

PROFILE

Tony Weeks

Tony Weeks was born in Trinidad and migrated to Canada in the early 1970's. He initially pursued studies in sociology and political science at Concordia University. Full time studies at Concordia limited his ability to sustain a decent quality of life and forced him into part-time work with agencies. His agency jobs dispatched him to factories, community centres and whatever odd jobs were available. He eventually made the decision to migrate to Toronto with his wife and three children to seek better employment. In 1983 Tony was hired as a correctional officer for the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services where he became a member of OPSEU.

Tony was exposed to activism at a very young age. Both his father and uncle were trade unionists and his mother was a social worker. Tony's home was like a community centre. People would drop in, debate, network and plan strategies for improving their community. His home environment made it natural for him to have a strong sense of justice, human rights, and activism. Tony continued to practice what he learned as a young man. His accomplishments and contributions as a union activist include:

- Becoming a steward in Local 582
- A founding member of the Association of Black Law Enforcers formed in 1992 (A.B.L.E), to address the needs and concerns of Black and other racialized minorities in Law enforcement and the community.
- Joining the Coalition of Black Trade Unionist, an international organization fighting for the rights of Black workers.
- Receiving commendation from the Human Rights Commission as a Human Rights officer (Special Task Force) 1991-1992
- An investigator with the Pay Equity Commission 1995-1996
- Facilitator for MCSCS Systemic Change Program (1998-2004)
- Facilitator for MCSCS Systemic Anti-Racism Organizational Change Committee S.A.R.O.C.C (2004 to present)



- A Human Rights investigator for OPSEU (early 90's to present)
- Presently probation officer in the Anti-Guns Gangs Unit (Probation and Parole Division)

As a correctional worker Tony experienced various forms of discrimination; which he fought using the Human Rights Policy, Occupational Health and Safety Act, the media, and the grievance process. His case against the ministry for racial discrimination and harassment, reached a settlement in 2004. Tony tackled issues that directly affected him, co-workers and the union as a whole. Tony was one of the key witnesses in the McKinnon VS MCSCS in issues of poisoned work environment and harassment.

One of Tony's most important lessons as an OPSEU activist is "activism is founded on the responsibility to protect against violations of human rights. Unions have always and continue to fight for the dignity of humankind."

Tony is inspired by people like Nelson Mandela and humanitarian organizations like Doctors without Borders. "Displays of altruism, where those involved are willing to go the extra mile in assisting their fellow citizen."

His advice to young workers of colour or activists is that "The labour movement is a light in the darkness. It continues to fight for the dignity for all human kind; it is big on justice and human rights and should remain that way. A Union has to reach out to diverse communities. We live in a diverse world; the more inclusive we are the better it is for the strength and longevity of trade unionism. The struggle may seem hard at times, but it is a creator that strengthens us all from the oppression in the world. Young activists should take time to replenish their mental well being"

Tony is a very strong believer in human rights and lives up to his beliefs by actively engaging and challenging systems and institutions that lack diversity.