

2021 Black History Month Poster
“Never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations.”
- Dr. Mae Jemison

Concept

The 2021 ETFO Black History Month Poster explores how the commonly used and accepted map of our world is not accurate and rooted in bias and colonialism. The classic, most recognizable map in circulation globally is the Mercator cylindrical map projection, named after the explorer that created this representation while on a cartography mission in 1569¹. His goal was to create navigational courses for colonial trade routes which emphasized the North, parts of the world where Christians lived and expanded their size. An example of how this has impacted the map is that Europe is presented as the same size as South America though South America is nearly double its size. This, in addition to centring Europe in maps, quite literally centred whiteness and European ideals within our society.

The centre image is the traditional world map with an overlay of the true-to-size world map in yellow. This image is on a grid as it would be pictured on a screen from a shuttle where Dr. Mae Jemison, a prominent Black astronaut, would have seen the world from above.

What is the Significance of the Quote?

Racism is the belief in superiority of one race over another. When those in positions of power do not recognize their bias and do not actively work to fight against the systemic racism prevalent in our society, they become complicit with it. This quote speaks to how traditionally, the education system has presented barriers to this level of accomplishment and it serves as a reminder for us as a society to ensure we do not place barriers on anyone. Young Black-Canadians have, can and will continue to do anything in this world.

Dr. Mae Jemison

Dr. Mae Jemison, engineer, physician and former astronaut, is the first Black woman to travel into space. After graduating from Stanford University, in chemical engineering and African studies, she earned her medical degree from Cornell University. Post NASA, Jemison formed a technology research company and a non-profit educational foundation.

¹ theguardian.com/education/2017/mar/19/boston-public-schools-world-map-mercator-peters-projection



Six Screens: A View into the Past

The top six images are the space data and navigation screens. The idea was officially part of the futurism component, including the cultural significance of Ankara wax prints, an affinity for pattern, and the influence of contemporary design on tech-aesthetics. It's a loosely imagined combination of land-scanning, biometric data of an astronaut, and molecular data using elements that are typically decorative but reimagined for practical uses. We also have a replication of Mercator the explorer, evaluating the flat Earth, pictured in yellow in the centre, as well as part of the map he created below it also in yellow.

Space and Land Reimagined

In the centre of our poster, we have the Mercator map with the true-to-size map layered over top of it. The colours used are nontraditional to once again, provide us with a reminder to consider how all parts of our maps could be reimagined including the orientation, the colours and how lands are centred. On the left of our poster, we have Dr. Mae Jemison proudly in her astronaut uniform, placed beside the world she would have seen from above.

The Future: Afrofuturism

Afrofuturism is the reimagining of a future filled with arts, science and technology seen through a Black lens which is also a tribute to groundbreaking innovations of early African development. The design of this poster incorporates stylistic elements that represent Afrofuturism, including the perspective and imagery of our second astronaut. She is a view into our future: a Canadian woman astronaut as part of a futuristic partnership with Ghana, an African country with a prominent space research program at present. We also see subtle nods to proud elements of present day Canadian Black culture; a Black Lives Matter symbol, beautiful, natural Bantu knots and African-style accessories that double as wearable technology.



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