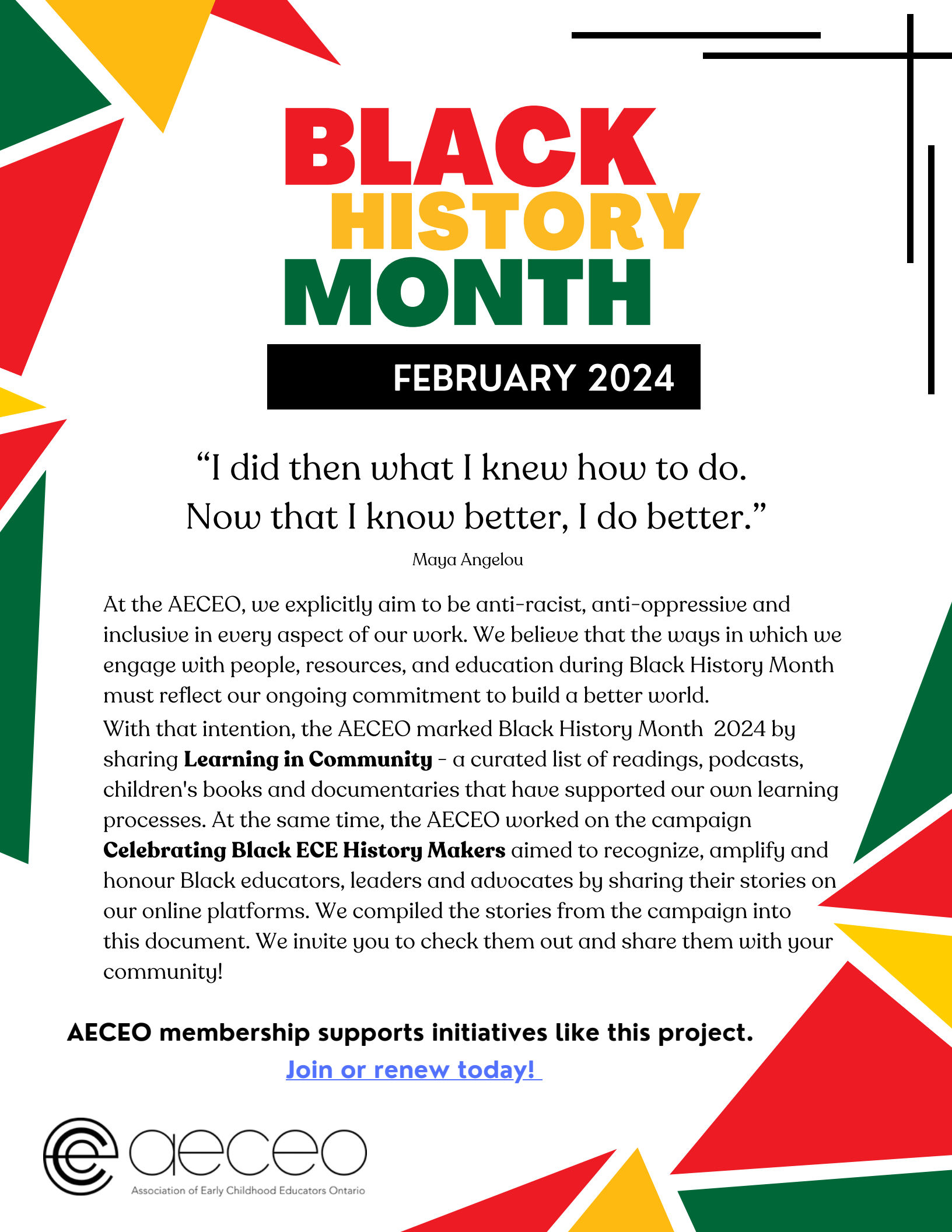




BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FEBRUARY 2024

“I did then what I knew how to do.
Now that I know better, I do better.”

