

Blacks in Canadian Politics

Introduction

Whether they were born in Canada or came as immigrants or refugees, people of African descent have made important contributions to government in Canada. In this module, you will learn about four African-Canadian politicians: The Honorable Jean Augustine, Councillor Lindell Smith, The Honorable Mitizie Hunter, and Beatrice Ghettuba.

Here is a list of activities you will work on:

- KWL Chart
- Reading
- Listening / Video
- Summary
- Research Activities
- Writing Activities

KWL Chart

K	W	L
What I know about black people in Canadian politics	What I want to know about black people in Canadian politics	What I learned about black people in Canadian politics

Reading



Figure 1: Thauberger, Althea. The Honourable Jean Augustine. Library and Archives Canada. Retrieved 16 Dec 2017 from <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/jean-augustine/>

The Honourable Jean Augustine¹

In 1960, the Honourable Jean Augustine (nee Simon) immigrated to Canada from Grenada through the West Indian Domestic Scheme. The program enlisted women between the ages of 18-35 with at least a grade 8 education to come to Canada as nannies. After completing her one-year contract, Jean earned her Ontario teaching certificate and began her career as an elementary school teacher. She later completed a BA and a Master of Education at the University of Toronto. Augustine was an activist in Toronto's Caribbean communities throughout her teaching career, volunteering with grassroots organizations to strengthen immigrant and women's rights and to combat drug abuse, poverty, and violence against women. In 1967, she served on the committee that helped organize the first Caribana festival. In 1973,

¹ <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/jean-augustine/>

Augustine founded the Toronto chapter of the Congress of Black Women of Canada, where she later became national president.

Jean Augustine was nominated as Liberal candidate for the Etobicoke-Lakeshore district in Ontario on October 25, 1993. An enthusiastic, intelligent and charismatic woman, Augustine won the seat and became the first Black woman elected to the House of Commons. Of approximately 65,000 voters registered in the district, only 700 were Black. Augustine was re-elected in 1997, 2000, 2002 and 2004.

As a new Member of Parliament, Augustine tackled issues that were important to her supporters, to women and to Canadians. Appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister of Canada (1993-96), she was Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's trusted voice on committees, at international meetings and in Parliament when he was absent from the House of Commons. Augustine was appointed Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women) on 26 May 2002, making her the first Black woman to achieve a post in Cabinet. The same year, she was selected to be a member of the Queen's Privy Council of Canada. On 12 December 2003, she was appointed Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Status of Women) and in 2004 she was elected Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons.

Additionally, she was instrumental in ensuring that February is recognized as Black History Month in Canada. She has been honoured with numerous awards for her service to Canada - including the Order of Canada in 2007.

Augustine also has a strong connection to York University. In 2007, many documents and records of her life and political career were donated to the university's Clara Thomas Archives ([see Clara Thomas](#)). The Jean Augustine Chair in Education in the New Urban Environment was established at York University on June 25, 2008. According to the university, the chair researches "educational issues involving immigration, community engagement and cultural diversity" and seeks to "improve school in in metropolitan cities."

In 2014, the Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women's Empowerment opened in Toronto, part of the PACT Urban Peace Program. The centre highlights "education, nutrition, mindfulness and real-world job training."

Councillor Lindell Smith²³



Figure 2: Smith, Lindell. Retrieved 16 Dec 2017⁴

Lindell Smith was born and raised in Halifax. In 2016 after a landslide victory, he became the first Black Nova Scotian to be elected to the Halifax Regional Municipality since 2000. To his credit, he opted to be true to himself and retain his cornrows even though some advised that it could cause voters to associate him with the stereotypical black gangster represented in hip hop videos. Lindell shows that you can still be yourself and achieve your goals. You do not need to mimic anyone else or deny your identity.

Prior to entering politics, Smith worked as local library assistant and co-founded Centreline, a non-profit recording studio as way of engaging youth and keeping

² <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/why-lindell-smiths-election-in-halifax-was-so-remarkable/>

³ <https://ansa.novascotia.ca/RisingStars>

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<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-october-27-2016-1.3822261/meet-lindell-smith-halifax-s-first-black-councillor-in-16-years-1.3822415>

them away from criminal activities. He was awarded the Lieutenant Governor Award in High School and completed an internship with the Burchells law firm. He worked as a Youth Ambassador for three years for the Crime Prevention project "Youth Opposing Gangs" and created a DVD called "Speak Up" about the issues of the North End community in Halifax. Lindell graduated from Nova Scotia Community College's Recording Arts program. He is passionate about ensuring that the needs of all persons in Halifax are served, regardless of class, race, or ethnicity.

The Honorable Mitzie Hunter⁵⁶⁷



Figure 3: Hunter, Mitzie. Ontario Byelections. Retrieved 16 Dec 2017⁸

The Honorable Mitzie Hunter is the Minister of Education and the Liberal MPP for Scarborough-Guildwood. She was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 2013 as the MPP for Scarborough-Guildwood. She was re-elected in 2014. Prior to this post, she served as the Associate Minister of Finance, responsible for pension reform. Mitzie and her family immigrated to Canada from Jamaica in 1975. She grew up in Scarborough, graduated from U of T (Scarborough Campus) with a BA, and recently completed her MBA from the Rotman School of Management.

