



New Being Seen report examines Quebec industry's equity barriers

The report from the BSO, Black on Black Films and Coalition M.É.D.I.A includes 16 directives to help build a more authentic and inclusive screen industry in the province.

BY JAMIE CASEMORE

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Black and racialized individuals face a high level of systemic barriers in Quebec's screen industry, according to a new qualitative report from the Black Screen Office (BSO), Black on Black Films and Coalition M.É.D.I.A.

Released on Wednesday (April 29), the Being Seen Québec Report builds upon the BSO's initial **Being Seen** report from 2022, which examined equity shortfalls across the entire Canadian industry. This new report was developed via conversations with 90 Black or racialized industry professionals in Quebec across 19 focus groups conducted between 2023 and 2024. The report collected the key themes from those focus groups to develop directives to help build "a more authentic, inclusive and equitable screen industry in Québec."

The key themes focus group participants discussed include "persistent underrepresentation of equity-deserving communities at every organizational level" and a significant "lack of representation of Black and racialized individuals" in the Quebec industry.

The participants attributed those shortcomings to a number of systemic factors, including Quebec's historical context, with connections to colonization and slavery that have not been properly reckoned with. They also cite Quebec's struggle to maintain its unique identity, which participants perceive as being particularly "associated with whiteness."

In terms of sector-specific issues, participants said that it is difficult to get stories from racialized people greenlit and funded, with decision-makers frequently describing them as "niche" or "commercially risky."

These attitudes feed in to what the participants view as poor media representation of racialized individuals, with their stories often dictated by people outside of that group and typically without meaningful consultation.

The respondents did note that funding initiatives for racialized stories have increased since 2020, but many felt that those measures are temporary and insufficient. They added that the decision-makers allocating those funds are rarely from Black or racialized communities, which potentially introduces bias into project assessment.

The focus groups also expressed concerns about tokenism and performative diversity, with participants recounting being asked to imitate an "African accent" and being contacted for casting calls about "immigrant characters." They also described a dearth of racialized talent behind the camera, with many participants reporting a need to do their own hair and makeup due to a lack of expertise from the production's stylists.

Turning to on-screen representation, the groups described stereotypes as "omnipresent" throughout Quebec media. The most commonly cited stereotypes included Black people depicted in poverty, hardship or crime-related scenarios; Black single mothers; Black teenagers joining criminal organizations; hyper-sexualization of Black teenagers; Black men being portrayed as violent; and Black women being portrayed as angry.

When asked about content they thought exhibited proper representation of racialized groups, participants frequently pointed to English-language series such as CBC's *Kim's Convenience* (Thunderbird Entertainment) and U.S. projects including *Insecure*, *Atlanta*, *Get Out* and *Black Panther*. Frédéric Pierre's Radio-Canada comedy *Lakay Nou* (Productions Jumelage), which follows the lives of a Haitian family in Montreal, was one of the few examples of Quebec media cited. Many of the participants who named it also questioned why it took until 2024 for a series such as *Lakay Nou* to appear on Quebec television.

Two focus groups were dedicated to LGBTQIA+ communities and the intersectional struggles faced by queer racialized individuals. These discussions highlighted a "double oppression experienced by LGBTQIA+ communities," and emphasized the need to address sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity discrimination faced by racialized LGBTQIA+ individuals.

The report includes 16 directives developed to help guide the Quebec industry, which are split into three wider categories.

The first set of directives focuses on creating an inclusive industry, and asks stakeholders to examine their hiring practices, employment patterns, career advancement opportunities, training systems and advisory committees through a lens geared towards equity and inclusion. Funders, broadcasters and unions and guilds are also urged to track their progress via transparent and accountable processes, such as independent reporting and assessments.

The second set of directives pushes for further learning and training opportunities for equity-deserving individuals. Proposals include collaborating, learning from and supporting Black- and racialized-led organizations and their training initiatives; developing residency and internship programs for emerging talent; creating learning opportunities to discuss systemic racism, unconscious bias and entrenched barriers; and soliciting feedback from racialized communities to identify barriers to accessing funding initiatives.

The final set of directives focuses on authentic representation of racialized individuals. They ask for the industry to support storytelling that is multi-dimensional and authentic, and to solicit stories that reflect a wide range of backgrounds. The report also asks the industry to commit to addressing harmful and inaccurate stereotypes, set goals for hiring and cultivating diverse talent, and to move beyond tokenism by advocating for companies that demonstrate commitment to inclusion by removing barriers to entry and visibility.

"Equity cannot be achieved by diluting the debilitating impacts of systemic racism, shallow statements of solidarity, short-lived funding schemes or tokenistic hiring," read the report. "It requires bold leadership — leadership that recognizes the urgency of fundamentally re-examining the structures and relationships that marginalize and exclude."

The full report can be found [here](#).

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