

## **MULTICULTURAL AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION: THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE**

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## MULTICULTURAL AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION: THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

By *Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill\**

### Topical and Timely

A Seminar on Multicultural and Intercultural Education<sup>1</sup> is both topical and timely<sup>2</sup> particularly since, with more and more frequency, the International Community is turning its attention to the potential role Multicultural and Intercultural Education can play “in fostering tolerance and understanding between various groups in society.”<sup>3</sup> Consequently, today’s gathering, unprecedented in this country, is loaded with

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<sup>1</sup> While the separate use of the two terms, *Multicultural* and *Intercultural Education*, in the international instruments would denote, by inference, a clear distinction in meaning between them, yet their usage in Canada merely reflects the Quebec-Ottawa tensions and on-going political dialectic between Canada’s Federal Government and the Provincial Government of Quebec, the French *versus* the English polarization. For, in Canada, the Federal Government employs the term *Multicultural Education* while the Provincial Government of Quebec has steadfastly rejected this appellation, preferring instead to substitute *Intercultural Education*. As affirmed by Fleras and Elliott:

Quebec is officially a multicultural province, although it rejects federal multiculturalism and prefers the expression “interculturalism” as reflective of its style and objectives for managing diversity. It is widely acknowledged that Quebec has long dismissed federal multiculturalism as irrelevant to its collective survival. The Quebecois look upon federal initiatives as little more than another intrusion by central authorities into Quebec’s internal affairs. They are also viewed as a ploy to downgrade the distinct society status of the Quebecois to the level of ethnic minority cultures under the domination of English-speaking Canada. Nor have federal multicultural programs always respected Quebec’s unique characteristics as a francophone society within Canada’s cultural duality. Multiculturalism is thus repudiated as a manipulative ruse by federal interests to neutralize Quebec’s special rights as a founding nation and a distinct society [...].

in A. Fleras & J.L. Elliott, *The Challenge of Diversity: Multiculturalism in Canada* (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1992) at 82. From my own professional and personal *de facto* experience, Canadian practice, in essence, makes no distinction between these two terms which are employed independently to address an identical reality — the obstacles preventing harmonious understanding among various groups in society.

<sup>2</sup> See generally E.M.A. Thornhill, “Multiculturalism, Racism and the School System: What’s To Be Done? What Must I Do?” in *Canadian Education Association Conference Proceedings* (Toronto: C.E.A., 1984) at 51 [hereinafter “Multiculturalism, Racism”].

<sup>3</sup> “[...] During its sessions, the Working Group focused on the meaning and application of the principles contained in the *Declaration*, the different measures adopted to enable persons belonging to minorities to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their own religion and use their own language; the role of multicultural and intercultural education in fostering tolerance and understanding between various groups in society; the contribution of regional and other mechanisms, as well as national institutions and non-governmental organizations, to minority protection; conciliation and early warning mechanisms to prevent the escalation of tensions and conflicts; and the definition of a minority.”

See *Human Rights, Minority Rights*, Fact Sheet No.18 (Rev.1) at 10. See also the reports of the WG at its 1st, 2d and 3d sessions contained in Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/28 and Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/18.

significance for us Canadians, for the United Nations System, and for the International Community. As the dust of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century fast settles among us and as we brace ourselves to turn the corner and brave this New Millennium, it is my firm belief that this Seminar will generate instructive lessons which will help to carry us harmoniously forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

There is something, some “je-ne-sais-quoi” about the year 1999 that persuasively seduces us into a mode of celebration. And, why not? Why not celebrate, for example, the soon-to-be 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Multiculturalism in Canada?<sup>4</sup> However, from a Black perspective, any celebration of Canada’s national policy of Multiculturalism needs perforce to be also tempered by the countervailing and enduring reality of betrayed promises and unfulfilled expectations. For, the first-hand experience of Multiculturalism’s near thirty year track record convinces People of African Descent in Canada that multicultural and intercultural education have all too often become sites for reproducing or even generating social inequities. Consequently, at this point in time, there exists a pressing need both to raise the level of debate around Multiculturalism and to improve the quality of discourse on what constitutes, or should constitute, multicultural and intercultural education in this country.<sup>5</sup>

### **Mandate and Parameters**

In accordance with the initial request asking me to address the issue of multicultural and intercultural education in Canada, I have entitled my brief presentation, *Multicultural and Intercultural Education: The Canadian Experience*. My co-panelists<sup>6</sup> having already provided you with an understanding of Canada’s constitutional and linguistic framework, it is now left for me to provide you with the picture!

