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PROJECT WOKE POLICY REPORT

**Redefining the Black Experience in Montreal:
One Institution at a Time**

Prepared by: The Project Woke Interns

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BCRC

About the Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC)

The Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC) is a vibrant resource-based organization that strengthens community capacity by providing professional support to organizations and individuals in need. The Centre helps visible minority Black English-speaking communities rekindle their dreams and achieve their full potential by fostering a holistic approach within its programs to support the many needs (e.g. socio-cultural, educational, economic, etc.) of Montreal's Black Community.

About Project Woke

While attending the Ministerial Forum on Anti-Racism (hosted by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Hon. Pablo Rodriguez, P.C, M.P., on October 25, 2018), the BCRC representatives identified a critical misrepresentation in Black and Canadian society when they asked themselves, "What would Black Canadian Youth have to say if they were present at this Ministerial Forum?" To close this gap, the BCRC developed Project Woke with the aim of providing Black youth in Montreal with the necessary empowerment tools, such as civic education and leadership skills that would give them the confidence to explore this question as interns of the Project Woke program. Hence, the goal of Project Woke is to give Black youth the opportunity to analyze, critique and propose solutions to racism and anti-racism policies.

About the Interns

Project Woke Interns are all actively pursuing college and university studies and have been working on this project since January 2020. It is their collective ambition to bring awareness to the achievements of Black Canadians, their historical significance and societal contributions by changing how Blacks are seen in Canada; beyond the historical slavery stereotype. The rationale is: in order to correct inequalities and move towards an anti-racist future, it is fitting for Canada to acknowledge its shortcomings for having tolerated, condoned and thus, essentially allowed as acceptable historically inhumane, unethical and unjust racist behaviors that has caused, and continues to cause damage to human beings just because of values attached to racial, skin and cultural differences. Catalysts for change must include the recognition of the issues, the willingness to participate from all parties, and constructive collaboration to bring about positive changes with positive impacts.

Executive Summary

Project Woke interns identified and investigated three critical themes affecting the Black community in Montreal. An analysis of societal issues and Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy Project revealed harmful anti-human rights gaps affecting the Black Community. The findings from several consultations further validated these gaps. A comprehensive list of recommendations is included along with next steps as a continuation to advance Black human rights in Montreal, and elsewhere, along with the support of government and non-government actors.

Project Objective

The objective of this paper is to accomplish mindful change through partnerships and to empower activism.

Mindful Change Through Partnerships.

This report is aimed at individuals, society, institutions and the Government of Canada to resolve racism in three core areas: education, mental health and community development. The interns recommend key changes that would result in mutually positive benefits for both Montreal's Black Anglophone Community and Canadian society. It is anticipated that this research and proposal project (the first of its kind in Quebec by Black youth) will be an activist starting point for anti-racism change by influencing government and non-government policies and as a template to help other racialized communities achieve equality.

Empowering Activism.

The proposed recommendations in this paper are meant to complement anti-racism policies by offering insight into the Black English-speaking community of Montreal with a special focus on Black Youth, a segment of society whose voices are often not heard. This paper identifies gaps in anti-racism policies and makes suggestions for positive impact on Black people's lives with a positive spillover effect affecting the entire Canadian population.

Anti-Black Racism Approach

Unique Communities Require Unique Solutions. How?

Through Recognition. Since each ethnic and racial demographic has its own unique character, societal contributions and experiences with discrimination, their unique issues must be recognized by all parties (all government levels, institutions, individual, etc).

Through Custom-Made Solutions. As a result of the different components within a particular ethnic community, custom-made solutions must be made and take into account each demographic. Lump-summing certain racial issues from other racial groups is not a one-size-fits-all solution to unique racial problems.

Terminology

Anti-Black Racism: Prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, such that anti-Black racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger white society. Anti-Black racism is manifested in the legacy of the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians in society such as the lack of opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.¹

Anti-Racism: The **active process** of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably."²

Equity vs Equality: Equity is about **giving people what they need**, in order to make things fair, whereas Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents/ the difference between equality and equity must be emphasized. Although both promote fairness, equality achieves this through treating everyone the same regardless of need, while equity achieves this through treating people differently depending on need. However, this different treatment may be the key to reaching equality.³

Eurocentrism: A biased way of interpreting the histories and cultures of non-European societies according to the European experience.⁴

Human rights: Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.⁵

Institutional Racism: Racial discrimination that derives from individuals carrying out the dictates of others who are prejudiced or of a prejudiced society.⁶

¹ Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre. (2014). Retrieved from Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre website: <http://www.aclrc.com/forms-of-racism>

² Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre. (2014). Retrieved April 6, 2020, from Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre website: <http://www.aclrc.com/antiracism-defined>

³ Daisy. (2019, March 29). Equality and Equity. Retrieved April 6, 2020, from social-change.co.uk website: <https://social-change.co.uk/blog/2019-03-29-equality-and-equity>

⁴ Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). *Encyclopedia of case study research* (Vols. 1-0). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412957397

⁵ Human Rights. (2019, February 18). Retrieved April 1, 2020, from Un.org website: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/>

⁶ Forms of Racism. (n.d.). Retrieved March 10, 20AD, from <http://www.aclrc.com/forms-of-racism>

Intersectionality: Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw coined the term in 1989 in her paper *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex*. It is an approach to understanding the experience of individuals whose identities intersect in ways that impact how they are viewed, understood and treated.⁷

Mental Health: Mental health is the state of your psychological and emotional well-being. It is a necessary resource for living a healthy life and a main factor in overall health. It does not mean the same thing as mental illness. However, poor mental health can lead to mental and physical illness.⁸

Racism: refers to “a system in which one group of people exercises power over another on the basis of skin colour; an implicit or explicit set of beliefs, erroneous assumptions, and actions based on an ideology of the inherent superiority of one racial group over another, and evident in organizational or institutional structures and programs as well as in individual thought or behavior pattern.”⁹

Systemic Racism: The policies and practices entrenched in established institutions, which result in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups. It differs from overt discrimination in that no individual intent is necessary.¹⁰

⁷ Coaston, Jane.(2019, May 28). The Intersectionality Wars. Retrieved April 1, 2020, from <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>

⁸ Public Health Agency of Canada. (2015, October 6). Government of Canada. Retrieved February 2, 2020, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/about-mental-health.html>

⁹ Racism and Power. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.aclrc.com/racism-and-power>

¹⁰ Racism and Power. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.aclrc.com/racism-and-power>

Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to investigate the degree of willingness and the engagement level of Black youths in anti-racism initiatives. In order to address this, the opinions of the Black community were collected on what initiatives did they believe were needed to ameliorate racism. Questions that arose were: Do Black youths feel empowered? Do they feel like they have the necessary resources need to tackle anti-Black discrimination? Will they follow the footsteps of previous generations or develop a different approach? Should anti-racism initiatives be restricted to Blacks or should non-Blacks be encouraged to get involved? As a starting point, the Project Woke internship team analyzed Canada's current Anti-Racism Strategy and analyzed how it applied to the Black community who are a double minority group of Montreal (Black-English speakers).

This paper includes the following sections:

- Anti-Black racism approach
 - Background
 - A review of literature
 - Methods and procedures
 - Data collected
 - Recommendations
 - Next steps
-

Background

Demographics

Canada is made up of a multicultural society with a Black population of over one million people. Halifax is home to one of the oldest Black settlements in Canada, dating back to the arrival of Jacques Cartier. Today, more than 9% of Black people in Canada are 3rd generation Canadians. Black Canadians are the largest visible minority in Montreal, with 171,385 or 10.3% - of Montreal's population.¹¹ As will be shown, Black Canadians have made a considerable impact with its ongoing human rights' efforts in Montreal.

The Adverse Effects of Anti-Racism Policy: How Anti-Racism Policies Hurt Canadians

A national anti-racism and multicultural policy does not mean that there is no racism. These policies may give an illusion to some that that racism does not exist when in fact, racism continues to thrive and result in marginalized communities facing systemic and institutional racism and consequential disparities. Inclusive and supportive instruments are needed to back up anti-racism policies and contribute to real change.

The stigma of speaking up. When visible minorities are vocal about racial difficulties, even though there is a national anti-racism and multicultural policy in place, they may face stigma and be accused of pulling the race card by the general public, other minority groups and/or their own ethnic group. As a result, some visible minorities may be passive and hesitant, practicing self-censorship to not talk about the reality of the consequences. They may also participate in shaming others for talking about racism in fear of backlash (e.g. social backlash by being excluded or treated differently in certain social circles, employment backlash by treating differently at work, or fear of their career). Essentially, denial, the bias of stigma and discounting the reality of the problem by both the predominant race and the affected racial community makes the situation worse.

If racism doesn't affect me, why should I care? If racism is not framed as having a spillover effect on society, it will not grab the interest of some. And if racism is only remedied in racial silos, and/or if a generalized solution is applied to all racial communities, this is in fact promoting racism. Racial equality needs to be approached as a human rights priority for all people and all Canadians instead of approaching and addressing certain racial communities as sub-standard obligations and neglecting to see the vital importance and unique characteristics of each group and how they contribute to all of society. To favor certain racial groups and address them differently is in itself a racial practice that has dire consequences to the affected racial community and the country as a whole.

¹¹ Wikipedia contributors. (2020, February 28). Demographics of Montreal. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 16:42, April 6, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Demographics_of_Montreal&oldid=942984516

What is racism and how does it domino-effect into society? Racism is a deeply rooted belief that one race is superior or inferior to the other. This leads to the discrimination, antagonism and prejudice experienced by minorities. Racism's negative effects take on several forms - psychological, physical, social and economic. In terms of psychological and physical impacts, these effects range from; depression, emotional trauma, low-birthweight, skin bleaching and many more. Racism has worse adverse effects than harmful medications. And, in many cases, it is also fatal. People of colour experience lower socioeconomic status, higher unemployment and lack of opportunities when compared to Caucasians with similar work qualifications. For example, from 2000 to 2015, the annual wage increased for the general population but was also noted as remaining stable for Black men while wages increased for the Caucasian population.¹²

Government in Action

Building a Foundation for Change: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019-2022 was developed by the Government of Canada to combat racism in the country.¹³ Canada's Anti-Racism strategy was inspired by community engagements organized across Canada from October 2018-March 2019 in which they heard from those affected by racism the most.¹⁴ Based on what they heard, and the recommendations proposed by these communities the government developed and invested millions of dollars into an Anti-racism strategy. One of Canada's goals is to enhance local community support by developing culturally focused programs such as promoting mental health programs in Black Canadian communities. In 2019, Canada allocated a budget of \$25 million over a period of 5 years to support projects that will build capacity within Black Communities in the country. Furthermore, Canada's Anti-Racism strategy 2019-2022 will invest \$30 million in community-based projects to address racism and discrimination.¹⁵ Canada also confronted racism in the country by officially recognizing the International Decade for people of African Descent in 2018, a program started by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 with a budget of \$19 million over five years.¹⁶ Although the Government of Canada has introduced the Anti-Racism strategy to combat racism, much of its investment focuses on the Indigenous population of Canada. Indigenous, Black and South Asian communities experience racism the most. Canadians believe that 77% of Indigenous people, 73% of Black people and 75% of South Asians experience discrimination often or at least occasionally.¹⁷ A direct and individualized focus on these communities must be incorporated in Canada's Anti-Racism strategy in order to have the most successful outcomes.

