

Combat Anti-Black Racism in the Workplace

By Gerald V. Paul



From left to right – Alexandria Williams of Black Lives Matter-Toronto, June Veacock, former Human Rights Director with the Ontario Federation of Labour and lawyer Osborne Barnwell, spokesperson for Justice4Blacks@work at the launching of its campaign to end racism in the workplace in Ontario.

Toronto Black advocate Osborne Barnwell has lashed out at managers in the public service who are perpetuating anti-black racism, “apparently knowing that they can do so with impunity.”

Barnwell was speaking at Toronto City Hall yesterday at the official launch of the campaign by justice4blacks@work, a recently- formed coalition of black community groups, to end racism in the workplace in Ontario.

The St-Vincent born lawyer who is the current official spokesperson for justice4blacks@ work, called on black people ” to organize

ourselves to address anti-Black racism” in the workplace.

He said that” it is without debate that racism has now reached a stage of legitimacy and that it is predicated upon the doctrine of white supremacy.

“It is that entrenched mentality which has driven us to take action for the long term,” he explained.

Barnwell noted that victims of anti-black racism are” psychologically terrified . They believe that if they dare speak out, they would become the subject of reprisals. This consistent pattern simply cannot go on.”

He went on to note that as Black folks, ” not only at work do we experience the significant discounting of our dignities. We continue to express our concerns about racial profiling by police, racism at the Court House experienced by Black accused and Black legal counsel...”

Noting the Ontario government’s stated intention to put in place an Anti-Racism Directorate, Barnwell said that “ while we recognize that this is a step in the right direction, at this time we have no indication how that would roll out.

“What we do know is that it will not address the issues which are the centre of our efforts. In any event, Black bodies are being stepped over as they cry out for help. We simply cannot wait.”

In calling for action to deal with anti-Black racism, Banwell made it clear that he did not mean the managers and union leaders in the Ontario Public Service, and at City Hall here, or at the two Toronto school boards burn down the houses of their Black employee or physically hang them from trees to die in horrible fashion.

“What I am declaring is that racism is not as much an in- your- face type conduct. It is clear to me that what drives this trivialization of human dignity is the concept that we are inferior- that Black Lives do not matter- that we are undeserving of respect and acts of common decency.”

Present at the launch were representatives of several black organizations. Among them were Midaynta Community Service, the African Canadian Legal Clinic, the Black Action Defence Committee and Black Lives Matter-Toronto



Call for action to combat anti- Black racism in the workplace added by A. Joseph on June 23, 2016

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