In the ensuing few minutes allotted to me, I shall brush in a part of this Tableau — etching out the contours, and filling in with broad strokes the Canadian experience in multicultural education, all from an African Canadian or Black perspective.

But first, a word of caution!

This Tableau of multicultural and intercultural education in Canada is anything but a “still life” study. The emerging picture presents an interesting scene, wherein we find movement, creativity, innovative techniques, competing focal points that vie for our attention, as well as permanent fixtures, which, all together, make up the multicultural landscape and lifescape. This Tableau teems with humanity; for, after all,

<sup>4</sup> Multiculturalism as national policy was first introduced on October 8<sup>th</sup> 1971 when then Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Elliott Trudeau “rose in Parliament and promoted multiculturalism to the level of official government policy [...]” in “Forging Unity From Diversity: Multiculturalism As Policy in Canada” in Fleras & Elliot, *supra* note 1 at 68-92.

<sup>5</sup> See generally E.M.A. Thornhill & N.L. Warner, *Brief Presented to the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism* (Montreal, 1978) [hereinafter “Brief”]. See also “Multiculturalism, Racism”, *supra* note 2.

<sup>6</sup> Professor Joseph A. Magnet, of Ottawa University’s Faculty of Law, addressed the constitutional context of Canada while Sous-ministre adjoint, Robert Bisailon, presented the linguistic context.

Multiculturalism is about human life — human presence, consciousness, uncertainty, frailties, aspirations and optimism...

But, before zooming in to focus specifically on the picture of multicultural and intercultural education in Canada which, like the negative of a photograph is still in the process of being developed, it behooves me to open up a window on the background of Multiculturalism in Canada. For, in this country, it is the practice of Multiculturalism as national policy that has set the stage for multicultural and intercultural education. Like a template, Multiculturalism has formatted and pre-determined the nature and quality of both the philosophy and the praxis of multicultural and intercultural education in Canada.

This Paper will address three main points. First, I shall address Multiculturalism since it is the progenitor of multicultural and intercultural education. Secondly, I shall focus on multicultural and intercultural education. Then I shall conclude by suggesting some guidelines for change which can assist us in moving forward to fulfill the broken promises and failed expectations of our past.

I should like to further contextualize my remarks by identifying the *locus* or location from which I speak and by clarifying the pitch in which my voice registers. The assertive tone on the one hand affirms collective Black identity and validates our lived Canadian experience, while at the same time it critiques and assesses the role multicultural and intercultural education *have not yet played* in eradicating Racism and Racial Discrimination from the daily lifescape of Black People in Canada.<sup>7</sup>

The *James Robinson Johnston Endowed Chair in Black Canadian Studies*,<sup>8</sup> of which I have been appointed the first holder, is an unprecedented national initiative with international dimensions “*established to bring Black culture, reality, perspectives, experiences and concerns into the Academy.*” Accordingly, it is primarily from under the aegis of this mandate that I address the Canadian experience of multicultural and intercultural education.

In addition, it is almost three decades of professional — and sometimes painful — work as an educator, in particular as a Human Rights educator, that also inform my remarks.<sup>9</sup> But, more importantly, it is my day-to-day experience as a Woman, societally marked and identified, first and foremost, by *race* and *colour*, that refracts my vision and determines my “reading” of multicultural and intercultural education.

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<sup>7</sup> E.M.A. Thornhill, “Regard sur le racism: perspectives juridiques à partir d’un vécu noir” (1993) 6:1 C.J.W.L. 1; See English translation “Focus on Racism: Legal Perspectives from A Black Experience” in *Judicial Awareness: Race, Culture and the Courts: Volume of Reference Materials* (Ottawa: National Judicial Institute, 1995) [hereinafter “Focus on Racism”]; L’institut canadien d’administration de la justice, *Bulletin de l’I.C.A.J.* (décembre 1996).

