



## The Decade for People of African Descent

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### Background

In 2014 the United Nations General Assembly declared the “International Decade for People of African Descent” with an overarching theme of “recognition, justice and development”. The impetus for the declaration has its roots in 2001 when the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) established the Durban Declaration & Programme of Action. The Durban Declaration acknowledged that people of African descent who are largely classified as black across the world have been victimized by colonialism, slavery and the slave trade, and continue to suffer as a result. The declaration calls on nations to adopt specific steps that would help combat racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination which are derived from classism, ageism, ableism, sexism, heteronormativity etc. by protecting and promoting human rights. In 2011 the United Nations General Assembly called for the efforts to combat racism and xenophobia to be intensified. Ultimately on January 1, 2015 the UN launched the “International Decade for People of African Descent” to be observed from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2024.

The focus of the decade is broken into three core objectives:

- The promotion of respect and protection of fundamental human rights for people of African descent as outlined in the UN Declaration on Human Rights;
- A greater acknowledgment and understanding of the diversity of heritage, culture and contributions of people of African descent on the development of culture and society;
- The strengthening of national, regional and international legal frameworks as articulated by the Durban Declaration and the UN’s International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

The Canadian government officially recognized the “International Decade for People of African Descent” in February 2018 citing feedback from people across Canada and the Federation of Black Canadians who strongly urged the government to commit to a better future for Canadians who fall within this designation including immigrants and other non-citizen residents. The commitment arising from this promise entails learning more about and being receptive to, listening and hearing about issues impacting people of African descent living in Canada. From this commitment a strategic action plan was developed. The key areas of focus within the strategic action plan are based on the UN’s recommendations for implementation and include:

- Access to justice & community safety
- Access to affordable housing and shelter
- Greater arts/media representation and increased Black identity
- Increased Black ownership and wealth production
- Increased democratic engagement with impacted groups
- Access to more Education
- Work on inclusion & immigration policies
- Increased mental/physical health supports

Racism and other intersectional forms of discrimination are insidious and deeply rooted in society, healthcare and in all aspects of the nursing profession. NNPBC is committed to doing the work to ensure nurses can address racism in society by taking the necessary steps to confront it within the profession. NNPBC is



committed to improvement in the key areas of education, inclusion & immigration, mental/physical health and democratic engagement.

In 2020 we are living in a world of increasing recognition and awareness of the issues and injustices faced by Canadians with African ancestry in addition to the worsening global COVID-19 pandemic. The expanding global pandemic and increasingly broken systems of justice have intertwined in a complex way to increase our recognition of systemic racism and the many intersectional forms of discrimination that make up our daily fabric of life. These new external nudges have awakened many of us to the need for urgent change. Nurses, by virtue of their earned public trust are ideally positioned to address the disparities of systemic racism. However, we must do the work to ensure nurses of African descent are in positions where their individual human rights are promoted and protected so they can serve their communities in meaningful and fulfilling ways.

## Key Messages

- NNPBC supports the principles set out in the “International Decade for People of African Descent”.
- NNPBC supports efforts at all levels to combat racism, xenophobia and other intersectional forms of discrimination, and will commit to working to help eradicate it from the nursing profession.
- NNPBC commits to working with nurses of African descent to create actionable items to support a just and equitable nursing workforce that can meet the needs of the communities they serve.
- Nurses are among the most trusted of all professions and as such are ideally positioned to advocate for those who experience decreased access to care, poor experiences in interacting with healthcare, marginalization and health disparities as a result of structural racism and discrimination
- The global pandemic has intensified the need to address health disparities that arise from systemic racism and other forms of intersectional discrimination to achieve health equity.

## Recommendations

- Nurses should learn about anti-racist and anti-discriminatory [tools](#) that support social justice and equitable practices in nursing.
- Nursing and health system leadership must create conditions and opportunities for all nurses devoid of historical disparities.
- Nurses of African descent should be at the forefront of any decision-making processes concerning the welfare of nurses and communities they serve.
- Nurses should recognize and understand the history and contributions of nurses of African descent to the development and advancement of the health sector in Canada and beyond.
- Nurses need to understand lived experiences of discrimination and racism for people of African descent and the broad systemic impacts of this discrimination on health and wellness.

## Further Reading/Resources/Tools

- [UN International Decade for People of African Descent](#)
- [UNESCO- International Decade for People of African Descent](#)
- [World Conference on Racism](#)
- [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](#)
- [UN Declaration on Human Rights](#)



- [International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)
- Patricia Hill Collins (2009) "Black feminist thought knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment"
- Ibrahim X. Kendi (2019) "How to Be an Antiracist".
- [Bryan Stevenson: We need to talk about an injustice - TED Talks](#)
- [Kimberlé Crenshaw: The urgency of intersectionality | TED Talk](#)
- "American Son" 2019 via Netflix
- "When They See Us" 2019 via Netflix

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