

## Contesting Systemic Racism | Text Transcript

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This is a text transcript for the webinar “Contesting Systemic Racism” presented by the Guelph Institute of Development Studies (GIDS) as part of the World in 2030 event series. GIDS welcomed guest speakers Mary Ann Chambers and Patrick Case. The discussion was moderated by Steffi Hamann, Assistant Professor, University of Guelph. The event was recorded on January 15, 2021.

Transcript:

### Steffi Hamann:

Here we go. Alright, so officially welcome and thank you for joining us for today's GIDS speaker event. My name is Steffi Hamann, I am an Assistant Professor and the organizer of the World in 2030 speaker series at the Guelph Institute of Development Studies, which is part of the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences.

I'd like to start by taking a moment to remind us that at the University of Guelph we emphasize the importance of the Dish with One Spoon Covenant, and the fact that we share a responsibility in upholding the stewardship of this land, which we share with our First Nations and Métis neighbours.

We're here to set the tone for 2021 and talk about the nature and impacts of systemic racism, more specifically, today we want to address issues related to anti-Black racism, the BLM movement, and controversies over racialized policies and politics in the Canadian context. And I'm so thrilled to welcome Mary Anne Chambers and Pat Case who agreed to join us for this purpose today, and I'll introduce them properly in just a moment, but please allow me just some brief introductory remarks to set the stage first.

Anti-Black racism refers to the prejudice attitudes and beliefs, but also the acts of stereotyping and outright discrimination that are directed at people of African descent, and it is rooted in the inhumane colonial history of slavery and its legacies. This is systemic; it's deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies, and practices, and it has led to the marginalization of the Black community. You really don't have to look far for evidence. The University of Guelph is not an institution known for its racial diversity, the opposite is true. The campus community and the senior leadership are not representative of the diversity of the Canadian population at large. The same holds for the vast majority of other institutions of higher education in this country.

Now, the statistical evidence is very clear about the systemic inequalities that exist in Canada. We know for a fact that Black women with a university degree are unemployed at a greater proportion than white women with a university degree. We know for a fact that there's a distinct wage gap among white men and Black men. We know that there are huge disparities with regard to poverty rates, and we know that Black Canadians are over-represented in the criminal justice system. But those statistics aren't new, we've known those for many years, and

yet there's an urgent need today, and every day, to address the underlying causes. And recent research has shown that it's not the sterile statistics and journal articles that are most effective in motivating actual change. It's only when we manage to internalize the impacts of these injustices that it becomes impossible to ignore them any longer.

And while the Black community in North America has long internalized the presence of anti-Black racism, the gruesome evidence of cell phone videos that spread like wildfire in this era of interconnectedness finally seems to get the message across to everyone else as well. The fates of persons like George Floyd in Minneapolis, Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, Jacob Blake in Wisconsin, they made waves.

But a wave of protest isn't enough. And a one-hour talk? Certainly not enough to address the deep-seated problems properly either, but it's one opportunity to share, to listen, and to learn. Today's event is part of a much larger conversation, a learning process, a call to action. It's the reason why we scheduled this in the very first week of this new semester, as a signal that this is a central concern for us going forward. And so, let me finally introduce our two inspiring guests, most of you are familiar with them, but each deserves a proper introduction, nevertheless.

Mary Anne Chambers' list of accomplishments is long and impressive. She was a banker, a politician, and has served on the boards of many institutions in the non-profit, education, and health sectors. She used to be the senior vice president of Scotiabank before she became the Ontario Minister of Training Colleges and Universities and Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Among many other high honors, Mary Anne has been named to the Order of Ontario, and is a recipient of the Governor General of Canada's Meritorious Service Medal. She holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Toronto, York University, Lakehead University, and the University of Guelph.

I could go on and on, but to understand what kind of person Mary Anne is, all you really need to know is that she has personally funded scholarships and bursaries for more than five dozen university and college students in Ontario, which enabled them to pursue their dream careers. She's a lifelong supporter of fostering education and has made it her personal mission to improve access to education at all levels. Mary Anne, I'm so grateful that you made time for us today, and I know you have a busy schedule, so it's highly appreciated.

### Mary Anne Chambers:

My pleasure, Steffi.

