

“I love my human rights” series:

Anthony Brown’s story

Conversation guide

Introduction

This guide has been prepared to assist businesses, organizations, and Grade 10-12 classrooms explore themes in the “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 a group setting.

Getting started

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

1. Watching the video may raise some difficult or unexpected emotions, especially for people who share similar experiences. Ensure people know they can step away temporarily or do what they need to do to take care of their well-being. Tell the group that everyone has a responsibility to create a space that is as safe as possible for those who have experienced racism or discrimination.
2. Highlight that creating a safe space does not mean that the space will be comfortable for everyone. Discussing this video may lead to some discomfort if participants are considering, for the first time, the devaluing of Black history and Canada’s role in anti-Black racism. Tell participants that it is okay to feel this discomfort because it can help us reflect on attitudes and actions and contribute to positive change.
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, respecting confidentiality, and centring the voices of those with lived experience. Once the community agreement is developed, the group can come up with ways to ensure that the guidance is followed and respected. For more information and examples, consult the community agreements resource at the end of this guide.
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 contribute.
5. Take breaks. Pause for tea, snacks, and movement breaks.

Pre-viewing activity

Take up to two minutes to brainstorm a list of contributions made by Black people in British Columbia. If people are unable to identify any examples, acknowledge that this appears to be a challenging task for everyone and tell them that the video will help them to reflect upon why examples don't come easily to mind.

Open the conversation

Choose three questions that speak to you:

- What feelings did you experience while watching the video?
- Did you find anything surprising in Anthony's story?
- Anthony said he learned "absolutely nothing about Black history in school." What did you learn 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 ever 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 showed pictures of his grandparents and the areas in Canada where they lived, demonstrating that Anthony's family have been in Canada for seven generations. When considering the visibility of Black people in B.C., how does this make you feel?
- Anthony never uses the words "human rights" in the video. How is this still a story about human rights?

Deepen the conversation

- How challenging was it to identify contributions made by Black people during the brainstorming activity? Why do you think so little focus has been placed on Black history?
- Anthony mentions that it is important for people to know about the contributions that 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 stories?
- Anthony's ancestors came to Canada to flee slavery and anti-Black racism in the United States. What is the relationship between slavery and the colonization of North America? How is the movement of Black people to North America different from the settlement of other groups of people?
- Many people use the term "settler" to acknowledge that they or their ancestors are not Indigenous to the land here. What responsibility do settlers on the lands we now call British Columbia have in acknowledging and addressing the impacts of colonization and land appropriation on Indigenous people?
- Anthony applauds his ancestors for having "the fortitude and the smarts to come here" and celebrates the strengths and achievements of Black settlers. How does this focus compare to the way Black people's experiences are generally portrayed in the media? What impact might these different portrayals have on our perceptions and attitudes?
- 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. How does anti-Black racism show up in your world? Do you think many people acknowledge that racism is an issue in Canada? Why or why not?



- Saying “juvenile things,” such as the joke that Anthony had a nice tan, is an example of a microaggression. Microaggressions are subtle comments and actions—often made without intent to do harm—that single out a person or group as being different from others. Anthony tells us that comments such as these “can get a little tiresome.” What are some other examples of microaggressions? What other impacts might microaggressions have and how can we avoid them?
- 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? Consider how these words would feel to a child, the trauma they would inflict, and how it would affect their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth.
- What are the negative impacts of anti-Black racism on the individuals or groups inflicting it as well as those witnessing it and not taking action?
- Anthony says he wants to “write stories that tell the truth.” Sharing the truth—even for education—can also raise uncomfortable feelings. For example, people may have feelings of shame, guilt or denial when they learn about anti-Black racism in Canada and how we have ignored Black people’s contributions. Guilt, shame and denial may show up as shutting down or being defensive. People sometimes want to gloss over or avoid thinking or talking about those truths. What are some healthier ways we can talk about difficult or tricky topics?

Bring the conversation to a close

- Growing up, Anthony was not comfortable in his own skin. People of colour are often made to feel that the colour of their skin is not beautiful. Towards the end of the video, Anthony joyfully concludes, “as I’ve gotten older, I’ve gotten to know who I am, and I actually love who I am.” How does this make you feel?
- Is there someone now or from when you were younger who connected you to something important that has helped you feel more comfortable in your skin? How can we create a society where everyone knows and loves who they are?
- Anthony tells us that “if everybody can just do their little bit,” racist attitudes will change. What is your “little bit”?
- Anthony’s hope for the future is that racist attitudes will change. What is your hope for the future?

Community resources

For support setting up a community agreement:

[Safer space policy/Community Agreements: The Anti-Oppression Network](#)

To learn more about Black history in B.C. and Canada:

- [British Columbia Black History Awareness Society](#)
- [Hogan’s Alley Society](#)
- [Secret Victoria: Rush for freedom](#) (film by Anthony Brown)
- [BLK: An origin story](#)
- [Teaching African Canadian History: Websites](#)
- [Canada’s slavery secret: The whitewashing of 200 years of enslavement](#)

Initiatives to address anti-Black racism:

- [Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network](#)
- [Towards a healthy city: Addressing anti-Black racism in Vancouver](#)
- [Province-wide public inquiry into hate in the pandemic](#)



To learn more about anti-Black racism:

- [Out of the Sun: On race and storytelling: Esi Edugynan's CBC Massey Lectures](#)
- [Challenging Racist "British Columbia": 150 years and counting](#)
- [Race relations in Canada 2021: A survey of Canadian public opinion and experience: Final report](#)
- [The Black experience project](#)
- [Equity is safer: Human rights considerations for policing reform in British Columbia](#)
- [Toni Morrison, HBCU grad, takes white supremacy to task \(video\)](#)

