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Blair A. Ruble
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HOW TORONTO BECAME TORONTO

At the end of World War II, Toronto retained its reputation as "America's Belfast." Beset almost from its founding by sectarian conflict and violence among a predominantly "Orange" English, Scotch, and Irish Protestant community embedded in Britain's colonial system and alargely "Republican" Irish Catholic immigrant working class, the city had a nasty

reputation. The thuggish mentality of the Protestant Orange Lodges dominated the city's story throughout its first century, which began in 1793 when Governor John Graves Simcoe relocated Upper Canada's colonial capital for protection against American aggression. As late as 1955, the city's Mayor Leslie Howard Saunders promoted Toronto as a Protestant bastion. There was nothing subtle about his message. Saunders listed himself in his campaign materials as "Protestant."

Unsurprisingly, Toronto's soot-covered brick cityscape often seemed to glower under low, gray Canadian skies. A deeply provincial industrial colonial outpost, Toronto seemingly lacked the dynamism of its as-yet-flourishing rust belt partners across the border to the south (such as Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Toledo and Detroit). As industry grew, thousands of working class families – often Irish Catholics supporting the Hibernian Benevolent Society in opposition to the Orange Lodges -- were relegated to substandard, self-built homes in such neighborhoods as "Cabbagetown." Their highly idiosyncratic self-built houses lent a higgly-piggly feel to many a proletarian street.

Toronto played a distant second fiddle within Canada to the country's older historic financial and mercantile center, Montreal.Everything in Toronto appeared second rate in comparison with the seemingly more cosmopolitan and firmly established historic primate city 330 miles away.

Perhaps most irritating of all for the local creative class, local ordinances shut down all manner of sporting and cultural events on Sundays, while limiting the consumption of alcohol in public. There would be no traditional stand-up bars in "Toronto the Good" until the 1960s as alcohol consumption was prohibited without food. Those Torontonians who wished to drink at home had to apply for a Government-issued license to purchase alcohol.

A robust, largely East European Jewish immigrant community proved to be the first harbinger of change when it arrived during the early years of the twentieth century. Largely concentrated at the foot of Spadina Avenue in an area dominated by the needle trades and nearby Kensington Market, Toronto's first Jewish residents were dirt poor having traveled more or less directly from the harsh *shtetls* of the Russian Empire. They were greeted unkindly by both Orange and Catholic Torontonians, a hostility exemplified by the infamous August 1933 Christie Pits Riots that erupted when National Socialist wannabe Swastika Clubsattacked "foreigners" at a baseball game between Jewish and Italian community teams.

World War II transformed the city forever. The war solidified the presence of the city's financial institutions increasingly huddled around a portion of Bay Street that had been dubbed "Canada's Wall Street" by dispossessed Western farmers just a few years before. The city's industrial

base expanded as Toronto became one of the chief shop floors for the British war effort. The war similarly nurtureda nascent communications sector that would grow to rival similar centers across North America. A young city in a young country, Toronto was ready for change.

Immigrants were beginning to make their presence felt in new ways. More successful members of the Jewish community began to move uptown – and uphill -- to the small, independent, wealthy enclave of Forest Hills. The floodgates of Italian immigration were about to open, luring tens of thousands of those impoverished by war.Moreover, English Canada began to integrate into a booming continental postwar American economy untouched by the ravages of war.

Still tied politically, economically, and psychologically to the imperial Mother Ship in London, Toronto nonetheless was only beginning to create its own identity. In retrospect, the elegant Art Deco Bank of Commerce Tower – which opened at the height of the Great Depression in 1931 and remained the tallest building in the British Empire until 1962 – would prove to be a more appropriate symbol for the city than the stockyards which gave the town the moniker of "Hog Town."

Political institutions and social attitudes change more slowly than built environments. The domination of Protestant hardliners organized around the Orange Lodges continued to exert control over public institutions; as did the imperial "Old Compact" families that had forged Canadian confederation less than a century before and were now housed in neighborhoods with names such as "Rosedale."

The city's atmosphere at the time was perhaps best captured byPolish physicist Leopold Infeld, who collaborated with Albert Einstein and Max Born during his career. Reflecting on his time teaching at the University of Toronto during the 1940s, Infeld observed that "it must be good to die in Toronto. The transition between life and death would be continuous, painless, and scarcely noticeable."