Maya Angelou

At the AECEO, we explicitly aim to be anti-racist, anti-oppressive and inclusive in every aspect of our work. We believe that the ways in which we engage with people, resources, and education during Black History Month must reflect our ongoing commitment to build a better world.

With that intention, the AECEO marked Black History Month 2024 by sharing **Learning in Community** - a curated list of readings, podcasts, children's books and documentaries that have supported our own learning processes. At the same time, the AECEO worked on the campaign **Celebrating Black ECE History Makers** aimed to recognize, amplify and honour Black educators, leaders and advocates by sharing their stories on our online platforms. We compiled the stories from the campaign into this document. We invite you to check them out and share them with your community!

AECEO membership supports initiatives like this project.

[Join or renew today!](#)

“This is intentionally a safe space to belong and build relationships. It’s important for people to feel like they have a voice. This is the one time, maybe, where I can say things and the folks that are here will hear me.”

Tonja,
on why she is a Co-Lead of the
Community of Black ECEs



Tonja Armstrong-MacInnis is a Registered Early Childhood Educator who has over 30 years experience in varying capacities in the field of early learning and care - including facilitating workshops that incorporate the pedagogical documents of the ECE field with an anti-oppression and anti-racist lens. Tonja is a [2021 Prime Minister's Award Recipient for Teaching Excellence in Early Childhood Education](#). Tonja is currently a professor in Humber College's ECE program and the executive director at the Humber Child Development Centre. She is one of the co-leads of the Community of Black ECEs, an AECEO Community of Practice connecting Black ECEs to address Anti-Black racism in Early Childhood Education & support one another.

Connect with Tonja and the **Community of Black ECEs** via [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or via email at communityofblackeces@gmail.com

“The power of change lies within each of us.
We just have to be brave enough to use it.”



Dorothy Pitman Hughes,
(1938 - 2022) was an American feminist,
activist, child care advocate and one of the
co-founders of the Women's Action Alliance

Dorothy Pitman Hughes (1938–2022) was a transformative community organizer in New York City in the 1970s who fought for causes such as child welfare, accessible child care, housing and more. After leaving rural Georgia in the 1950s, she moved to New York, determined to fight for civil rights and equality. Hughes became a powerhouse activist, responding to the needs of her community, by actively engaging its members and building a platform for their empowerment. Throughout every phase of her life, Dorothy Pitman Hughes understood the transformative power of activism for Black communities.

Hughes created a high-quality childcare centre that also offered job training, adult education, housing assistance, food resources and more. We encourage you to read [When a Childcare Center Became a Political Movement](#), an interview with writer Laura L. Lovett who wrote the biography [With Her Fist Raised - Dorothy Pitman Hughes And The Transformative Power of Black Community Activism](#), released in 2021. You can also learn more about the West 80th Street Community Child Day Care Center and Dorothy Pitman Hughes's work in this [New York Times article](#).

“It is imperative that every nation invests in the people who build the nation. **Early childhood educators build our nation everyday** when they go to work by laying the foundation of learning for children and deserve more respect.

I just want to be able to look back in the future and see that **every early childhood professional is motivated to go to work everyday and can afford a decent life just like other professionals.**”



Joy

RECE, AECEO Board Member,
CUPE 2484

Joy Adeola is a Registered Early Childhood Educator who is currently a member-at-large of the [AECEO Board of Directors](#) and serves on the executive team for [CUPE 2484](#). Joy is an active advocate for children and the early learning professionals who care for them, using her voice to draw attention to the ECE workforce crisis with the media and government.

Learn more about Joy's advocacy - check out [CUPE 2484's Raising The Floor Campaign](#).

“Violence is Black children going to school for 12 years and receiving 6 years worth of education.”



