

46th session of the Human Rights Council
Debate on the midterm review of the International Decade for People of African Descent
Statement: Action Canada for Population and Development

Thank you, Madam President. Action Canada makes this statement on behalf of the Sexual Rights Initiative and in collaboration with Action Canada's National Youth Advisory Board.

As young people, we are invested in the struggle to build a better world than the one left to us. Key to that collective struggle for justice and freedom is the dismantling of white supremacy and anti-racist solidarity. The global [#BlackLivesMatter movement shows how young people play a large role in advocating for racial equality](#).

The social and economic fallout of COVID-19 has deeply affected young people throughout the world: [unemployment is skyrocketing in the age groups of 16 to 24](#), schooling is disrupted, many of us are stuck in unsafe family or living situations during lockdowns, and online socializing is taking a toll on mental health. In short, [young people are suffering](#). Just as the fallout from COVID-19 impacts adults differently depending on their socio-economic status, race, gender identity, education level, sexual orientation, to name only a few, so too do the ways that COVID-19 has impacted the health and wellbeing of youth. The health disparities and deeply entrenched systemic racism that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed across the world impacts young people in ways that intersect with age. For instance, social location impacts young people's ability to navigate privacy in crowded family homes, to access health care during a pandemic, explore sexual and gender identity when living in lockdown with caregivers, and finding culturally relevant social, emotional and community supports online and in the community. Racism and in particular anti-Black racism, also heighten the risk of being policed, being removed from our family, of violence from the state, of growing up in poverty, of being subjected to what has been dubbed a school-to-prison pipeline, of facing daily microaggressions and to being subjected to racism in healthcare settings. In response, young people have been propelling large scale demands for change and coming together in solidarity against anti-Black racism.

US-based youth advocate Carmen Martinez stated: "The more we increase the active participation and partnership with young people, the better we serve them. ... And the more comprehensively we work with them as service partners, the more we increase our public value



to the entire community.” Young people have been asking adults to do better. We have been asking adults to listen to us. When young people have not had our voices elevated by adult officials, we find other ways to make our voices heard. It is through our significant involvement and presence on social media that young people have been pushing back against white supremacy and leading the struggle for change.

Globally, young people bring different experiences to the struggle for racial justice. For those of us who are not of African descent, we need to listen to youth who are. This is the first step in building movements based on solidarity and trust. We must unpack and dismantle the racist ideas we have been taught. We must recognize that caring about each other across differences is the way forward. Care across differences includes considering the ways oppression and privilege intersect to affect our access to resources and working in solidarity to ensure everyone sees their human rights realized. We, as young people, express our commitment to racial equality for people of African Descent and are here to fight against anti-Black racism and all other forms of injustice and discrimination that people of African Descent face on a daily basis, across the world.