

# RACE RELATIONS AWARD WINNER CHAMPIONS EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

BY NEIL ARMSTRONG

THE EXECUTIVE director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Debbie Douglas, says employment equity should be brought back to Ontario.

Employment equity legislation was passed in December 1993 by the provincial government led by New Democratic Party Premier Bob Rae to address issues of racism and inequality in the workplace.

However, the law was repealed two years later by the majority-winning Ontario Progressive Conservative Party led by Mike Harris.

Douglas, an active feminist and anti-racism activist, is one of the winners of this year's Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR) race relations award presented in Toronto on September 18. The other recipient is Lloyd McKell, educator, activist and community leader.

Acknowledging Jean Augustine, Ontario Fairness Commissioner for the trail that the former Member of Parliament has set for black and other women in Canada, Douglas said there is much more work to be done to change the many systems that oppress and marginalise people in society.

"It is great to be recognised for the work and what I hope is a modest contribution that I make towards progressive change here in Toronto and Ontario and across Canada," she said, noting that, "the kind of work that we do is only successful when we work collectively."

## CONTINUE TO WIDEN

Alluding to the Sheila Block and Grace-Edward Galabuzzi report, "Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market," put out by the Wellesley Institute, she said it is a reminder that inequality continues to grow and that the income of radicalised women/women of colour continues to be outstripped by the income of non-radicalised men/white men.

She said the gap continues to widen and particularly for radicalised immigrant

women who experience unacceptable levels of underemployment and unemployment.

"This must change, we must bring employment equity back to Ontario," said Douglas who leads a sector of more than 230 agencies concerned with immigrant and refugee integration and social and economic inclusion.

"We are witness to our federal government rightfully condemning homophobic and heterosexist laws and practices in developing countries and other countries around the world yet we watch the very same government put unnecessary barriers in place for those same people who are impacted by the laws that we condemn when they come there seeking asylum - that has to change."

She said the federal government has rolled back many years of accomplishments regarding a progressive immigration, citizenship and refugee policy.

"We've watched change made to our Citizenship Act and while there was a huge outcry from those of us in the activist community, the rest of Canada has remained so silent that the government has been able to make it more difficult to obtain citizenship while making it a hell of a lot easier to revoke that very same citizenship."

## CHILDREN AFFECTED

The co-chair of the City of Toronto's Newcomer Leadership Table said the federal government is flirting with the idea of removing the automatic right of citizenship for children who are born in Canada.

"We know whose children will be affected. We've got to pay attention because we cannot afford to allow that to happen."

She said the government, in continuing to demonise refugees, especially asylum seekers, is now pushing through a private member's bill in Ottawa, Bill C-585, which will allow provinces to put in place residency requirements for social assistance.

"That is a way to keep those who are seeking asylum here in Canada, refugee claimants, not able to support and help themselves while they wait for their cases to

be determined. We cannot allow that to happen and we certainly cannot allow that to happen here in Ontario. There's a role here for Premier Wynne to be saying no the way she said explicitly and loudly, and we are

very proud to hear, she said no to removing automatic rights and citizenship to children born in Ontario," said Douglas.

"There is really is much work to be done and that is why organisations like the

UARR, OCASI and coalitions, like Colour of Poverty-Colour of Change, need to be supported in the work that they undertake because the work that we do will lead to lasting systemic change, she said.

McKell has devoted a lifetime to advancing equity and

inclusion for radicalised youth and families.

He was the executive officer for Student and Community Equity at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) for over thirty-five years.

In 2007, he led the process for establishing Canada's first Africentric school and helped establish the Race Relations Advisory Committee of the TDSB.

As co-chair of the Mandela Legacy Committee, he was recently successful in getting the Toronto city council to approve renaming University Avenue as Nelson Mandela Boulevard.

"The idea being floated is that it is important for us to have a collective citizen engagement event that visibly demonstrates our collective celebration of the progress that we have made in human rights and in equity and inclusiveness," he told those gathered at the Dim Sum restaurant for the 39th anniversary and awards dinner of the UARR.

## FREEDOM WALK

He is proposing that once a year, beginning with the 25th anniversary of Nelson Mandela's first visit to Canada next year, that there be a freedom walk on Nelson Mandela Boulevard from Front Street to Queen's Park.

This is something that he hopes will catch on across the country. The former South African president and anti-apartheid icon first came to Canada on June 19, 1990.

