

# The Experience of Black Executives in the Federal Public Service of Canada

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# Puzzle

- The Black Executives Network / Le Réseau des exécutifs noirs (BEN/REN), was established in 2020 to support Black executives in the federal public service (FPS)
- *Privy Council Task Force* survey found that employees identified bias (73%) as the largest barrier to diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Black Class Action, 2021).
- 11 Black public service employees filed a class action lawsuit in the Federal Court of Canada, seeking solutions to systemic racism and discrimination in the Public Service of Canada.
- At the time of this study the FPS employed less than 100 Black executives (BEN/REN, 2022). I think it should be FPS (not FPS). Please correct throughout.

Research Question

***What are the experiences of  
Black executives in the Federal  
public service?***

# Significance

- Scarcity of studies on Black leadership in Canada and more specifically Black leadership in government.
- Value of listening to Black executives on how they overcame career barriers
- Improvement to social change for Black people seeking to advance to senior executive level positions.
- Black researchers are needed to advance discussion within the literature on organization behaviour studies and workforce diversity/inclusion.

# Research Design

- This research project utilized a qualitative research design
- The federal public services as the case study and use of semi-structured interviews to collect data
- Interviews were a great way to listen actively to the narratives of participants, who felt comfortable to share honestly about the challenges and successes in their career

# Research Design cont...

- Recruitment via poster through LinkedIn search to participants who met research criteria
- *6 interviews* completed successfully after consent forms signed
- Interviews and transcripts done via Microsoft Teams.
  - deidentified transcripts, participants given pseudonyms.

**RESEARCH STUDY ON  
BLACK EXECUTIVES  
EXPERIENCE  
IN CANADA'S  
FEDERAL PUBLIC  
SERVICE**

Identify as Black?



Have senior managerial responsibilities?

**We want to hear from YOU!**

**How does it work?**

- The study aims to understand how Black executives imagine an equitable workplace.
- Individual interview on MS Teams, 45-90 minutes in length
  - English only
  - Interviewer is Black
  - Anonymous participation

**Respond by\***

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# Theoretical Framework

## *Double-Consciousness theory*

- Du Bois, 1996

## *Critical Race Theory*

- Solórzano, 1997
- Mari Matsuda, 1991
- Solorzano and Yosso, 2002

## *Intersectionality theory*

- Crenshaw, 1991
- Collins, 2015.



# Findings

- Black executives passed the merit criteria but lack connection to power that can take them over the threshold.
  - *“I'm qualified and talented and ready to help you meet your organizational goals and objectives, and most times the response to that is, Yeah, you are. You know, we think you could do great things, but we already have our person.” - Interviewee*

# Findings

- Respondents attributed FPS desirer to increase Black executive representation to the events of George Floyd in 2020

*“After George Floyd when every government department was trying their hardest to get more Blacks that is where through the Black hiring process I was able to get into this particular position, so my journey has been long.” - Interviewee*

# Findings

- Employment policy decisions historically discriminated against Black people and there has been little significant change to address the systemic issue of anti-black racism in Canada's labour market.

*“Maybe many minorities have difficulties trying to get into this position because the process of hiring is not geared for it. It was developed many many years ago and it is tailored to normally white folks, right? Nothing much has been done to adjust to reflect the change in population.” - Interviewee*

# Findings

- While promoting Black people into EX roles related to diversity, equity, and inclusion is important, there needs to be Black representation in core business roles (Finance, Human Resource, Policy, etc... )

*“There have been a number of executive appointments to positions that deal with diversity and equity and inclusion, which is great. So we're increasing the number of black executives. However, that's not within core business. Those aren't core business leaders, and it's very important to me that I'm in core business, so I'm not in my position because I'm black.” - Interviewee*

# Findings

- Black leadership is integral to the diversification and inclusion in the Federal Public Service.

*“I'm the only visibly black person brown person at my management table and so when I bring those things up, they have impact. They sway the room, they adjust their perspectives a little bit sometimes. So I think that my very presence in the room sometimes is enough. Sometimes I don't have to say anything.” - Interviewee*

## Limitations

- Interviews conducted only in English limited expression of Francophone participants
- 4/6 Interviews were with women so getting more men to participate

## Future Research Direction

- Specific focus on the difference between Black Men and Black Women Executives
- Include perspective of retired Black executives
- Comparison study between experiences of White and Black executive's experiences

Gloria Baylis  
- (1929–2017) Canadian civil  
rights activist, registered nurse  
and entrepreneur

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- In October 1965, in the first case of its kind, Hilton of Canada was convicted of “illegally and knowingly refusing employment to Mrs. Gloria Clarke Baylis, committing thereby an offence provided by the Quebec Discrimination Act of 1964.” This Act was the first piece of legislation in Canada that defined discrimination and made explicit reference to exclusion or preference on the basis of race.



# Donald Willard Moore - (1891 - 1994) Canadian civil rights activist, entrepreneur

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Moore led the first delegation to Ottawa in 1954 to protest Canada's discriminatory immigration law restricting entry of non-whites from the West Indies and other Commonwealth areas. The law was changed in 1962 due to Moore's tireless efforts.





# Stanley G. Grizzle - (1918 – 2016), Canadian civil rights activist, judge

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Upon his return to Canada after serving in Europe during World War II, Grizzle became more active in the union. He was elected president of his local union, and pushed the Canadian Pacific Railway(CPR) to open the management ranks to Blacks. He is also the first Black citizenship Judge.

