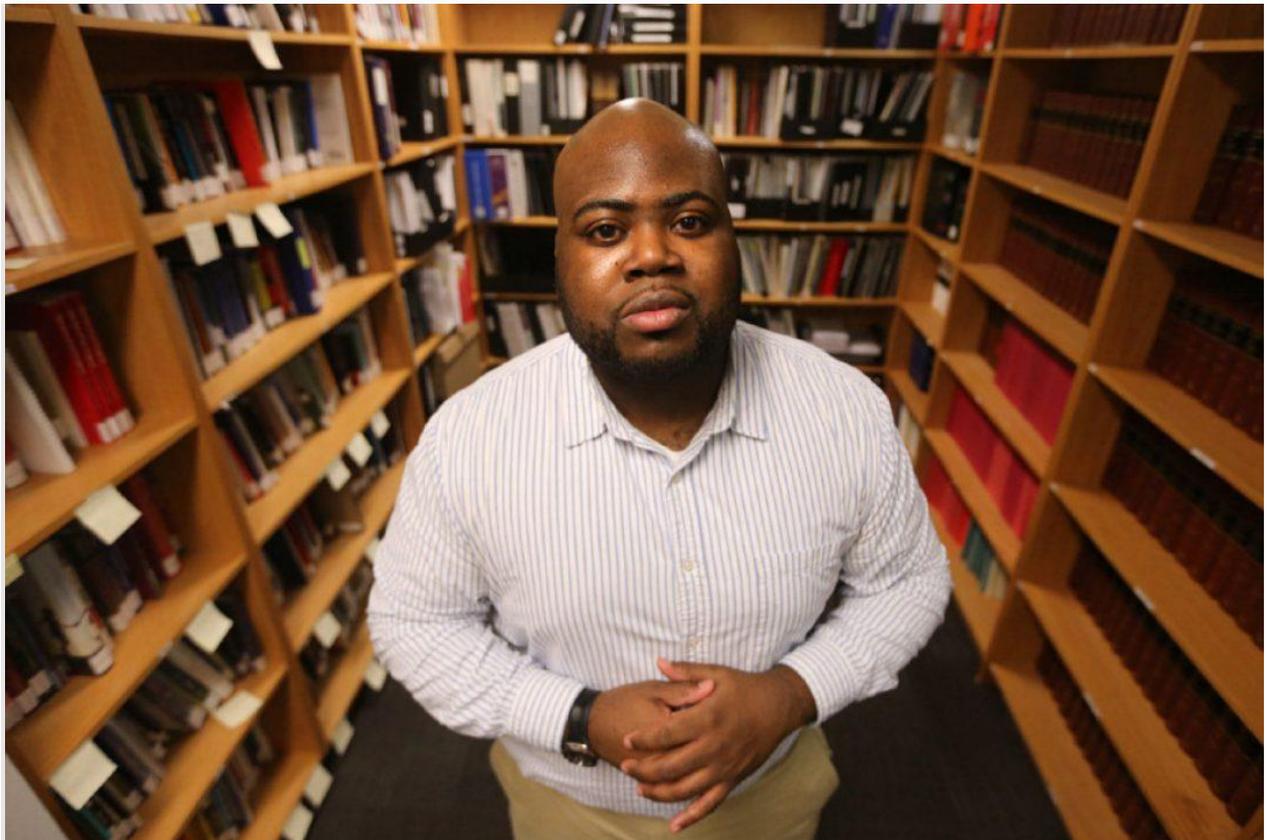


Black lives mattered then, too: trending hashtag points users to black Canadian history

#BlackLivesCDNSyllabus highlights academic resources on the black Canadian experience.



Lawyer and community activist Anthony Morgan said there seems to be a lot of confusion and misinformation about Black Lives Matter. (VINCE TALOTTA /TORONTO STAR) | ORDER THIS PHOTO

By **EBYAN ABDIGIR** Staff Reporter

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On July 5, just two days after activist group Black Lives Matter Toronto made headlines for its controversial demand that Toronto police not be allowed a float in future Pride parades, the hashtag #BlackLivesCDNSyllabus began trending on Twitter.

Created by lawyer and community activist Anthony Morgan, the hashtag points users to resources — academic or journalistic — on black Canadian history and how it relates to systemic racism.

Tweets using the hashtag have drawn attention to Canadian academics such as Wayde Compton, David Austin and Karina Vernon, and the discourse on the black Canadian experience to which they've contributed.

Morgan says he created the hashtag largely because “there seems to be a lot of confusion and misinformation about (Black Lives Matter) and what they were doing and how it related to the broader black experience.” Studies in black history help put what's happening now in a bigger context.

After Black Lives Matter Toronto's actions against Pride hit the media, many people weren't shy about expressing their dismay about the group's tactics, which involved shutting down the parade until organizers agreed to their demands.

However, those demands may have inspired other Black Lives Matter groups in Canada.

[Black Lives Matter Vancouver followed suit](#) in asking police to voluntarily withdraw their float from the upcoming Pride Parade. In a public letter, the group says the involvement of police in the march creates an unsafe environment for some communities.

The group also said the lack of police floats would represent “a show of solidarity and understanding.”

[In St. John's, Nfld., organizers of the pride parade requested that off-duty police not walk in uniform during the march.](#) After some

backlash, St. John's Pride then later clarified that off-duty police are welcome to attend as "community allies."

But the issue seems more misunderstood in Toronto, Morgan said.

"I wanted to put the hashtag out there so that we can create those connections and (develop an) intellectual infrastructure that makes us understand: 'Oh, this is the broader context of which their anger, frustrations, demands and strategies come from.'"

Black Lives Matter, founded by American activists Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi and Patrisse Cullors, started out as a Twitter hashtag. Now, the movement has branches in various cities throughout North America and the West, and works as a mobilizing unit for activists to organize protests against police brutality and systemic racism against black communities.

[The first public meeting of Ontario's new Anti-Racism Directorate](#), as promised by Premier Kathleen Wynne, took place Thursday at Daniels Spectrum in Regent Park.

It was a full house. Tensions soared as audience members lined up to address their concerns to Wynne, Mayor John Tory and fellow citizens as part of what is intended to become an ongoing series.

While the conversation around black issues in Toronto is growing, Morgan says that's just one step in a larger plan of action coming from concerned citizens of "different backgrounds and experiences."

Morgan hopes that if more people come to understand the conflicts black Canadians face, "they may come to a place with greater compassion and understanding for the kinds of resistance you see in black communities and the kinds of challenges (faced by) black folks in Toronto, the GTA, and Canada."

With files from Toronto Star staff and The Canadian Press