<sup>8</sup> The James Robinson Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies was established in 1996 at Dalhousie University and named to honour the memory and legacy of James Robinson Johnston, the first member of the African Nova Scotian Community to graduate in law from Dalhousie Law School, and to practice law in Canada. When he died in his prime at the young age of 39, African Nova Scotians had to wait 54 years before another member would again break through and graduate in Law.

<sup>9</sup> The author has worked professionally as a Human Rights Anti-Racist Educator for more than two decades with the Quebec Human Rights Commission, Montreal, Quebec.

Furthermore, my perspective is critically coloured and textured by the palpable and very enduring “*material reality*”<sup>10</sup> of Racism and Racial Discrimination in Canada. This reality, far from being a joyful “Kodak moment,” is a reality wherein members of the vast and ethnically varied Community of African Descent are called upon, day in and day out, to overcome hurdles, navigate straits, mediate confrontations, and survive a relentless onslaught of micro-aggressions,<sup>11</sup> that are all triggered by skin *colour*.

Therefore, as a direct consequence, and from my own particular *locus* and stance as a Black Woman, *multicultural and intercultural education merely represent the flip side of the same coin*.<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of this brief presentation, I make no distinction. In our Canadian context, the convergences of multicultural and intercultural education are so striking that they represent, respectively, federal and provincial responses to a self-same perceived reality.

While it is true that in its process of evolution over the past thirty years, Multiculturalism has been pressured and has attempted to start addressing issues and concerns around Racial Discrimination and Racism,<sup>13</sup> yet it is beyond the scope and purpose of this paper to give a comprehensive overview of the evolution of Multiculturalism in Canada. Instead, this paper proposes to flag the failure to date of Multiculturalism in Canada to effectively address and eliminate Racism and Racial Discrimination and the concomitant impact on the framing of multicultural and intercultural education.

Since multicultural and intercultural education are cut from the cloth of Multiculturalism, we must first address Multiculturalism before we can even turn our attention to multicultural and intercultural education.

### What is Multiculturalism?

Just what exactly is Multiculturalism? Multiculturalism is part of Canada’s national ethos. From October 8<sup>th</sup> 1971 when Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau rose

<sup>10</sup> For Racism as a “material reality”, see “Focus On Racism”, *supra* note 7. See also E.M.A. Thornhill, “Research Priorities Critical for Developing Meaningful Education Programmes Against Racism” in *UIE Reports Adult Education for International Understanding, Human Rights and Peace: Report of the Workshop held at UIE, Hamburg, 18-19 April 1991* (Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education, 1999) at 66-67 [hereinafter “Research Priorities”].

<sup>11</sup> See “Racism: A Daily Reality” in “Focus On Racism”, *supra* note 7.

<sup>12</sup> In this Paper, I shall make no distinction between Multicultural and Intercultural Education precisely because, *from the vantage point of the “material reality” of Racism, no distinction exists*.

<sup>13</sup> Multiculturalism slowly and gradually evolved from its initial 1971 policy focus on European immigrants, their cultural preservation and sharing of their heritage, languages, festivals organizations and dance troops. The on-going concerns of Visible Minorities about lack of access to gainful employment, housing, education and discrimination exposed Multiculturalism’s inability to meet the needs of a multicultural society and led to demands for an anti-racist agenda which Multiculturalism purported to champion by putting in place “Race Relations” policies aimed at targeting Racial Discrimination. The 1988 passage of the Multicultural Law was designed to have an impact both on justice and society. See generally Fleras & Elliot, *supra* note 1.

in Parliament and proclaimed it to be permanent national policy in Canada,<sup>14</sup> Multiculturalism has steadily evolved to be now elevated to the status of:

1. A constitutionally entrenched legal interpretative norm.<sup>15</sup>
2. A generator of national public policy.<sup>16</sup>
3. A source of new law.<sup>17</sup>

But how to define Multiculturalism correctly? Multiculturalism is ubiquitous — and, just like the notion of “Human Rights” in the International Community, Multiculturalism is also a world phenomenon.<sup>18</sup>

Here in Canada, Multiculturalism has virtually become “all things to all people” — a ready plaster for every sore, a fast fix, “une étiquette prête-à-coller partout.”<sup>19</sup> Multiple viewpoints on Multiculturalism abound.<sup>20</sup> In the minds of some people, for example,

- Multiculturalism is a recognition of the cultural diversity which has existed since the founding of Canada.<sup>21</sup>
- Multiculturalism is meant to complement Canada’s Federal Policy of Bilingualism.<sup>22</sup>
- Multiculturalism is viewed as a governmental administrative policy response to the findings of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Fleras & Elliot, *supra* note 1.

