

## **Is Volunteerism truly a pathway to comparable employment for racialized immigrants?: exploring the experiences of African-Caribbean migrants in the GTA**

Andrew Greaves, Graduate Student,  
Immigration and Settlement Studies, Ryerson University

Immigrants account for 22% of Canada's population with a significant, increasing number facing substantial employment barriers such as lack of Canadian experience. Previous works indicate that out of the total number of immigrants to Canada yearly, only a small percentage of those born in the Caribbean, Central and South America were employed in a comparable occupational group as they were prior to migrating, compared to a larger percentage of immigrants born in the USA, Australia and New Zealand. Furthermore, employment rates among immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean are low and many unemployed or accept employment well below their field of education and training obtained in their country of origin. While studies on the impacts of under/unemployment among skilled immigrants are limited, evidence suggests that mental health can be undermined due to a lack of income, loss of employment-related skills, loss of social status, and family pressure. In an attempt to address these issues, volunteerism has become a highly recommended strategy for racialized immigrants to acquire Canadian experience, and increase opportunities for them to be able to find comparable jobs.

Using focus groups, this project will examine whether, how and under what conditions volunteerism assists racialized African-Caribbean migrant professionals in acquiring comparable jobs in the GTA. Two specific research questions will be explored in this study. Firstly, does volunteerism assist migrants in building social capital and expanding their networks so that they may find work through those in the near future? Secondly, are there ways in which volunteer work can be codified and recognised towards Canadian experience? Would there be a possibility for developing relevant benchmarks and standards?

### **Biography**

**Andrew Greaves** (he/him/they/them) is a graduate student in the Immigration and Settlement Studies program at Ryerson University. He is an Ontario Certified Teacher and holds an undergraduate degree in Environmental Protection and Management and a Diploma in Education from Jamaica. Andrew's volunteer experience with refugees, asylum seekers and newcomers in Canada has piqued his research interest around the areas of Migrant Labour, Volunteerism, Forced Migration and the Canadian Refugee Determination Process.