¹²Turcotte, M. (2020). *Insights on Canadian Society Results from the 2016 Census: Education and labour market integration of Black youth in Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2020001/article/00002-eng.pdf?st=AO6ODyks>

¹³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/anti-racism-engagement.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/anti-racism-engagement/what-we-heard.html>

¹⁵<https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2018/01/30/prime-minister-announces-government-canada-will-officially-recognize>

¹⁶ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/programme-activities>

¹⁷ Neuman, K. (2019, December 10). Project Details. Retrieved April 1, 2020, from www.environmentalinstitute.org website: <https://www.environmentalinstitute.org/projects/project-details/race-relations-in-canada-2019>

The Black Community's Current Response

In Montreal, the Black community has continuously raised awareness of frequent racial abuses. In 2018, the Black Coalition of Quebec demanded compensation from the City of Montreal as a result of police racial profiling against Black Canadians and the negative impacts on Blacks as a result.¹⁸ Likewise, Montreal en Action requested that the City of Montreal hold its first public consultations on racism and systemic discrimination as a response to the lived experiences of racism by Black and other minorities. Having obtained more than 20,000 petition signatures, the City was reminded to hold these consultations due to public demand and the signature requirement that was met for the petition. And Project Woke, a youth-led initiative created by the BCRC, offers this paper as continuation of Black human rights activism by conducting three public consultations and three surveys with the Black English-speaking community of Montreal. Thus, the presence of Canada's multicultural society does not mean that it has hindered the spread of racism.

A Long Road Ahead

The Canadian government put in place the 2019-2022 Anti-Racism Strategy to help combat racism and discrimination against Blacks, Indigenous and other people of colour in Canada. This initiative aims to support and invest money into local, regional and national initiatives, outcome-based activities and community-based projects in education, social participation and justice for minority groups. However, the Strategy falls short of meeting the needs of Black Canadians.

The Role of Mis-Education: How Blacks are Invisible

The lack of Black perspectives in private and public institutions play a key role in the systemic and institutional discrimination that Black Canadians experience on a daily basis. Nonetheless, "we know that academic institutions are built on our backs and continue to profit from us, and therefore we have the right, responsibility and obligation to influence and impact them: Re-forming, Re-mapping, Remembering."¹⁹

¹⁸<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/black-coalition-reacts-to-go-ahead-for-class-action-on-racial-profiling/>

¹⁹ Gumbs, A. P., Martens, C., & Williams, M. (2016). Revolutionary mothering: Love on the front lines.

Literature Review

This section outlines the following:

- The history of the Black People in Canada
- Regaining Agency: Exploring how the Black community responds to racism
- #BlackLivesMatter
- Mental Health in the Black Community

The History of Black People in Canada

History contains vast silences through the absence and erasure of key players by those who have the power to circulate, censor facts and promote biased knowledge, with Eurocentrism playing a core role in society: it distorts the way we see the world and the people in it and it downplays the value of other cultural and historical perspectives as ways of seeing and understanding the world.”²⁰ The mainstream distribution of a biased Eurocentric historical narrative played and continues to play a pivotal role in the erasure of a Black Canadian historical narrative while the consequences of this erasure are felt not only by Black people but all those around them. For example, there is the subtle denial and dismissal of the inhumane treatment of Black slaves in Canada and therefore a notable presence of Black people in Canada since the 17th century. Only until the 1960s did Canada shift its focus from the French and the English to Black Canadians.²¹ While efforts were made to unearth this buried history, Canada has been silent on its “historic role as a ‘safe haven’ for runaway slaves, celebrating British liberation of the Black Loyalists and Canada’s role in the Underground Railroad in a manner that underscores Canadian tolerance and benevolence.”²² The mainstream distribution of a distorted version of Canadian history in which the history and contribution of Black people are dismissed or simply erased has grave effects on our society. Canadian denial is a Eurocentric bias that has huge impacts at every level to all communities. For non-Black people, not having a basic knowledge of Black Canadian history can lead to the perpetuation of racism, discrimination, bigotry and more severe effects. Not having access to an unbiased version of history for a Black person means depending on a harmful Eurocentric society to define the Black identity and, this is damaging to the truth of the Black race and humanity as a whole. Eurocentric history, education and societies perpetuate serious holistic damage to Blacks and beyond, sometimes not even being aware of these damages. And, at other times, it is questionable if these damages are tactical in nature. Thus, it is important for Canadian schools to implement an unbiased Black historical narrative in their curriculum, and that the historical narrative takes the Black experience into account.

²⁰ Lisa Merriweather, Hunn. 2004. "Afrocentric philosophy: A remedy for Eurocentric dominance." *New Directions For Adult & Continuing Education* 2004, no. 102: 65-74. p. 66.

²¹ Austin, David. 2013. *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal*. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, p. 37.

²² Maynard, Robyn. *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*. Fernwood, 2017, p. 21.

Regaining Agency: Exploring How the Black Community Responds to Racism

The Past, the Present and the Future

Over the years, the Black community of Montreal rejected racial oppression by fighting to regain their identities, livelihood and integration into the community. During the first quarter of the 20th Century, the Montreal was well-known for its 'Black Power' initiatives to fight against the inhumanities of slavery and racial oppression.²³ The Black community was known for its active and radical activism against anti-Black discrimination. In the 1960s, the Sir George Williams University riot became a defining moment. Responding to the inadequate handling of racial complaints in the University, students initiated a sit-in protest in the Computer Center in the Henry F. Hall Building for about two weeks. Police involvement ultimately led to the destruction of the Computer Center and 97 students were arrested (see picture).²⁴ To regain and promote their sense of agency, many African-Canadians and Caribbean-Canadians established several organizations such as the Negro Citizenship Association, the Coloured Women's Club (a chapter of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association -- Louise Langdon, the mother of Malcolm X played an active role within this organization) and the Negro Community Center (NCC), created by the Union United Church. The importance of the Union United Church in Black race relations is its role as the first church that gave Blacks permission to worship.²⁵ The NCC was committed to attending to the needs of the Black community, as well as to enhance Black empowerment in the heart of Little Burgundy. One of the NCC's main areas of concentration is 'Education'.²⁶ The NCC was instrumental in advocating against the Eurocentric and discriminatory nature of the Quebec school system and it argued that "the Canadian educational system is designed to create exploiters and the exploited. Naturally, Black youths are being modeled to become the exploited generation of tomorrow".²⁷ Whether the organization was successful in their advocacy for the inclusion of an Afrocentric system is highly questionable. Afrocentrism in the school system remains an issue till today with many Black-Canadian students being unaware of their Black history and heritage.²⁸

#BlackLivesMatter

The present day version of the 'Black Power' initiatives- particularly the #BlackLivesMatter initiative - has been highly criticized with many prominent Black figures stating that young people

²³ David Austin, "All Roads Led to Montreal: Black Power, the Caribbean and the Black Radical Tradition in Canada (2007) *The Journal of African American History* 92:4 516-539

²⁴ <https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/in-an-era-of-black-lives-matter-montreal-has-been-curiously-quiet-where-are-the-young-black-activists>

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ http://cohds.com/ncc/Chelsea_Matheson.pdf

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0306396810371770>

nowadays, “...don't seem to have the same kind of energy”²⁹ This young generation is seen as, “lack[ing] a sense of empowerment” and being inactive as “they are not really challenging the government, or institutions or the system.”³⁰ Others, such as Dr. Clarence Bayne (a Concordia University professor and co-founder of the Black Theatre Workshop), believes that the approach of today's youth is different, explaining that during his time, they “needed a battering ram to get in the door. [Today's youth] are at the door and are now looking to see which room they want to be in. This is a totally different picture.”³¹ The approach of Black youth today may be different; however it is still impactful. In 2017, *Black Lives Matter Montreal* conducted a “sombre vigil” following the death of 58-year-old Pierre Coriolan.³² Following this, a coroner's inquest into Coriolan's death only began in February 2020 -



three years after his death. **The primary question here is this: Are Black youths in this generation aware and actively involved in activities that aim to regain their agency and address the anti-Black discrimination that they experience?** Engagement is imperative.

Racism continues to linger on in several public and private institutions, whether Black or not, we cannot sit back and witness the disintegration present between Blacks and non-Blacks in Montreal. While engagement might not be in the same radical manner as the 1900s 'Black Power' movements, the Black community needs to increase the volume of its voice and highlight the systematic racism and micro-aggressions embedded in many public and private institutions in order to regain their identity and place in the Canadian community.

If their voices are not heard, who else will advocate on their behalf?

²⁹ Lalonde, M., 2016. *Where Is Our Black Lives Matter*. [online] Montreal Gazette. Available at: <https://pressreader.com/article/281487865414941>

³⁰Ibid

³¹Ibid

³² Fatal shooting by police in Montreal sparks Black Lives Matter protest
image source:https://twitter.com/simon_nak/status/881580997992738816

Mental Health in the Black Community

The availability of mental health services can have an impact on one's quality of life, yet these services are generally inaccessible to Black Canadians and are still perceived within the Black community as something reserved for the White middle-class. This double-standard and bias is reinforced through the representation tailored to the White population, stigma around Black mental illness, and the lack of Black representation in healthcare. In this section, we will investigate the link between racism and mental health in the Black community by exploring the following questions:

- How racial trauma affects mental health
- How marginalization contributes to the inaccessibility of mental health services
- How the underrepresentation of Black healthcare providers in the healthcare system affects the Black community.

A majority of Black Canadians experience racial trauma. Dr. Joy Degruy describes this as multigenerational or intergenerational trauma, which is trauma that is based on negative historical events that have been passed down through generations of oppressed people.³³ In her book, she named the concept 'PTSS: Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome'. In a YouTube video with AJ+ Opinion, Dr. Degruy summarized her research using the example of how Black mothers downplayed their sons' accomplishments in school to protect them. This is said to be a coping strategy that originated from slavery where, when approached by her slave owner, a Black mother would downplay her son's work in the field in order to keep him from being sold to another slave owner and hence separated from her. However, today the sons generally interpret this as their mother not being proud of their accomplishments. This impacts their self-esteem and as a result their mental health. Dr. Degruy explains that this type of coping strategy is still present today because of the lack of opportunity to heal and access to benefits in society to deal with these ingrained behaviors.³⁴

We can deduce that this theory applies to Canada due to the parallels in American and Canadian history on slavery, systematic oppression in the form of police violence against Black people, the continued use of derogatory terms and phrases, and the disproportionate poverty present in the Black community. These hardships, along with the societal celebration and admiration of prominent persons who were affiliated with slavery (e.g. former slave owners), are insensitive to the Black psyche -the self-image and overall health of Black people who were suppressed by their Caucasian counterparts.³⁵

³³ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/black-enslavement>

³⁴ <https://www.joydegruy.com/post-traumatic-slave-syndrome>

³⁵ <https://globalnews.ca/news/6492868/anti-black-racism-mental-health-campaign-toronto/>

Consequently, systemic racism then results in Black Canadians experiencing being undervalued in society and limits Black people from getting access to much needed psychological help and therapies.

