Anti-Racism in Canada

A RESOURCE GUIDE

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TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT
As a provincial umbrella association, AMSSA acknowledges that BC is on the unceded homelands of First Nations who have stewarded this land since time immemorial. We recognize the privilege that we have as settlers on this land and acknowledge that AMSSA’s operations is on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

INTRODUCTION
On October 12-14, 2021, AMSSA held the National Virtual Roundtables for Migrant Worker Support Organizations to provide professional development opportunities and enhance the capacity of individuals, and the staff organizations, institutions and businesses that support migrant workers. On Day 3 (October 14, 2021), all attendees were welcome to join a professional development training session with Dr. Moussa Magassa. The topic explored during this session was racism and hate towards migrant workers in communities across Canada.

Migrant workers have reported experiences of racism and hate during their time working here in Canada. Migrant worker support organizations in communities across Canada can support migrant workers who are facing hate and racism and be connectors and bridge the gap between TFWs and the community.

In this handout, we will examine:
- Key terms and definitions of hate racism
- Impact of racism and hate on migrant workers
- Key steps to take in anti-racism work
- Resources for further reading

The video recording of this session can be accessed here on the Migrant Worker Hub.
Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) are hired by Canadian employers to fill temporary jobs when qualified Canadians are not available (Source: www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/temporary-foreign-worker.html).

However, the situation of vulnerability in which migrant workers and members of their families frequently find themselves is ongoing. Their rights have not been sufficiently recognized everywhere and therefore require appropriate international protection. The primary objective of the Convention in this regard, is to foster respect for migrants’ human rights. Migrants are not only workers; they are also human beings. They should “enjoy treatment not less favorable than that which applies to nationals of the State of employment in respect of remuneration and other conditions of work and terms of employment” (Art.25.1).

In reflecting on the experiences of migrant workers in Canada, keep in mind the following questions as well:

1. How do experiences of racism impact migrant workers?
2. How can service providers support workers when they experience racism from the community?
3. What are workers’ rights when it comes to racism and human rights?
4. How can service providers be connectors and bridge the gap between TFWs and the community?
5. What are some strategies in getting the community on board and to buy in?

According to the Canadian Council for Refugees, migrant workers in Canada don’t enjoy the same rights as nationals. Many are economically exploited, being charged illegal recruitment fees or being subjected to wage theft, and their visa conditions often make them dependent on their employers for such things as housing, access to healthcare, and access to basic information about their rights. They are also particularly vulnerable to racism and hate.

MIGRANT WORKERS’ EXPERIENCES: RACISM, HATE AND THEIR IMPACTS

Perry (2012) reports that the persistence of racism against migrant workers is a systemic issue. Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (CSAWP), for example, is a self-regulated private-sector non-profit organization governed by a board of directors chosen by farmers (FAMRS 2010).

- These constitute the legal basis of migrant workers program through Canada’s history. However, programs like these may have a lack of legal human rights framework and equal labour legislations for migrant workers.
- Programs like these may have physical, psychological and health impacts on migrant workers, including isolation; control; abuses; segregation; etc.
- Other systemic examples abound:
  - Colonization of Indigenous land and people.
  - Treatment of the Chinese migrant: exclusion act of 1883-1943 & head tax
  - Hindu women restriction to join spouses
  - Japanese Internment (World War 2)
  - Black people (Vancouver black settlement & Africville in Nova Scotia; etc.)

RACISM

According to the Ontario Human Rights commission, racism can be embedded in the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and systems:

- As a belief, racism justifies a belief that one group is superior to others. Racism as a belief can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs or hate crimes. It can also be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs.
- Racism is also an attitude based on the belief that ‘race’ produces inherent cognitive, moral and behavioural traits, often involving the belief that one’s own race is superior to others.
- Racism is also a form of discrimination (behavior) which is defined as any individual action or institutional practice which treats people differently because of their colour or ethnicity.
- Systemic racism or structural racism is “a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. Systemic racism identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time.” (Aspen Institute, 2010).
- Systemic/institutional racism includes the policies and practices entrenched in established institutions, which result in the exclusion of racial groups.
- Individual Racism: refers to an individual’s assumptions, beliefs or behaviours that supports or perpetuates racism. It is a “form of racial discrimination that stems from conscious and unconscious, personal prejudice” (Henry & Tator, 2006).

Additional reading: Analogy of the Tree - A framework to about systemic racism.
Learn more at https://ricochet.media/en/2654/bill-21-is-a-case-of-systemic-racism

3 J. Adam Perry (2012): Barely legal: racism and migrant farm labour in the context of Canadian multiculturalism, Citizenship Studies, 16:2, 189-201
MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Verbal, behavioral, or environmental offences/insults. They are often automatic and unintentional; occur in brief instances on a daily basis; communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative viewpoints; perpetuate a worldview of White supremacy and superiority; can be a demonstration of power and privilege.

HATE AGAINST MIGRANT WORKERS

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, hate is defined as an intense hostility and aversion usually deriving from fear, anger, or sense of injury; an extreme dislike or disgust (antipathy, loathing). It also means to feel extreme enmity toward an individual or group, to regard them with active hostility. There is also a systematic and especially politically exploited expression of hatred or hate crime. Hate crime is often investigated by police services in Canada.

- The Metropolitan Toronto Police Force, defines a hate crime as a criminal offence committed against a person or property that is based solely upon the victim’s race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender or disability.

- According to the Halifax Police Department, a hate crime is a criminal offence committed against a person or property, the motive for which is based in whole or in part upon the victim’s race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

- For the Edmonton Police Service, a hate or bias crime is criminal offence committed against a person or property that is based solely upon the victim’s race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin or sexual characteristic.

ANTI-RACISM

- Kendi (2019) defines an antiracist as someone “who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and none needs developing and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity” (p.24).

- According to Dei (1997), anti-racism work is an “action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression”.

Additional reading: Anti-racism toolkit to adopt in advocacy work for migrant rights and justice. Learn more at https://cardinalatwork.stanford.edu/manager-toolkit/engage/ideal-engage/anti-racism-toolkit