

PRESS RELEASE
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PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON THE WHITE PAPER

BY

THE MONTREAL ALLIANCE OF BLACK ORGANIZATIONS.

As a group who have had to live as a minority in the new world, and having experienced far more repression than any other group brought to this continent; we can understand the frustration of the French people of this province; they too have experienced isolation and fear, but for different reasons.

The Black Community is sensitive to the emotional needs of the French speaking people of this province to live a full and complete life in their own language and culture. However, we question some provisions of the language White Paper, which, if legislated into law, will be one of the most effective means ever devised for limiting the flow of immigrants from the English speaking Caribbean. It will prevent the reunification of families because of language requirements in work and in education. The bill gives some hope in the use of the word "maybe" - "any child, one of whose parents attended English elementary school outside Quebec"... This concession may be withdrawn at any time.

West Indian children in Panama and Cuba have been completely assimilated in the Spanish language after two generations,

but it has come about because they have been accepted as "equals" and not by legislation. These Spanish speaking Blacks have enriched the life of both countries. In Quebec, the Haitian speaks French, but he is still Black, he continues to have the same experience of discrimination in jobs, housing and opportunity.

The Caribbean Blacks who turn up for a job find themselves in double jeopardy; he has an English name and he is Black; language legislation will not change this fact. Native Canadian Blacks in Quebec have fared no better than their West Indian counterparts.

The Blacks in this province, while concerned about language, are more concerned about the future - that maybe after learning a language there will still be no place to go.

As a minority group within the province, we believe we have a contribution to make. But we must be recognized as a special minority whose problems reach far beyond language. Some of our Black institutions have been here for over seventy-five years. Samuel de Champlain's interpreter was Black, he knew the Indian language. He probably originated in the Cape Verde Islands. We have been here in small numbers since that time. Our heritage is as rich and real as that of any other group.

We ask that the Government of the province provide far more meaningful civil and human rights, for those who will continue to experience humiliation and pain in being denied to exercise a full and free existence here in this province. NOW!

It is our feeling that first there must be demonstrated that willingness and determination to resist the "vengeful" and the desire for conformity and assimilation of minorities within this province, and create a climate and an assurance that when it is all over we will have a place to stand, to grow and to share our own values as a Black Community.