

CRTC Chief Executive Officer - Ian Scott
CBC/SRC President - Catherine Tait
Minister of Heritage - L'Honorable Steven Guilbeault

Absence of racialized voices at CRTC public hearings

Montreal, January 20th, 2021 - We write as media guests, producers, consultants, directors, and/or citizens whose taxes fund the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

As we take [note](#) of the public hearings underway at the CRTC regarding the renewal of the CBC's license, we can only be concerned about the near-total lack of representation from community groups and entities committed to bringing the concerns of racialized voices to the Canadian public. This is especially concerning in a Canadian context defined by, among other things: the exacerbation of anti-Asian racism in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Black racism (including the police killing of George Floyd and Breona Taylor in the US and Regis Korchinski-Paquet and Sheffield Matthews in Canada), anti-Indigenous racism (including the recent death of Joyce Echaquan), as well as anti-Arab racism (including offensive media discussion of the Honorable Omar Alghabra).

Accountability

As the CRTC, an independent public body responsible for regulating and supervising Canadian broadcasting and telecommunications, you have a responsibility to broaden the mobilization of Canadian voices in your hearings, to encourage and facilitate the involvement of racialized and indigenous groups absent of the current hearings. You must therefore take them into account when conducting consultation regarding the renewal of licenses, considering the immense challenges for such populations to access complicated online and bureaucratic procedures that structure who can actually participate. The absence of these populations reveals an institutional failure shaped by lackluster anti-racist policies, practices, programs and processes and illustrate the need to change the CRTC'S conventional public hearing practices which perpetuates the CRTC's failure to effectively achieve its role of the federal broadcast regulator and architect of diverse Canadian identity and broadcasting system.

As the CBC/SRC is a Crown corporation, we see it as having an obligation to recognize that the Canadian public is diverse in many ways as mentioned in section 3 (1) (d) (iii) of the Broadcasting Act. The content produced through the issued licenses should reflect this diversity, rather than simply linguistic duality (which ultimately supports a bilingual whiteness). However, the underrepresentation of racial diversity in operations and programming at CBC-SRC is a long-standing problem.

For example,

We have been informed that a proposal for content created by and for Canadians of Asian descent is not considered to “fit” within the current mandate of the SRC. It was implied that diverse content should be educational for the audience (i.e white majority), that is, have the role of educating white audiences. Although, this content in which two people from Asian communities share their experiences has been characterized as “very niche” and would not be of societal value to Canadians.

This view is extremely problematic as it prevents equal access to the possibility of being recognized as full Canadians. Who is considered to be Canadian for CBC/SRC? Fundamentally, we consider it important to overcome the educational burden imposed on productions carried by racialized Canadians, since it is not a burden borne by white productions, whether francophone or anglophone and this practice fails the Broadcasting Policy for Canada (see 3 (1)(d)(iii)).

Here is another common experience:

We have been informed that Ideas for documentary series or fictions on societal issues historically covered with bias, in particular by the Société Radio-Canada, will be deemed too “radical”, because of the anti-racism curriculum of the racialized person behind the initiative or because of a lack of interest in the legitimacy of approach.

Thus, the CBC will judge a project idea carried by a person with an activist background as being problematic, but will have no hesitation in featuring voices in programming that confirm the dominant discourse. A decision like this serves to marginalize racialized voices fighting for justice by labeling them activists, whether they are journalists or citizens, and opposing this term, activists, to real journalism.

We invite the CRTC to question the French Services of SRC/CBC on its treatment of racially diverse participants and creators. When racialized people participate in such programming, they are encouraged to have empathy for the French-speaking white Quebecer, to show understanding. The converse is not expected. That is, white participants are not expected to demonstrate empathy toward, or understanding of, racialized groups. This is a problematic stance, especially given that marginalized groups have no choice but to understand the anxieties of the majority groups. This approach, therefore, upholds whiteness in the programs, productions, and products of the French Services of CBC/SRC.