How is it, then, that a child born in postwar Toronto wakes up on any morning a lifetime later as a resident of one of the most successfully diverse cities in the world? How did this closed bigoted town grow into a celebrated poster child for late twentieth century urban multiculturalism? What are the keys of success in transforming a spiteful provincial backwater into a global powerhouse embracing residents from every conceivable corner of the world? What are the limits of that success imposed by some of the public and private policies that have promoted multiculturalism?

Observers from afar often assume that the Canadian multiculturalism model of citizenship adopted by the Canadian Parliament in 1971 must hold the answer to these questions. Such federal policies – which were further enshrined in law with the passage of the 1988 Multiculturalism Act

-- undoubtedly have played a supporting role over time. However, story has far deeper roots.

To begin, the initial multicultural policies were a largely improvisational response by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau's government to a growing backlash among Aboriginal peoples and immigrants to the earlier policies embracing bilingualism and biculturalism. These previous policies had elevated the country's historical "charter groups" to a new status just two years before. Multiculturalism became a means for Native Peoples to assert their claim to long-standing historical community rights that are often territorially based; and immigrant groups to demand greater inclusion. The result has been a re-conceptualization of Canadian citizenry as polyethnic and diverse.

Changing federal immigration policies proved to be of greater direct importance for explaining Toronto's makeover from Belfast to a model of urban diversity and tolerance.Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King accelerated Canada's transformation when, in 1946, he introduced the Canadian Citizenship Act, which officially made Canadians "Canadian citizens" rather than British subjects living in Canada.In late 1950, the Canadian government began opening immigration offices in Europe. The Immigration Act of 1952 -- together with other administrative and legal policies and procedures – further eased immigrant access to Toronto.

This initial lessening of immigration restrictions opened the door for Italians – primarily poorly educated rural migrants from the peninsula's south who were mired in postwar poverty – to fill the seemingly endless construction and industrial jobs created by an exploding Canadian economy. Building on more modest prewar migration patterns, Italians streamed into Toronto initially settling near College Street at Manning Avenue before moving on to what is now known as the "Corso Italia" along St. Clair Avenue West. Initially laborers, the immigrant offspring generation took full advantage of the city's expanding universities to move into the middle class. By the early twenty-first century, Toronto had become home to nearly 500,000 Italians, 90% of whom trace their residence in the city to immigration immediately following World War II.

The Italians were followed by other groups fleeing deprivation in Europe. A significant Hungarian community formed following the failed 1956 Hungarian uprising against Soviet domination; establishing the "Goulash archipelago" along Bloor Street between Spadina Avenue and Markham Streets. Greeks fleeing their own internecine conflicts at home similarly established a robust Greektown along The Danforth; as did Portuguese immigrants somewhat later.

The federal government lifted racial quotas on immigrant selection in 1967, converting the granting of immigrant status to a point system based on skills and educational achievement. This change led to a dramatic shift over time in immigrant country of origin. Prior to this change, 90 percent

of Canadian immigrants came from Europe, with only 3 percent arriving from Asia. By the mid-2000s, nearly 85% of Canadian immigrants were non-European.

These changes transpired while Canada's primate city Montreal was becoming less attractive to businesses and immigrants due to sustained political unrest over language rights and sovereignty. World War II proved to be a turning point for Montreal as well as for Toronto. Quebec had come out of World War II stuck in a time warp that placed *La Belle Province* at odds with much of North America. A nationalistic right-wing populist government under Premier Maurice Duplessis and his thuggish Union Nationale Party – together with corrupt police and officialdom – used its gerrymandered majority in the Assemblée nationale to insure that nothing would change.

Transformation came as the rest of the continent increasingly became incorporated into a dynamic continental extending far beyond local boundaries. Eventually, following Duplessis's death, everything would snap during the "Quiet Revolution" begun in 1960 by a new Liberal Government under Jean Lesage.

