

**YOUTH FORUM AGAINST RACISM**  
**~ Québec City ~**  
**Université Laval**  
**June 1-3, 2001**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Through the Youth Forums Against Racism, including the regional forum held in Québec City, the United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) is encouraging young people to participate in anti-racism education. UNA-Canada considers young people to be the best ambassadors to educate their peers about anti-racism. By organizing youth forums, UNA-Canada provides the space for young people to develop their own strategies and heighten their awareness of issues related to racism.

The role of the United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) was to provide young people with a conducive setting for dialogue about racism among youth. The forum workshops were designed to be primarily interactive. In keeping with one of the basic principles of the Forums – namely, to allow the young participants as much freedom as possible to construct their own educational model – UNA-Canada ensured a fairly flexible framework for the workshops.

At the Québec Youth Forum Against Racism, a group of about thirty young people gathered together to discuss and exchange ideas on what they consider to be important elements of anti-racism education by young people, for young people.

### Participants:

- A total of 28 participants between the ages of 15 and 24 attended the Forum.
- Of this group, 12 were male and 16 female.
- Geographical regions represented: Quebec's North Shore (2), Montreal (20), Québec City (2), north-western New Brunswick (1) and Ontario (3).

It should be noted that all of the recommendations, strategies and ideas contained in this report come directly from the participants in the Forum. UNA-Canada's role in producing this report was limited to summarizing the discussions, ideas and recommendations suggested by the youth participants.

## **Friday evening, 1 June 2001**

The Québec Youth Forum Against Racism started off with a series of icebreaker activities intended to allow participants to become better acquainted with each other. These events culminated in a “talking circle”, which brought the first day of the Forum to a close. This type of agenda achieved two objectives: the safe and friendly atmosphere contributed to the establishment of good group dynamics for the rest of the weekend, and a number of participants took the opportunity to share their personal experiences of racism with the rest of the group.

## **Saturday, 2 June 2001**

While Friday evening was intended more or less as a social event, Saturday quickly got underway as a working session, during which participants were asked to define what racism means to them. They also discovered what educational tools currently exist for young people related to this theme. The second day of the Forum made it possible for participants to lay a common groundwork on the theme of racism. Moderators initiated the day’s discussions with a brief explanation of both the Forum’s objectives and the context in which UNA-Canada’s project is being carried out (e.g. UN World Conference Against Racism, Government of Canada, the United Nations, NGOs, and youth). One highlight of Saturday’s agenda was a presentation by special guest speaker, Darashani Joachim, from the Urban Alliance on Race Relations. Ms. Joachim spoke briefly of her work with youth in Toronto and provided some interesting historical background on Canada and racism.

### **PRESENTATION: From the Youth Forums Against Racism to the UN World Conference Against Racism**

**FORMAT:** Presentation (Questions and answers)

**DURATION:** 1 hour

**MODERATORS:** Ian Foucher and Christine Parsons

**DESCRIPTION:** The objective of this presentation was to provide a detailed explanation of the YFAR project, as well as its relationship to other initiatives (WCAR, ACTION 2000, March 21<sup>st</sup>), and to explain the roles of the various stakeholders involved in the World Conference Against Racism (NGOs, the Canadian Government, youth, and the United Nations).

### **WORKSHOP 1: Defining racism and describing its manifestations**

**FORMAT:** Plenary session

**DURATION:** 1 hour and 45 minutes

**DESCRIPTION:** During this plenary session, all participants were free to discuss and exchange ideas on the theme in question. The goal here was to develop a common understanding of the general concept of racism by the time the weekend drew to a close. Participants were also invited to share their personal experiences with racism. The following points were put forward during this workshop:

- *DEFINITION OF RACISM:*
  - Racial discrimination
  - An ethnic majority exercising power over an ethnic minority (oppression/repression)
  - Emotion/reaction (hatred)
  - Narrow-mindedness towards the unfamiliar
  - Mistrust of differences
  - False beliefs

\*\*It is interesting that many participants referred to a nuance between racism and ethnocentrism, in that racism is specific to the relationship of superiority imposed on black people by white people.

- *HOW RACISM MANIFESTS:*
  1. Blatant racism:
    - Words or glances
    - Abuse (reference to police officers)
    - Rudeness
    - Violence
    - Isolation (stigmatization/marginalization/exclusion)
    - Stereotypes/labels
    - Prejudices
    - Unwarranted provocation
  2. More subtle racist behaviours (systemic racism):
    - Misinformation in the media
    - Content of history textbooks in schools (selective reporting of historical facts)
    - Power games
    - Institutionalized racism
    - Hypocrisy

**WORKSHOP 2: Overview of currently available educational tools.  
Do they meet the needs? What is effective?  
What is ineffective? What are the shortcomings?**

**FORMAT:** Subgroups

**DURATION:** 1<sup>st</sup> part – 2 hours 45 minutes  
2<sup>nd</sup> part – 2 hours 30 minutes

**DESCRIPTION:** This session consisted of two parts: in the first, participants had an opportunity to analyze existing educational material, and during the second, they were invited to present the results of their analyses. The purpose of this exercise was to identify the strengths

and shortcomings of the educational tools currently available. As a result, the participants were able to define what is effective with young people and specifically determine the elements they would like to see included in an educational model.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL ANALYSED:

- Title:** *Tout l'monde ... Mon monde! Les jeunes et le multiculturalisme*  
**Source organisation:** *Guide d'animation d'ateliers et d'activités (Everyone's World ... My World! Youth and Multiculturalism: Facilitator's Guide to Workshops and Activities)* Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO – Federation of Franco-Ontarian Youth), produced by the United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada)  
**Language:** Available in English and French  
**To obtain a copy:** Copies available at UNAC, 130 Slater Street, 9<sup>th</sup> floor, Ottawa ON, K1P 6E2, (613) 232-5751, [info@unac.org](mailto:info@unac.org)
- Title:** *Secondary Level Teacher's guide*  
**Source organisation:** March 21<sup>st</sup> Campaign, Canadian Heritage  
**Language:** Available in French and English  
**To obtain a copy:** Copies available by calling 1-888-MARCH21, or by downloading from the following address: [http://www.pch.gc.ca/march-21-mars/outreach/index\\_f.shtml](http://www.pch.gc.ca/march-21-mars/outreach/index_f.shtml)
- Title:** *Ten Ways to Fight Hate: a Community Response Guide (English only)*  
**Source organisation:** Southern Poverty Law Centre (Intelligence Project)  
**Language:** Available in English only  
**To obtain a copy:** download document from the internet at the following address: <http://www.splcenter.org/intelligenceproject/ip-index.html>
- Title:** *Comic Books against Intolerance: starting points for working with young people on responses to intolerance*  
**Source organisation:** Council of Europe (“all different, all equal”)  
**Language:** Available in French and English  
**To obtain a copy:** See the following address: [www.ecri.coe.int](http://www.ecri.coe.int)
- Title:** *European Passport Against Intolerance*  
**Source organisation:** Council of Europe, European Campaign of Youth Against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance (“all different, all equal”)  
**Language:** Available in English and French  
**To obtain a copy:** Go to: [www.ecri.coe.int](http://www.ecri.coe.int)
- Title:** *Education pack: ideas, tools and resources for intercultural education*  
**Source organisation:** Council of Europe, European Campaign of Youth Against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance (“all different, all equal”)  
**Language:** Available in English and French  
**To obtain a copy:** Go to: [www.ecri.coe.int](http://www.ecri.coe.int)
- Title:** *Domino: a manual to use in peer group education as a means to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance*  
**Source organisation:** Council of Europe, European Youth Centre (“all different, all equal”)  
**Language:** Available in English and French  
**To obtain a copy:** Go to: [www.ecri.coe.int](http://www.ecri.coe.int)

### ASSESSMENT:

The analysis of this material enabled participants to identify several features they believe should be considered in the production of an educational material for young people. Their suggestions are as follows:

- Shocking statistics (i.e. start with a hook!!!!)
- Material must be adapted to the target clientele
- Material should not be left open to free interpretation. An explanatory text included with the material would be important, in order to accurately convey the intended message.
- The presence of mediators during activities is advised (available resource people)
- Educational material is more effective when it is interactive
- The text must be brief and concise (no long rambling paragraphs)
- Material should be adapted to the Canadian context and take into account the various regional settings in which racism occurs
- Examples people can relate to are important (e.g.: testimonials – personal experiences)
- Interactive activities (ensure that they do not trivialize racism as a social issue)
- Include a summary of the material to facilitate access, so everyone can grasp the general idea without reading the entire document

**Sunday, 3 June 2001**

On Sunday, participants had a chance to put forward their ideas and strategies for educating their peers about racism. On the basis of Saturday's conclusions, in particular the important elements of an effective educational model, participants were asked to continue their reflections on what should be included in anti-racism education by young people, for young people. Participants used this day to come up with some very innovative ideas for fighting racism through education.

**BRAINSTORMING SESSION:**  
**What are the most effective means to attract the attention of young people? What messages should be communicated to young people concerning racism?**

**FORMAT:** Plenary session

**DURATION:** 1 hour

**DESCRIPTION:** This workshop entailed a discussion of the various ways of drawing young people's attention to the issue of racism. The goal was to allow participants to come up with a clearer idea of approaches that are effective with young people. This brainstorming session was intended as a preparatory exercise for workshop 3, as it is essential to discuss the message itself and the means of conveying it before educational strategies can be developed. Many ideas were put forward by the participants, for example:

## HOW TO SPARK THE INTEREST OF YOUNG PEOPLE?

- Music (principally because of its universal appeal)
- Television
- Films (documentaries and television series, such as “Roots”)
- Theatrical presentations (a play that is well-done can induce reflection)
- Festivals featuring discussion groups
- Awareness campaigns
  - create interest in schools through history courses
  - take the message directly to where young people gather
  - establish local organizations to combat racism
- Organize settings for young people that are conducive to dialogue on racism (resource centres)
- Network with existing anti-racist groups (umbrella associations)
- Encourage people to get involved by signing petitions (Amnesty International’s conference-café system)
- Get celebrities involved in the cause (e.g.: celebrities against racism)

