

P R O F I L E

BEVERLEY JOHNSON

An activist and a leader

A longtime activist

Beverley Johnson is a long-time human rights activist, not only in Canada, but also in England and her native Jamaica. In a lifetime of work, both within and outside OPSEU, she has helped to change structures, attitudes and practices and to challenge the status quo.

Bev received her Bachelor of Arts at Sir George Williams University in Montreal, majoring in Psychology with a minor in Sociology before obtaining her post-graduate diploma in Social Administration at London School of Economics. She also attended Ryerson University where she completed a program in Public Administration. Bev has worked as Human Rights Officer for the Ontario Public Service Employees Union since 1990.

Anti-racism, disability rights, aboriginal issues, gay and lesbian rights and youth concerns today find voice in OPSEU - and in the labour movement generally - in part because Beverley has helped these individuals and groups to assert theirs.

Advocate

She is a gentle but firm advocate, using skills she learned as a young woman working with troubled children in Jamaica and England. Her subsequent employment in Canada was at the Ontario Human Rights Commission where she played a key gatekeeper role as intake officer. Before joining OPSEU staff, Beverley's advocacy and political strategy skills were put to work, along with her colleagues, in developing a rationale for the union's first race relations and minority rights committee.

In the 1990s at OPSEU, Bev's expertise was crucial as she led the union's Employment Equity negotiations with the provincial government. During this period, she served on several committees outside the labour movement, including the Citizenship Minister's Advisory Committee on Employment Equity; the Advisory Committee to the Cornish Taskforce on the Human Rights Commission; and the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee.



Community work

Beverley has also worked diligently within her community as a member of many Boards, including the Congress of Black Women, the Children's Aid Society, Harmony Movement and Homeward Family Shelter. She was also a founding member of the Ontario Coalition of Visible Minority Women. At all times she brought a human rights perspective to the organization.

In 1996, she became a founding member of the first international chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) serving as Vice President. In 2001, she became the President of the Ontario Chapter and supported young trade unionists in efforts to become more educated and articulate on the issues of importance to young workers of colour.

In 2002, Bev was a member of the labour caucus at the first World Conference for Africans and African descendants, and she is a distinguished elder within the Global Afrikan Congress for her expertise in labour and human rights issues and her ability to link workers issues into every facet of society.

One of Beverley's greatest strengths is her perspective and her ability to work so effectively in joint efforts with employers and government. Over the years, she has done so successfully especially in the areas of policy development and training.

Awards

Beverley has received the 1997 CBTU Regional Humanitarian Award; the 2003 CBTU International Presidents Award; and the 2004 Jamaican Canadian Association Women Recognizing Women Award for outstanding contributions to the organization and the community. In both 2001 and 2004 she was nominated for the NDP's J.S. Woodsworth Award.

Beverley Johnson lives in Toronto, has two grown children and two grandchildren. She works as an equity officer with OPSEU.