The reinvigorated Quebec consciousness re-awakened periodic movements for the political separation of French from English Canada. Various radical movements caught the revolutionary spirit of the times, increasingly being drawn to violence and terrorist acts. Attempts to gain independence through armed exploits reached an apex in October 1970 when the kidnappings of a prominent provincial official and a British diplomat led to the imposition of Martial Law throughout the province.

On November 15, 1976, the sovereigntist Parti Québécois under the leadership of Rene Lévesque defeated the province's Liberal Party-dominated government. As their first act, the new government passed Bill 101 establishing French as the sole official language of Quebec and began setting down the groundwork for a referendum on independence.

On May 20, 1980, Quebec voters went to the polls in a referendum authorizing the provincial government to renegotiate the terms of Confederation. When the votes were tallied the No vote surpassed the Yes 59.56% to 40.44%. A second referendum rejected Quebec sovereignty by the razor-thin margin of 50.98% No to 49.42% Yes.

As this process unfolded, many of Montreal's corporations and English-speaking residents began decamping for Toronto. This exodus accelerated Toronto's development as Canada's leading economic center and largest city, statuses achieved by the end of the 1970s.

As Toronto surpassed Montreal as the largest port of entry into the country, the cityimmediately felt these dramatic demographic shifts on its streets and in its neighborhoods. By the first decade of the twenty-first century, just under half of the city's residents were foreign born, including a large number of "visible minorities" (i.e., non-whites). Toronto is now

considered to have the second largest foreign born population in the world behind only that of Miami.

Immigrants continue to fuel the city's metropolitan growth, with over 100,000 arriving in the region every year. According to the 2011 Canadian census, there are nearly as many Torontonians of Chinese ethnic origin (12.0%) as there are of English heritage (12.9%); and more than those who identifythemselves as "Canadian" (11.3%). Religious diversity has become just as striking, with Catholics constituting the largest group (28.2%), followed by those with no religious affiliation (24.2%) and Mayor Saunders's Protestants as a distant third (11.9%).

Immigrants unsurprisingly have been primary drivers behind dramatic changes in the city's morphology. If, in 1950, Toronto was most appropriately compared with Great Lake neighbors Buffalo, Cleveland and Toledo, the city and its expansive metropolitan region now ranks among such North American powerhouses as Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, and San Francisco. Indeed, Toronto has grown faster than any North American city over the past half-century other than Los Angeles. The Greater Toronto Area presently has a population over six million; and, the larger Southern Ontario Golden Horseshoe within which it sits exceeds nine million residents.

If Canadian federal policies fostered the context for metropolitan transformation, Ontario provincial and Toronto municipal policies have proven critical for insuring that diversity would become an asset rather than a liability. More often than not regional and local officials were driven by the exigencies of an increasingly modern economy that required a workforce that was mobile, educated and literate. Watching the immigration story unfold, local elites at the provincial level moved to standardize education, labor practices, and cultural policies. Their actions created a shared sense of democratic identity that transcended multicultural differences by offering the promise of opportunity with dignity.

A small circle of Protestant, British-oriented elite families often called the "Old Compact" dominated the commanding heights of Ontario life from the earliest days of colonization. Educated at Upper Canada College before heading off to either the University of Toronto, or elite British and US institutions, descendants of this social elite long controlled the province's major financial and legal institutions. Hidden within their board rooms, social clubs, and Anglican Churches, members of Ontario's elite thought of themselves as the most proper custodians of Upper Canada's British colonial legacy. By the 1950s, their paternalism permitted others to enjoy political and economic success.

For more than a quarter century, their "Big Blue" Machine dominated Ontario politics with a string of Progressive Conservative governments stretching from 1943 until 1985 under the leaderships of Premiers George Drew, Thomas Kennedy, Leslie Frost, John Robarts and

Bill Davis. With the exception of Kennedy, whose premiership lasted only a few months, all had studied at the prestigious and well-connected Osgoode Hall Law School and all represented the values of the province's business elite.

Collectively, they shared that elite's belief that government can and should be run by the business virtues of efficiency, incorruptibility, sober and steady administration intended to provide a predictable business order which would benefit all. They endorsed agendas favoring planning, private enterprise, home ownership, infrastructure development, education and research all in the name of advancing Ontario's business climate. This was the era when British actor Peter Ustinov famouslyquipped that Toronto was "New York run by the Swiss."