Barbara Hall, chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), the keynote speaker, is counting down the weeks to her retirement after ten years at the helm of the first human rights commission established in Canada.

She does so being quite proud of the change in the role of the OHRC, from dealing with individual complaints to developing a mandate of addressing systemic issues.

These include issues such as racial profiling, discrimination based on mental health and mental illness, the demand by employers for "Canadian Experience" from newcomers to the province, and a policy on trans people.

Journalists, Jim Rankin of the *Toronto Star* and Enzo DiMatteo of NOW magazine were the recipients of the UARR Ashok Chandwani media award.

"As a small non-profit charitable organisation, the UARR has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing emerging issues related to race, opportunity, equity and inclusion (and their intersections) in furthering a democratic and pluralistic society that accelerates prosperity for the full diversity of Toronto," said Gary Pieters, president of the UARR.



Photo by Eddie Grant  
Winners of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations 2014 race relations award, Lloyd McKell, co-chair of the Mandela Legacy Committee and Debbie Douglas, executive director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)



Contributed  
Bunji Garlin

## Bunji Garlin continues successful US tour

SOCA STAR Bunji Garlin continues to break through nationally. Following his BET 106 & Carnival takeover performance with Fay-Ann Lyons and ASAP Ferg and his recent FADER article, this week he lands homepage features with *Rolling Stone* and MTV Iggy as well as a glowing album review in Sunday, September 14 in the *New York Times*.

The Trinidad native's brand new album *Differentology* (RCA/VP) "assuredly moves soca into the now era" according to NY Times. MTV Iggy (who named the title track Song of Year in 2013) declares Garlin "will change soca forever" in their latest interview, while *Rolling Stone* calls him the "hardest working man in soca," after spending the week with him during NYC's West Indian Carnival festivities.

His work ethic is certainly paying off and without a moment's rest, Garlin will continue his ceaseless tour schedule throughout the year. Next month, he will take over Miami Carnival during Columbus Day weekend. After performing select dates on Mad Decent's Block Party tour this summer, he also teams up with the crew again in November. This time, he will hit the decks on Mad Decent's Boat Ride, a 4-night musical voyage from Miami to The Bahamas with Norwegian Cruise Lines.

## ADVERTORIAL

# READY FOR THE ROAD

Miami Broward One Carnival 2014 now at a new venue, Miami Fairgrounds and Expo Center

MIAMI, Florida: The long colourful history of Miami Carnival, now Miami Broward One Carnival has included a somewhat nomadic experience, due to the fickle nature and challenges involved in securing appropriate venues. As a result Miami Broward One Carnival is on the move for 2014, leaving the Sunlight (Miami Dolphin) Stadium behind, heading for their new digs at the Miami Dade Fairgrounds in South West Miami.

One thing that never changes for Miami Broward One Carnival is the palpable excitement, colour and spectacle that come with the event, the climax of carnival week when thousands of revellers and mas players descend on the South Florida Tri-County for seven days of parties and fete.

In spite of the detailed planning it takes to stage the carnival, the Miami Broward One Carnival committee which plans the event also plans a number of supporting activities leading up to the big day on Sunday October 12. They include the launch of Jouvvert on Friday September 5, Junior Carnival on October 5, Panorama on Friday October 10 and Jouvvert Morning Saturday October 11, all at the Central Broward Regional Park in Lauderhill.

Over the years entertainment for carnival has been absolutely fantastic with the colourful costume parade, involving thousands of people marching in the mas bands behind the "Big Trucks", and performances by top entertainers from around the Islands. Last year the big headliner was Soca Monarch for 2013 Super blue, supported by Red Hot Flames and Raymond Ramnarine and others. In 2012, leading the pack was Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, Patrice Roberts and Farmer Nappy. Back in 2011 it was soca Empress and Queen Allison Hinds at the helm a long with,

Talpre, and Roy Cape Kaiso all Stars.

This year on its 30 year anniversary the entertainment for the Miami Broward One Carnival is nothing less than spectacular. Leading the charge on stage on October twelve will be The Burning Flames, Pumpa, Patrice Roberts, Farmer Nappy, Kirwin Dubois, Iwer, Ricardo Drue, Skinny Banton, Breasman, and Dil - E - Nadan along with Scrouge and Stage Muzik.

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Revellers show their moves at Miami Broward One Carnival

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