Unpacking Anti-Black Racism in the HRM: Creating Sustainable Change for Our Community

The Honourable Wanda Thomas Bernard, PhD, C.M., O.N.S.
Senator – Nova Scotia (East Preston)
Overview

• The Past Informs the Present
• Decade for People of African Descent
• Recognition
• Justice
• Development
• Self-Reflection
The Past Informs the Present

- The legacies of historical anti-Black racism are kept alive through current policies and practices
- All decisions need to be made within the historical context of
  - Colonialism
  - Slavery
  - Segregation
  - African Nova Scotian & Mi’kmaq solidarity
Mayor Mike Savage’s Statement

• Statements and trainings are the beginning of the work
• The follow through shows real commitment
HRM Commitments

• 2010 Africville apology & commitment to compensation & community development
• 2016 African Heritage Month
• 2016 Employment Systems Review
• 2018 Diversity and Inclusion Framework
• 2019 Street check apology & commitment to action
• 2019 CAO’s ‘Zero Tolerance for Anti-Black Racism’ memo
• 2020 public statements from CAO & Mayor
Racism, Health & Violence Study

Racism-Related Stress

- Criminalization
- Subject to blatant acts of racism
- Underestimated / undervalued
RACISM-RELATED STRESS AS PTSD

• African Canadians are victims and survivors of PTSD
• Racism-related stress not recognized in DSM
• PTSD is visible in our:

COMMUNITIES  HOMES/FAMILIES  RELATIONSHIPS
IMPACT OF RACISM

- Coping Strategies
- Impact
- Sites of oppression
- Survivor of Racism

SenatorWanda
The Pandemic of COVID collides with the Pandemic of Racism

• “COVID-19 does not flatten these disparities; It amplifies them.”
• Racism is a public health issue
• The death of George Floyd was a tipping point
• Black Lives Matter is a movement
International Decade for People of African Descent

• Balancing historical context with current realities

• Framework developed for countries internationally to address unique barriers and challenges faced by people of African Descent globally

• Three pillars: recognition, justice & development
Recognition

• Immediately:
  Halifax Regional Municipality should formally acknowledge the Decade and commit to the enacting change with the United Nation’s framework

• Recognition of the trauma of racism

• Recognition and Apology for Africville
  • What about other ANS communities?
  • What about current environmental racism that is happening NOW?
Justice

• Justice comes in many forms
• Legal Justice
• Economic Justice
• Social Justice
• Community Development

WHAT DOES JUSTICE LOOK LIKE ON HRM COUNCIL?
Development

- Shifting from reactionary responses to preventative measures
- Centering Black voices, Black communities, Black engagement
- Focus on Employment, Education, Health & Housing
- Community Development
  - East Preston - The 7
  - This infrastructure design is a form of systemic anti-Black racism, as it prevents Black communities from being able to access health, employment, nature, social connection
The Personal is Political.
The Political is Personal.
Make the conscious shift to see your personal impact on collective issues.
Individual Self-Reflection

• Examining how you benefit from the SAME system that oppresses others
• What risks have you made to support ANS communities?
• What was your takeaway from the ABR Toolkit?

What specific action will you personally take after this presentation?
Three Take Away Messages

1. How will you use your privilege to lead change?
2. How will you integrate ABR lens into your work?
3. How will you help the Black Lives Matter Moment become a Movement for Change
Q&A

WandaThomas.Bernard@sen.parl.gc.ca