Comment

Vaccine apartheid spreading the same strain of racism

Not only do Black lives not matter in Canada, in interpreting the actions of the Liberal government, they’re worth less around the world.

Erica Ifill
Bad+Bitchy

OTTAWA—Tell me anti-blackness is global without telling me anti-blackness is global.

On Nov. 26, researchers in South Africa detected a new addition to the coronavirus family, a variant named omicron (B.1.1.529).

It was first detected in Botswana but identified by South African researchers, after a rapid spike in cases in the city of Pretoria. In just two short weeks, the variant had reached outbreak status, with cases detected in Belgium, Botswana, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, and the United Kingdom, meaning it’s already on its march towards global domination as the variant of fear for 2022.

Happy New Year.

This variant is more transmissible than previous iterations of COVID-19. ‘Experts believe there are at least 50 mutations on the new variant, with 32 mutations on the spike protein, the point where the virus enters human cells.”

However, little is known as to how that translates into physical implications, as compared to previous variants. Of great concern is the potential for reintroductions.

The research continues, particularly since South Africa is one of the leading researchers on coronavirus in the world. This is because for the last few decades, South Africa has been battling both HIV and TB and has some of the best resources and health networks on the continent. According to Science.org, this gives South African researchers an advantage in fighting the coronavirus. “Infection control policies are more rigid for COVID-19 and TB … because both seem to spread through exhaled droplets. As healthcare workers are familiar with the protective gear they need to treat suspects, they’re more efficient at treating patients. And South Africa’s government is repurposing the aggressive ‘find, treat, and prevent’ strategy that’s key to its HIV response … It began to send mobile COVID-19 testing clinics into densely populated areas to test every case and contacts.”

This article was written in April 2020. Although Canadian researchers didn’t drive-throughs, that approach is a narrow one, which doesn’t reach those most exposed and/or most marginalized.

I see Canadian excellence is alive and well.

The political response to the detection of omicron was as expected from the Liberal government: swift and anti-Black. By imposing a travel ban on African countries that will do little to stop the spread of the variant, it left out the rich countries (read: white) that have also detected the variant but are the aforementioned countries that detected the strain, Belgium, Botswana, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, and the United Kingdom, only one was hit with the travel ban. Because only one is in Africa. Because only one is a majority Black country.

And while the South African variant will soon lead some media outlets to dub this iteration of COVID-19 “The South African variant”, these outlets have no idea that the African continent produces the world’s second largest amount of carbon dioxide. They have no idea that the same strain of racism is perpetuated in the name of White Saviourism. They have no idea that the actions of the Liberal government: Bill 21, the so-called “secularism law” that discriminates against practicing Muslims, Sikhs and Jews; and Bill 96, his proposed language law. Never mind the thousands of Quebeckers who died during the pandemic due to incompetence, or the lack of a cogent government strategy.

The Liberals, on the other hand, are dependent on urban voters, especially in Montreal. Within cosmopolitan Montreal, the Anglophone and ethnic communities have almost always skewed Liberal, and federalist. Anglade’s dilemma is therefore this: appeal to Anglophones and lose francophone votes, or seek out young people, nationalists, and those in the region with a stronger pro-French message and gain seats.

Wading into this political minefield is former provincial minister of intergovernmental affairs Benoit Pelletier, who teaches law at the University of Ottawa, and who recently recovered from a two-month-long bout with COVID. He recently wrote a lengthy article in La Presse last week entitle “The Quebec Liberal party has to find its soul.”

In it, he offered Anglade some advice on how to win the next election. He proposed Quebec emphasize its nationhood at home and abroad, press the French language everywhere, and promote its ability to decide its own constitutional future. He suggested to be a federalist means to support greater autonomy for Quebec, and that while rights are important, “they should not be an obsession.”

Pelletier is a contradiction: he sees himself as a great intellectual, and then comes forward with all the most hackneyed arguments one could imagine. He passes himself off as a federalist, only to be revealed to be what the late constitutional scholar and senator Eugene Forsey called a “semi-demi-semi separatist.”

I heard Pelletier offer similar ideas at a McGill conference as a minister many years ago. He proposed Quebec pursue an international policy that would be the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine on steroids. The doctrine named for late Liberal minister Paul Gérin-Lajoie, postulates Quebec has the right to “work in the international sphere in any area in which it is sovereign.” For Pelletier, that means Quebec should be able to negotiate treaties on the world stage in health, labour, and education.

When he proposed that at McGill, he was eviscerated by longitudinal researcher Paul Heine beckner, among others. Indeed, at Global Affairs, while consultation with Kenogamiak, Que, is needed, unless the doctrine caused serious problems between Ottawa and Quebec, we just ignored it.

His final point, to throw out rights and established conventions because they are not politically convenient, is morally bankrupt. In short, Pelletier’s scrumpled thoughts do not constitute a strategy.

The Quebec Liberals’ winning formula in the past was to be federalist and nationalist, be good stewards of the economy, keep a window open to the world, encourage basic rights, welcome immigrants, and encourage business to thrive.

Andrew Caddell
With All Due Respect

The Quebec Liberal Party struggles for its soul

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Andrew Caddell

KAMOGRASKA, Que.—Domi nique Anglade is the eldest optimist. Coming out of its week end policy convention in Quebec City, the Quebec Liberal Party gave her a ringing endorsement to develop a platform to win the election and a left-wing tilt to the economy. She believes this platform will make the party competitive, is morally bankrupt. In short, Pelletier’s scrumpled thoughts do not constitute a strategy.

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