<sup>15</sup> In 1982, the notion of Multiculturalism was entrenched in article 27 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Part I of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, being Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982* (U.K.), 1982, c. 11:

27. This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.

In addition, the provisions of Canada’s *Employment Equity Act*, S.C. 1995, c. 24 also reflect the spirit of the Government’s Multicultural initiatives.

<sup>16</sup> The year 1974 saw Saskatchewan become the first province to officially announce Multiculturalism as policy, while the provinces of, notably, Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba also have varying policies of Multiculturalism. For example, see *The Multiculturalism Policy of Canada*, and the *Ontario Policy on Multiculturalism*, both reproduced in Fleras & Elliot, *supra* note 1.

<sup>17</sup> On July 21st 1988, Canada became the first country in the world to pass a national multiculturalism law: *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, R.S.C. 1985 (4th Supp.), c. 24.

<sup>18</sup> H. Eriks, “Multicultural Education” in K.A. McLeod, ed., *Intercultural Education and Community Development: Papers presented at a Symposium at the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto* (Toronto: Guidance Center, 1980) 3 at 5.

<sup>19</sup> “Racism, Multiculturalism”, *supra* at note 2.

<sup>20</sup> Fleras & Elliot, *supra* note 1 at 4. See generally McLeod, *supra* note 18, and T.R. Morrison, “Transcending Culture: Cultural Selection and Multicultural Education” in McLeod, *supra* note 18.

<sup>21</sup> Eriks, *supra* note 18 at 5.

<sup>22</sup> McLeod, *supra* note 18 at viii.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* According to Fleras and Elliott, *supra* note 1 at 72: the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* was appointed by the Federal Government in 1963 to inquire into and report on the existing state of *Bilingualism and Biculturalism* in Canada, and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation predicated on the equal partnership between two founding races, while taking

- Multiculturalism is the educational answer to national unity, international understanding, or ethno-cultural survival.<sup>24</sup>
- Multiculturalism is the means of promoting bilingual and bicultural education.<sup>25</sup>
- Multiculturalism is a dynamic ever-changing “museum”,<sup>26</sup> a colourful, exotic and entertaining way of — selectively, according to one’s own comfort level — expanding one’s knowledge base, and promoting intercultural understanding and solidarity.
- Multiculturalism is the panacea *par excellence* by which we can support and preserve our Human Rights, develop our Canadian identity, strengthen citizenship participation, reinforce Canadian unity, encourage cultural diversity within a bilingual framework, and promote unity in diversity.<sup>27</sup>
- Multiculturalism seeks to enhance the appreciation of the contributions of the many ethno-cultural groups to Canadian society.
- Multiculturalism is an anti-French tool.<sup>28</sup>
- Multiculturalism is an anti-English plot.<sup>29</sup>
- Multiculturalism is nothing but catering to “Immigrants.”<sup>30</sup>
- Multiculturalism is for everyone.
- Multiculturalism is a demographic reality.
- Multiculturalism is good business sense.
- Multiculturalism is a new resource, just waiting to be tapped, commodified, packaged, marketed and managed productively, and above all, profitably.
- Multiculturalism is an educational reality.
- Multiculturalism is sound pedagogy.
- Multiculturalism signifies the elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination.
- Multiculturalism evokes the “social contract”<sup>31</sup> which we must re-negotiate in the name of equality and non-discrimination in a democratic society.

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into account the contributions made by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada. The *Report*, tabled in 1969, reaffirmed the priority status of Canada’s *Bilingual* and *Bicultural* framework.