We believe it is important that the SRC explains the means it intends to put in place in order to stop concealing and subordinating Black, Indigenous and racialized identities and to stop using the pretext of linguistic identity (support for the French language) to suppress the many non-white francophones in Canada. This issue needs to be addressed in the governance of the SRC/CBC, the composition of its staff, the project evaluation processes, the broadcaster's culture of accountability, as well as in the stance regarding the issues relating to the use of “offensive” comments.

For example:

On October 26, 2020, the CBC, via the French Ombudsman for Radio-Canada, justified the use of the "N" word, despite previous decisions such as Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2009-548 and Broadcasting Decision 2005-348, with regard to the "extreme caution" the CBC must exercise "in permitting the use of this expression".

In 2020, during strategic meetings, the CBC admitted to having failed to support, with its productions, projects and policies, two generations of French-Canadians. The CBC has also failed BIPOC communities in this way, with worse consequences.

The media are the 4th estate. The latter, however, constantly reproduce stereotypes. It must be remembered that state television is a crucial source of transmission of beliefs and values for Canadians. It has a direct effect on how communities are perceived and treated.

Finally, we believe it is important that the CRTC's public hearings promote accountability in matters of regulation and supervision in the implementation of the principles of diversity, by the SRC/CBC, in the exercise of its mandate. This is essential in a Canada with multiple identities, despite linguistic duality obscuring other diversities, including other linguistic realities (e.g., Indigenous linguistic realities).

We believe it is important that the Minister responsible for the CRTC and the Société-Radio-Canada act in accordance with his government's commitment to the fight against systemic racism and takes concrete measures to diversify the leadership of CRTC and Radio-Canada, while strengthening their distinct statutory obligations. Radio-Canada is still struggling to make available the budgets granted to independent (mostly white producers) who contract licenses for the production of its content. If Prime Minister Trudeau recognized the existence of anti-Black racism and systemic racism on January 30, 2018, it seems that the CBC is ignoring it.

We suggest optimizing the surveillance systems around the commitments that the CBC intends to put forward to achieve equity and an adequate representation of diversity through contract compliance, especially in independent productions, while abiding to a new standard of transparency in terms of disclosure of the financial proportion granted to its suppliers.

For more information, you may contact
Ricardo Lamour, black, artist, and Gabriele Gilbert, black, doctoral student in psychology
Coherence Group
emrical@gmail.com

Signatories

Nom Name	Espace d'autoidentification How do you self-identify	Domaine d'activité ou titre / Field of expertise or title
Aisha Vertus	Haïtienne de Montréal	Musique, Festival et Médias
alain dufourneau	Caucasien/ Caucasian	travailleur autonome
Alexandra Turgeon	Caucasienne	Études supérieures en communication
Allison Reid	White	Indigenous community development
Aly Ndiaye alias Webster	Afrodescendant	Musique et histoire
Amélie P. McGarrell	Noire	Mannequin et chargée de projets
Angelina Guo	Asiatique	Traduction
Anne Laurence Buteau	Noire	Consultante en stratégie d'impact
Anne-Claudie Beaulieu	Asiatique (PANDC)	Candidate à la maîtrise en recherche en sexologie, le racisme sexuel
Anne-Laure Dubé	Caucasienne	Intervenante
arige mahmoud	POC	cinema
Brian des Smith	Black	Media
Camille Michaud	Caucasienne	Étudiante
Carine Basiala	Candienne-africaine	Manager - government of Canada
Catherine Gilbert	caucasienne	retraîtée de l'enseignement
Cathy Soto	Noire	Travailleuse sociale
Chanel G Garceau	Caucasienne	Syndical
Charlène Biragoye	Femme Noire	Étudiante
Charles Bottex	Noir-e ascendance africaine / Black / African descent	
Charles-Eric	Caucasienne	Santé et services sociaux
Chloé Germain-Thérien	caucasienne	illustration
Cynthia Cadieux	Ally	Arts
Danielle Bouchard		
David-Alexandre Després	Caucasien	Comédien-auteur
Emily	Caucasienne	Étudiante
Emmanuel Hessler	caucasien	Producteur
Fred Nguyen	Asiatique	Comedien
Frédérique Fiset Deschênes		Étudiante
Gabrièle Gilbert	Noire	Doctorante en psychologie
Hélène Lesage	Caucasienne	Innovation sociale
ingrid enriquez-donissaint	yes	Marketing

