

**Maxine Adwella**

**Re: Anti- systemic discrimination workshops**

For the past three years the National Collaboration for Youth Mental Health, NCYMH, which is a BIPOC mental health organization has been trying to implement Diversity in Student Mental Health in Ottawa to meet a demand from black and diverse and lgbtq2 students. The NCYMH thanks the OCDSB for listening and responding to our submissions on behalf of BIPOC students and LGBTQ2 students. There was a diverse mental health conference planned with the OCDSB but the strike and then covid-19 has delayed it. However, we can do more now to meet the immediate and current needs in this crisis of black and diverse students.

We need school boards and schools across this country to respond to the traumatic intersectionality between racism, mental health and student/life success.

On May 15, 2019 the OCDS adopted the International DEcade for People of African Descent We need the OCDSB to ACT now because the Gorge Floyd incident was a "triggering " event and covid-19 is a "triggering" event and our students are feeling depression, anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness and loss which is impacting their wellbeing, and academic success.

For decades, our society has tried to understand '**systemic discrimination**'; why some students do better in school than others, why families of different races are treated differently when they apply for an apartment or go to the bank for a loan or apply and interview for a job. All that children and youth know is that it 'hurts' to be treated differently and see their parents, whom they looked up to, treated poorly for no other reason than their race, culture, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability, or things that are beyond their control. This confusion leads to mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, low school performance, low self-esteem and family stress. It also affects and impacts the children who witness these children and youth being treated differently as they innocently become bystanders to systemic bullying, often against their will. Thus the state of being oppressed causes widespread environmental confusion, marginalization, isolation while consistently exposing all attendees to negativity, which is suffocating to all.

NCYMH submits that OCDSB schools need:

- 1) Youth Mental Health Plans for students who have experienced and are experiencing trauma from racism and others experiences.
- 2) To neutralize student learning environments with bi-weekly anti-systemic discrimination workshops which are grade specific.

**NCYMH's virtual anti-systemic student workshops are a SAFE HAVEN and a STRONG SUPPORT for the bullied child and the child or youth who is bullying.**

I Can't Breathe will bring a positive neutralized learning environment into schools, and will unify your classes, your workplaces and your communities and fill your communal spaces with understanding, positivity and the desire to learn and produce as a team for SUCCESS.

The National Collaboration for Youth Mental Health( NCYMH): [www.ymhconference.ca](http://www.ymhconference.ca)) would like to provide these on-going anti-systemic discrimination workshops virtually to students on a bi-weekly basis and there is a measurement piece which is also available which will measure the link between anti-systemic discrimination and black student success.