Congratulations, to all new students who are just about to finish their first term in the University, away from families and loved ones. I know how difficult it can be for some of you who might be spending your Christmas away from home and your families. I have been there and I know it’s the most difficult thing to go through at this time of the year. However, the good news is that you only have one more term to go and you will be in your second year.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for participating in our new discussion and focus group program of celebrating birthdays and building relationships together bi-month. For those who have not joined us for this celebrations I do encourage you to, it’s usually a time when we laugh and talk about things that matters to our heart and also celebrate our colleagues birthdays. I am confident that you are all set and prepared for the coming exams and also looking forward to a great Christmas break. So my advice to you all at this festive period is make the best use of what you have around you to have fun during this festive period.

Give yourself the time to rest and recuperate for the coming year. I believe each and every one of you has the power within you to achieve your goals. I am confident that with lots of rest and hard work when required you will be able to achieve a great height at the end.

You are all invited to the BSAC Holiday Party on the 5th, of December in Council Chambers, 2nd floor of the SUB 12:00pm.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. Be safe anywhere you travel to or visit this Christmas season.

Oluronke Taiwo BSc,MSc,BSW,MSW,RSW
My Canadian Christmas

The first advice I received when I landed in Ottawa was, ‘don’t stay indoors, no matter how cold it gets’. I did not know how this was going to be possible. Coming from Kenya, there was great concern and doubt on whether I could handle the negative temperatures. I think there was a conspiracy among interested parties to keep me from leaving the country and they told me chilling stories about Canadian winters. It seemed I would get here, freeze to death and head back home in a coffin!

But I was mentally prepared for the cold and I took my first Canadian piece of advice very seriously. Coincidentally, my new Canadian residence was home to ten students drawn from eight nations in different parts of the world. We were from the Bahamas, Canada, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, South Africa, and Syria. We went from being lonely strangers in a foreign land far away from home to friends, to family. And we had a great Christmas. There was no staying indoors. We went to the open crafts market on Agricola street and then there was the Christmas parade downtown after that. It was raining. And instead of running back home, we walked in the rain. We headed downtown, we watched the christmas parade in the rain. Everyone had come out to greet Santa, the kids of course had the most fun. They sat in the flowing waters and played in the rain. And when it was time to go home, the taxi wouldn’t come. We waited at Scotia square and eventually gave up and still walked home in the rain.

Though far from home, I had a wonderful Christmas. I met a lady in church who invited me to her house for dinner. We had many Thursday wings at Your Father’s Moustache, I watched all the Christmas movies on Netflix, I attended all the Christmas carols concerts I could possibly attend. At one of the Christmas Carols concerts, I met new friends who brought me to BSAC, and for once in a very long time, I felt at home. My loneliness vanished and I came to appreciate the role of such support services on campus. We had several house parties after that and ushered in the New Year with more friends, and more opportunities to go outdoors in the following chilling months, including hiking in the snowy Backlands. Winter persisted and I didn’t stay indoors. Not at all.

Thanks to the stranger who gave me my first Canadian advice!

This article was written by our newest staff member Irina Wandera. Give her a warm welcome if you see her around the Centre!
CHRISTMAS IN GHANA

Afehiapa o is the familiar refrain one hears as one goes about their business from Christmas time through to New Year’s Day. The well-loved sounds of jingle bells are playing on what appears to be all the radios in Ghana. It is the time of year when the Harmattan winds come howling, tossing up clouds of reddish dust and bringing with it echoes of the biting wind that is a very faint ghost of snow. It is the time of year when one has to ensure there is a good coating of shea butter or Vaseline on the skin and on the lips to prevent the cracking of the skin that will make it look like that of a crocodile. It is the time of year where there is a constant smell of chicken and/or goat meat frying in the air and all little children are excited. It is the time of year when prodigious quantities of cake is baked and shared with the neighbours and the visitors who are sure to come calling. It is the time of year for showing off one’s new clothes, often in vibrant colours and patterns on the way to church.

These are some the memories I cherish most about growing up in Ghana.

Nenyo Kwasitsu

WE’RE MOVING!

BSAC is getting a makeover and because of these renovations we’ll be moving to the International Centre. This is a temporary relocation for the 2018 winter semester. We encourage you all to join us there after the winter break.
Congratulations Ronke!