Statistics Canada's 2016 report on the Black Population, titled "*Canada's Black Population: Education, Labour, and Resilience*," justifies data of how Black Canadians' experience society.³⁶ We chose to observe labor data because having a job that gives benefits such as insurance to cover medical expenses, including psychological services, is essentially the most secure way to ensure access to mental health support in society. We also used the report to analyze how Black Canadians' income situations differ from their non-Black counterparts. According to Statistics Canada reports, the unemployment rate of Black females and males nearly doubled (at 10.2%), while males and females of non-Black communities are at **5.8%** and **6.7%** respectively. Additionally, since 1 in 5 Black Canadians live in a low-income situation, consequently they will heavily rely on the public health system. And when it comes to mental health services,, since the public health system does not cover psychological services, economically disadvantaged people cannot access much needed mental health services as a result of financial disadvantages.³⁷ In a report by Therapy Today, Black clients of health professionals in America are said to be more likely to access services and follow through with treatment if they can relate to, believe in, and trust a health professional.³⁸ One way to resolve emotional barriers to access mental health services would be to institutionalize mandatory cultural-sensitivity training and, actively recruiting underrepresented racial groups into the profession could also be a solution.³⁹

Canada's most recent effort in addressing inaccessibility of mental health services in the Black community includes the Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund, an initiative promoting education on mental health by community-based organizations.⁴⁰ The fund is set to cover program expenses such as salaries and benefits, travel expenses, workshops, promotion of events, insurance, and other approved costs. However, the first criteria listed in expenses not set to be covered in the fund is mental health services and clinical treatment for mental illness for the people running the organizations. It would be contradictory to educate Black Canadians about mental health yet hinder their right to access it.

Furthermore, **how can organizations offer mental health services if the program restrictions deny access to these services they are meant to promote?** Due to the lack of literature specific

³⁶ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2020002-eng.htm#geo-2>
source: (strategyonline.ca, 2020)

³⁷ <https://www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca/en/citizens/health-insurance/covered-services/Pages/covered-services-accessory-costs.aspx>

³⁸ Jackson, C. Black spaces, Black faces. *Therapy Today*, [s. l.], v. 30, n. 8, p. 20–24, 2019

³⁹ Vukic, A.; Steenbeek, A.; Muxlow, J. Increasing the Representation of the Black Population in the Health Professions in Canada. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, [s. l.], v. 23, n. 2, p. 50–52, 2016.

⁴⁰ <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/funding-opportunities/grant-contribution-funding-opportunities/promoting-health-equity-mental-health-black-canadians-fund.html>

to the Black community and insufficient data, including racial breakdown in reports, there is limited information from articles and that of other organizations and their report findings. As suggested by studies, this lack of data can prove to be harmful if certain issues are unreported on minorities. In order to improve the health care system, it is important to get comprehensive data on who is most at risk or receiving less quality of care.



“Experiencing systemic discrimination and micro-aggressions are social stressors that increase the risk of negative physical and mental health including anxiety, depression, suicide or suicidal thoughts, cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, high blood pressure, and premature mortality”⁴¹ These are a few of the many adverse effects racism has on the mental health of Black people and other people of color. In order to create programs that truly meet the needs of the Black community it is important for the government to ensure that the support given is inclusive, accessible and provided by those who have an understanding and connection to the Black community. Representation is key.

⁴¹James, R. (2020, February 28). After 400 years of racism, Black Mental Health Day is way overdue. Retrieved March 6, 2020, from thestar.com website: <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/02/28/after-400-years-of-racism-black-mental-health-day-is-way-overdue.htm>
image source:<https://strategyonline.ca/2020/02/07/how-anti-black-racism-impacts-mental-health/>

Methods & Procedures

Research Goal

The primary focus of this research is to:

- Gain insight into the experiences of anti-Black racism in Montreal
- Provide missing data about the Montreal Black Anglophone community
- Analyze Canada's Anti-racism strategy
- Identify areas that policy makers could focus on to help eradicate racism from a Black Canadian perspective.

Research Approach

The research methodology consists of academic research, surveys, and public consultations with focus groups from the Black community in Montreal. Data from other minority communities were excluded in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the distinct experience and needs of the Black community. The research project consisted of three youth-led community consultations and three surveys with the following themes:

1. Black History in Canada: The Erasure of Black People's Contributions to Canadian Society
2. Mental Health in the Black Community and Racism's Effect on the Mental Health of the Black Community
3. Regaining Agency: Exploring How the Black Community Responds to Racism

These themes were identified by the internship team as an important part of the Black-lived experience. It will later be shown that these themes need to be further explored, developed and integrated into Canada's anti-racism strategy in order to successfully achieve its goals and support the development of Black communities.

The target population for this project was the English-speaking Black community members with a special focus on Black youth, age 15-30.

Research Principles

- Focus on the lived experiences of the Black English-speaking community of Montreal
- Receive feedback from Black Youth in the community
- Use an intersectional approach
- Collect data in a respectful manner

Project Phases

The three project phases were: Community Research, Community Engagement and, Development of the Report.

Consultations at A Glance

Project Woke interns consulted with three institutional stakeholders and conducted three surveys.

Format	Consultation	Consultation	Consultation	In person survey	In person survey	Online Survey
Forum	Black Community Forum AGM-	Living History Exhibition	Woke Wellness: Healing Black Minds	Survey	Survey	Survey
Date	December 16, 2019	February 6, 2020	February 21, 2020	February 26,2020	February 29, 2020	March 11-21,2020
Location	Le CRC 6767 Cote-des-Neiges	Concordia University Webster Library	Walkley Community Centre	Concordia University	Federation of Black Canadians Youth Forum	Facebook, Online (Survey Monkey)
Participants (117)	25	9	21	30	15	17

see appendix for more information pertaining to the demographics of the survey sample

Consultation #1: Black Community Forum AGM

Overview

The theme of this community consultation was community development and was used to explore the topic of Regaining agency: Exploring the ways the Black Community responds to racism. In this consultation, stakeholders (such as Black Community organizations and leaders) were asked questions about the importance of community and providing Black youth with civic engagement skills. The data collected at the Black Community Forum were responses from a focus group where the 25 participants were divided into four groups and discussed and responded to five questions prepared in advance by the Project Woke team. This section explores the thoughts, beliefs and perceptions of Black stakeholders on community development and youth development and the most important factors in creating a strong empowered Black community that supports Black youth.

Key Findings: Four major themes were found from the participants' responses: civic education, intergenerational engagement, self-esteem and empowerment

Participants Responses

Question 1: *Why is it important to engage youth in anti-racism initiatives?*

An overwhelming response was that the Black youth must be engaged with Anti-racism initiatives because they are responsible for their own solutions. In short, the respondents believed that the solutions to serve Black youth must be created by Black youth (“For us, by us.”).

Question 2: *How would you suggest the youth go about changing systemic racism?*

The majority of respondents recommended educating youth on ways of engaging in civil discourse, how to mobilize and create advocacy groups and collectives will provide them with the skills needed to motivate one another in the fight against systemic racism and injustice. The participants suggested that an essential part of youth education would be intergenerational engagement. The respondents expressed that by learning from those that came before us would be necessary to understand just how far “we have come from and what is left for us to do.”

Question 3: *What is the most important aspect of civil engagement that youth need to learn?*

Majority of the respondents indicated:

- Civic education
- Self-esteem (a sense of importance of self)
- Learning how to speak truth to power
- Learning how to connect the political to the personal
- Understanding the link between law, policy, rules, institutions and how they work together

Question 4: *How can the Black Community better support the youth to become civically engaged?*

This question was met with the calls to improve and support communication and community engagement. Participants agreed that prioritizing education increases positive self-esteem and a larger understanding of Black pride and self-acceptance, which also includes current and historical accomplishments and contributions of Black People is necessary.

Question 5: *Are you doing anything to combat racism? If yes, how can you improve?*

Respondents provided a robust set of answers of how they combat racism initiatives such as:

- Creating financial initiatives for the Black community and encouraging economic empowerment within the community
- Conducting research into anti-Black racism
- Recognizing racial profiling and speaking up and out against various acts of racism

The responses confirm that community engagement is crucial when it comes to empowering the Black community, specifically Black youth. Whether that be intergenerational engagement, mentorship programs or education programs (“for us, by us”) that takes seriously the teaching of self worth, Black history, empathy, understanding it is clear that Black youth need to strengthen their identity and also understanding how to engage with civic discourse (e.g. mobilizing groups in response to injustice).

Consultation # 2: Living History Exhibition

Overview

On February 6, 2020, the Project woke team attended the BCRC's Living History exhibit at Concordia University and asked questions to gain feedback on the research topic: "The history of Black people in Canada: The untold story of Black people's contribution to Canadian society." The focus group was very small, with less than 10 respondents, but were all engaged and had extensive experiences and knowledge of racial struggles of Black people and other marginalized groups within Montreal. The respondents consisted of academics and community leaders.

Key Findings

- Majority of Black Canadians only learn about iconic Black Canadians only when they receive higher education in College and beyond.
- Reconciliation and crisis intervention are considered important to empower the Black Community. One month to celebrate Black history is not enough

Participants Responses

Question 1: When was the first time that you were introduced to a prominent African Canadian person in school?

- In High school back in the 70s, it was Malcolm X and Martin Luther King
- I was only introduced to European and Canadian political history except for the Blacks mentioned in American civil war.
- Not until University while doing research on Canadian immigration, mainly on Little Burgundy and the Montreal Black history.
- In university, I was introduced to Michaëlle Jean
- In my second year of CEGEP.

Question 2: How have Black communities across Canada supported each other in history and today?

- Through associations, organizations and events celebrating
- Black lives matter
- Black Rising and professional association (BRPA)
- Caribana
- Desta Black Youth nation
- Black Community Resource Center (BCRC)
- Through churches and cultural exchanges
- Facebook
- By creating more conferences, meeting and festivals

Question 3: Why do we get a whole month for Black history month? Do you think that a month is enough time to celebrate black history?