<sup>24</sup> McLeod, *ibid.* at viii.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> G.J.S. Dei, *Anti-Racism Education. Theory and Practice* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1996) at 58.

<sup>27</sup> T. Johnstone, “Multiculturalism Through Education: A Nova Scotia Approach” in McLeod, *supra* note 18 at 24.

<sup>28</sup> M. Laferrière, “Education and Multiculturalism in Quebec: Attitudes and Policies” in McLeod, *supra* note 18 at 28, 32.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* at 35.

<sup>30</sup> K. McCutcheon, “Adapting to Multiculturalism” in McLeod, *supra* note 18, 37 at 39-40.

And the list runs on and on...

Clearly then, it would seem that Multiculturalism in Canada escapes and defies any easy straight-forward definition. When we in Canada start to be specific about what Multiculturalism means in practice, it seems to be the folkloric aspects to which we still reflexively turn — songs, food, dances, handicrafts, fashions, traditions...<sup>32</sup> “Now, there is nothing wrong with and much that is right about ‘folk-dancing, traditional cuisine, and cricket’.”<sup>33</sup> However, the point is that despite protestations to the contrary, a lot of multicultural effort seems to dwell mesmerized, in fixated fashion, solely on these folkloric aspects, to the apparent exclusion of bread and butter issues, and thus end up creating rather than correcting inequities. For example, Discrimination, and more specifically, Racial Discrimination, is a key component of those obstacles and barricades which preclude and forestall the harmonious social integration of racial and cultural minorities.

More than two decades ago, during its national hearings on Multiculturalism, the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism was admonished that:

To date, talk of Multiculturalism has been just talk. Regular international folkloric festivals with week-end multi-ethnic conferences punctuated here and there by an international buffet, by themselves cannot create a harmonious pluralistic Canadian society. The real problems are being shoved aside, ignored amidst the folk dances, ethnic costumes and exotic dishes... A policy on Multiculturalism must be based on a real commitment to equality among peoples. Folk-dancing and amateur theatre are quite meaningless if people are excluded from participation in the mainstream of Canadian society.<sup>34</sup>

Then, another ten years later, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Prosecution of Donald Marshall Jr,<sup>35</sup> heard the caution that more than a century after the abolition of slavery,

[...] many citizens continue to suffer from the discriminatory attitudes and [practices that infect our economic system, contaminate our cultural and political institutions and taint the daily inter-personal relations between individuals. [Today, decades] after the adoption of an official Policy of Multiculturalism, this policy still has not served to eradicate racism. The problem of racism is being skirted and buried amidst folk dances, ethnic costumes, exotic dishes and intercultural studies flavored with a good dose of “Love-one-another,” “Aimez-vous-les-uns-les autres!” — the brotherhood

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<sup>31</sup> J. Mallea & J. Young, “Teacher Education for a Multicultural Society” in McLeod, *supra* note 18 at 8.

<sup>32</sup> K. Osborne, “Class or Culture: Some Reflections on Multiculturalism” in McLeod, *supra* note 18, 94 at 97-98.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* at 98.

<sup>34</sup> “Brief”, *supra* note 5.

<sup>35</sup> The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Prosecution of Donald Marshall Jr. was established to look into the wrongful imprisonment of Donald Marshall Jr., a young Mi’kmaq who, falsely accused of the murder of an African Canadian youth, Sandy Seale, spent 11 years of his life behind bars. The Commission tabled its seven volume Report of findings in 1989.



approach. Folkloric festivals from time to time, accented by a week-end intercultural buffet here and there are not an appropriate response to racism whose victim-survivors are entitled to remedy, relief and reparation.<sup>36</sup>

### **Multicultural and Intercultural Education**

Whether we admit it or not, Multiculturalism has provided the template for multicultural and intercultural education, which in turn incontrovertibly reflect and reproduce many of the inconsistencies, contradictions, uncertainties, ambiguities, and tensions triggered by Multiculturalism.