### Steffi Hamann:

Our second guest is similarly remarkable. Pat Case is a legal scholar and human rights expert, in the past he has been a trustee and equity advisor to the Toronto District School Board, a commissioner for the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and not just a faculty member but

also the director of the Human Rights and Equity Office at the University of Guelph. Welcome back!

Today, he's an Adjunct Professor at Osgood Hall Law School and the Director of the school's certificate program in human rights theory and practice. Pat has dedicated his entire professional life to the fight for structural and procedural change to foster equity, especially in the education sector. In 2017 he was approached by the Ontario Ministry of Education to set up and help with an action plan, and this is why he currently serves as the Assistant Deputy Minister in the Ministry's Educational Equity Secretariat. Pat, thank you so much for being with us, there's so much more I could say to sing your praise but that would take all day.

**Patrick Case:**

Thank you.

**Steffi Hamann:**

Instead I've decided to cap our meeting to one hour today because we all know and feel the Zoom fatigue. So, the format today is a moderated conversation and while there may be a little time for audience questions towards the end, I want to be very clear that we're not going to rush anything, or aim to cover all possible angles and issues. This event is meant as a primer for future conversations, and future actions.

So finally, without much further ado let me get started and actually pose direct questions to our guests. And what I wanted to get started with is a very broad question. We know that Canada as a country likes to present itself as a multicultural and open society, yet we also know that the country's governance and education systems were modeled after the institutions of Western Europe, and built and populated, so far, largely by Caucasian colonizers and their descendants. So, Mary Anne and Pat, by way of introducing yourselves, could you share with us your experience in chartering a career path for yourself in Canada? Let's start with Mary Anne, how multicultural was your experience?

**Mary Anne Chambers:**

Well, I was born and raised in Jamaica and I guess I didn't really place any emphasis, no one really placed any emphasis, on my race when I was growing up. I was really fortunate that when I applied with my husband for visas to migrate to Canada with our two little boys, the skills that were in greatest demand at the time for Canada's labor market were information technology and domestic workers, and Chris and I were both experienced in information technology.

So, I actually had no difficulty whatsoever getting a job immediately with Scotiabank as a Computer Program Analyst in their international division. And I came to realize not long after, that it wasn't just luck; they really did need my skill, in fact, in my first year at the bank I was sent to Bermuda three times - really, really tough I know but somebody has to do it. [laughs]

**Patrick Case:**

[laughs]

### Mary Anne Chambers:

And so, about three weeks after I joined the bank, a Canadian colleague, a young, blond business analyst confronted me with a conversation about her observation that I was conscientious, hard working, and she, you know, she figured I was obviously ambitious. So, she really wanted me to know that I shouldn't be disappointed if I didn't get very far at the bank, because I had so much stacked against me. Or maybe somewhat naïvely I said: "Like, what?"

And she said, "Well you're a woman, you're Black, you're not Canadian born, you're Jamaican, you're married, you're a mother, and you're a Roman Catholic." And I thought, woah jeez! So, I guess I had two choices. I could either roll over and play dead, or I could ignore her, and I chose to ignore her. And several years later, when she was leaving the bank, she was still a Business Analyst and I was an Assistant General Manager. And I credit my resilience to the fact that I was raised by parents who always told me I was wonderful, even when I knew I really wasn't being wonderful. It was an expectation that they were conveying to me, I think that has served me well throughout.

### Steffi Hamann:

Thank you so much Mary Anne for those introductory words. Pat, I have the same question to you. How multicultural was your educational and/or professional experience?

### Patrick Case:

Well, first I have to say how glad I am to be back at the University of Guelph. [laughter] I mean, I said yes to this right away. So, hi to everybody I know out there Adam, Gard, everybody who's online, and Craig, and everybody else I don't know, who I know and didn't name or might not know.

So, how multicultural my experience is? Well, you know, I was born and raised in England. My dad fought through the whole Second World War, he joined the army - British army in 1939. At the end of the war he was still a private. The fact of the matter is you know, that if you were white and you started off in that war in 1939, no matter who you were, you had a commission of some kind, even a non-commissioned officer, but not for him. His stories were about having to quite literally clean the defecated pants of officers during the war, in the heat of fighting that was going on, and of the treatment that he—negative treatment—that he got when he was a soldier. But after the war, he fought and fought, raised a stink, and was made a sergeant. But the thing about it though is that, I don't know whether it was because of the war and his experiences in the war, or he was just like this when he was, before the war. But he was a scary guy, very scary person, and his physical abuse of my mother led her to leave him with me and my younger brother.