- No, it should be celebrated each month
 - Black history should be integrated into the school curriculums. Many do not know slavery happened here.
 - We need to approach this by having Black history focusing on the subject and Black history integrated in courses
-

- It is not enough, is there another way to get around the issue of unity and collective efforts?
- No, but reconciliation and crisis intervention are needed all year long.



Findings

This data shows that most people do not learn about Black Canadian History or a prominent African Canadian icon until they are young adults in High School or University. In fact, while for two of the participants, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King as well as a few other African-American figures that played a part in the American civil war were taught in high school, no prominent Black Canadian people were introduced.

For four of the respondents, it was in higher education that they finally were introduced to important African-Canadian figures, one while doing some research on Montreal Black History and others and the other by specifically being introduced to the prominent African Canadian, Michaëlle Jean. Community outreach is a key factor in connecting with other Black communities.

While some of the respondents indicated that social media outlets like Facebook enabled Black communities across Canada to support each other, others stated that churches and other organizations like the Black Rising and professional association (BRPA), the Black Community Resource Center (BCRC), Black Lives Matter and Desta Black Youth Network successfully help connect Black communities. Other worthy mentions in regard to the ways in which Black communities across Canada supported each other were conferences, meetings and festivals such as Caribana in Toronto, North America's largest Caribbean Carnival. Lastly, all of the respondents stated that one month to celebrate the rich culture that is Black history was nothing short of insufficient. As a matter of fact, one respondent went as far as to state that Black history should be celebrated every month while another stated that Black history should be integrated into school curriculums. Other respondents went ahead to state that reconciliation and crisis intervention was needed all year long and that while one month to celebrate Black history was

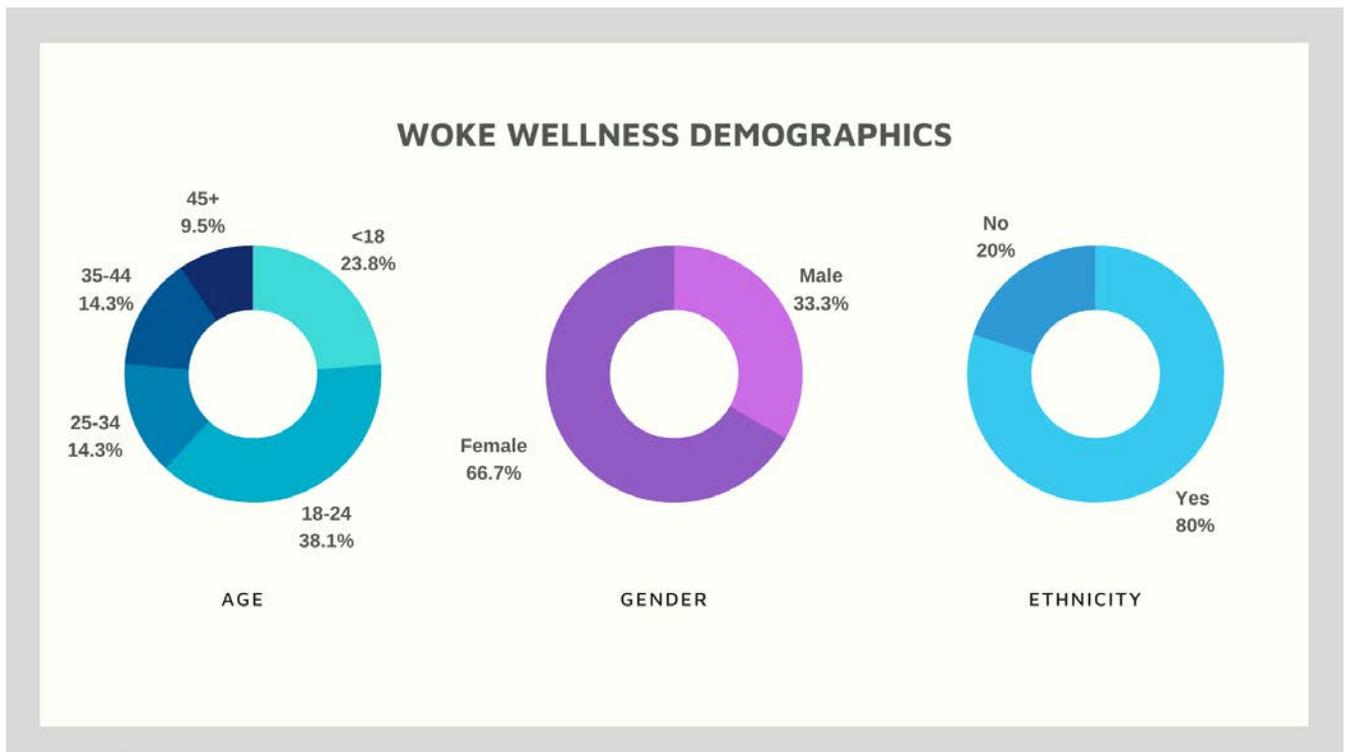
not enough, and another way to get around the issue of unity and collective effort could be more beneficial.

Consultation# 3: Woke Wellness: Healing Black Minds

Overview

Woke Wellness: Healing Black Minds was a Black history month event organized by Project Woke and the Walkley Community centre of Montreal on February 21, 2020. The theme of this event was mental health in the Black community and was an event for Black English speaking youth ages 15-30.

The main focus of this event was to learn more about the experience of mental health in the Black community, and how this issue affected Black youth. The Project Woke team conducted a focus group in groups of two. The participants first took part in a workshop on mental health and were then asked to discuss and respond to the questionnaire individually.



Key Findings from the Consultation Events

- Black youth believed that good mental health is the ability to cope and overcome challenges throughout life.
- The majority of youth agreed that having a community that is open to addressing and dealing with mental health issues will help break the stigma and fear that is associated with it.
- Receiving mental health services from a Black person who has the tools and knowledge to deal with mental illness is important to provide outreach to the community and decrease Black people's experience with discrimination by non-Black professionals when seeking help.

Participant Responses

The participants of this event were asked to provide a response to these 4 questions:

1. What Does Mental Health Mean to you?

- Your state of mind. How you are feeling emotionally. It is something important and it should be talked about more.
- My emotional well being over a period of time.
- Balances state of mind, compassion, community
- It means openness and healing with others who understand your experience.
- Having the safe and professional space to address the barriers with mental health.
- Mental health is the ability to cope with the everyday stress of life in a positive way.
- Mental health is a spectrum of emotions and can be very bad or good.
- It is related to your state of well being. Mental health is how you feel on a day to day basis.

2. As a Black person, what comes to mind when you think about healing?

- Taking time for yourself, resting and overcoming the stigmas and bias.
- Community
- As an older Black person, I believe in a continuous approach. That means having a mental health professional available (Black person from the community).
- Community involvement, kindness to each other.
- I think about being able to freely express myself. I think of being able to articulate complex thoughts and emotions with people who understand.
- Acknowledge social scripts that prevent help healing. Systemic racism that contributes to negative mental outcomes.
- Healing, I associate healing with being cured. Also, healing with religion.
- Being with your community that you can relate to. Knowing that your trauma doesn't define you and you can redefine yourself.
- Medication, righting my wrongs, moving forward from past traumas.
- Healing reminds me of spiritual healing usually cleansing your mind, soul and body.
- People need to come together. I am tired of seeing Blacks not working together.

3. What has been your experience with Mental Health? Did you find it easy to acknowledge it and to talk to anyone about it?

- It's still something I'm struggling with and have a hard time accepting it. It's not something I share, and my parents don't accept it.
 - It is not a topic that is talked about openly which is maybe the main problem.
 - My experience was through the struggle of a close friend and this story also empowered me to acknowledge mental health and to take active steps to balance it.
-

- I have had a long experience with bad mental health without knowing it. It was hard and still is to talk about it. I either feel like a burden or ignored because I won't open up.
- Yes, I feel it somewhat easy to acknowledge it.
- The only experience I had was with a family member. It was difficult for the family, but easy for me.
- Personally, I struggle with anxiety and depression and find it very difficult to talk about. My parents don't acknowledge or talk about it and close friends don't take it seriously.
- I have been privileged to experience more positive mental health than negative because of that reason I found it easy to speak about it.

4. In your opinion, what is the biggest barrier when accessing Mental Health help? Do you think the barrier is specific to the Black community?

- I think the Black community is not really accepting but it's a trend in most if not all non-white communities.
 - We as Black people do not have an open culture when it comes to talking about mental health.
 - Stigma is probably the most concern preventing access. Limited resources within the community.
 - Knowledge as the process to get help and de-stigmatizing mental illness. In the Black community it may be knowing the process to get help and culturally sensitive help.
 - I think the biggest barrier is that the Black community does not seek help because of the stigma with mental health.
 - Race, gender and culture/religion. I believe it is specific because with history and the erasure of Black struggles through a white lens, we have a tough time dealing with it or finding people to relate to vs. a white person having the resources open and not feeling alienated.
 - Mental health help is very accessible for me. However, it is not specific to my race or culture and, therefore, does not resonate with me.
 - The stigma around it. No, I don't think it is specific, but it is definitely present and requires more attention in the Black community.
-



The survey findings show that mental health is important within the Black community.