Julian Bond

(1940-2015) American social activist, former NAACP Chairman, Queer rights activist

Julian Bond (1940-2015) was a U.S. legislator, social activist, civil rights leader, professor and writer. Bond led student protests against segregation in Georgia and was a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Julian Bond was an outspoken advocate for LGBTQ+ rights, being one of the first African American civil rights leaders of his generation to argue that [LGBTQ+ rights were civil rights](#). He also served as chairman of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People \(NAACP\)](#) from 1998 to 2010. Learn more about Julian Bond on this article written by Jeanne Theoharis, [What Julian Bond Taught Me](#).

"I am here to **empower the ECE community** to rediscover their passion and purpose. I know I'm impacting the entire community, especially children, when I support ECE professionals. Having walked in their shoes, I aim to affirm that **early educators are indispensable members of our society**, worthy of both respect and support."

Anisha Angella

CEO & Founder of **The Early Childhood Coach**, entrepreneur, author, Registered Early Childhood Educator, & ECE leadership coach



Anisha Angella is an entrepreneur, author, Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE), and ECE leadership coach on a mission to elevate and empower the ECE community, one professional at a time. Anisha achieves this by supporting ECE educators, leaders, owners, and parents through coaching, advocacy, and collaborative workshops. In 2020, Anisha published her first children's book. [Zoey Has An Allergy](#) celebrates kids with allergies, giving them courage to be themselves and the confidence to speak up for their safety. You can learn more about Anisha and her work to empower educators and ECE leaders on [The Early Childhood Coach](#).

“When a child walks in the room, your child or anybody else’s child, do your eyes light up? That’s what they’re looking for.”

Toni Morrison

(1931-2019), American novelist, Nobel Prize in Literature recipient, Pulitzer Prize for Fiction recipient



Toni Morrison (1931-2019) was an award-winning American novelist, editor and professor whose work focused on the Black American experience and addressing the consequences of racism in the United States. Throughout the years, her novels have been challenged (and even banned) by schools and libraries due to their honest exposition of racism, violence, and sexism. She was outspoken in [her fight against censorship](#) and advocated for libraries and open access to literature. Morrison was the first Black woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. To learn more about Toni Morrison, we encourage you to watch this clip of [her talking about loving and caring for children](#) on Oprah Winfrey's show in 2000 and read [Toni Morrison: American literary giant made it her life's work to ensure that black lives \(and voices\) matter](#), published on The Conversation in 2019

“I was getting frustrated with the fact that
things weren’t changing fast enough.

Instead of criticizing, I decided it was time to get more involved. It was time to put up or shut up.”



Zanana Akande

(b. 1937) teacher and politician, first Black woman elected to the Ontario legislature, former Minister of Community and Social Services

Zanana Akande is a former politician from Toronto. She was the first Black woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and the first Black woman to serve as a cabinet minister in Canada. While serving as Minister of Community and Social Services, Akande presided over the increase of welfare benefits and raised the social assistance rate. She later created the jobsOntario Youth Program, while serving as premier Bob Rae's parliamentary assistant.

Outside of politics, she worked as a teacher and a school principal for the Toronto District School Board and was a longtime member of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario. Akande was a co-founder of [Tiger Lily](#), a newspaper for visible minority women.

[Zanana Akande was given the Key to the City](#) by former Toronto mayor John Tory. Learn more about Zanana Akande on [this profile published by The Kit](#) in 2018.

“I keep asking questions. I'm always asking questions. I will continue to ask why we have such dynamics of power in the system, why there's so much anti-Black racism in the sector. **Advocacy, for me, is a way of life. It's how I show up.** It's how I inspire other people who look like me to show up and encourage them to speak up for the things that matter to them.”



Adebola,

Executive Director & Founder of Afro Women and Youth Foundation, Registered Early Childhood Educator, Child and Youth Care Professional, Certified Coach, Ontario Premier's Award Recipient

Adebola Adefioye is a Registered Early Childhood Educator, Child and Youth Care Professional, ECE professor, and the executive director and founder at [Afro Women and Youth Foundation](#), a non-profit organization that provides leadership, empowerment, and mentorship programs to Newcomers, Black Women and Youth. Adebola started AWYF after her daughter's experience of racism as a newcomer to Canada. Adebola has won many awards, including the 2021 Ontario Premier's Award, the YWCA Sudbury Woman of Distinction Award in the social justice category, the 2022 Black Faculty & Staff Community Network Award for Student Leadership and Catherine Howe Memorial Award at TMU.