Our very own Mrs. Oluronke Taiwo was named one of the Top 25 Immigrants in the Maritimes at this year’s Halifax Experience gala. She is recognized for her vision and leadership in the Halifax community. Mrs. Taiwo has earned; a Bachelor’s Degree in Biology, a Bachelor’s Degree in Social Work, a Master’s Degree in Medical Microbiology and a Master’s Degree in Social Work. With these amazing accomplishments, she has worked as a researcher, a professor, a social worker and currently as the Black Student Advisor (just to name a few). Despite not being a newcomer to Canada she has tirelessly poured herself into local organizations and causes. We are truly grateful for your hard work Mrs. Taiwo.
Of Killer Whales & Race Relations

Do you ever sit and wonder why human beings just can’t get along? Well, a look at how killer whales (Orcinus Orca) relate may shed some light on why we are antagonistic and racist toward one another.

Killer whales have a life span of up to 50-80 years when living within their normal, natural habitat. That life span reduces drastically, to 17-20 years when they are kept in captivity. Interestingly, the life span of humans who engage with captured killer whales is likely to be cut short (painfully) when the enslaved orcas decide to fight back.

Beyond the fact that Orcas like humans do not respond well to oppression and captivity, they share a number of other similarities with humans.

1. They are one of the world’s most powerful and organized predators (we have nuclear weapons and guns, they have deadly teeth and massive physical strength).

2. They are very social. Killer whales move around in families that are either resident (predictable movement) or transient (unpredictable movement). Their families can have up to 40 individuals who move around and hunt together. They are very similar to one another, and the untrained eye (like yours truly), may not be able to spot any difference from one to another. They are famous for their black and white patches, and of their deadly hunting practices (hence the name killer whale).

3. They have a variety of communication sounds with a variation in dialects which only members of individual family groups can recognize.

4. They may be xenophobic. A killer whale that strays from its own family group into another is never welcome and it is not uncommon for such strays to be met with vicious violence from members of the family that they stray into.

This brings me to how killer whales and race relations are interconnected.

For years, humans have labelled themselves the superior race. Perhaps we are, perhaps we are not. Evidence appears to suggest that we may be superior only if you focus on dominating other species as superiority. However, our reactions to people
However, our reactions to people who we perceive as different is animalistic and irrational, almost as if we revert back to our basic animal nature just like a killer whale. However, unlike the orca, we are able to learn each other’s languages hence bridging the language barriers that would otherwise separate us. This does not appear to be sufficient and brings forth the following questions:

Why do we persist with the hate, genocide and abuse of one another?

What is so precious that we want to protect to the extent of taking each other’s lives?

Are the differences or perceived threats that we feel from one another real or imagined?

And if we claim to be the superior race, shouldn’t our response to differences be more rational, less devoid of violence?

Lastly, do we need to change the way in which we address the racism issue?

There is no doubt that talking about racism is uncomfortable and usually unpleasant. When engaging contradicting opinions, the conversation can be aggressive and even abusive. However, as the conversation involves the persistent oppression of one or more groups by another/others for no other reason other than physical differences, we cannot afford to shy away from these discussions. The world is too small for any one group to live in isolation (tribes in the amazon forest have been unable to escape this globalization phenomenon).

RACISM: IGNORE IT… AND IT WON’T GO AWAY

Racism is a painful and degrading experience for the recipients. And what we are seeing, as an attempt to placate those who have been on the receiving end, is a dialling down of overt racism to democratic racism, which is just as bad, because it denies certain groups opportunities under the cover of politeness. However, how we engage in the discussion needs to change as well. Getting into shouting matches, threatening bodily harm only makes getting to a solution all the more harder. We need to find a middle ground of respect. People will get offended and defensive. We need to be cognizant of that and check our responses, lest we get sucked into the cycle of exchanging insults to see who insults who more.

The truth is, the victims of racism do not threaten the economic, social or political well being of anyone. If anything, diversity presents an opportunity to view socio-economic and political issues from a number of perspectives. Everyone wins when we treat each other as human beings of equal value. As Martin Luther King Junior once said, “We must learn to live together as brothers (and sisters) or perish together as fools.” For the sake of all humanity, for the sake of peace, we need to keep talking respectfully and in open spaces, because when we stop talking, we start fighting.

Cecilia Khamete
UPCOMING BSAC EVENTS

MLK Jr. Day Event:
Black Lives Matter: The Discussion Continues
Monday Jan. 15th, 2018
Dal SUB room 307
6pm - 8pm

African Heritage Month Event:
Why Black Unity?: Pan-Africanism, Dalhousie & the World
Tuesday Feb. 5th, 2018
Dal SUB room 303
6pm-8pm

Credits
Dominique Oliver-Dares: editor, head of graphic design
Emmanuel Maduko: project assistant
Oluronke Taiwo: project supervisor