So, I grew up as the child of a single parent in the Midlands of England, on welfare. And I remember that when I was about six or seven years old, I was at school, it was my birthday, we

were gonna have a birthday party for me and I invited a number of kids from school after this birthday party that was to take place on a Saturday. My mom cooked, there was food in the house, nobody came, right. The parents wouldn't let them come to our house, and you know the thing is, I mean you can [laughs bitterly] I can't hide it even now, how painful that was at the time, and how painful that memory has been for me throughout my entire life. Just up the road from where we lived was a working men's club that said on the outside no Blacks, no Irish, I had to walk past that place every day to go to school, right.

What really ended my time in England was an experience I had when I was 16, sorry I was 18 and I was looking for work. I went into a shop that said help wanted on the outside, and I was met with a blast: 'Get out n\*\*\*\*\*!', " right. I left the store, it was the day after that I received a letter from my brother who was living in Canada, who said, you know, you should come to Canada! Back in those days it was so easy to get into this country that three weeks to the day that I received that letter, I landed in Canada as a landed immigrant. I didn't even wait to say goodbye to a lot of people in the UK, I just wanted to get out.

But you know coming to this country, I've considered myself to have been a refugee from racism in Great Britain but, this place was no escape from it, it was no refuge from it. Many of the jobs that I did when I first came to this country, I experienced discrimination and racism on the job. Well for a good bit of time what I was doing was what was called at that time "day labor" at Pacific Avenue in Toronto and in the west end near the Junction there was a manpower office, and I used to go and line up at the manpower office in the morning to get a job.

Got a job one day that they drove me all the way out to Bramalea at 2 a.m. to a construction site, and I went up, multiple floors up, and I was taking wall board off a jib. I was coming up and stacking it, and throughout the day there was a guy there who had just kept on shouting at me, "Hurry up n\*\*\*\*\*, hurry up!" Like this was all day long, you know. It was later in the afternoon I looked down, downstairs, the two guys I'd come with had left, I had to ride my bicycle from Bramalea all the way back to Toronto and I never got paid for that job.

There are other jobs I did during that period of time I didn't get paid for either, but the turning point came for me when I met some people who were involved with some community work in the city of Toronto. People who were involved with trying to save a neighborhood, and many people will know it, it's the neighborhood at Bloor and Dovercourt, it's Dufferin Grove, and there were a number of developers trying to buy up all the houses there and turn it into St. James Town 2. Well, these residents were opposed to that and they thought, and I joined with them in that fight and that was the beginning of my politicization. So that was the beginning of sort of fight back, if you like.

### Steffi Hamann:

Thank you so much for sharing this deeply personal, but I think really helpful, really insightful story. Mary Anne, if you look back, you're a proud grandmother by now who finally allowed

herself some rest—not a whole lot of rest but some rest—and family time following your illustrious career. When you think about the lives of your children and your grandchildren you know, and the life they have lived in Canada, how have their experiences compared to yours? Have they been similar or different, what would you say?

### Mary Anne Chambers:

So, I have two sons and I was one of those parents who would stay awake at night waiting for my sons to come home if they were out with their friends and you know driving my car. They had a code among them as to how to behave if they were pulled over by the police, a foreign, foreign concept to me. You know, when one had an accident with my car I insisted that just based on the report of the incident which was very different to how he had described the incident, and how the person who had run the red light and hit him was treated versus how he was treated, I insisted that we would go to court.

And you know, I sat there proudly as he defended himself and in fact won the case, and as we were leaving a courthouse that day the police officer who had attended the accident came running up to us and said you know, the woman who had suggested that she would be a witness is not really the kind of person who liked to talk to us. And I said, why is that? And he said well, she's Black and she lives in community housing, and I said, you know we don't have time for this. And he said, but you know, I've heard that your son is a McMaster student, I have a Black friend who is on faculty there. And I said I don't think you heard me before, we don't have time for this.