Adebola leads [Creating an Anti-Racist Child Care System in Ontario](#), a Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) funded project, at the **Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care**. She co-leads the [AECEO Community of Practice in Sudbury](#) and is currently a PhD candidate in Policy Studies with a focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at TMU. [Learn more about Adebola on her website!](#)

The quote featured here is from Adebola's participation in the keynote panel at the [2023 AECEO Provincial Conference](#).

“We need to change our way of thinking about educating our young people, if we don't take a stand now to **change the way the systems are educating our children**, things are just going to get worse”



Nicole,

Executive Director & Founder of **Wlderus Educational Workshops**, Registered Early Childhood Educator, children's book author, co-lead of the **Community of Black ECEs**

Nicole Cummings-Morgan is a Registered Early Childhood Educator, Ontario Certified Teacher, workshop facilitator, children's book author and the executive director and founder of [Wlderus Educational Workshops](#). Nicole has over 20 years' experience working with children, families, educators and local community members. In December 2021, Nicole published her first book - [I Find it Hard to Learn](#) - a poignant story that addresses the challenges of learning differently and promotes self-reflection among educators and parents, sparking essential conversations about inclusive learning practices. Nicole is an active advocate for all things early childhood and is one of the co-leads of the Community of Black ECEs, an AECEO Community of Practice connecting Black ECEs to address Anti-Black racism in Early Childhood Education & support each other. Connect with Nicole and the **Community of Black ECEs** via [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or via email at communityofblackeces@gmail.com. The quote featured here was edited for clarity and it is from Nicole's participation in the SpeakUP! International Inc. podcast, hosted by Rita Burke and Ellington Brown. [Listen to this interview here!](#)

“My position [as **first Black and Queer person elected to the Ontario Legislature**] is an opportunity for me to physically bring in the youth and adults who don't typically see themselves in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to tour the building and see who is missing on those walls and recognize that Queen's Park is their house. This is their legacy and **they have a right to be at the table, helping to create the very pieces of legislation that impact very single one of our lives**”



Dr Jill Andrew,

Member of the Ontario Provincial Parliament for Toronto-St Paul's. Dr Andrew is a body equity advocate, a Child & Youth Worker and has a PhD in Education.

Jill Andrew is a Canadian politician who is the first Black and Queer person elected to the Ontario Legislature (and reportedly in Canada). Jill has a diploma in Child and Youth Work, a Bachelor of Education, a Masters in Women and Gender Studies and a PhD in Education, among other qualifications. She is currently the opposition critic for Women's Social and Economic Opportunity at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

She is a community co-owner of [Glad Day Bookshop](#) – the world's oldest LGBT bookstore, and the co-founder of [Body Confidence Canada](#), a group that advocates for equitable and inclusive representation of body diversity. Jill is an avid community leader, supporting organizations across the Greater Toronto Area that prioritize Black and racialized communities, youth, women, the arts, LGBTQ2+ communities, and more.

In her role as Member of Provincial Parliament, Dr. Jill Andrew has shown support for early childhood educators, education workers and the child care workforce on multiple occasions. Last November, on the [Canada-Wide Day of Action for Early Learning & Childcare](#), she joined the AECEO, the OCBCC, CUPE 2484, Child Care Now and other members of the Ontario early learning and child care community at the [Worth MORE!](#) rally at Queen's Park, calling for an [ELCC salary scale starting at \\$30/hour for RECEs](#).