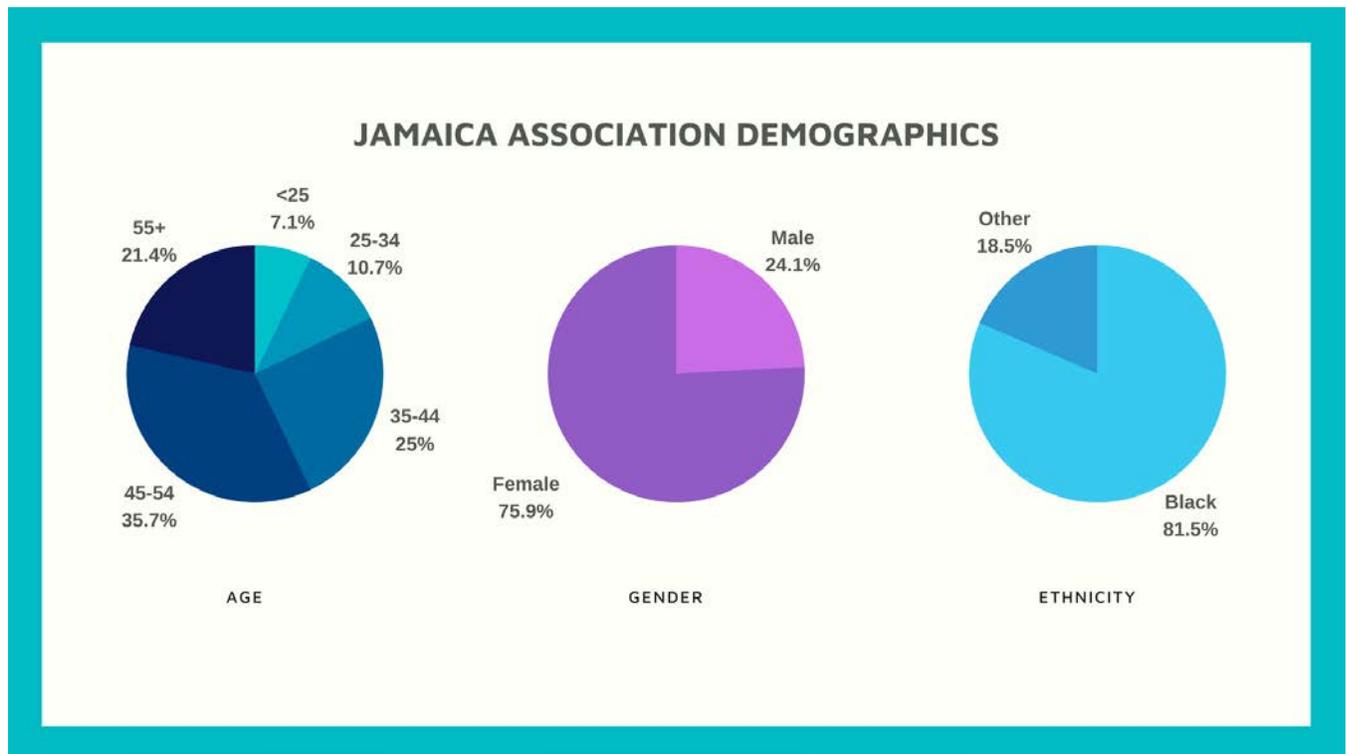
When asked, “What has been your experience with mental health? Did you find it easy to acknowledge it and to talk to anyone about it?” All participants shared that they dealt or are dealing with mental health issues in some way or the other, and they were encouraged to seek help and got the help they needed. Others were hindered to do so because of the lack of knowledge of the resources available and personal issues. The last question provided us with much needed insight, most agreed that the Black community stigmatizes the topic of mental illness causing it to be an ongoing issue within the community. Overall, Black youth struggle with confronting mental health within the Black community which makes it difficult to deal with or find someone to relate to (whereas, Caucasians easily have access to resources which prevents feelings of alienation).



Consultation #4: Mental Health in the Black Community Event hosted by the Jamaica Association

Overview

The Jamaica Association held a Black History Month event on Mental Health on February 26, 2020. During this event, the Project Woke interns conducted a survey with the participants on mental health the main question asked was: Does Racism have an effect on the Mental Health of the Black Community?



More women were in attendance at this event, as a result 75% of the participants were women, and the remaining 25% identified as men. 82.76% were English speakers in Quebec while 17.24% identified as French speakers. Their educational background was as follows; 26.92% had finished CEGEP, 46.15% a Bachelors and 26.92% a Masters. The participants identified 81.5% Black, and 18.5% as Other. When asked what the participants meant by “other” they self-reported as follows; Mixed Race, 1 Indigenous, Barbadian, Jamaican, Haitian and African. 68.97% were born outside of Quebec leaving 31.03% of participants indicating they were born in Quebec. The majority of the participants identified their nationality to be Canadian, however some did specify they are Canadian and another nationality such as Jamaican, and Barbadian. (see appendix for more details on participants' culture and ethnicity).

Key Findings: A major survey finding is an overwhelming consensus that there is a lack of Black Mental Health professionals. Also, many participants were quick to identify racism as trauma stemming from oppression and a loss of the sense of belonging. Participants also made a connection between racism as a trauma and lacks recognition of its impact on the mental health of Black people.

Participants Responses

Survey Question: In your opinion, do you think that there is a connection between racism and mental health? Explain why or why not.

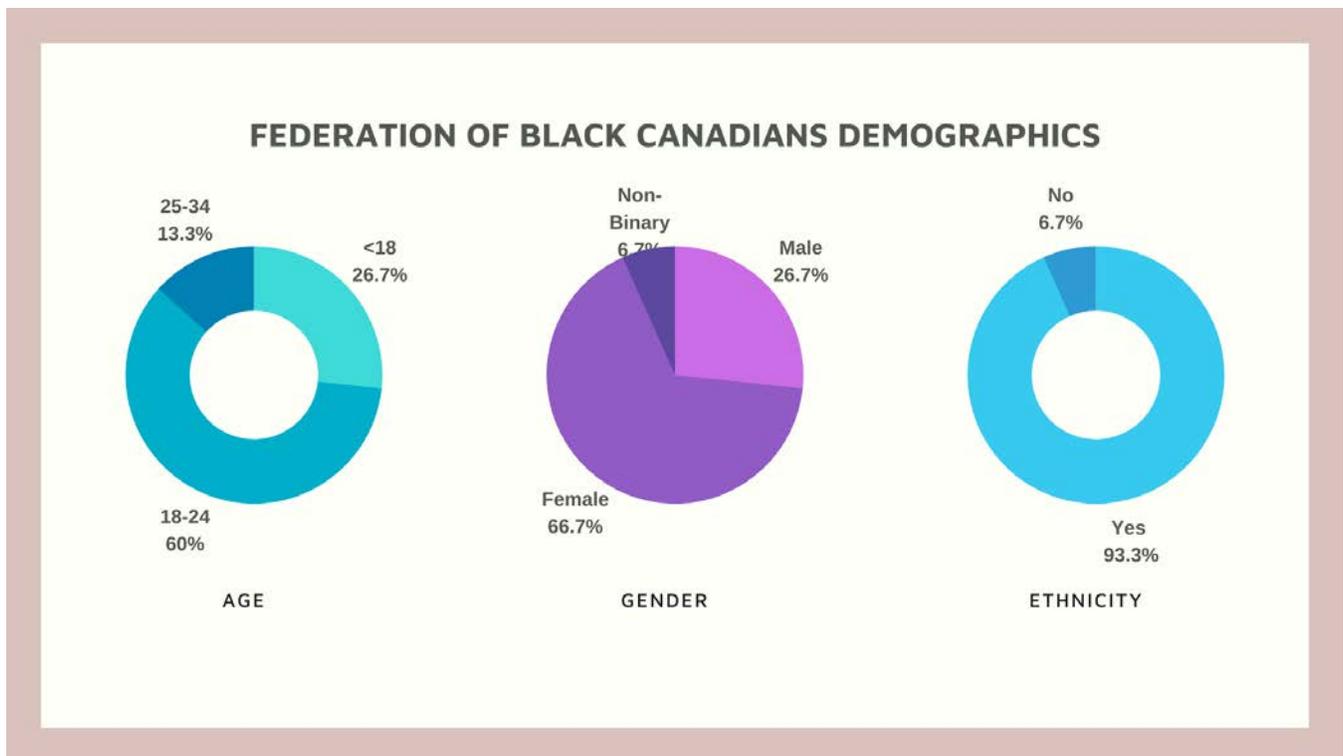
- “In my opinion, racism is a trauma that may lead to mental illness. There are direct psychological wounds on the psychological level such as feelings of oppression, loss of the sense of belonging.”
- “It could be a factor. People can get stressed due to incidents and behaviors towards them. But there are many more factors involved....”
- Possible. It is probably more due to the mis-education of black people (youth especially) i.e. No meaningful history of Africa and/or blackness taught in schools therefore there is no pride in the contributions made to the development of humanity by Black/African people.
- Yes, there is a connection between racism +mental health. Trauma of racism is undiagnosed + untreated. Lack of black psychologists, black psychiatrists, and black family doctors combined with a lack of trauma focused mental health programs/clinics
- Yes. The impacts of racism and the trauma experienced with it, even if it appears to be minimal, impacts our mental health and causes a breakdown even if unnoticed.
- Yes! However, it depends on each individual. Racism creates social and financial barriers that can cause anxiety, stress, depression, and low self esteem. Each "victim" of racism has different coping skills for some, the barriers to success that racism creates can be a positive motivator and challenges to overcome. For others, they can become overwhelmed by the consequences of racism, leading to mental health issues. In summary, yes, there is a connection whether Mental health issues manifest depends on each individual's coping skills and support network.
- Racism has the most to do with mental health; it does not make you feel good about yourself.

These responses confirm that the majority of Black people believe that racism has a negative impact on the mental health of Black people. Whether it stems from the experience of racism, the internalization of negative stereotypes directed towards Black people or the lack of support and access to Black Mental Health professionals; racism indeed harms the Black community, psychologically. Unfortunately, it can be difficult for Black community members to find the help they need because there is an overwhelming lack of Black professionals in mental health services, this lack exacerbated by the Black communities' general disregard for mental health issues and the public health system's inaccessibility to health services to economically disadvantaged people. A lack of understanding of mental health by the Black community, compounded with a lack of professionals sensitive to the Black experience further prevents Black people from accessing services that can support them. The need for more Black professionals within the healthcare system, specifically the mental healthcare system is indisputable. Having more Black Health professionals will not only help bring awareness of mental health in the Black community but will also allow the community to spread the knowledge from within into their family units, as well as broaden the institution's understanding which will give insight into recognizing the ways a visible minority might experience mental health.

Consultation #5: Federation of Black Canadians Youth Forum

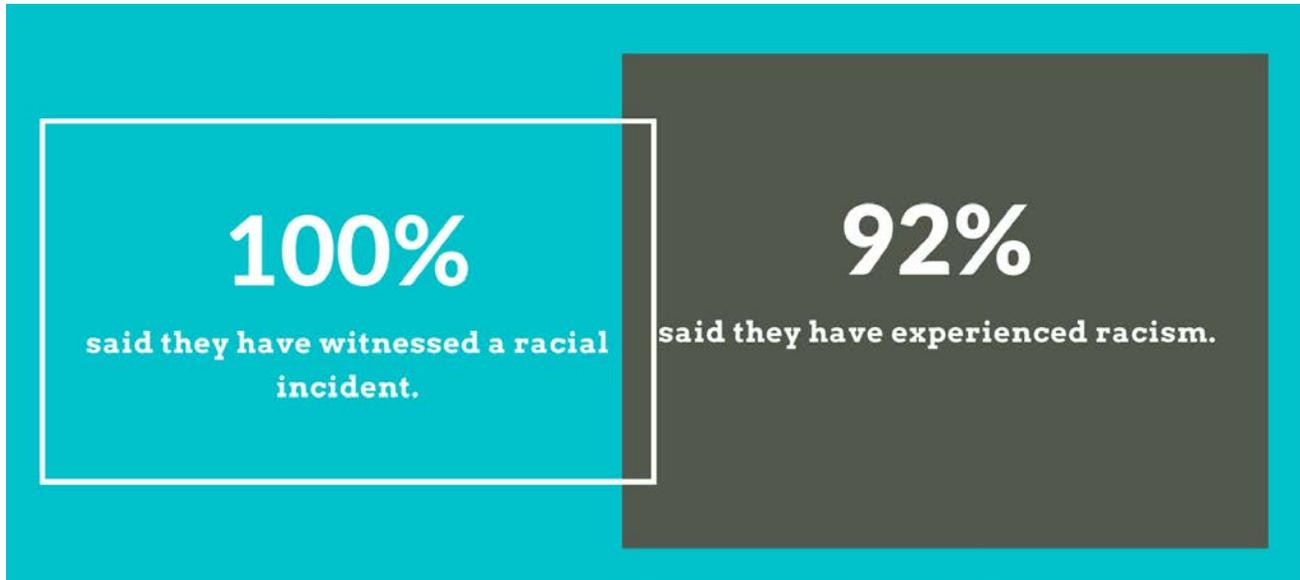
Overview

During the Federation of Black Canadian youth forum, *Project Woke* conducted a survey with fifteen Black youth who were in attendance during this event. This survey consisted of questions related to all of the topics explored in this paper and was divided into three parts. During the Black Federation of Canada event, *Project Woke* conducted a survey with fifteen Black youth who were in attendance during this event. This survey consisted of questions related to all of the topics explored in this paper and was divided in three parts. This was purposely done in order to gain more insight into the opinions of Black Canadian youth. 80% of respondents were 18 to 24-year-old women, (66%). 93% identified as Black and 73% identified as Canadians with 60% born in Quebec. The majority (60%) of the respondents indicated that they were employed. While the totality of the participants indicated that they were English speakers, the large majority had completed high school (93%) and amongst that large majority, most of the participants indicated that they had completed a Bachelor's degree (40%).



