

Better!

1989

ion of Racial Discrimination

THREE. Join, or help start, a community group which promotes better race relations. Volunteer for an organization which helps new Canadians get settled here.

FOUR. Support efforts in your workplace to combat racism and eliminate discrimination.

FIVE. Take the time to make friends with someone from another racial background.

SIX. Do a "roots" project, with each student in your class tracing his or her family tree.

SEVEN. Make a display, or create a cassette or videotape, presenting the different groups in your classroom or school. Show what each one has contributed to Canadian life.

EIGHT. Organize a "World Beat" Music Day or Week to showcase music from different parts of the world. Invite your local radio station to play "World Beat" music.

NINE. Organize a special day in your school or municipality with a public assembly, guest speakers and the presentation of a certificate of merit to the student or citizen who has done something special to help eliminate racial discrimination.

TEN. Work with local museums or libraries to put together an exhibit to highlight the contribution of Canadians of different races to Canadian life.

ELEVEN. Work with your local Cable TV outlet to create a show about eliminating racial discrimination.

TWELVE. Find out what the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, and other federal and provincial laws say about racial discrimination and human rights.

SEE WITH NEW EYES/ MEDIA WATCH

THIRTEEN. Watch TV commercials, newscasts or your favourite programs to see how racial groups are portrayed. Make a list of what individuals are shown doing and saying. Does the portrayal ring true to life or not?

FOURTEEN. Compliment the editor of your local newspaper for stories which present a fair and well-researched viewpoint on racial issues. Express concern when this is not done.

FIND OUT ABOUT HIDDEN RACISM

FIFTEEN. (a) Take a look at your city council, police force, board of education, and other public groups and see if they welcome and encourage the involvement and participation of people from all cultures and races.

(b) Do these bodies treat all people fairly?

SIXTEEN. Discuss what you can do to make your school, your college, your place of work, your home a "Racism-Free Zone."

SEVENTEEN. If you belong to a voluntary group, discuss whether it represents the cultural and racial groups living in your area. Find ways to encourage people from different groups to be involved.

EIGHTEEN. Ask your students/your children what the words racism, prejudice, discrimination and intolerance mean. Ask why people with different skin colours are unfairly treated. What can we do about it?

TAKE A STAND

NINETEEN. Write to your public officials if you see discrimination in action.

TWENTY. Learn to recognize, and reject as unacceptable, racial slurs in the workplace, at school, on the street, or at a party.

TWENTY-ONE. Spread the message that racist jokes are not funny and that racist humour hurts.



Write your own list of
21 THINGS TO DO
to eliminate racial discrimination in Canada
and send it to:

Communications Branch
Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0M5

Even one idea is welcome!

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abiding, but less sexually promiscuous than whites and blacks respectively.

Rushton also suggests that behavioural and intellectual differences can be accounted for by racial classifications ("Orientals, whites, and blacks") which originated and evolved from as far back as 200,000 years ago from relatively separate racial stocks.

While there is no reason either to deny individual variation in intelligence (or sexual restraint for that matter) or to question the relevance of genes toward intelligence (although proof is notoriously elusive), there are good reasons to reject a racial interpretation of human evolution.

Very simply, the concept of human races has long been discarded as scientifically valid or biologically meaningful. Discreet and well-defined categories of humans with unique assemblages of homogeneous and fixed properties do not exist. Certainly there are populations who possess recurrent clusters of traits pertaining to blood types, skin colour, or ear-wax composition. But because of migration and intermarriage, the boundaries between these populations are indistinct — merging into one another ("clines") without any abrupt stop.

In short, references to the concept of human races have no explanatory value, thus rendering any conclusions derived from this faulty assumption as untenable.

As a colleague (by profession if not spirit), I support Rushton's right to speak on contentious issues — keeping in mind that freedom of speech is not an absolute right, but entails a degree of social responsibility. However, I am dismayed by the publicity and exposure Rushton has received, all of which has had the unfortunate affect of conferring both a public forum and a degree of legitimacy to his somewhat anachronistic views.

As to why this type of thinking finds a receptive audience, the answers are less clear. Perhaps simplistic and bio-reductionist explanations will appear in a climate where the prosperity and industry of "Oriental" populations contrasts dramatically with the status of "blacks" who as a group are disproportionately represented in statistics (or stereotypes) related to crime, educational levels, socioeconomic status, and alleged promiscuity.

And I will also admit that Rushton's racist thinking is dangerously close to Canada's hate laws which were recently invoked

against Zundel and Keegstra following their attempts to white-wash Nazi atrocities. But in contrast with the anti-semitic diatribes of Zundel and Keegstra which historically are difficult to "prove" or "disprove," Rushton's views can be confronted, aired in a public forum of debate (such as the Rushton — Suzuki debate in London), and refuted by concerned academics.

Rebuttals to Rushton do not require any elaborate arguments. Counter proposals could probably be derived from any set of introductory lectures on biology, anthropology, or ethnic relations. With respect to Rushton's sources, the credibility of his work has suffered because of funding links with a eugenics-based (improvement through genetic engineering) movement in the United States. His data base has been denounced as outdated, simplistic, highly selective and manipulated to achieve a singular dimension in the nature-nurture debate.

In opposition to Rushton, I would dismiss the need to explain individual (or population) variation by resorting to biogenetic arguments. There are numerous "environmental" factors ("poverty," "discrimination," "test-bias") which can demonstrate why an individual (or population) scores higher on intelligence tests (although not on intelligence per se!).

Similarly there are social and cultural reasons why one group rather than another extols a more restricted sexual code. To be sure, this recourse to socio-cultural explanations may be inadequate at times. Yet in the interests of fostering a social milieu that reflects the multicultural ideals of Canadian society and envisions cultural differences as a resource for enrichment and strength, racist doctrines must be combatted with vigour.

In this sense, despite the possible social ramifications of his work, Rushton's allegations may assist in fostering a racist-free environment. For, in exposing his racism to the open market of debate and dissent, numerous groups and individuals have rebuked Rushton for undermining the social fabric of Canadian society. Perhaps in reminding us of how socially unacceptable racism has become in Canada, Rushton has performed a commendable service in advancing the reconstruction of Canadian society along non-racist and pro-multicultural lines.

Professor Fleras specializes in the area of race and ethnic relations at the University of Waterloo's Department of Sociology.