Not every action during the Tory decades fostered tolerance. In 1944 Drew promulgated a notorious mandate that all Ontario public schools require religious instruction; a rule that would not be rescinded until 1990. The purpose of this regulation was explicit: to promote Protestantism (it should be noted that a separate system of Catholic schools receiving public funds and governed by its own boards co-existed alongside the public schools). Bible recitation and readings were encouraged, often placing teachers in Toronto's Jewish neighborhoods in a quandary.

Robarts and Davis, in contrast, played especially important roles in the creation of a welcoming climate for Toronto's new immigrants. Their "Red Toryism" led them to promote education at all levels, and to support a massive expansion of the province's university system. Canadian universities generally – and Ontario universities in particular – recruited new faculty from abroad (primarily from universities in the United States and United Kingdom). By 1971, three-quarters of university faculty hires outside of Quebec were foreigners.

Robarts and Davis sought the creation of a highly skilled labor force. In the process, they extended previously unknown opportunity for affordable high quality higher education for Ontarians, including second generation immigrants. They further expanded access to health care and other public services that made it possible for immigrants to thrive, eroding any sense of zero-sum competition among foreign and native born families.

The continuous expansion of the Canadian and Toronto economies made their success possible. A prolonged recession during the 1990s would test this model of inter-ethnic relations. By that time, however, the embrace of multiculturalism and diversity had become embedded in the local identity.

Municipalities under the Canadian system are subdivisions of their provincial governments rather than self-standing institutions. Consequently, the role of local officials becomes dependent on whatever arrangement is established by provincial legislation. In the case of

Toronto, the business-oriented approach of the Progressive Conservatives led to the establishment of the first metropolitan government in North America. Established in 1953, the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto served as an upper tier of municipal government incorporating six boroughs of which the City of Toronto was the largest. "Metro" became responsible for major infrastructure projects, public transportation, public safety, regional planning and housing. The constituent boroughs -- including the City of Toronto -- retained more granular responsibilities, especially at the neighborhood level. This system continued until 1998 when the Province amalgamated all six constituent boroughs into a new City of Toronto.

One consequence of this governance structure was the creation of an urban system that consisted of two seemingly opposed topographies. Metro both supported concentration in the traditional Toronto downtown, and the development of a vast suburban region punctuated by nodes of commercial activity.

As geographer Ted Relph observes in his 2014 investigation of Toronto development *Toronto: Transformations in a City and its Region*, these competing visions of the urban future aligned with the philosophical insights of two of Toronto's most seminal late twentieth century social thinkers: Jane Jacobs and Marshall McLuhan. Jacobs became a touchstone for the City of Toronto's commitment to small-scale urbanism. McLuhan's notions of fluid electronic age boundary-less networks – though never articulated as an urban theory – reflected the evolution of Toronto's metropolitan region. While seemingly contradictory, both Jacobs and McLuhan and their visions of social change not only co-existed in Toronto; but were, at times, joined together. In 1970, for example, they collaborated in a short documentary "*The Burning Would*" opposing the ultimately defeated extension of the Spadina Expressway into midtown Toronto.

This unusual balance between concentration and suburbanization created the opportunity for managed growth that offered newly arriving immigrants a wide inventory of housing and employment opportunities. The population of the older City of Toronto has remained more or less stable between 650,000 and 700,000 even as the metropolitan region's population exploded to over six million. Most of the city's foreign born population joined the ranks of the five-and-a-half million Torontonians living outside previous city boundaries.

Closer to the ground, the former Toronto School Board (the body governing the once Protestant-dominated public schools) at times mitigated some of the more discriminatory features of the Ontario public school system. Similarly, over time, the Board and local officials embraced the system's growing diversity and promoted opportunities to support cross-cultural dialogue and cultural expression.

In many ways, city officials provided powerful symbolic support for the changes that were taking place throughout the city and region. In 1955, long-time city council member Nathan Phillips defeated "Protestant" candidate Mayor Saunders and several others to become Toronto's first Jewish Mayor. Phillips remained in office until losing an election in 1962. His tenure marked a moment of dramatic change – at least symbolically – as he sought to "modernize" Toronto. The city bought and razed numerous historic buildings downtown clearing the way for the explosion of modern office development that has become the city's trademark. These projects linked to underground arcades which have grown into the vast twenty mile PATH network connecting major transportation, employment, and retail centers throughout central Toronto for over 200,000 pedestrians each workday.