It is still very difficult to find a philosophy and praxis of multicultural and intercultural education which attempts not only to reflect a multicultural society, but also to simultaneously combat the pervasive effects of Racism.<sup>37</sup> While practitioners of multicultural and intercultural education will concede, albeit rather reluctantly, that there do exist victims of racism, yet they somehow seem to stop short of or fail to pinpoint and sanction the perpetrators, itself a necessary act geared to eliminating the source of violation.<sup>38</sup> By the same token, it is equally difficult to find a practice of Community Involvement predicated on a relationship of *Visible Partnership* and *Accountability*.<sup>39</sup> Racism still taints the notion of Community Involvement, rendering it colourless and meaningless, particularly at significant decision-making levels.<sup>40</sup>

From a Black vantage point, multicultural and intercultural education in Canada mask, mediate and continue to order and structure Knowledge and Authority in ways that maintain and further entrench a *status quo* of inequality.<sup>41</sup> "Notwithstanding the current changes being made, state funding for instructional materials, curricula development and reform by and large [still] serves to reinforce Euro-Canadian dominance by regulating the processes of knowledge production, validation and dissemination."<sup>42</sup> Multicultural and intercultural education in Canada have not yet, for example, interrogated *white privilege*<sup>43</sup> and all its ramifications. Multicultural and intercultural education still have not systematically presented a clear challenge to those assumptions undergirding a white-dominated society and the very false sense of superiority they inevitably engender in White youngsters even as they concomitantly spawn self-hatred in youngsters of colour.

<sup>36</sup> Nova Scotia, *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Prosecution of Donald Marshall Jr.*, vols. 1-7 (Halifax: Commission, 1989).

<sup>37</sup> E.M.A. Thornhill, "Guidelines for Implementing More Visible Partnerships in Schools" in R. Samuda & S.L. Kong, eds., *Multicultural Education: Programmes and Methods* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) 287 at 288 [hereinafter "Guidelines"].

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* at 255.

<sup>39</sup> "Guidelines", *supra* note 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* at 288.

<sup>41</sup> Dei, *supra* note 26 at 21.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* at 131.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 28-29. See also P. McIntosh, *Interactive Phases of Curricular and Personal Re-vision with Regard to Race*, Working Paper No. 219 (Wellesley, Massachusetts: Wellesley College Centre for Research on Women, 1990).

Multicultural and intercultural education in Canada are still very much loathe to relinquish their superficial window-dressing approach to, definition and treatment of culture. They would seem to be stuck, comfortably transfixed in the celebratory mode of festivals, cultural days, and ceremonial dress or “ethnic costumes.” From a Black Community perspective, multicultural and intercultural education in Canada by and large still do not sufficiently address the day-to-day lived experiences, reasonable expectations and legitimate entitlements of People of Colour. Nor do they acknowledge the on-going “material reality” of inequality confronting racialized communities. The preference of multicultural and intercultural education is still rather to remain comfortably fixated on the simplistic, and at times voyeuristic, “Getting-to-know-you” routine and the curious “spectacle-like” presentation or observation of ethnic foods, dancing and dress.<sup>44</sup>

In short, multicultural and intercultural educators in Canada, both well-intentioned do-gooders and self-proclaimed experts, have not yet been able to acknowledge and adopt *behavioural modification* as a priority.<sup>45</sup> They still nurture the false but comforting “conventional wisdom” that, above all else, the priority to be targeted is *attitudinal change* which should, at all costs, be promoted along with careful deference to White comfort level, so that White people will not be “turned off by the whole thing.”

### Looking to the Future

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century, knocking outside on the doorstep, has already cast its shadow on our present. As we look towards the future, we in Canada are only now beginning to acknowledge — albeit with a somewhat fatalistic resignation — those great seismic shifts that have for quite some time already rocked Canadian identity at its very core and brought about irrevocable changes in this country’s demographic landscape.<sup>46</sup> Canada must now answer to a new population profile, and Canada is not alone. Other Nation States of the International Community are also fast coming to this new level of awareness.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the half century or so of the United Nation’s existence, the factor of “Race” is the one single issue that has by far commanded and commandeered the sustained attention, as well as consumed the concerted efforts of the International

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<sup>44</sup> Dei, *ibid.* at 58.