And so, you know, there are several instances. My younger son was an air cadet and it was while he was at camp, summer camp one year that he was first called a n\*\*\*\*\*, and you know, I needed to know how he actually felt about that for real, and I said, well does this mean you will not be going back in the coming years to other camps? And he said, "Mother, I have my career planned out and it includes these summer camps." And I said bravo, good for you. You know in that particular case I should also add that his fellow cadets, none of whom were Black, came to his defense. And so, maybe that's what we refer to these days as allies, and the importance of allies.

My granddaughters asked my husband and my son how we felt about the George Floyd situation, and it wasn't something that we were going to raise with them, so kind of set us back. And my husband said to one of them, "That course that you're doing at university must be helping you" - and she said, "I don't need a course to tell me that that's wrong."

And what they had done was my granddaughters, they had approached their friends who are predominantly white and said we need to talk about this, and their friends thanked them for engaging them in this conversation, because their friends also believed it to be wrong and felt it was important to have this conversation.

And that - excuse me - that, is an example of why I am hopeful, because it seems to me that the younger generations are very clear about these centuries of wrong being at a stage now where I just cannot tolerate this, this is not their idea of humanity. And so, I encourage them, and you know, there are all sorts of difficult conversations that are happening, but the conversations are just as difficult for Black people to have.

And I remember with the George Floyd situation one of my Board colleagues, a woman I had tremendous respect and affection for, calling me to find out how I was doing and she said, "Mary Anne, my husband and I last night watched the James Baldwin documentary I Am Not Your Negro," and you know, I didn't know how to respond because I knew she meant well, but I couldn't help but wonder how it was that something like this had to happen for her to realize that this was a serious, serious problem.

So, I do believe that if I do a little bit of analysis of the different experiences, I'd have to say that some of what I've seen at play falls under the heading of social determinants of health. So, for example, the experiences that my granddaughters are having are different to the experiences that Black youth in many public school systems are having, and it's for a few different reasons.

My granddaughters have a circle of friends, and a lifestyle that includes being able to voice their opinions on things. The kids who do not have the ability to advocate on their own behalf and who are subject to whatever systems are in place that do not necessarily favor them, you know, find themselves in trouble.

So, Pat for example would be familiar with a study done by another university professor Carl James who I have a lot of time for. He, you know, there was a report called Towards Race Equity in Education published in 2017 and it showed that in the largest school board in Ontario, that's the Toronto District School Board, by the time Black students finished high school 42 percent had been suspended at least once, compared with 18 percent of white students and 18 percent of other racialized students. And 48 percent of TDSB students expelled between 2011 and 2016 were Black, 18 percent were white, and to me that's no accident, that's no accident.

But I can tell you that when my sons were in high school, one came home after the day after parent teacher interviews and said Mrs. So-And-So, my whatever teacher, said your mother is really articulate. I flew off the handle, I said what the hell did she expect? What did she expect? In another case, my other son, and my sons would track their marks in high school so they would know exactly what to expect their marks to be by the end of a term, and one came home while I was away on one of my business trips, which meant that my husband had to play guard and he tends to be a little gentler than I am and perhaps a little more forgiving than I am.

But my son, you know, showed him his report and said this mark has to be wrong because I have been tracking my marks. So, you know, in a phone call home that night I got these reports, and my husband said, I'm going to speak with his teacher. And when he went to meet with my son's teacher, the teacher told my husband that our son needed to manage his expectations.

Patrick Case:

[laughs]

Mary Anne Chambers:

In other words, he needed to expect less of himself, and my husband said have you looked at his other marks? Because this is the only one that's not an A. I learned, we learned, not long after that that teacher was released from that school as he should have been, but it was really only because my husband had come.

And I have to wonder about all of those other Black students whose parents either don't understand how the system works, are intimidated by the system, or just for whatever reason are not able to advocate on behalf of their children the extent that we did on behalf of ours.

Steffi Hamann:

Thank you so much Mary Anne, that already provides a type of segue into the big systemic institutional structures that exist and that have allowed these practices, these acts of discrimination to be in place and stay in place for so long. So, I'd like to take the conversation to the education system in particular and Pat you're an expert not just in human rights and equity but you also have a deep knowledge about our education system. Could you share some insights with us? What are some of the key barriers that have prevented and still prevent large parts of the Black community from moving up and through the system in an equitable manner?