Isabelle Mas	Caucasienne	
Ismaël Seck	Noir-e ascendance africaine / Black / African descent	Éducation
Israël Rimtobaye	Noire	Artiste
Jasmin Labrecque-Dion	Caucasien	Restauration
Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec	caucasian	Professeur
Katia McEvoy	ccaucasienne-alliée	communications
Kharoll-Ann Souffrant	Noire	Doctorante en service social à l'Université d'Ottawa, boursière Vanier, Fellow 2020 des Nations Unies pour les personnes d'ascendance africaine
Kimberley Ann Surin	Noire	Productrice/Scénariste
kimura*lemoine	asiatique	multi media artist
Ky Vy Vy Le Duc	Asian	Réalisateur
Laura Nhem	BIPOC	Industrie du cinéma et de la télévision
Les Apatrides anonymes		émission de radio antiraciste sur CHOQ.ca
leyna sahl	Arabe	Assurances
Lysiane Lavoie	Caucasien/ Caucasian	Doctorante en psychologie
Maïtée Saganash	Indigenous	Communications
Marie Beigas	Femme blanche française	Etudiante en sciences de l'environnement
Marie-Eve Gosselin	personne blanche	Candidate à la maîtrise en communication (M.A.) - recherche générale, UQÀM
Marie-Livia Beaugé	Noire	Droit
Maylee Keo	Asiatique	Illustration, animation 2D
Mc Arthur M. Dodard	Noir	Gestion
Mélanie Lemay	Latino-américaine / latin	Violences systémiques / art-thérapie transformatrice
Michelle Lord	Caucasien/ Caucasian	Santé
Mudi Wa Mbuji	Noir-e ascendance africaine / Black / African descent	communautaire
Myriam De Verger	Noire	Actrice
Olivia Xiao Tong Wu	Oui	Avocate fiscaliste
Omar benfetouah	Arabe / Arab	Ingénieur informatique
Paul Tom	Asiatique	Cinéma
Pierre Michaud	Caucasien	Professeur de philosophie
Pierre Villepelet	Noir-e ascendance africaine / Black / African descent	Cinéma
Planché	Caucasien	Artisanat d'art

Ralph Mesidor	Noir-e ascendance africaine / Black / African descent	Psychology
Ricardo Lamour	Noir	Artiste et entrepreneur social
Rose Marcello	Black	Placements
Rose NGO NDJEL	Noire de couleur	Directrice
Roxane Barnabé	Alliée	Étudiante infirmière (et intervenante communautaire)
Samantha Kaine	Black	CEO - IMPACT
Samira Menour	Moyen orient	Soutien Scolaire
Samuel Langlois		
Samuel Ledoux	Caucasien	Entrepreneur
Saron Gebresellassi		
Sébastien Roy	Allié	Production cinéma/télé
Sibel Ataogul	Turkish	Avocate
Sophia Ratté	Caucasienne	Psychologie
Stéphane Moraille	Noir-e ascendance africaine / Black / African descent	Law
Stéphanie	Noire de couleur	Animatrice de contenu culturelle
Tatiana	Noire	Travailleur autonome
Thierry Lindor	Black	Entrepreneur
Veronique Menard	Caucasian	Psychologie
Vox Sambou	Black	Les Arts
Yanick Letourneau	Blanc	Président fondateur et producteur
Yoan Boisjoli	Caucasien	Motion designee
Yola van Leeuwenkamp	Ally	Art Director