



Celebrating Black History Month

Black History Month is celebrated in Canada to recognize the contributions of Black people and people of African heritage to the growth and development of this country and their importance to its history.

The contributions of Black people and people of African heritage are still far from being integrated into the mainstream of Canadian history. In particular, the contributions of Black activists to the labour movement are not widely known. This aspect of our history is important to recognize because the labour movement was and continues to be instrumental in fighting for human rights and equality for workers and all Canadians. The simple truth is that our struggles for human rights and equity would not have been completely effective without the hard and persistent struggles of Black workers.

All accounts of Canadian labour history must include the collective and individual contributions of Black workers and labour activists. Examples of these include the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a Black-led trade union in Canada that fought to end discrimination in railway employment.

We can learn a lot by recognizing the accomplishments of pioneering Black labour activists such as Stanley G. Grizzle, who was a leader in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In 1961,

he became the first Black labour relations officer in a provincial labour relations board. Another tremendous role model is Fred Upshaw, who in 1990, became the first Black person to head a major Canadian union, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

At PSAC, we take particular pride in remembering James (Calbert) Best, one of the first racialized leaders of a federal public sector staff organization. His career in the federal public sector began in the Department of Labour in 1949, where he co-founded the Civil Service Association of Canada, one of the

organizations that merged in 1966 to form the PSAC. In 1999, he served as a member of the Treasury Board President's Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service.

PSAC would like to take this opportunity to recognize the important sacrifices and contributions of the people of African descent to the nation-building and the defence of Canada since the early 1600s. During Black History Month, we re-affirm our commitment to combating racism in workplaces and in our communities.

Activist Profile: Aileen Duncan

Our movement has many accomplished activists within its ranks. Aileen Duncan stands out thanks to her tenacity, commitment and broad involvement in the community.

Aileen's activism within PSAC began soon after she started working for the Department of National Revenue in 1972. She understood early on that it was not good enough to fight against something but that we must fight for something.

(Continued on page 2)



Joan-Ann Gravesande (right) from the Toronto Regional Office presents Aileen Duncan with an award for her union and community activism.

Aileen Duncan: *Union activist and community organizer*



(Continued from page 1)

Aileen translated her vision of building our union “from the bottom up” into a concrete reality.

Aileen was a founding member of the first PSAC Members with Disabilities Action Committee in Toronto and Hamilton. She participated in the work of the Toronto Political Action Committee and was active in the Visible Minority and Aboriginal Members Committee.

the new Ontario Council in 1999 until her retirement in 2008.

In addition to her activism within PSAC, Aileen was active in the broader labour movement and played instrumental roles at the Ontario Federation of Labour, building strong bridges of solidarity between unions and community organizations. Since her retirement from the paid workforce, she has become more active with her congregation at the Stewart Memorial Church.

Aileen’s many awards and recognitions include the Appreciation Award for her long years of service, dedication and hard work from the PSAC Ontario Region (May 2008); the 2009 Coalition of Black Trade Unionists Humanitarian Award; and the John C. Holland Award for Community Service (February 2010).

Throughout her years of activism, Aileen touched and inspired a countless number of people with her humanity, her commitment to our movement and her dedication to the ideals

that we stand for. She is truly a living inspiration to our young activists and continues to motivate her sisters and brothers in the PSAC, the labour movement and the broader community to do better.



Gerry Halabecki, REVP for the Ontario Region, honoured Aileen Duncan at the 2008 regional convention.

She also contributed to regional women’s committees in Toronto and Hamilton. Aileen participated in the founding convention of PSAC’s Ontario Region and was elected as a representative for members with disabilities on

Fighting for the right to retire with dignity

PSAC launches pension campaign

Corporate think-tanks, such as the C.D. Howe Institute and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business are pressuring the Harper government to attack our pensions in order to cut the deficit. These are the same groups that champion the business interests that benefited from tax cuts and government bailouts.

They are now using the deficit as justification to gut public services and expenditures – and their first target is our pensions. They are doing this to divert attention away from the real pension issue: the need for public-pension reform that will provide retirement security for all.

As workers who provide quality public services, we cannot allow them to divide working people and push everyone's welfare down to the lowest common denominator. We must fight against any attack on public services and defined-benefit pension plans. We must bring the focus back to the real issue: Retirement security for everyone!

What you can do:

- Sign the PSAC petition to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, which calls for protecting our pension plans and retirement security for everyone.
- Promote our on-line petition at www.pfac-afpc.com.
- Discuss these issues with your co-workers, friends and families and ask them to sign our petition.
- Organize forums or town-hall meetings to discuss these issues and collect signatures for our petition.
- Wear the “Hands Off Our Pensions!” stickers in your workplace, and encourage your co-workers to do the same. This will send a message to the employer that we are ready to fight off any attacks against our pensions.

- Take part in mobilizations to resist attacks against our pensions and to call for retirement income security for all.

The poster features a central photograph of an elderly woman with short, grey hair, wearing a patterned top. The text is arranged around her in both English and French. At the top, it reads 'I deserve to retire with dignity.' and 'La dignité à la retraite,'. To the left of the photo, it says 'So does everyone!' and to the right, 'nous y avons tous droit!'. Below the photo, there are two columns of bullet points in English and French, detailing campaign goals such as 'Protect federal public service pension plans' and 'Protégeons les régimes de pension de la fonction publique'. At the bottom, there are logos for PSAC and AFPC, and the text 'A message from the Public Service Alliance of Canada' and 'Un message de l'Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada'.

- Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece to your local newspaper dispelling myths about our pensions and calling for retirement income security for all.
- Visit the PSAC website regularly at www.pfac-afpc.com to get more information and updates on this campaign.
- Also visit the Canadian Labour Congress website at www.clc-ctc.ca to get more information on the campaign for “Retirement Security for Everyone.”