Patrick Case:

So, I'd like to focus on three things. One of them is a suspensions regime that Mary Anne's already alluded to, the question of who gets to lead the education system, and then the other one has to do with well, you know, after the breakdown of the main edifices of colonialism and white supremacy - what happened to all those ideas that sustained that those systems? Where did they go? So, a bit about that.

The first one on suspensions. We know because of research from the United States of America that you start kids off in school from kindergarten in the early grades with suspensions. Those records follow them throughout their entire schooling. In fact, what happens is that the probability of their being suspended in later grades grows exponentially from their being suspended in the early grades in school.

And so, some of you will know that last year, I was involved with a small team of people in a review of the Peel District School Board. And as a result of that review, one of the recommendations that was made and one of the directions that was given to the board was to cease all suspensions between kindergarten and grade three within one year.

Within a few months of that, the ministry then changed the education act to prohibit suspensions from kindergarten to grade three across the province. Frankly I think that that is a massive change, that will really affect the fortunes of Black and other marginalized kids within



education in Ontario. It's the only place in Canada where such a move has been made. And although there are 16 states in the US that have banned suspensions or kind of banned suspensions from kindergarten to grade three. California's been talking about banning suspensions altogether in their high schools.

The second one has to do with who's in charge. So, there are 72 boards of education in Ontario and if you look at who's in charge, among those 72 Directors of Education, five of them are racialized people. That's it. Five of them. If you look further down the ladder, in terms of with the Associate Directors, the pool that would naturally become Directors, there are four Black Associate Directors and four South Asian Associate Directors.

So virtually no pool at all, really. So, that's a big issue, a massive issue in education, because the fact of the matter is that whoever's at the table gets to call the shots. When you had to put together a table to deal with some of the more critical things in education having to do with streaming and de-streaming, the representatives from the unions, the representatives from other parts of the of the sector, are almost always going to be predominantly white folk.

And so, one of the things that I have been doing since I went to the ministry is actually calling the general secretaries of the unions and having conversations with them and saying, "You can't do this anymore. This has to stop." We have to change who's at these tables. It's beginning to have an effect but nevertheless, there's still a long way to go, as far as that's concerned. Recently, the hiring regimes for teachers in Ontario were changed in the past and since 2012 until just about six months ago or so hiring was done almost entirely on a seniority basis.

The system that preceded that was one in which principals of schools had complete discretion over who they would hire from faculties of education. The result of that was that, hey look, I gotta tell you, you know, like I know this because it's in my wife's family, I mean she was a principal of a school. Her dad was a coordinator in the system. Her sister is a teacher. Her sister's daughter is a teacher.

That's the way that it's worked in education for the longest time, right? So, the question is how to break the back of that. So what we've been able to come up with, and we'll see how this works the jury is out big time it hasn't even been implemented yet, but a new policy that is essentially an employment equity policy for school boards across the province. Hopefully within about three or four years from now We'll begin to see some change as far as the hiring is concerned.

The last thing I wanted to mention has to do with what happened to those racist ideas. Well, all those racist ideas that were developed during the time of transatlantic slave trade – the justifications for slavery, the justifications that built themselves into a system of white supremacy had to go somewhere when colonialism was just dismantled.

They didn't disappear. What happened is that they went into our education systems and some of our other civil and social systems. Here's one place where it went. In education from grade 1 to grade 12 school boards have been practicing what is known as and teaching what are known as learning skills and work habits for children. Learning skills are essentially questions responsibility, organization, independence, the work you do collaboration, initiative and self-regulation.

Well, a couple of years ago, a couple of researchers, one from York University, Gillian Parekh and a former researcher from the Toronto Board of Education, looked at the Toronto Board of Education's data to determine whether there were disproportions and race-based disproportions that arose as a result of evaluating those learning skills and work habits. What they found was absolutely incredible.

The paper is available, people can get it from the People for Education website. What they found was absolutely incredible and this was that if you were Black or you're a student with a disability or you're a student from a low socio-economic background, that even though you might have a high mark in math you would almost certainly get a low mark in those learning skills and work habits. What's the difference? Well, the marking of the math is marked on an objective basis.