## THE MESSAGE CONTENT:

- Emphasis should be placed on the fact that we are all unique, rather than our differences
- The message should be worded differently, according to age group
- Avoid negative slogans
- Promote dialogue among cultural groups
- Relate it to everyday reality (otherwise, target audience will be lost)
- Avoid discriminatory remarks in daily life
- Influence the perception of police officers and politicians
  - engage in open discussions with them, regarding their racial perceptions and beliefs
  - the ultimate goal: to heighten awareness among police officers and politicians regarding abuses of power. Offer solutions to counter such abuse.
- Create bonds in society (young people collaborating with parents, community groups, school organizations, government agencies...)
- Target population of the message – youth (+ hope for change)
- The message should be more than a simple slogan
- The message must target young people who, once converted, should spread it to adults
- Encourage young people to be proactive

### **WORKSHOP 3: Concrete ideas: local and national strategies**

**FORMAT:** 1<sup>st</sup> part – subgroups  
2<sup>nd</sup> part – presentations by participants

**DURATION:** 1<sup>st</sup> part – 1 hour and 45 minutes  
2<sup>nd</sup> part – 1 hour and 30 minutes

**DESCRIPTION:** In the first part of the workshop, the participants split into three subgroups to develop initiatives for fighting racism through education, which they later presented to the larger group. These presentations included detailed plans for implementing their ideas. The purpose of the workshop was to allow participants to suggest concrete ideas for the educational model to be formulated during the National Forum. Their initiatives are described below:

### GROUP #1

This group concentrated on what they termed “Historical Truth”. In their view, school curricula overlook many historical facts related to the roles played by different ethnocultural groups throughout Canada’s history. They suggest a number of possibilities for addressing this problem, such as:

1. Creation of youth groups in each province of Canada to conduct historical research in an effort to shed new light on historical facts neglected by the school curriculum. To foster this approach, teachers could invite community members to speak at schools. The members of group #1 reiterated the importance of sharing life experiences, involving racism, with students. They also felt that this would be a more effective learning approach, which, of course, would be complementary to the school curriculum.

**\* It should be mentioned that this group suggested networking with existing youth organisations in other provinces that have a mandate for anti-racist education.**

2. Offer a course on tolerance in high schools. If this is not possible on the short term, an informal course covering, among other things, racism, xenophobia and homophobia, could be taught by young people to young people.
3. Promote networking among various groups involved in the fight against racism. Eventually, it may be useful to design and distribute a leaflet to students, containing information on these provincial and national organisations, including pertinent website addresses.
4. Provide ethnocultural communities with the tools for teaching young people in the communities about their own history (participants refer here to human, rather than material, resources, implying experienced people available to speak to youth).

### GROUP #2

This group decided to focus their efforts on community activities, i.e. developing ideas for youth initiatives that would heighten awareness within their communities.

1. How can misinformed people be re-educated?
  - Organize awareness campaigns in villages (unfamiliar aspects of other cultures are not grounds for mistrust, but integration)
  - Establish a permanent anti-racism committee in the community
  - Organize intercultural exchanges or forums

- Organize intercultural community activities (e.g.: BBQ – An event of this nature would allow people to prepare dishes typical of their ethnocultural group. Music from different regions of the world could also be featured)
- Awareness meetings (access to various resources and works discussing other cultures)
- Free concerts to counter racism, highlighting music associated with different cultural groups (e.g.: hip hop, Latino, rock...)
- Create anti-racism advertisements for public settings (public transit, washrooms, highway billboards...) funded by government. The government could play an active role by organizing contests for designing such publicity (the group suggested this activity as part of the March 21<sup>st</sup> campaign)

### GROUP #3

This group developed an approach involving both school and community, specifically, an activity entitled “Theatre of the Diverse”, the aim of which is to stage plays in each province. A number of participants suggested basing these theatrical productions on the “*Cégep en spectacle*” model, i.e. as a competition held in various schools. The best plays would then be presented in a community-wide contest, designed to select candidates for a provincial competition, where prizes would be awarded to the winners. This activity is described as follows:

#### Theatre of Diversity:

Objectives:           1) Promote intercultural communication  
                              2) Shed light on certain historical facts

Target audience:    1) High school students  
                              2) Parents who attend the plays  
                              3) Community members in the audience

#### Organisation:

Phase 1               1) Competition within one school  
                              2) Produce a play that presents an historical event or news item (e.g.: Africville, Marie Angélique, a community event...)  
                              3) The play should last about 15-20 minutes  
                              4) Be creative. Use of music, dance and traditional art is strongly recommended  
                              5) A discussion with the audience, to further explain the story behind the play, could follow each presentation

Phase 2               1) Selection of the best play within one school  
                              2) This play is then entered in a community-wide competition to select an entry for a provincial contest