Key Findings

Not only did *all* of the respondents state that they have witnessed a racial incident at one point of their life but the majority of them mentioned that they had experienced racism themselves (92%). The majority of the respondents indicated that the racism they endured had, at one time, resulted in being called a racial slur (69%).

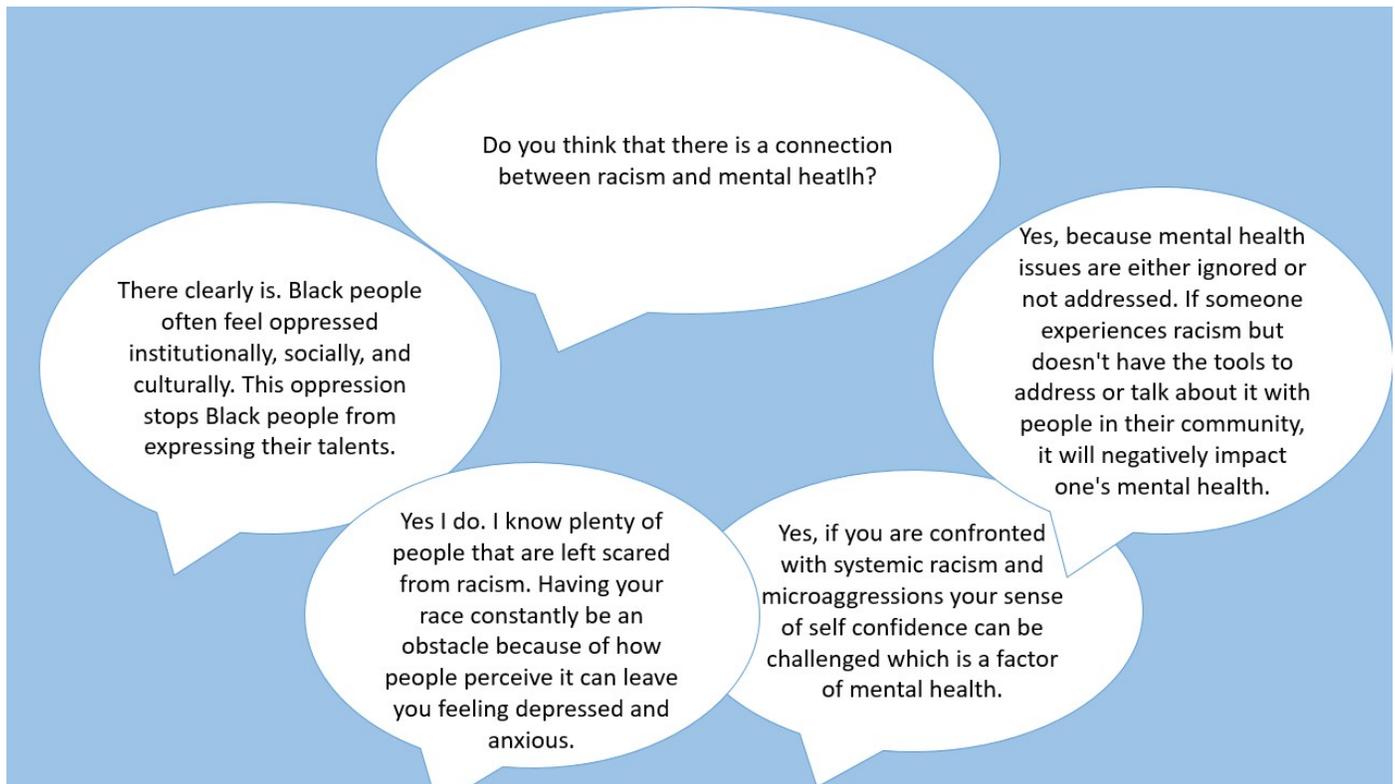


Participants Responses

The respondents' experience with racism made them feel various ways. While some stated that the racism they endured made them feel as though they had to fight twice as hard to be acknowledged, others stated that having to experience racism made them feel isolated, powerless and inadequate. A few other respondents pointed out that their experiences with racism made them feel like they were in the wrong for simply being Black. Others indicated that being confronted with the racism of others resulted in their discomfort and anger, but overall it instilled a strong desire for change. In regards to their overall well-being, 53% of the respondents believed that their experience with racism had a negative impact on their mental health. The youth participants also shared their opinion on whether there was a connection between racism and mental health in the Black Community. The majority stated that there was in fact a connection between racism and mental health in the Black Community 83% said yes. While some argued that being confronted with systemic racism and micro-aggressions threatens one's sense of self and confidence, damaging one's mental health, others argued that the overall effects of racism could lead to depression. A few other participants pointed out that having one's race as an obstacle and a factor at play in the way others perceive them can also lead to anxiety and other mental health issues.

One of the main questions asked in this survey was "*Do you think there is a connection between racism and mental health? Explain why or why not*". The participants all agreed that there indeed is a connection between racism and mental health and explained how racism has impacted them, and expressed how it can really play a role in one's mental well-being.

Some of the responses were:



Consultation #6: Project Woke Online Survey

Overview

From March 11 to 21, 2020, Project Woke launched an online survey that consisted of questions from all three key topics: Black History in Canada, Mental Health in the Black Community and Regaining Agency. The aim of this survey was to get a more in depth view of from Black English-speaking youth. 70% of the youth that responded to this survey were under the age of 35 but, the survey was open to other members in the Black community as well. 70.5% were female, 5.8% male, and 17.6% non-binary. 70.6% identified as Black, 64.7% indicated that English is their first language. 88% of respondents were born in Canada, and 81% were born in Quebec.

Key Findings

- The production of art is one of the most important outlets for empowerment for youth in the Black community.
- The majority of Black youth believe that Black Canadian History should be implemented into the Canadian school curriculum.

Participants Response

This survey was divided into three sections with seven questions each which reflected the themes explored in this report.

ONLINE SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS



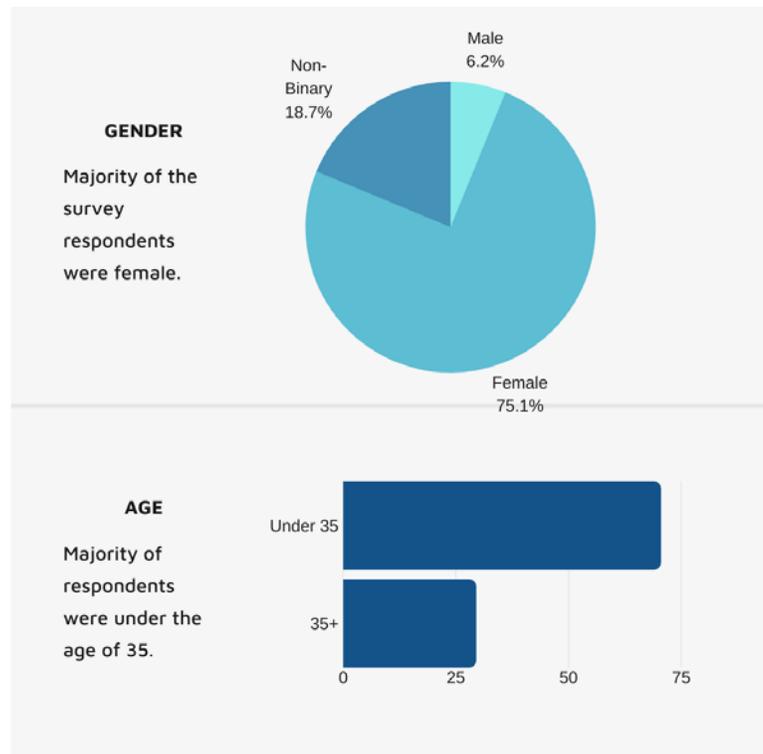
70% Have a Bachelors Degree or higher (Masters, PHD)



70% Are currently employed



70% Identify as Black

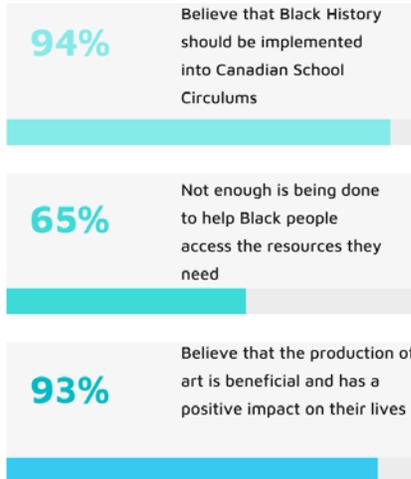


Mental Health in the Black Community

88% of respondents said that they have experienced racism sometime throughout their lifetime, out of 17 respondents only 2 responded that they have not experienced racism.

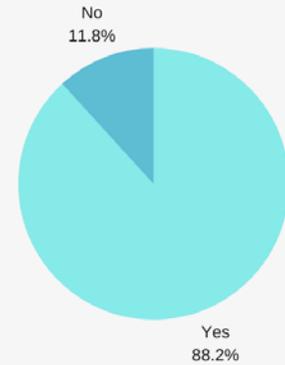
When asked if they believe that their experience with racism has had a negative impact on their mental health 82% replied yes. When asked the question “What does Mental Health look like in the Black Community?” 50% said “negative”. When asked if they have ever experienced mental health issues, 82% replied yes. Likewise, 82% of respondents said they have witnessed racial incidents, and 70% have been called a racial slur. When asked, “As Black youth, do you believe you can do anything to end racism?” 41% replied yes. However, 47% said they were not sure. Only 62% said that they believe they could make a positive impact in their community.