Phillips, when coming to office, inherited a growing controversy over plans to build a new city hall. Toronto voters rejected proposals promoted by a local firm that would have replaced the landmark Old City Hall with an undistinguished slab tower. Phillips cajoled the city council to undertake an international competition which, in 1958, resulted in the acceptance of an elegantly modern design submitted by Finnish architect Viljo Revell. As important as the building itself – which has become an iconic symbol for the city – Revell's plan included what was the city's first public square. What is now known as Nathan Phillips Square has become Toronto's great civic gathering space. Opening as it did just as Toronto embraced its growing immigrant communities the plaza provided the first opportunity for Torontonians to gather together and embrace their diversity.

Additional gestures honoring diversity soon followed. In 1964, the city's Ukrainian community initiated a folk music "nation builders" event at the Canadian National Exhibition. The festival proved so successful that, as part of the city's Canadian Confederation Centennial celebrations in 1967, the city council invited folk groups representing all of the city's ethnic communities to participate in a week-long heritage celebration on the new Nathan Phillips Square. This festival expanded in 1969 into a week-long city-supported celebration of ethnic diversity known as "Caravan." Torontonians purchased "passports" which they took to have stamped at pavilions featuring ethnic foods and performances in each community. As a result they discovered the rich neighborhood mosaic that had emerged as more and more immigrants poured into their city.

By the 1970s, as many as 400,000 people trekked from one corner of Toronto to another during Caravan, marveling at a multiculturalism they had never before imagined. The festival had lost its luster by the early 2000s, and came to an end. Torontonians no longer required a special invitation to experience multiculturalism. They lived their own caravan of diversity each and every day.

Toronto's remarkable transformation from "America's Belfast" to one of the world's largest and most successful multicultural cities in the course of a lifetime is rightly celebrated as a primary example that diversity can become an asset. Enthusiastic praise for Toronto's success – while deserved – should not obscure some of the very real limits to multicultural comity that emerged with the passage of time. Those among the city's and province's elites promoting immigration, for example, never intended to open their own board rooms and social clubs to outsiders; and have done so only parsimoniously. Two structural challenges – those of race and growing inequality – deserve greater attention.

Toronto has avoided many of the worst racial pathologies of the United States. Governor Simcoe banned slavery in the city from the very beginning. More generally, the 1834 Slavery Abolition Act banned the practice throughout the British Empire, including in Canada. The official "Jim Crow" segregation present in the United States was not repeated north of the border. Nonetheless, being Black in Toronto has never been easy.

The city's small Black community at the time of Confederation celebrated the formation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 with other Torontonians. They already had formed the North America Convention of Coloured Freemen and have remained outspoken advocates of their own rights ever since. Discrimination has been real and damaging. In 1882, to cite one poignant example, former African American slave Albert Jackson secured an appointment as mailman only following the intervention of Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald. Caught between two warring and bigoted Orange and Green factions, Black Torontonians have faced discrimination throughout the city's history. Their most consistent struggle has been with gaining the equal protection of the police.

Toronto's growing Black community has been transformed by immigration. Initially descendants of arriving Blacks from the British Isles and African Americans escaping slavery and Jim Crow discrimination in the United States, today's Black residents are primarily immigrants from the Caribbean and their offspring. Black Torontonians are more likely that other Torontonians to be questioned by the police (in 2017 79% of Black men aged 25 to 44 reported having been stopped by officers); more likely to be shot by the police; more likely to live in segregated communities; more likely to be streamed into non-academic curricula; more likely to face daily "micro-aggressions;" and are more likely to be poor. All the while, the success of South Asian and other Asian immigrants belies simple notions of white racism.