<sup>45</sup> I have always believed and still do firmly believe that behaviour should constitute the top priority since it not only empowers the Victim-Survivor, but, by targeting acts and actions, also stops the violation. Furthermore, to prioritize behaviour is to preclude *white comfort level* being set up as the norm or controlling limit that trumps the Victim Survivor’s entitlement to, remedy, relief, or reparation.

<sup>46</sup> E.M.A. Thornhill, “Diversity — A Challenge for Continuous Learning” (National Parole Board Annual Conference Keynote Address, Montreal, June 1998) in National Parole Board General Board Meeting, 1998 Conference on “Diversity in a Continuous Learning Environment”, May 24-26, 1998, Montreal, Quebec (Ottawa: the National Parole Board/La Commission des libérations conditionnelles, September 1998); E.M.A. Thornhill, “Ethical Lawyering: A Must in the Matter of Colour” (Annual Wickwire Memorial Lecture, Dalhousie Law School, November 1998) [Unpublished] [hereinafter “Ethical Lawyering”].

<sup>47</sup> Fleras & Elliot, *supra* note 1 at 268.

Community.<sup>48</sup> "Race" is an issue so undeniably pressing that it has systematically compelled world consensus.<sup>49</sup> The mantra of "Race" resonates throughout, for example, a plethora of international instruments from the *International Bill of Rights* down through a variety of *Conventions, Covenants, Treaties, Resolutions, Declarations, Proclamations, Statements, Decades, International Years, International Days, Special Procedures, Special Rapporteurs, Working Groups, Committees, NGOs, Studies, Reports...*

The globalization of the "world village" dictates that we now find new, workable ways to also "deal with the emerging globalization of [R]acism."<sup>50</sup> Depending on how it is implemented, multicultural and intercultural education can constitute either part of the problem, or part of the solution to Racism. Issues of Racism remain central to any multicultural or intercultural education purporting an unequivocal commitment to public and academic education for meaningful social change.<sup>51</sup>

Consequently, I posit that in order to move forward,

- Multicultural and intercultural education, *ipso facto*, must mean *anti-racist education*<sup>52</sup>;
- Multicultural and intercultural education, *ab initio*, must necessarily be *redistributive* and be geared to *societal transformation*<sup>53</sup>;
- Multicultural and intercultural education must lead to *More Visible Partnerships* on an equal footing wherein reciprocal accountability of partners prevails and Power is equitably shared<sup>54</sup>;
- Multicultural and intercultural education must signify a *meaningful sharing of Power*, of opportunity, of access, of responsibility, of information, of resources, of perspectives, of appraisal power, of veto Power<sup>55</sup>;
- Multicultural and intercultural education must also mean, in a concrete sense, the *sharing of space*, of boardroom space, blue-print space, front page space, prime-time space, centre-stage space...<sup>56</sup>

<sup>48</sup> By way of illustration, race, colour, national and ethnic origin head the lists of illicit motives of discrimination enumerated in international and regional instruments (e.g. *International Bill of Human Rights, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, First and Second Decades to Combat Racism, Convention Against Slavery, multiple Resolutions condemning Apartheid as a "crime against humanity."*)

<sup>49</sup> As typified by the four UNESCO Statements on Race in Ashley Montagu, UNESCO Statement on Race. An annotated elaboration and exposition of the four statements on race issued by the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 3d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

<sup>50</sup> Dei, *supra* note 26 at 18.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* at 10.

<sup>52</sup> Anti Racism or anti-racist Education must be predicated on the primary goal of *eliminating Racism*, rather than settling for the compromise of *reducing Racism*.

<sup>53</sup> Multicultural and intercultural education, like Human Rights Education, cannot afford to and should not "just happen," moving in and moving out, to leave behind an unchanged *status quo* with people untouched.

<sup>54</sup> See "Research Priorities", *supra* note 10 at 67-68.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* See also "Guidelines", *supra* note 37.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

And above all, from the vantage point of our collective Black experience in Canada, multicultural and intercultural education must signify a change of mindset, a paradigm shift — “un réaménagement des méninges” — wherein we will all come to acknowledge that *no single individual, group, collectivity, People, or Nation State is entitled to sit, forever unchallenged, at the Centre of Scrutiny.*<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “Ethical Lawyering”, *supra* note 47.