

Supply

One of the problems is that the racism is no longer as overt. When we do see it as overt we try to change it. Unfortunately, over the last 15 to 20 years racism has gone underground. It has become systemic, and it is systemic racism that challenges each one of us as Canadians to root out and to kill.

In my community in Dartmouth we did a study called "Education Income in the Watershed Area". This black community is only six miles from the city of Dartmouth, a city that suffers only 6 per cent unemployment. In that black community of thousands of individuals that has been there for over 300 years, we found that on average a young black male could expect to earn 42 per cent less than the average non-black male in the Halifax-Dartmouth area.

We found that the levels of high school completion in academic programs was much lower for black students, not because they did not want to succeed, but because the school system was not responding to the different needs of various minority communities in Nova Scotia.

We also found some disturbing trends in types of employment. If you looked at the black community as opposed to the larger community in Nova Scotia, 39 per cent of the residents of the Watershed community, the black community, and 61 per cent of county residents work in white collar operations, while 61 per cent of Watershed residents and 31 per cent of county residents work in blue collar occupations.

We are dealing with something very deep and very systemic, but nevertheless something that is very dangerous. What we are doing by allowing systemic racism to exist in our society is creating a situation whereby we are robbing young people in minority communities of the right and the ability to dream, to dream about what they can be and what they want to do. When they look around and see people who have graduated from Grade 12 or have gone to university, they see that they are not getting the same jobs as their white counterparts. When they look around and see the types of jobs they are getting and the treatment that they get, it robs them of their ability to dream of where they can go and what they can be in this country.

This government and successive governments has tried over and over again to deal with this problem. I think that by and large we have failed and we failed for a number of reasons. One is that the provincial governments and the federal government has refused to put the necessary resources forward, especially in times of restraint, to do the job that has to be done. Canada Employment and the programs that come down from the CEC should target specifically the black, minority, and native communities in Canada. If a community suffers 40 per cent of the unemployment in an area then my view is that it should receive 40 per cent of the dollars that are available through government programs to alleviate the unemployment problems.

I would like to close my comments with a poem which I think is appropriate when we talk about Canadians trying to understand the role of minority communities in this great fabric that is our country. Many times we try to force minority communities to be more like the non-minority communities, to be more like me or to be more like us. This is a poem from Rita Joe, a native Micmac Indian, entitled *Song of Eskasoni*:

I lost my talk
 The talk you took away.
 When I was a little girl
 At Shubenacadie school,
 You snatched it away:
 I speak like you
 I think like you
 I create like you
 The scrambled ballad, about my word,
 Two ways I talk
 Both ways I say,
 Your way is more powerful.
 So gently I offer my hand and ask,
 Let me find my talk
 So I can teach you about me.

That is a lesson to which every Canadian should listen. If they practice it, I know that the scourge of racism in our society is something that can be eliminated.

Mr. Bjornson: I would like to compliment the member for Dartmouth on a fine presentation this afternoon. I think it was well received in all parts of the House.