The marking as far as learning skills and concerns are entirely discretionary. They're up to the classroom teacher to determine. Well, I'm looking at this kid over here do they have self-regulation? And what they were seeing through their eyes was this largely white, female workforce in teaching was negative attributes in Black kids and kids with disabilities and so on.

So now here's the answer to why you're seeing the kind of diversity of the University of Guelph that you should be seeing. Picture this. For the first eight years of your schooling, from grade one to grade eight, you get low marks or lower valuation when it comes to learning skills and work habits. At grade 8 there's a conversation with the guidance teacher about what stream you should go into.

Is it any wonder that what happens now is that Black kids, kids with disabilities, and low socioeconomic background kids are going to end up in applied programs, rather than advanced programs that might send them to university? On top of that I'm going to show you a picture. [holds photo up to camera] This is what they did to my son. A teacher, when my son was in grade seven, painted my son in Black face. I still got the picture, and he knows that I'm showing you people here. I'm showing you with his permission. But those ideas are so strong.

Those negative ideas are so strong in the teaching force and in the people who work in our systems that this is the result sometimes of that. This is the way that Black children are looked at in our systems and this is the hardest thing in the world to defeat. But it can only be done through rigorous accountability within the education system. We've managed to this year stop the evaluation of kids based on those learning skills and work habit criteria. Teachers will teach

them, but they won't evaluate based on that, because that's where the discretion lies, and the negative outcomes lie.

We managed to stop that for this year and what we'll do is work to stop it for future years as well. But you can see how difficult it is within education to actually turn around and enforce a sense of accountability.

### Steffi Hamann:

Thank you Pat. That's horrifying, but I think also something that we need to see. So, I appreciate you sharing it. You already alluded to the complexity of the issues that we're dealing with here, but it isn't just skin colour that it comes down to. And that's, you know, what makes all this even more complicated. And so, maybe a question I'll first throw out to Mary Anne—and Pat feel free to jump in—which is, what role does the intersectionality of race and other factors, like gender, play in this context too?

### Mary Anne Chambers:

So, Steffi, I briefly referred to social determinants of health earlier and I'm actually surprised that there is more talk about this. And it's not just about physical health it's not just about why the COVID-19 impacts have been more severe in certain communities. So, it's not just about physical health. It's also not just about mental health.

It's about the broadest definition of the health of communities, and, you know, public health and social science practitioners know that a person's well-being is influenced by socio-economic factors alluded to that just now. And poverty is usually found at the top of the list of social determinants of health by definition, which also includes such factors as early childhood development, underemployment, unemployment, substandard housing, quality and level of education, race, gender, disability as well and social exclusion which Pat was also alluding to.

And, you know, to the extent that researchers have quantified the impact of social determinants of health as 50 percent of what makes people sick. The remaining 50 percent is comprised of access to quality health care, genetics and biology, the environments, the support of the air we breathe. The social determinants of health impact not only how the world around us sees us, but also how we process that world and where we dare to believe we belong in that world.

In the simplest of terms, we often hear that young people need to be able to see what is possible for them. When young Black girls and boys have Black role models, they're more likely to recognize that this is possible for them. And I think this is one of the areas in which we can look to universities and colleges to help us navigate this complexity.

And, you know, I see in the participants here Oriana Vaccarino I want to give the Vaccarino, Oriana's father, who was principal at the University of Toronto Scarborough and helped me to

get in place a program of academic mentorship that had been created by the Black students association at the University of Toronto.

And what the students needed was basically the university's support to make it happen. And they struggled to receive that, until principal Vaccarino arrived on the scene. And it's the same principal Vaccarino who became president later on. So, the whole concept behind that academic mentorship program was to focus on mentoring Black middle and high school students. And the mentors are Black University of Toronto Scarborough students.

Not much older than they were, some of them living in the same neighborhoods, having attended the same middle schools or high schools. But playing this really, really important role modelling for the younger students to understand what was possible for them and how to access what supports they require in order to achieve success in life. So, I think some of these solutions are relatively simple when you think them through.

But one of the things that I heard from what Pat has shared with us is that there are some very real systemic barriers that makes this all very difficult to accomplish. The other thing I would have to add is that when we talk about systems, I like the way, Steffi, that you have approached your questioning in terms of what's the personal experience.