⁵ <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/profile/mitzie-hunter/>

⁶ <https://news.ontario.ca/profiles/en/mitzie-hunter>

⁷ <http://www.100abcwomen.ca/mitzie-hunter/>

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<https://www.cp24.com/features/ontario-byelections-2013/riding-profile-scarborough-guildwood/why-i-m-the-best-candidate-mitzie-hunter>

Prior to becoming an MPP, Hunter was CEO of the Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance where she championed solutions to some of the region's toughest social, economic, and environmental challenges. Prior to that, she served as the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, which is Canada's largest social housing provider with \$6 billion in real assets. Toronto listed her among Toronto's 50 most influential people in 2016.

Ms. Beatrice Ghettubah⁹



Figure 4: Ghettubah, Beatrice. Candidate Photo. Retrieved 16 Dec 2017¹⁰

Ms. Beatrice Ghettubah was born and raised in Kenya and migrated to Canada in 1998. She is a chartered accountant, entrepreneur, and community leader. She is the founder and owner of K2Z Accounting. In 2013, she served on the City of Edmonton Women's Advisory Council. She was recently appointed by the City of Edmonton Council to the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee. In this

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<http://www.nbccedmonton.ca/2017-rosalind-smith-professional-award-winner-beatrice-ghettuba-k2z-accounting/>

¹⁰ <https://www.beatrice4council.ca/meet-beatrice>

role, she is involved in providing council with advice on women's gender-based issues, leadership, and empowerment affairs relevant to the municipal jurisdiction.

In 2015, she was nominated and contested as a federal Liberal candidate for the St. Albert- Edmonton riding, where she placed second. Additionally, she campaigned in the 2017 Edmonton Municipal elections for Councilor of Ward 4.

Beatrice is a board member and past chair of the Africa Centre Board of Directors, which provides a variety of services African-Canadians. She has won a number of awards including The National Black Coalition of Canada Society's 2017 Rosalind Smith Professional Award.

Listening/ Video Activities

Watch a CBC five- minute video where Lindell explains what motivated him to enter politics.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfdARxGfb6o>

In these short videos watch Jean Augustine talk about her early life in Grenada, how she entered politics, and how she got Black History Month to be recognized nationally in Canada

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wGRWtSMq3s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjYPHhxvMqs>

Summary

We have learnt about three Canadians of African and Caribbean descent who have been successful in politics and have used their power to improve the lives of all Canadians. Their success serves as an inspiration to other Canadians who may want to serve in public office whether as Mayor, Councillor, School Trustee, Member of Parliament or in other political offices. They are examples of African-Canadians who are fully integrated in Canadian society to the extent where they can lead a wide cross-section of Canadians in building a society where people of all races and origins can be successful.

Research Activities

Research Activity A

Canada has many successful politicians of African and Afro-Caribbean descent. Choose from the names below and write the name of the correct politician beside each description.



Vivian Barbot



Yvonne Atwell



Maka Kotto



Tony Ince



Ike Jonathan Awgu

1. He is a Canadian politician who was elected to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly in the 2013 provincial election, representing the electoral district of Cole Harbour-Portland Valley. On October 22, 2013, he was appointed to the Executive Council of Nova Scotia where he serves as Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage as well as Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs and the Minister responsible for the Heritage Property Act.
2. Born in Douala, Cameroon, he is a member of the National Assembly of Quebec representing the riding of Bourget. From 2012 to 2014, he served as the Minister of Culture and Communications. He has appeared in films is also a published author, stage director and worked as an educator in dramatic art for nearly 15 years in France and Quebec.
3. This African-Canadian teacher, activist, and politician was born in Haiti. She is a former President of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, a former Member of Parliament and former vice-president of the Bloc Québécois. She was the party's interim leader and president following the resignation of Gilles Duceppe in May 2011. She became the first person of a visible minority group to lead a Canadian federal political party with parliamentary representation. In the past, she has served as the Member of Parliament for the riding of Papineau in Quebec.
4. Born in Ottawa, at the age of 19, he ran for Mayor in the 2003 municipal election, and finished third out of eight candidates with 2.92% of the vote. After the municipal election, he became an editorial columnist for the Ottawa Sun newspaper. He went on to host *X-Factor*, a politics-oriented national television show on CPAC in the summer of 2004. He has also been a columnist for the *Globe and Mail* newspaper.
5. This politician was born in East Preston, Nova Scotia and is the first black woman elected as MLA in Nova Scotia. She has been the president of the Black United Front and the African Canadian Caucus, a chair of the Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq Program at Dalhousie University, a member of the Metropolitan Board of Trade's small business committee, and a member of the George Washington Carver Credit Union executive board. She is also currently the Vice President of the Nova Scotia New Democratic Party.

Research Activity B

1. David Shepherd is an MLA in Edmonton. Use the internet to research when he was elected, what section of Edmonton he represents, his educational background, and hobbies.

When was he elected?

What section of Edmonton does he represent?

What is his educational background?

What are his hobbies?

Writing Activity

Have you ever thought of going into politics? Write a 1 or 2 page essay or story based on the title "If I Was Prime Minister of Canada, I Would..." Outline three things you would do if you became Prime Minister.

References

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