OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

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This special edition of *Canadian Diversity* created in partnership with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to mark the International Decade for people of African Descent and entitled *Facing the Change: Canada and the International Decade for People of African Descent*, is published in two parts.

With an introduction calling for all to "take an active role in supporting, investing, learning and helping the Black community prosper" by Federation of Black Canadians Chair, Dahabo Ahmed Omer, this second issue is divided into four sections.

The first section, "Looking Back to Look Ahead" opens with a contribution by The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean who challenges the notion that "Black history" belongs exclusively to Black people and argues that resistance to racism and efforts to eradicate discrimination are essential to building a society based on universal humanistic values and the enjoyment of full fundamental human rights by all. Abdi Bileh also looks at the transformative power of history education and its essential role in building a better society by contributing to the awakening of young people to better equip them to build inclusive economies, more dynamic civil and political institutions and healthier and safer cities.

Section two, "Seeing what is, and what can be", contains three articles that explore the mechanisms of and solutions to systemic discrimination. Juliana West and Christine Lwanga seek to offer an alternative way of viewing differences among people, and to deconstruct rigid hierarchical discourse inhibiting positive identities and inclusion. They emphasize the way in which diversity can be understood and recognized as a valuable resource to support deeper 'self' and 'other' awareness, human development and social justice.

In a consideration of the situation faced by Black communities in Quebec, Bochra Manai, Ricardo Gustave, Didier Boucard view the International Decade for People of African descent as providing an opportunity to truly recognize and address the systemic inequalities created by racialized social relations and economic inequalities. Part of the way forward, they argue, lies in highlighting the important contributions of Afro-Quebecers in enriching our society and culture, through the creation of sites preserving and honouring cultural tradition and heritage.

In an article on the educational experiences of Black youth, Carl James documents how endemic antiblack racism has sorted Black youth into status-differentiated educational programs that have structured their lives, contributed to their racialization, and accounted for their poorer social and educational outcomes. He calls for the overdue need to recognize and address the educational system's failure and its consequences on the educational, psychic and social wellbeing of Black youth and larger Black communities.

Entitled "The view from within", the third section focuses on the urgent need for healing. Darlene Lozis insists on the vital importance of addressing decades of psychosomatic trauma

experienced by Afro-descendants brought about by inequities built into the system. The healing of the collective soul can only be accomplished, explains Lozis, by tackling such critical problems as the overrepresentation of Black youth in our prisons. Atieno highlights the integral role played by art in the creation of identities showing art's unique power to change and shape the Black experience. She focuses on the inspirational work of three black women artists in Vancouver whose lives and art serve to heal and validate Blackness in a community which has suffered from erasure and a fragmented sense of self.

The final section, "How do you see me?" speaks to vital questions of definition, identity and intersectionality. Activist Cicely Blain points to the need to apply a framework of intersectionality to celebrating the Decade for People of African Descent. She exposes the visibility paradox of Black Canadian LGBTQ2S+ communities who experience both constant hypervisibility – making them more vulnerable to scrutiny and violence, but also invisibility – making their unique perspectives so ubiquitously marginalized and ignored. In an article investigating the notion of an *Afro-Métis* nation, poet George Elliott Clarke raises such fundamental philosophical questions as the process by which nations get created and whose role it is to define community identities, control community cultures and write community histories.