



## Appendix A: Summary of the experience for Black/Africa MSM with blood donation at Canadian Blood Services

MSM / Gay Blood ban/deferral	Black/African ban/deferral
<p><b>1998-2013:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Male donors: Have you had sex with a man, even one time since 1977?</li> </ul>	<p><b>1998-2005</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were you born in or have you lived in any of the countries listed here since 1977: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Niger, Nigeria?</li> <li>Have you had sexual contact with a male, even one time since 1977, who was from Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Niger, Nigeria?</li> <li>When traveling to any of the above countries since 1977, have you received blood or treatment with a product made from blood?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>2005-2013</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were you born in or have you lived in Africa since 1977?</li> <li>Since 1977, did you receive a blood transfusion or blood product in Africa?</li> <li>Have you had sexual contact with anyone who was born in or lived in Africa since 1977?</li> </ul>
<p><b>2013-2016</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Male donors: In the last five years, have you had sex with a man, even once?</li> </ul>	<p><b>2013-2015</b></p> <div> <p>Since 1977, were you born in or have you lived in Africa?</p>  <p>Yes No</p> </div> <div> <p>LIFESTYLE QUESTION:</p> <p>Have you had sexual contact with anyone who was born in or lived in Africa since 1977?</p> <p>Yes No</p> <p>Back Skip Next Replay</p> </div> <div> <p>TRAVEL QUESTION:</p> <p>Since 1977, did you receive a blood transfusion or blood product in Africa?</p>  <p>Yes No</p> </div>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were you born in or have you lived in Africa since 1977?</li> <li>Since 1977, did you receive a blood transfusion or blood product in Africa?</li> <li>Have you had sexual contact with anyone who was born in or lived in Africa since 1977?</li> </ul>

At this time, Canadian Blood Services argued that this type of “geographic deferral” was necessary since people who lived in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Niger, Nigeria may have been exposed to a then new strain of the virus, HIV-I, Group O – a strain, which at the time, could not be reliably detected through blood testing. As such, anyone from these countries would not be eligible to donate blood. CBS also stated, “this is not based on race or ethnicity but possible exposure to HIV-I Group O” (CBS, n.b.d.). However, there were a number of ways in which this statement was contravened:

1. HIV-I Group O was also present in predominately white countries, France, Belgium, Spain, Germany and the United States (Behring-Diagnostics, Aug 1997). However, these countries were *not* added to the lists of concern. If this was really about preventing another tainted blood scandal, then all countries where HIV-I Group O was present would have been included in this deferral.
2. Dr. Mindy Goldman stated that moving from 8 countries in Africa to the entire continent of Africa was for questionnaire simplicity. It was easier to answer this one question Goldman stated, then be expected to answer yes or no to each country. Science did not and does not support the stereotype that HIV is rampant throughout Africa (this is a racially framed stereotype). Thus, HIV-I, Group O is not rampant throughout all 56 countries in Africa.
3. However, people from Africa, but not the 8 specifically named countries, were unnecessarily barred from donating blood. In addition, some white people recounted to me that although they were born in one of the 8 African countries, they were still allowed to donate blood.
4. An approved and effective blood test for HIV-I Group O was approved for use in 2009 however, these questions remained on the donor questionnaire until 2015.
5. The images used in these questions trade on the racist tropes of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which suggests that Africa is barren of technology, or housing structures and its inhabitants live in close proximity with animals and vegetation.

**The totality of these decisions made this deferral about race and not simply about geography.**

<b>2016-2018:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Male donors: In the last 12 months have you had sex with another man?</li> </ul>	<b>2015-2016</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since 1977 were you born in or have you lived in Togo and Cameroon?</li> <li>Have you had sexual contact with anyone who was born in or lived in Togo and Cameroon since 1877?</li> </ul> <p>* Images used for these questions are a version of the acacia tree (middle image above)</p>
	<b>2016-2018 (April 23)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the last 12 months have you lived in or visited Togo and Cameroon?</li> <li>In the last 12 months have you had sexual contact with anyone who was lived in or visited Togo and Cameroon?</li> </ul>
<b>2018-present</b> Male donors: in the last 3 months have you had sex with another man?	

6. Asked why Togo and Cameroon were now the focus, Dr. Mindy Goldman stated that if there was a new strain of HIV, there would need to be time to develop an appropriate test, the assumption being that new strains of HIV could only come from Africa. As COVID-19 has demonstrated new variants of viruses can come from anywhere in the world. In addition, where new variants are first detected is not the same as where they first originated.

**As I stated in my letter, removing the questions without public acknowledgement or accountability of the systemic anti-Black racism remains a practice of avoidance and a form of white-washing – an issue still in need of attention.**