



“I love my human rights” series: Anthony Brown’s story

Classroom conversation guide

Introduction

This guide has been prepared to assist classrooms from grades 4 to 9 to explore themes in BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner’s “I love my human rights” video series. In Anthony Brown’s film, he shares the importance of valuing and showcasing Black peoples contributions to British Columbia. Use the questions provided to explore the film’s themes in the classroom. These questions touch on subjects that may bring up difficult emotions for students who have had similar experiences. You may wish to use some of the questions as journal prompts, so that students can reflect on them individually before discussing them.

To consider in planning the activity

Conversation questions that may be triggering for students who have experienced racism or other forms of discrimination or bullying are indicated below. While preparing for this activity, take some time to identify which of these questions should be omitted from the conversation or modified to avoid putting students at risk. Check in with students who may have experienced racism before the activity to let them know about the content and see how they feel about participating in the activity. Follow up with them after the activity and offer to connect them with the school counselor or other school or community-based supports if needed. Information about RiseUp and the Kids Help Phone is provided in the Community Resource section.

Getting started

Take steps to ensure that students feel safe and comfortable to express themselves:

1. Tell students that as humans we like to hear about other peoples stories. We often make connections with these stories, which may cause us to experience similar feelings to the person in the story, especially if their experience reminds us of something that has happened to us. If this happens, you can step away temporarily or do what you need to do to take care of yourself. Tell the group that everyone has a responsibility to create a space that is as safe as possible, especially for those students who may have similar experiences as those shared in the video. They will consider ways to do this through a community agreement.
2. Highlight that creating a safe space does not mean that the space will be comfortable for everyone. Some students may feel uncomfortable when they think about Anthony and other peoples experiences with racism. Some examples of discomfort may be feeling embarrassed or ashamed for having been unaware of these experiences. It is okay and often helpful to feel uncomfortable in this way because it can help us to reflect on actions that we can take to make things better.

3. The purpose of this discussion is to listen to and learn from one another. Ask participants to help develop a community agreement to create a space where people show mutual respect and listen attentively to what others share. Examples may include listening actively, being present, sharing only your own story, opening your mind to learning new ideas, showing gratitude when people share their experience, and knowing you have the right not to share your story. Once the community agreement is developed, the group can come up with ways to ensure that the guidelines are followed and respected.
4. Identify ways for everyone to participate and to be heard. For example, consider taking turns speaking around a circle or pausing from time to time to invite those who have not yet spoken to have the opportunity to contribute.
5. Take breaks. Go outside or stop for a movement break. Pause for snacks. Consider carrying out the conversation over several days.

Concepts covered

Anthony refers to slavery and the Ku Klux Klan in the video. If students are not familiar with these topics, allocate sufficient time to explain them. While focusing on Black history, the video also discusses racism against Black people. If the video and discussion guide are used as an introduction to racism, take the time to consider it further in subsequent lessons. Resources on these topics are listed at the end of this conversation guide.

Pre-viewing activity

Take two minutes to brainstorm a list of important people in history. Give an example that you know students are familiar with to get them started.

Open the conversation

Choose three questions that will work with your students. Begin with one of the first two questions to ease students into the conversation in an emotionally safe manner.

- Anthony talks about how his ancestors came to Canada. Did anyone tell you how your ancestors came to Canada?
- What did you think while watching the video?
- What feelings did you have while watching the video?
- Did you find anything surprising in Anthony's story?
- Anthony learned “absolutely nothing about Black history in school.” What have you learned so far in school about Black history?
- Anthony talks about moving from East Vancouver to Texada Island and how different the two communities were culturally. Have you or someone you cared about moved from one community to a new one that was very different in some way? What do you remember most about that transition in terms of how you were treated and how you felt?
- Anthony's pictures of his grandparents show that they have lived in different areas in Canada for seven generations. Were you surprised to learn this? Why?
- Human rights are the basic rights that every person has from the day they are born. Human rights help us to be treated equally and respectfully. They also protect us from discrimination. Discrimination means treating people badly or unfairly because they are different from others. Anthony never uses the words “human rights” in the video. Why and how is this still a story about human rights?



