Celebrating Black History Month

Craig Reynolds – PSAC REVP Ontario

This year, Black History Month is marked by the themes of resilience, perseverance, and success. It celebrates black people, past and present, who have risen to the challenges and changes of their time, so that their peers can move forward in their communities and into a better world. UVAE Human Rights Committee invites you to meet Craig Reynolds, Regional Executive Vice-President (REVP) of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) Ontario one of PSAC's current Black Leaders.

Since you joined the federal public service in 2004, how would you describe the evolution of the place of blacks in the public service?

Sadly, not much has changed since my time in the federal public service. There are a few improvements when it comes to policies and the recognition that racism exists in the public service, but much of the structural barriers still remain. There are still very few Black managers, as many of our Black members continue to be denied the promotions they deserve; and there is still a lack of representation in positions of decision-making power.

You joined the union in 2009 as a shop steward. What is the union's place in the debates surrounding the main issues concerning the place of blacks in the public service today?

I have seen our union become more vocal when it comes to addressing racism in the public service. More grievances are being filed, along with human rights cases, and a greater focus on equity has been placed at the centre of Local development. With our union taking a much more active role in holding the government accountable for its actions, the union has become instrumental in pressuring the employer to address issues facing Black workers.

You've served on the PSAC's Racial Visibility Committee in Toronto and as an alternate racially visible representative on the PSAC's Ontario Area Council. What were the highlights of your time on these committees? What personal values accompany you when you get involved in this kind of mandate.

My time with the Committee and Area Council were instrumental in my own development and engagement with our union. By providing a safe space where Black and Racialized members could work on issues affecting our communities, I saw the value of our union for more than pay and benefits. These structures helped me to understand the important social and civic work our union does and because of that I got more active. On a personal note, my time on the Committee and Area Council, helped to foster close relationships with fellow members who were going through many of the same struggles I was going through. This network of support helped me develop into the leader that I am today.

Since becoming REVP for Ontario in 2021, you've mentioned that you want to work on prioritizing engagement with young workers. Can you explain why this is a focus for you?

Our movement cannot be successful if we do not mentor and pass on what we have learned to the next generation to continue the fight. Young workers are leaders who deserve to be supported and given the resources they need to make positive change. There is so much passion and energy within our young members and by engaging them, our movement will continue to strengthen and grow. Fighting systemic racism is critical for our union, as social justice is a core belief of the labour movement and necessary for the collective action that gives us power. Division is what employers try to accomplish to weaken us, but together we are stronger. Our union needs to reflect the changes we want to see in our society, and work towards ending discrimination and racism in all its forms.

Unions do so much good for our country. They make sure workers are treated fairly and have the economic security that is necessary for a good quality of life. Many workers in this country do not have a union and are treated terribly by their employers, who take advantage of them because they can. By organizing new workplaces, we are helping people improve their working conditions, making workplaces safer and fairer. Unions empower education and promote civic engagement, and they are the reason the middle class exists.

To learn more about Craig Reynolds, PSAC REVP -Ontario visit:
https://psacunion.ca/craig-reynolds-regional-executive-vice-president

https://www.instagram.com/craig.psac?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet&igsh=M2M0Y2JmOTAyOA==