The 2017 "*Black Experience Project in the GTA*" undertaken by several Toronto institutions -- including the United Way, YMCA, and York University -- underscored the diversity of the Black experience in Toronto. They reported that the Toronto community of African descent – which embraces some 400,000 individuals who self-identify as "Black"-- is

comprised of individuals from several countries, speaking multiple languages and practicing varied religions. Many are highly successful and the community as a whole has made substantial contributions to the city's, region's, and country's success. Nonetheless, surveys reveal that Black people across all of these differences shared the belief that racism is common in Toronto life. This perception is reflected further in economic data which reveal that 25% of Toronto's Blacks fall into low income categories as opposed to 11% of "non-visible minorities."

A fulsome celebration of multiculturalism similarly obscures solidifying patterns of inequality throughout the Toronto region. Landmark studies published in 2010 by University of Toronto sociologist David Hulchanski – *The Three Cities within Toronto* – and in 2002 and 2011 by the United Way– *Poverty by Postal Code* – exposed significant, persistent, and growing income inequality throughout the Toronto metropolitan region.

Based on income change between 1970 and 2005, Hulchanski found that Toronto neighborhoods fell into three distinct cities. City # 1 consisted of predominantly high income neighborhoods in which incomes had risen relative to the metropolitan norm. Located in the central city and along subway lines, these neighborhoods formed an upside down "T" running along the waterfront and up the city's primary north-south axis along Yonge Street.

City # 3 was generally low income and was found in northeastern and northwestern Toronto. These neighborhood followed an earlier pattern of industrial areasgrowing up a century or more before along major rail lines.

City # 2 was primarily middle-income, having tracked metropolitan average income since 1970s. This city had shrunk over the course of the period covered by the study. Faced with increasing housing and living costs, residents were most likely to leave the region rather than simply move to the suburbs.

Rising income polarization is visible as well in growing trends of gentrification that are visible throughout Toronto's neighborhoods. Several traditional immigrant gateway neighborhoods in the central city have been priced out of the reach of newly arriving immigrants whonow tend to head to "ethnoburbs" further out in the metropolis.

University of Toronto political scientist captured these changes through the lens of a single neighborhood school in 2017 in his *Making a Global City. How One Toronto School Embraced Diversity.* Having serendipitously gained access to the registration records of Toronto's Clinton School, Vipond was able to trace the evolution of the school's student body. Located in the traditional migrant reception area near the intersection of Bathurst and College Streets, Clinton was established in 1888 to introduce immigrant children to the Canadian way of life. The

school's achievement is evident in the successful life stories of its alumni, including, most famously, the Canadian-American television journalist Morley Safer.

Vipond identified distinct periods in which the student body consisted of predominantly native-born Canadians and the children of migrants from the British Isles (1888-1920), Jewish children (1920-1951), Italian and later Portugueseimmigrants (1950-1975), and a hyper-diverse mixture of children from all over the globe (1975-1990). He traced school policies, tensions with the School Board and other city authorities, and the reaction of alumni to their student days. In doing so Vipond, in his own words, discovered that the"well-known citizenship 'tune' – from assimilation to integration to multiculturalism – is still recognizable at Clinton, but the dissenting voices and different rhythms are interwoven in ways that may come as a surprise to listeners who are expecting a simple tuneful melody." This improvisational complexity is essential to understanding the story of how Toronto became Toronto.

Over the course of the past three-quarters of a century, Toronto has made a remarkable transition from being a grungy industrial "American Belfast" to one of the continent's most successful and diverse "Global Cities." This accomplishmentholds many lessons for other communities.

The first is to understand that change on the scale of a city is incremental, with new norms and expectations building up as coral expands a reef. There are no comprehensive policy responses that address all the challenges of growing diversity; nor are there any single levels of power that make a difference on their own. In the Toronto case, partnerships among federal, provincial, and city officials together with community organizations and an all-important private sector paved the way for the city's greatest advances.

Similarly, the Toronto experience demonstrates the prominence of long-term and sustained investment in providing quality education for all residents from primary school through graduate and professional education.

Finally, there must be a recognition that the task of sustaining a vibrant and productive multicultural community is never complete. Noisome challenges of race and inequality remain despite all of Toronto's impressive achievements.

Whatever these challenges may be, contemporary Toronto demonstrates the wisdom of its own official motto: "Diversity Our Strength."

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