

Monday, July 5, 2021

Catherine Regan
Executive Committee
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Re: EX25.1 – Recognition Review Project Update and Response to the Dundas Street Renaming Petition

The motion and petition to rename Dundas Street has significant effect in this time of reconciliation and solidarity for members of Toronto's Black community and I hope to share my views as a member of this community and member of the Partnership Accountability Circle with the CABR Unit.

As representative of Black community members who was born and raised in this city there are many reminders that the history of people who represent our community are not celebrated. Black Torontonians have made their presence known in this since at least 1837, where dispossession and displacement has had considerable impact. I acknowledge the strides the City is making to ensure that place-making deliberately centres Black, Indigenous and equity-deserving communities who continue to feel the reverberating impacts of colonialism, discrimination, and system racism in the present day, while ensuring that history is told in its entirety.

Black Torontonians have and continue to contribute to vibrancy of this City. The Renaming Review and the aforementioned investments in renaming Dundas Street demonstrate the need to ensure that our contributions are acknowledged and deliberate investments are made to ensure Black communities and the spaces they call home in this City continue to be supported.

The legacy of Henry Dundas was very surprising to learn about. It was only during the petition last year that I learned about who Henry Dundas was and how his namesake came to represent so many aspects of the city of Toronto. I am grateful for this education because of how often I've heard and seen this name and internalized it to symbolize what makes this city as vibrant and colourful as it is. However, his legacy in actuality is one that played an instrumental role in the continuation of slavery of people who look like me. This name is synonymous with pain, suffering, and dehumanization and his affect on the lives of countless, nameless enslaved peoples is one we'll never truly be able to comprehend. Henry Dundas has not contributed much to Canada and even less to the City of Toronto; his name does not represent who we are, so it's a very easy decision for me to support renaming the street, infrastructure and markers of this city to something else.

The City of Toronto has made a pledge to Black and Indigenous peoples to truly attempt to reconcile our past for a better future. The renaming of parts of our city to better reflect what this reconciliation can look like is one step in this direction. It ensures every single one of us knows that this city will celebrate the diversity of people who have made it great, who work everyday to make it better, and who truly make up the social fabric of this great city. It is a commitment of course to United Nations International Decade for People of African and in response to the global movement against anti-Black racism, but it also the right thing to do.

I am sincerely thankful for the opportunity to share my views on this matter and look forward to hearing more on the considerations the City of Toronto is taking.

In solidarity,
Nura Yunus, Stakeholder Member
(she/her)
Partnership and Accountability Circle Member