KEY FINDINGS



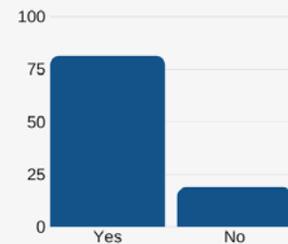
BORN IN CANADA

Majority of the respondents were born in Canada. Only 2 respondents indicated they were not.



BORN IN QUEBEC

81% of participants were born in Quebec.



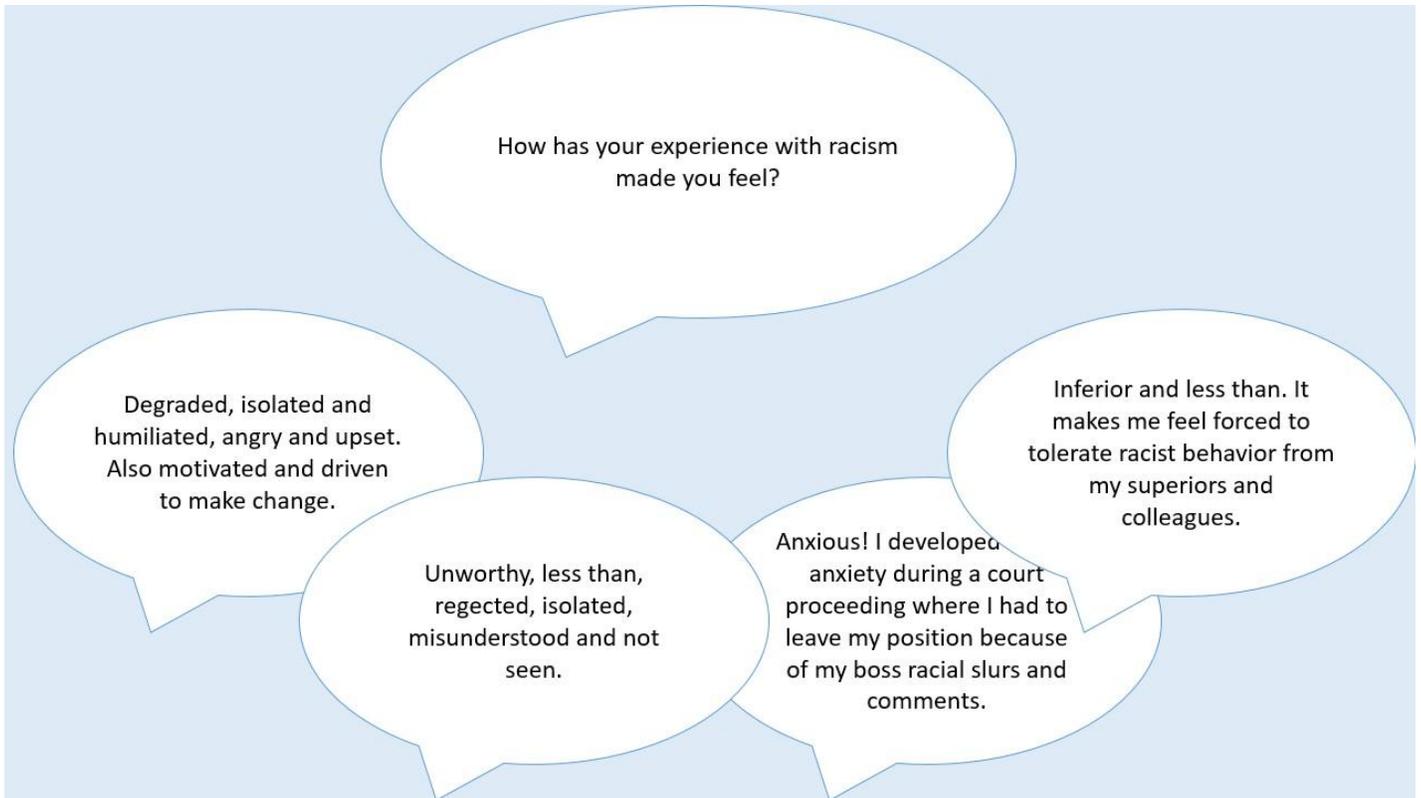
Regaining Agency: Exploring How the Black Community's Response to Racism

When asked: Do you believe that the production of art by you or another Black person has a positive impact on your life? 94% of respondents responded yes.

When asked: Do you believe that Montreal's Black Community is well connected? 47% of the youth said no. When asked, "Are you aware of the ways Black people have connected to support each other through history?" 35% said they were aware, and 35% said they were unaware. 65% of the respondents believe that not enough has been done to help the Black Community access resources that could benefit them within Montreal.

Findings

From this online survey, it is clear that many Black youth are not satisfied with the way Black people are presented in society. There is a clear link between not teaching Black Canadian History in schools, and racism. Majority of the respondents expressed that they have experienced racism at some point in their life, and majority have been called a racial slur. They clearly expressed that Black Canadian History should be implemented into school curriculums, as it will have a very positive impact on Canadian society. Teaching Black Canadian History needs to happen in elementary school, since the majority of Black Canadians do not learn about their own history until they are a young adult, in college or university. This data illustrates that racism has a negative impact on Black people's lives. The majority of respondents also believe that there needs to be more efforts to make resources readily available to the Black community.



The experience of racism evokes many negative emotions for Black people and many people of colour. These are the responses of young Black youth. It is clear that racism is a human rights issue that needs to be addressed. Black people are often known for their resilience, however their ability to overcome should not be used as a justification to inflict harm.

Racism has a negative impact on these youth lives but they are still determined to make change.

EMPOWERED

76% believe they can do something to end racism.

TO MAKE CHANGE

91% believe they can make a positive impact in their community as Black youth.

IN THEIR COMMUNITY

74% believe that the Black Community is not connected enough and are willing to do something.

Recommendations

As a result of the consultations and findings, the suggested recommendations from Project Woke's interns are as follows:

Mental Health in the Black Community

1. Provide Black Canadian youth with mental health education and increase access to free and accessible resources, such as information, clinics, programs, etc.
2. Increase Black representation and inclusivity in institutions offering mental health services:
 - 2.1. Implement more employment equity programs in public institutions that offer mental health services to increase the representation of Black employees within those institutions.
 - 2.2. Improve funding and access for Black youth entering the healthcare domain through scholarships and increased funding for targeted educational programs for Black youth.
 - 2.3. Increase funding for Black community centers to offer mental health services to the Black community that are transparent and accessible
 - 2.4. Collaborate with mental health professional associations and service providers across Canada to introduce mandatory cultural sensitivity training.
 - 2.5. Offer funding to mental health associations to facilitate these training programs.
 - 2.6. Cultural sensitivity training should address anti-Black racism and how it operates with regards to mental health provision.

Black Canadian History

3. Work with Canadian and provincial governments to expand and improve cultural sensitivity and racism education in all schools.
 - 3.1. Provide government funding to Black educator programs and organizations that provide cultural sensitivity in Canadian schools.
 - 3.2. Expand public awareness and understanding of the role of Black Canadians in Black society and Canadian history.
 - a. Increase the recognition of the contributions and achievements of Black Canadians through award programs, funding for organizations and institutions that educate the public on Black Canadian society.
 - 3.3. Work with provincial governments to reform Canadian school curriculums to include Black and African historical contributions to Canada and the world with the goal of addressing the abhorrent lack of robust education on Black Canadian history and fight systemic discrimination.

Community Development

4. Establish reporting mechanisms and a national database to track incidents of racism and hate in Canada.
 - 4.1. Fund and provide resources to Black-led community organizations that work to address incidents of hate and racism through facilitation, redress and mediation*.
 - a. ***Rationale:** while the majority of the youths believe that voicing their experiences with racism is vital to combat it, it was also pointed out that to *better* support youths to become civically engaged, their voices need to be appreciated, and resources should be provided to allow for a louder echo of their voices. Valuing the voices of Black youths is the beginning of change. Without these voices, we will remain unaware of the exact loci of systemic racism.
 - 4.2. Fund youth mentorship programs that focus on creative research as a way to connect Black youth with recent Black historical events in order to empower youth to recognize their role as community participants.
 - 4.3. Provide accessible funding opportunities for Black Youth who want to develop workshops, events, support groups, and programs to foster the Black community development.
-

Conclusion

Many questions were raised in this paper. Of primary importance are:

- 1- “What would Black Canadian Youth have to say had they been present at the Ministerial Forum of Anti-Racism?”
- 2- “What is the willingness of Black youth to make change and what is their level of engagement in anti-racism initiatives?”

By exploring these questions in the context of three themes (e.g. Black history in Canada, mental health and, regaining agency), findings have repeatedly shown that there is an interest amongst Black youth to identify and explore these issues further with the goal of making positive and multi-beneficial change having attended and created forums for discussions on anti-racism. The implications of not applying these recommendations would lead to the continued systemic abuse of human beings who become victimized simply because of their skin colour, in addition to a despondent generation of youth with no connection to the past, no interest in the present and no hope for the future.

It is evident that the implications of not mitigating the many problems of racism would lead to the continued systemic abuse of human beings who become victimized simply because of their skin colour, in addition to a despondent generation of youth with no connection to the past, no interest in the present and no hope for the future. And that racism would continue to result in the deterioration of mental health and a disconnected community, which would do much harm to any mobilizing initiatives acting in the interest of said community. However, the role of civic education is essential if Black youths are to move away from isolation and towards celebration and empowerment. Civic education needs a strong foundation to be effective and it must include how to engage in civil discourse, justice and injustice, it must include tools for youth to connect with their communities, connect with their sense of self-importance and it **MUST ENCOURAGE SELF ESTEEM.**

The Black community must be equipped to speak truth to power and understand the connection between the political and the personal and the link between law, policy, institution, society at large. Civic education could include media literacy, case studies on current social movements and how people relate to the individual and the collective, an understanding of the importance of Black people throughout history, including in the 21st century (i.e. contributions to social media and pop culture, its significance, where it comes from, and how it comes about).

Next Steps

The Project Woke interns aspire to continue to work together as a group and contribute to the development of Montreal's Black Community.

The interns hope to develop:

- Support groups as a safe place for Black people to speak about their experience with racism and other forms of discrimination.
- Community events that focus on intergenerational conversations and learning
- Mentorship programs to support the career and personal development of other black youth entering the workplace and wanting to develop their career.

This report will be distributed to government officials (federal, provincial, and municipal) and will be sent to Black Community organizations in Montreal. This report will also be available to the public through the BCRC Montreal's webpage: www.bcrcmontreal.com.

Project Woke Intern Reflections

Since January 2020, fourteen interns conducted research and wrote this report. Here are a few of their reflections. More intern reflections can be found on www.bcrcmontreal.com.

