



## NEWS RELEASE

### **INSPIRATIONAL BLACK CANADIAN CHANGEMAKERS TO SPEAK AT LIVE CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY**

*Public Ceremony the culmination of a month of citizenship ceremonies hosted by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada to celebrate Black History Month*

FEBRUARY 26, 2021 – In celebration of Black History Month, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC) and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) are inviting the public to take part in a special live-streamed citizenship ceremony. Guest speakers will include Jean Augustine, the first Black woman to be elected to the House of Commons, and Nicholas Johnson, the first Black valedictorian at Princeton University, and Caroline Xavier, Associate Deputy Minister at IRCC and the first Black deputy minister in the Government of Canada.

Throughout February, citizenship ceremonies hosted by the ICC and IRCC have been centered on Black History Month, with the theme “The Future is Now,” to celebrate and acknowledge the transformative work that Black Canadians are doing.

“I am proud to be a part of this citizenship ceremony; events such as this help us celebrate the achievements of Black Canadians and newcomers. It is an important opportunity to better understand the impacts of systemic racism with the objective of eliminating racism in all its forms. As we celebrate Black History Month with our newest citizens, I urge all Canadians to contribute to positive change in our communities and in our country,” says The Honourable Marco E. L. Mendicino, P.C., M.P., Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Joined by inspirational storytellers, performers and distinguished voices, the ICC has celebrated the accomplishments of Black Canadians virtually across Canada, culminating with today’s ceremony [which will be livestreamed](#) at 10 am EST.

Guest speaker Jean Augustine, who introduced the motion to create Black History Month says, “We, as African-Canadians in this country since 1603, were part of this nation’s building.

Black history is not just for Black people. Black history is *Canadian* history. It’s the history that tells the complete story of Canada, and we all need to know that if we are to be this diverse society.”

Ms. Augustine will be joined by Nicholas Johnson to create a dynamic dialogue between an older generation of activism and the powerful young leaders of tomorrow. Mr. Johnson was not yet born when Ms. Augustine designated February as Black History Month, but has felt the results of her activism throughout his life.

“I think that my knowledge of those contributions [of Black Canadians] have been one of those things that have pushed me along the path that I have moved so far.”

Putting a spotlight on Black History Month as part of a citizenship ceremony sends an important message to new Canadians about their adopted country.

“How we welcome our newest citizens says a lot about who we are and what we value,” says Yasir Naqvi, CEO of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship. “Centering Black voices reminds all of us that we are a nation that celebrates diversity. It sends a message to Black Canadians that they belong here. They are a part of Canada’s history and our future.”



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“We have a long way to go in working toward true equality and a sense of belonging for BIPOC and newcomer communities, but moments like this are an important step forward.”

**About the [Institute for Canadian Citizenship](#)**

The Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC) is a national non-profit organization co-founded by The Rt. Hon. Adrienne Clarkson and John Ralston Saul. The ICC works to inspire Canadians to be inclusive, create opportunities to connect, and encourage active citizenship. Since 2005, the ICC has also supported more than 300,000 new Canadian citizens with programming to encourage a sense of belonging and build a more inclusive Canada.

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