

# Opinion

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## Fighting racism starts with opening our eyes

Next Friday, March 21, is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Something we should all stop and take time to think about. It seems to me Canada is falling further and further away from its reputation as a tolerant and compassionate country.

For too long we've been able to smugly point our fingers south of the border and say that we're not as bad as the Americans. Sadly, in some ways we're worse.

Racism in the U.S. has been around since before the country was founded. They know it exists and are at least willing to acknowledge it, though it seems they've done a terrible

job of dealing with it.

In Canada, we prefer the approach of ignorance is bliss. We just pretend it isn't happening — out of sight, out of mind.

I think we would do better to recognize that there is racism in Canada. That's a first step.

What we need to do next, however, is a bit of an un-Canadian approach. Instead of setting up a Royal Commission, or a brush-it-under-the-carpet task force, we need to tackle it on an individual basis.

Institutions, be they human rights commissions or committees for this, that or the other, can't solve a problem such as racism because they are trying to dictate solutions.



### Viewpoint

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It's hard to dictate the way people think.

If we're going to make things better, we're going to have to look within ourselves. All of us must do this.

Racism is a vicious circle which builds upon itself, with one generation's victims becoming the next generation's oppressors.

Bitter parents who suffered the racist taunts of one group or another as children, pass on their hatred of that group

to their kids and it goes on and on.

It's happening all over the world as many countries fall into the mess of "us and them" which does nothing but tear their country apart.

Mostly these differences fall along religious lines, but the question of race is always a factor.

So what are we going to do about it? We can hold days for the elimination of... until the cows come home, but change will only happen if people want it to.

The future is up to us. Before casually tossing racist accusations around, we should stop and think about where this will lead us.

We should do that every single day, but next Friday especially.



## Tourists say the dumbest things

Can you believe this weather? We've got winter on the run. The days are getting longer and warmer. The car actually starts in the morning without whining and moaning.

You know what this means, don't you?

Summer is just around the corner, folks. Summer! That means tourists.

I know that tourism is a much-needed shot in the arm for the Canadian economy. If this year is anything like the last we'll have some 20 million visitors checking in through the Welcome To Canada turnstiles. And by the time they leave, their wallets will be lighter to the tune of some \$5 billion. So no mistake about it — tourists

are important. And valued.

But my, they can be dumb.

I have a theory about tourism. I believe that an actual genetic change occurs when an average citizen sloughs off his everyday identity to become a rubbernecker with a pocketful of travelers cheques and a Camcorder on his/her shoulder. I'm not sure about all the biological ramifications of this change, but I'm convinced it involves the loss of at least 20 IQ points.

Art Linkletter wrote a famous book entitled Kids Say the Darndest Things. Somebody needs to write one called Tourists Say The Dumbest Things.

A worker in the Toronto Tourism office remembers a call she fielded that went like this:

Caller: "Can we get tickets to a performance of Beauty and the Beast this afternoon?"

Attendant: "Yes, you can sir."

Caller: "How long is the afternoon performance?"

Attendant: "It lasts three hours, sir."

Caller: "Whoa, that's way too long. How long does the evening show last?"

It gets dimmer. The folks who run the Calgary Convention and Visitors Bureau have been asked everything from "What time do you turn the Northern Lights on?" to "Is your civil war over yet?"

The all-time 'most-stunned' question? Probably one that they get about a tourist site outside of town. Just south of Calgary there is a heritage park called Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. This is



### Basic Black

Arthur Black

where Indians once hunted buffalo by stampeding them over a cliff.

And two or three times a year, some American tourist in Bermuda shorts and a flowered shirt will approach a park attendant and ask:

"What time do you run the buffalo off the cliff?"

Not that Americans have anything like a monopoly in the tourist moron department — we Canadians more than hold our own when we go abroad.

Ask any Floridian. Canadians are famous in The Sunshine State. They call us Snowbirds. That's because each winter we descend in flocks of thousands to roost in semi-tropical splendor while we wait for Canada to become habitable again.

Which explains Florida's favorite bumper sticker. It reads:

When I get old, I'm going to move to Canada and drive slow.

Oh those Floridians have got our number. I remember a wise-cracking waitress in a restaurant in Daytona Beach. While I was paying my bill, she said: "You're Canadian, aincha?"

I said I was, and asked her how she could tell. She said:

"Well I could tell you wasn't a canoe" she said. "A canoe?" I said. "Yup—'cuz a canoe tips."

### Editor's mail

## Safe driving a community responsibility

Dear Editor,

I have seen the wreckage of six fatal car accidents in the past eight months. I feel compelled to write about this carnage as speeding and unsafe passing continue unabated.

Why is this form of violent death so under-reported when so much media attention is given to other violent acts? Three of these were single-car accidents, one being a new Corvette driven by a young man.

Not bringing home the serious consequences of unsafe driving contributes to a feeling of invincibility. Car advertising is irresponsible too, appealing to the headiness of speed and a sense of rugged individualism.

Accidents are so quickly cleaned up, victims taken to morgue or hospital. If the accident is not fatal, there is never a follow-up report on the injured. When one hears the sobering words "taken to hospital with serious head injury..." one does not hear about the lifelong consequences. The injured simply disappear from sight as

they and their families struggle to cope.

I just read a newspaper write-up on a five-month investigation into the unfortunate Toronto Indy accident this past summer. There was a list of (expensive) recommendations to help prevent a recurrence. It strikes me that this is a risky sport and while it should be made as safe as possible, there seems to be far less analysis and modification of accident sites occurring in the general public.

Two in my immediate area have involved a vehicle going through a stop sign and striking another vehicle. Maybe we should install warning bumps or larger stop signs where a sideroad intersects a through road.

But the biggest necessity is awareness. Shaving a few seconds off your commuting time is hardly worth jeopardizing your life and others.

Driving is potentially deadly and we all have a communal responsibility in taking it seriously. It is not a lark.

Barbara Simpson