Taibat

My name is Taibat Adeyemi, and I joined the BCRC: Project Woke internship on the 30th of January 2020. I remember being very excited to be part of a group that was trying to make an impact in our community – and to this very day, I am happy that I participated. The internship was more than just doing research and having textbook answers to questions: it was a learning experience and an eye-opener about the impact that Black people have and their history in Canada. This knowledge made me have a sense of belonging in the community. The internship gave us personal access to the community in a way in which we could ask questions on Mental health and get honest feedback. I learnt a lot from the intelligent and insightful ladies that participated with me in this journey. It was always an interactive space where everyone's opinions and suggestions were not only welcomed but explored. One of my many highlights was reading an original piece of mine at an event we created at the Walkley Community Center, and I wouldn't trade that feeling for anything. I am super appreciative for being part of this project, and I cannot wait to see how far it will go.

Aicha

I first joined Project Woke due to my interest on the topic concerning racism and discrimination. Moreover, I couldn't pass the opportunities of learning new skills and applying the ones I have gained over the years studying sociology and political science to a real-life issue. I loved the idea that my knowledge could be used to write public policy and create change in the Black community. That being said, my experience as an intern was not only educational and informative, but also very eye-opening and helped me gain experience in my discipline. Multiple workshops made us, young interns, learn and discover a lot of details concerning the injustices the Black Canadian community has been experiencing for centuries. On the other hand, other workshops provided us crucial information to be able to write our paper advocating public policy recommendations we uncovered through data collection and research, and believe are pivotal for the eradication of racism and discrimination against Black individuals within the country. Essentially, I hope to use the skills I gained through civic education and research training provided by Project Woke, in particular teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking, and apply them to not only school but also further similar opportunities I will have in the future, such as employment, volunteering work and internships.

Samy

I am a third-year student at Concordia pursuing a double major in Communication Studies, and Western Society and Culture. I have often felt isolated in my academic pursuit and interests. The topics I am interested in and wanted to research were scarce in documentation that would be recognized by academia. After constantly searching I realized that there is work out there, it is just not given the same visibility and opportunity. Luckily, that is changing in recent times with

research creation. I was immediately drawn to the implications of using research creation to solve two problems I faced. The first, was a lack of a Black perspective in academia and the other was articulating complex thoughts and concepts found in different Black diasporic cultures. Through my internship with the BCRC, I attended a workshop titled “Research-Creation from a Black Perspective” led by Annick Maugile Flavien the founder of the Black Perspectives Initiative. In this workshop I learned not only how research creation is aiding in creating a repository of Black scholarly work, but also how it can go beyond. Research Creation can take many forms: books, sculptures, podcasts, even businesses. I also discovered since most often it requires working closely with the community that is affected by your research. This drastically changes the paradigm of how research is conducted, instead of being a passive subject in the research the community is a proactive participant of it. This change in relationship has promising implications, such as creating businesses and organizations, and programs that are formed by the community and for the community. Insight that might have been overlooked, downplayed, or even left out can now be incorporated in the research creation. I refrain from saying final work because with research creation it does not end with the publication of the findings, it has a life beyond academia. This bridges the gap of academic theory and practical application. Where academia can be alienating and rigid in its traditional research methods, research creation can be more dynamic and have a more immediate response to the research being conducted. Through BCRC I have been able to discover a whole network of organizations and programs being done within the Black community of Montreal that I was previously unaware of. If these programs and researchers are given the proper visibility, I know that young Black kids like myself wouldn’t feel so isolated. I am thankful that an internship program like this exists and hope that many more do in the future.

Jane

My experience working on Project Work at BCRC can be summed up as empowering, thought provoking and fun. I was empowered with knowledge to engage in intellectual conversations about racism, to empathize with those that have experienced racism and to refer Black youths to several services that the Black community offers to mitigate the effects of racism. Moreover, the several workshops and youth forums organized were thought-provoking. For example during the “*Woke Wellness: Healing Black Minds*” event we had deep conversations about the relationship between mental health and racism. Many of the participants were vulnerable, sharing their experiences with mental illness and how being “Black” exacerbates the illness because of issues ranging from stigmatization from the Black community to the lack of culturally sensitive resources. I felt privileged and thankful for such exposure. It was one thing to talk about the issues within the four walls of our weekly workshops, and it was another thing to meet persons that had first-hand experiences with the issues. Finally, my experience at BCRC was fun. I got to work with amazing youths. Although we were all Black, huge diversity of thoughts and experiences were brought to the table. Friendships were formed and valuable connections were made!

Rachael

I am bi-racial. I am a woman. I am a biracial woman. I am a participant in the first Project Woke session, where we explore, discuss, learn and collaborate on what it is to navigate the Black experience. My initial experiences were internal. I am a bi-racial woman that has experienced life almost entirely void of any Black community experience. I grew up with my white mother in a white

suburb. Instead of exploring ways to enhance my curls, I opted to straighten them. Until recently my blackness was experienced in isolation, manifesting in confusion and frustration. By chance I met another intern at a non partisan event where we marveled at all of the Black folks, women in particular, participating in community action and organizing. A few weeks later that same intern reached out to invite me to participate in Project Woke, which I was happy to accept. This experience began with acknowledging an internal struggle that had been raging for years. My relationship to my own blackness has been something I have been simultaneously running from and observing outside of myself. The Project Woke experience brought me out of my head and showed me where I might find a role in the community. First and foremost it showed me just how diverse the Black community is. I knew it but I didn't know it, Black people are not a monolith. Initially I was very aware of how much I was talking in the meetings. I spent a little bit of time in a Political Science degree and so a lot of the workshops felt like a review for me. As a result I had a lot of opinions and questions for the facilitators. This kind of discussion would often lead to more questions than answers from my fellow interns. Upon reflection I realize that this was maybe some of the most valuable information we would receive throughout the process. At the time though, I was frustrated that our discussions weren't taking on the shape that I felt they needed to be and it was all happening at a pace that I felt to be too slow for our timeline. At the beginning I found that it was mostly the light-skinned and bi-racial women doing most of the talking, myself included. It was uncomfortable for me at first because, again, my experience with the Black community before this was one of isolation and something I mostly read about, not something I participated in.

These were my initial hesitations. As we continued with the workshops, more people joined and more voices started speaking up. My earlier qualms about taking up too much space as a light skinned woman gradually fell to the wayside and my concerns became focused on the timeline of the project. What I found most difficult was the lack of consistency of my co-interns. The project was growing but there were only a handful of faces I saw regularly. When old faces would pop in again we as a group would have to review the last few weeks that individual interns had missed. With so little time I found this to be our greatest challenge as a group. This in itself is another lesson and with physical isolation as my most immediate reality, I've been able to distill lessons from these challenges. For me, I have come to understand that it is essential to check in with myself about my feelings and have people beside me that are willing to listen and able to understand my concerns. It's also essential that I can provide the same service to my fellow interns. It is important in group work that everyone understands the goals and process to fulfill those goals. Time lines, objectives and somewhat rigorous structure are all necessary when coordinating a group, especially a group made up of mostly students who have hectic schedules outside of a volunteer community project. I have a great deal of respect for the process and even more for the facilitators of Project Woke. Without them my isolation would be greater than this physical confinement. To have so many interactions with people that shared my values or others that shared my experience but had different perspectives, it was all a gift. The gift of relating to myself free of the guilt I once held as a bi-racial woman, instead replaced with the ability to relate to myself through connection, community and understanding. With this I humbly thank the process.

Sarai

In my family, politics is not a topic of conversation or interest. The only time politics is discussed is when a decision is being made that impacts money, religion and children. I had no desire to follow this trend because I believe that individuals can impact what decisions are made. Therefore, the understanding of politics is imperative for such. Project Woke, a project designed to equip young people with tools that would enable them to make a difference in their community provided me with insightful workshops and leadership training. This experience has taught me many things such as why Black people need to continue to be engaged in the Black community. This project through various workshops has endowed me with knowledge. How policies are made and changed are information I did not know before. The public consultations have not only given me a chance to learn from the public, but meet people with like-minded passion. What I appreciate the most about Project Woke is that any Black student with an interest to generate change is accepted into the learning process. In a world that restricts individuals from growth through ineligibility, Project Woke has offered a high-class education and training for free!

Anthonina

During my time in University, I used every group project as an opportunity to learn and share the issues that are within the Black community with my multicultural peers. In addition, while studying tourism back in 2014, my final project's focus was to help my peers see countries like Cuba and Jamaica differently than just destinations for all-inclusive resorts, but rather places that are rich in history and art. In 2018, continuing my pursuit for greater knowledge and to have a different understanding of the Black experience outside of my own, I embarked on an internship in Senegal, West Africa, in communications. This experience reshaped my vision of life and therefore changed my life. While there, I was inspired to document people around me and the issues that were surrounding them so I ended up creating a short documentary film. That experience also inspired me to continue the pursuit of getting to know myself more and to get more involved within my community here in Montreal, which led me to sign up for this internship. As far as I can remember, I have always been passionate and very vocal about the struggles of people of color all over the world. When the opportunity of doing this internship was presented to me, I saw an opportunity to learn more about history, different organizations that serve my community and most importantly to connect with other people that share the same passion as mine. I am now leaving this experience enriched and ready to start my own initiative. I love to create and I find that there are still so many things about us that are left to be explored. I am now working on my blog, since I have way more time than I used to, which I hope could help build a bridge between our culture and struggles and other people's discomfort towards race conversations. I was inspired by our group conversations and how our two dynamic and patient youth animators would help us ask ourselves the right questions. I want to do more and I know now that I am not alone and that there are so many resources that are there for me. I was able to make friends and even though this experience wasn't what I originally expected, it was what I needed.

These are the faces of the amazing Project Woke interns!





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Appendix A: Survey Sample Details

Samples Ethnicity-Cultural Identity		Project Woke-Study Sample				
Ethnicity/Culture	# of Participants		# of Participants		Percentage %	
Caribbean		Gender	Female	58	70.73%	
Jamaican	7		Male	19	23.17%	
Haitian	5		Non-Binary	4	4.88%	
Barbadian	4					
Vincentian	4					
Trinidadian	1		Age	<18	11	13.58%
Other: Indo-Caribbean	1			18-24	22	27.16%
		25-34		15	18.52%	
		35-44		11	16.05%	
		45-54		13	16.05%	
African			55+	9	11.11%	
Cameroonian	3	Ethnicity	Caribbean	22	23.16%	
Nigerian	2		African	6	6.32%	
Congolese	1		Black	61	64.21%	
Somalia	1		Other	6	6.32%	
Algerian	1					
Other		Employed	Yes	38	73.08%	
African-American	1		No	14	26.92%	
British	1					
Sri-Lanka	1	Education	<High School	5	6.49%	
			High School	11	14.29%	
			College	11	14.29%	
			University+	50	64.94%	