And the reason why I say I like that is because sometimes when we simply talk about systems or institutions we almost de-personalize what we're referring to when in fact, as Pat has alluded to, these systems are orchestrated and then enforced by individuals. So, when we look at movements like the Black Lives Matter movement, which you know some people have supported and others have not, you know, these movements have been serving to increase awareness. And whether or not you like the methods, they have been proving to be of value.

Let me remind you, Reverend Martin Luther King was considered a radical in his time. He lost his life for what he believed in and so, I think what one of the things that we do need to recognize is that there are dominant cultures and dominant aspects of societies, of institutions, of systems, of laws, whatever, that are challenging to reduce or to disrupt and I think that the time has come, I think, for us to emphasize the importance of a change in attitudes. So that people start to care.

The way you personalize these questions Steffi, and the personal experiences Pat has shared, in my view says, I need you to live your life in such a way that allows others to live theirs. And so, when someone says I'm colour-blind and I say what are you 100 years old or something? That just doesn't cut it anymore! You have to tell me that you oppose racism. Don't just tell me that you're not racist. You have to tell me you know this is wrong. If you need me, no, want me to have any confidence in yourself.

But I remain hopeful, and I think that having this kind of discussion in a university setting is helpful and will hopefully encourage people to just think about how they behave towards others. Think of how they can show that they care. And we have to start by listening to each

other. By having these difficult conversations. By learning what it's like to walk in the other person's shoes. And then, you know, I say I challenge you to explain to me why some of those stories that Pat shared should be accepted, because the answer in my mind is that they are not to be.

### Steffi Hamann:

Thank you, Mary Anne, and thank you for already sort of bringing it to the talk about, you know, what is it that needs to change. Where do we need to start? You briefly mentioned the BLM movement and the protests, and that was something that was very visible. If possible, I'd like to use the last seven minutes of our conversation to also think about the responsibilities of those outside the BIPOC community. Since the BLM protests, we've seen the emergence of explicit solidarity statements and working groups that have the goal to address these issues of structural racism. One thing I explicitly don't want to do is to ask you to do the work for us here.

But I still would like to ask you to consider the roles of those working groups. And authors like Ibram Kendi, the author of "Stamped" and "How to Be an Anti-Racist" say the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it and then dismantle it. And so, one thing that we've done at GIDS is we're starting with a fact-finding mission.

We're serving community members and alumni about their personal experiences and reviewing curriculum content to see to what degree it includes non-white voices in the first place, in order to use that knowledge and dismantle the inequalities that are here and that are real and that we can see in this. And so, my question to you and to Pat and I'll give Pat the stage now, what are your opinions of these kinds of initiatives? Is this a move in the right direction finally? What are your thoughts?

### Patrick Case:

Well, let me just start off saying this. About 20 years ago or so, I stopped doing workshops. And I just and I try my damndest not to even go to workshops because I just figured that you know, if the answer lay there, we wouldn't be having this conversation. The workshopping has been going on now and the sort of like the low level [Patrick makes air quotes with his fingers] "001" awareness raising has been going on for 40 or 50 years with very little change indeed.

And so, I think that there are a couple of, for me anyway, there are a couple of areas in which change can be brought about convincingly and encompass the efforts of larger groups of people, right. Because Black and Indigenous communities, and communities of people of colour can't do it for ourselves. We have to do it as a society.

And so, one of the first of those has to do with accountability. Particularly within our publicly funded systems. Within the public sector and the broader public sector. It's there I'm looking for people, for institutions, to lead the way. There has to be a sense of accountability of what it means to be accountable for change and to make the way planar for everybody right. That means sharing power and that's not an easy thing.

It's not an easy ask. You know, for the longest time people were saying well you know in order to get everybody in the same room and get everybody on board this is not a zero-sum game. [Chuckles] I'm not so sure that that's the case, right. Like if there's a board for example with 12 white people on it, in order to make room for BIPOC people there are not going to be 12 white people on the board anymore. That's what change looks like, it seems to me is that there's accountability for real change and people in who's at the front end of organizations who permeates the whole organization.

The other thing has to do with empathy, and I'll give you an example of a situation where empathy was absent. And for the life of me, I just can't understand it. There's a board of education in Ontario where a young person is just seven years old had his arm broken in two places by another child of a similar age they met outside of school and there were four kids in all, two and two.

