THE CENTRE FOR INTEGRATIVE ANTI-RACISM STUDIES
STATEMENT ON THE UN RESOLUTION 80/250

The Centre for Integrative Anti-Racism Studies (CIARS) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto is dedicated to advancing research, education, and public engagement on racial justice. By pursuing decolonization to eradicate the enduring legacies of enslavement and ensuing colonialism, and anti-Black racism, CIARS works to support transformative change within institutions and society.

As such, we are writing regarding the recent United Nations Declaration recognizing the Transatlantic Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and Chattel Enslavement as the Gravest Crime Against Humanity, which was endorsed on March 25, 2026, and the reparatory justice for people of African descent it calls for.

This historic Declaration represents the culmination of generations of struggle led by people of African descent globally. It affirms what Black communities have long known: that the enslavement of African peoples was not merely a historical injustice, but a grave foundational crime against humanity whose impacts continue to shape educational, social, economic, political, and realities today.

The Declaration carries profound significance. It recognizes the enduring harms of enslavement which the diverse Black communities continue to endure. It establishes an international framework for reparatory justice and associated truth, accountability, meaningful education, and awareness-raising, and invites nations and institutions to move beyond symbolic acknowledgement toward substantive action that addresses the ongoing legacies of anti-Black racism and racial inequity.

For Canada, this moment presents an opportunity for honest reflection on how the nation and its institutions have been shaped by histories of enslavement, colonialism, and white supremacy. These histories are not distant; they continue to shape disparities in education, employment, housing, health, and child welfare. As Black scholars have shown, dominant national narratives have often obscured these realities. Meaningful recognition, therefore, requires more than acknowledgement—it necessitates confronting questions of power, belonging, representation, and whose knowledge and humanity are valued.

As one of Canada's leading universities, the University of Toronto is uniquely positioned to demonstrate what meaningful institutional engagement with this Declaration should look like. We believe this requires not only formally acknowledging the Declaration recognizing that the Transatlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans and chattel enslavement as crimes against humanity but actively integrating its principles into the institutional culture including university policy, curriculum, research priorities, teaching practices, governance, community partnerships, and recruitment, hire and retention of Blacks into strategic planning. Such integration must move beyond marginal inclusion toward fostering a sense of belonging grounded in full and legitimate presence and inclusion of Black students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners within institutional spaces.

We appreciate the initiatives the University has undertaken in recent years to address anti-Black racism, including the Anti-Black Racism Task Force and its 2021 report outlining 65 recommendations. We also acknowledge the University's commitment to the Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Canadian Higher Education. While these efforts have identified pathways forward, in light of the UN Declaration the critical questions now are how these commitments are being implemented, assessed, and sustained, and how the University is evaluating and communicating progress on the implementation of the Anti-Black Racism Task Force recommendations and its commitments under the Scarborough Charter.

We trust that the University will ensure that recognition of this declaration extends beyond symbolic acknowledgement and will take concrete measures to reshape institutional practices and narratives that have historically reproduced exclusion and inequity and advance epistemic justice, elevate Black knowledge systems, strengthen representation, and foster belonging for people of African descent.

We would like to establish ongoing engagement/consultation with the University regarding the University's commitment to pursuing meaningful actions/policies and contribution to reparatory justice, accountability, inclusion and collaboration regarding people of African descent.

In Solidarity,

The Centre for Integrative Anti-Racism Studies (CIARS)
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