The quote featured here is from a segment on representation in politics that aired on Global News Morning Toronto in 2023. [Watch the clip here!](#)

“As a Black woman and educator, I am proud to use my voice to share my story and my experiences with children who look the same as me. I'm able to **give children opportunity to be proud of who they are** even when society doesn't present those opportunities. It can be scary to go against the grain and make change but what we have to remember is that **as ECEs we know what we're doing**, we're educated in what we're doing and **we should not be afraid to cause good trouble**”

Deirdra,
Registered Early Childhood Educator,
Resource Consultant and co-lead of the
Community of Black ECEs



Deirdra Joseph is a Registered Early Childhood Educator currently working with the City of Toronto as a Resource Educator. Deirdra has a Bachelor's degree in Music and a certificate in Autism Behavioural Science. She is passionate about creating inclusive environments and often build a special connection with children with special needs, particularly autistic children. In her work, Deirdra is always seeking ways to uplift children and provide them with opportunities to shine and thrive. Born and raised in Canada by Trinidadian parents, in her spare time Deirdra enjoys crafting and watching the Toronto Raptors. She volunteers at her church and sings with the Juno Award-winning [Toronto Mass Choir](#). Deirdra co-leads the Community of Black ECEs, an [AECEO Community of Practice](#) connecting Black ECEs to address Anti-Black Racism in Early Childhood Education & support each other.

Connect with Deirdra and the **Community of Black ECEs** via [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or via email at communityofblackeces@gmail.com.

“We are all **part of one community**, and it is our responsibility to treat each other with respect and dignity.”

Jean Augustine

b. 1937) educator, elementary school principal and social justice advocate. First Black Woman to be elected to the House of Commons and to serve as federal Minister of the Crown



Jean Augustine is an educator, former elementary school principal and social justice advocate who was the first Black woman to be elected to the House of Commons in 1993. Augustine was born in Grenada and came to Canada to work as a nanny in 1960, through the West Indian Domestic Scheme. Once she became a citizen, Augustine earned her teaching certificate and worked in the Metropolitan Separate School Board and later the Toronto District Catholic School Board. Throughout her teaching career, she volunteered with grassroots organizations to strengthen immigrant and women's rights and to combat violence against women, drug abuse and poverty. Jean Augustine was very active in Toronto's Caribbean community and served in the committee that helped organize the first [Caribana festival](#) in 1967. Jean Augustine served as MP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore from 1993 to 2006. In 1995, she played an important role in establishing Black History Month in Canada by putting a motion before Parliament to recognize February as Black History Month. She was appointed Minister of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women in 2002, becoming the first Black woman serve as Cabinet Minister in Canada. In March 2007, the Ontario government appointed her the province's first Fairness Commissioner.

She has received multiple awards and commendations throughout her life, including being inducted as Member of the Order of Canada. She was granted an honorary doctor of laws by the University of Toronto, and has received honorary degrees from the University of Guelph, McGill University and York University.

In 2014 she founded the [Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women's Empowerment](#). Learn more about the story of the centre [here \(11-minute video\)](#)!

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HISTORY**

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“I did then what I knew how to do.
Now that I know better, I do better.”

Maya Angelou

(1928-2014); American memoirist, poet &
civil rights activist



Maya Angelou (1928-2014) was an American memoirist, poet, and civil rights activist. Angelou had a broad career as a singer, dancer, actress, composer, and Hollywood's first female black director, but became most famous as a writer, editor, essayist, playwright, and poet. She wrote several autobiographies and published multiple books of essays and poetry. Her work centres on themes including racism, identity, family and travel. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees. She was respected as a spokesperson for Black people and women, with her work being considered a defense of Black culture. As a civil rights activist, Angelou worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. She was also an educator and served as professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University.

As we close our series on **Celebrating Black ECE History Makers**, we encourage you to watch this [8-minute video compilation](#) of Maya Angelou's interviews and speeches. We hope you find her words as inspiring as we did and that you feel motivated to [“be the rainbow in someone else's cloud”](#)

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