The one kid called the Black kid a n\*\*\*\*\* and repeatedly called him a n\*\*\*\*\* and broke his arm in two places. In the result, the school decided that the parents of the Black child wanted to meet the school principal the senior administration at the school decided that that was a bad idea for the parents to meet the school principal to talk through what had happened and what some of the consequences might be.

And I got on the phone with one of the senior people at the board and she said, "Well the advice that we were given is that the parents shouldn't be allowed to meet the principal." I said, "Well why not?" "Well, because you never know what's going to happen there. I mean, there could be accusations flying and there could be allegations and so on and so forth." But this comes down to me to a sense of put yourself in the shoes of those parents.

Put yourself in the shoes of that family. What is it that you would want? An inability in some respects for people to do that. So what do we have to do to get people to the point where they are able to put themselves in the shoes of that family and determine what is it that they would want in terms of connection with the school?

And what is it that they would want in terms of healing? How would you resolve the situation so that everybody understood what their roles were, what their responsibilities were, right? So those two things, I think. And they're interconnected because in order to bring about a sense of, bringing about that kind of empathy you have to have accountability. You have to have accountable systems that understand those things. So, I think those two those two matters in particular.

But you asked the question before that I really am not happy I didn't get to answer which, is the question about intersectionality.

[Steffi Hamann interrupts]

Please go ahead.

[Patrick Case continues]

Because I think that it's really important. One of the surveys that the Toronto District School Board did of its students revealed that there are a thousand trans kids within the board in the schools. And a survey of those young people and their well-being in the sense of their sense of belonging to the institutions that they go to, would tear your heart out, just rip you up. In the sense of who they think they are. And if they're Black or otherwise racialized, the sense of not belonging, the sense of rejection, was magnified. It would just tear your heart out to read what those young people had to say.

The other way that intersectionality affects the system has to do with special education programs. In 1989, no, no, no, no, sorry 1979-ish, when Ontario adopted the special education regimes that we now work under. The Charter had not been repatriated. The constitution had been repatriated. The Charter hadn't been proclaimed in force.

The equality rights provisions had another five years or so to go before they'd be proclaimed in force, and so there was no law preventing discrimination on the basis of disability at that time. We were still warehousing people with disabilities left and right. The special legislation came in that environment, and so it never did develop a lens focused on disability so much as it did with, I think fairly wealthy parents wanting additional staff for their kids who were pretty bright.

But in that movement got packed in also all the problem kids that schools were dealing with. These problem kids would later, under our repatriated constitution and Charter, and under the human rights legislation that was amended in 1982, might be thought of these students with disabilities. Who are they? A lot of them Black and other racialized kids.

So now we've got a movement within schools where people are talking about equity and talking about human rights in relation to Black and other racialized kids. But not about disability. The mind frame is still about special education and a medicalized approach to dealing with children with disabilities. And so, that has created a lacuna within which the kids who are identified as being racialized and Black and also having disabilities, fall into. So that's a major problem and one that we're working in my office with other people to correct within the system.

Steffi Hamann:

Thank you, Patrick, I'm glad.

[Patrick Case interrupts]

I hope it helps.

Steffi Hamann:

No, I'm glad you did add that because I did in a way cut you off. We know that there's so much more we need to talk about,

[Patrick Case interrupts and laughs]

Lots more!

[Steffi Hamann continues]

And we know that we're only scratching the surface here. Both of you do so much to bring these complex issues to light. Mary Anne, for example, you're a member of this working group I mentioned, we know that this conversation continues elsewhere. But I promise that we'd keep today to an hour for all of our sakes. So, what I want to do is thank you both so much for sharing these thoughts today.

I know that it's a lot to ask of both of you. We've talked about this earlier, this is a draining activity. You never really asked to be an activist but in a way you've been put into this position again and again, so this is not something that's new, this is a fight you know for equity that has pretty much gone on your entire lives. So, I think our community still has so much to learn and, you've been fantastic in teaching us about it, and you have an extremely high level of professional expertise, and you shared your own personal perspective which really helps us understand these things. So, let me thank you officially and officially call this meeting to an end, which means I will stop the recording at this point.