Deepen the conversation

- Look at the list that you brainstormed before watching the video. Were any Black people included? If not, why might this be?
- Anthony mentions that it is important for people to know about the contributions Black people have made to the province. Why do you think he said that?
- Anthony has traced the roots of his parents and ancestors. What do you know about your parents, grandparents or great grandparents and important journeys they made? Did any of them immigrate to Canada? If so, why? Is there anything you wished you knew more about their story?
- Anthony's ancestors came to Canada to flee slavery and racism in the United States. What do you know about slavery in North America? Where did slaves come from and why did they come? How is this different from the reasons that people came to North America from other regions of the world?
- Many people use the term "settler" to recognize that when they or their ancestors came to the land we now call Canada, Indigenous people already lived here. How do you benefit from living on these lands? How have Indigenous people been impacted by settlers living here? What can all settlers do about this?
- Anthony tells us his ancestors showed intelligence and strength in coming to Canada. Think about movies or television shows you have watched that feature Black people. Do they show Black people as strong or weak? As heroes or victims? What message does this send about Black people? Did you know that that you can start believing these messages simply by watching movies or television? Why is this a problem?
- Trigger warning: Anthony's ancestors came to Canada because of systems of slavery and racism in the United States, but both Anthony and his ancestors experienced racism here as well. What do you know about racism against Black people in Canada?
- Trigger warning: Anthony talks about comments that people make that bother him, such as a joke someone told him about having a nice tan because it was hot. This is an example of a microaggression. "Micro" (like in microscope) means little and "aggression" is a kind of harm. Microaggressions are little comments or actions that people often make without trying to be unkind. Microaggressions are hurtful because they send the message, "I notice you because you aren't like me. You don't fit in." Lots of small things can add up over time. Imagine someone joking or talking about you in a way that makes you feel that you are different from other people and don't belong. How would it make you feel?
- Trigger warning: Anthony mentions that "when you're told that you're Black and you're not going to amount to anything, you actually start believing that." What do you think he means by that? How would you feel if someone made you feel this way?
- Anti-Black racism hurts Black people, but it also hurts the people who are being racist as well as the people who watch them and don't do anything. How?
- Anthony says he wants to "write stories that tell the truth." Hearing the truth can make people feel uncomfortable. For example, you may feel guilty, embarrassed or ashamed when you learn how Black people were and are treated in Canada. Sometimes when we feel guilty or embarrassed, we try to defend ourselves, make the problem seem smaller, or avoid thinking or talking about the things that make us uncomfortable. Why is this a problem? What can we do to accept that we have these feelings and put them aside when we learn, think, and talk about difficult topics?
- Trigger warning: At the end of the video, Anthony tells us, "As I've gotten older, I've gotten to know who I am, and I actually love who I am." What can you do to help others around you know and love who they are?



Bring the conversation to a close

- Write “Human Rights” in the middle of the board. Remind students of the definition of human rights from the opening activity. Then tell the students, “Anthony tells us that ‘if everybody can just do their little bit, racist attitudes will change. What is your little bit? How does it connect with human rights?’” Ask students to write their “little bit” on the mind map.
- Anthony’s hope for the future is that racist attitudes will change. What is your hope for the future?

Community resources

To learn more about Black history in B.C. and Canada (Grades 6-9):

- [British Columbia Black History Awareness Society](#)
- [Secret Victoria: Rush for freedom: film by Anthony Brown](#)
- [Canadian Museum for Human Rights: Black history teaching resources](#)
- [Black communities in Canada channel: National Film Board](#)
- [Black history in Canada Education Guide](#)
- [Teaching African Canadian History: Websites](#)
- [Canada’s slavery secret: The Whitewashing of 200 years of enslavement](#)

Initiatives to address anti-Black racism:

- [Anti-oppression educators collective](#)
- [A brief history of Black Lives Matter movement: CBC Kids News](#)
- [Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network](#)
- [From Reflection to action: Addressing anti-Black racism in schools](#)

Anti-racism teaching resources:

- [Racism in Canada: Elementary Lesson plans: BC Teachers’ Federation](#)
- [Experiences Canada: Antiracism resources: Grades 6 - 9](#)
- [Talking about racism in the classroom](#)
- [Challenging Racist “British Columbia”: 150 years and counting \(Grades 6-9\)](#)
- [Learning for Justice: Race and ethnicity](#)

Additional supports:

- [RiseUp](#): Support for Black youth
- [Kids Help Phone](#)

