



Amandla Olwazi: The Power of Knowledge

Literature Review

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1. Introduction

As part of the larger project, "Amandla Olwazi - The Power of Knowledge," guided by Afrocentric traditional values and principles, this literature review embarks on a journey to uncover the intricate layers of 'Black' in Canada. Amandla Olwazi, an innovative knowledge mobilization project, seeks to shed light on the impact of anti-Black racism on the mental health and wellbeing of Black communities in Canada, fostering awareness, dialogue, and change. In alignment with the project's core objectives, we aim to contribute to the creation and synthesis of knowledge, develop Afrocentric principled knowledge mobilization products, and engage diverse Black community members in addressing the impact of internalized anti-Black racism.

Question 1: What is 'Black' In Canada?

We will begin by unraveling the foundations of 'Black' in Canada. Understanding this complex identity is crucial as we navigate the multifaceted world of anti-Black racism, bolstered by an appreciation for Afrocentric values. This knowledge, steeped in the Afrocentric tradition, will guide us in our quest for enlightenment.

Question 2: What Does Anti-Black Racism Look Like in Canada?

Amandla Olwazi recognizes that acknowledging the detrimental manifestations of anti-Black racism in Canada is paramount to our mission. By delving into these deeply ingrained prejudices, both systemic and individual, we aim to create a space for transformative change, rooted in Afrocentric principles.

Question 3: What are the impacts of anti-Black racism on the mental health and wellbeing of Canadians?

The knowledge created through this exploration is intended to not only broaden our understanding but also to illuminate the mental health and overall wellbeing of Black Canadians. By recognizing the intersection of race, identity, and mental health, we will uncover the deep impact of systemic racism, while emphasizing the strength and resilience of Black communities in the face of adversity.

Question 4: What does a culturally appropriate and holistic approach to Black Mental Health and wellbeing look like for different segments of Black populations in Canada?

Amandla Olwazi's commitment to Afrocentric principles is reflected in our approach to understanding and addressing the diverse needs within Black communities in Canada. Our exploration will lead us to consider the holistic mental health support required by various segments of the Black population, embracing the rich cultural traditions that underpin their wellbeing.

Question 5: What is Afrocentricity, and how do Black communities in Canada understand it?

In line with our project's goals, we will conclude by investigating the concept of Afrocentricity and its significance to Black communities in Canada. By exploring how Afrocentric values are understood and embraced, we aim to empower individuals to take pride in their heritage and promote a sense of belonging within the Canadian mosaic. Amandla Olwazi is more than a project; it is a movement that brings together a diverse range of individuals and organizations from broader Black communities, academic institutions, faith-based organizations, community and social services agencies, and other Black-led agencies. With these stakeholders, we are collectively striving to raise awareness of how race and racism continue to shape the experiences of people of African, Afro-Caribbean, and Black descent in Canada. We recognize the importance of knowledge creation, partnership building, and the development of Afrocentric knowledge mobilization products. Together, we are committed to empowering and mobilizing knowledge to address the impact of anti-Black racism and create a more equitable and inclusive Canada.

2. Question 1: What is “Black” in Canada?

“Black Canada is not one thing. It's multiple moments of blackness. It's multiple relations to the nation space. It's multiple points of arrival. It's a set of different histories.” - Rinaldo Walcott

2.1 Historical Background

The arrival of Mathieu Da Costa, the first documented Black person in Canada dates to the early 1600s and marks over 400 years of significant contributions of Black Canadians to the rich cultural history of the country (1). Historians suggest that in the late 15th century, Africans functioned in the role of interpreters for the Portuguese, and in the 17th century interpreters for the Dutch, English and French (2). African descendant Mathieu Da Costa was multilingual and not only served as an interpreter but also a navigator for French colonizers and explorers Pierre Du Gua de Mons and Samuel de Champlain (3). Da Costa participated in trade expeditions in North America, allowing French explorers to communicate with Indigenous peoples (2). He is believed to have been a part of the expedition which led to the arrival and establishment of French settlers to New France, now present-day Quebec City, founded by Samuel de Champlain in 1608 (4). Twenty years later, the inception of Canada's significant relationship with people of African descent began when Black slaves were transported to this settlement from America (5). Slave populations were mostly concentrated in what is present day Montreal, Quebec City, and Nova Scotia, and unlike the United States, many enslaved persons in Canada were house slaves (5). While slavery in Canada existed in another form with Indigenous peoples enslaving prisoners of war, Europeans brought with them a form of chattel slavery that stripped the human element of Black and Indigenous persons, replacing it with a racial objectification that was designed to elevate white people as masters (6). This conscious reckoning created a mentality that reduced Black people to just a set of “goods” to be sold and transported, denying their fundamental human rights (6). As brought forth by, studies about enslavement fail to acknowledge the fact that the enslaved were skilled labourers who, through their knowledge, ensured the survival of their masters playing a key role in settler prosperity (7).

The transatlantic slave trade propelled slavery in Canada through a pattern that enabled European merchants to exchange goods for African enslaved people, who were forcibly transported to the Americas to produce raw goods that were then brought back to Europe for sale (6). Slavery in the United States of America has been documented for its brutality, and while Canada boasts of not sharing in some of the worst practices and traits of slavery, this does not absolve responsibility for the inhumane treatment, punishment, exploitation, forced labour, and threats for physical and sexual abuse that African enslaved people had to endure (6). In 1763, British governor of Quebec General James Murray asserted that Black slaves were the only people to be depended upon for labour (6). These harmful statements made by public officials contributed to negative public perception of Black people, and reinforced beliefs that they were no more than property. When Great Britain gained control over New France, the institutions of slavery continued and became further entrenched as enslaved Black people began to replace Indigenous enslaved people. In attempts to reclaim their humanity, enslaved persons would resist institutional slavery by

running away or assisting each other to escape, despite the risks and repercussions (6). Centuries later, the same exists, as the Black community continues to make attempts to resist institutional racism by asserting their position as human beings, worthy of human rights, human dignity and material growth and wellbeing.

By the mid 1700's, being Black in Canada became nuanced as more Blacks arrived after the American War of Independence (8). Some were formerly enslaved and promised land and freedom for defending the British Crown, some arrived as persons enslaved to Loyalists, and some continued to arrive from America and the Caribbean until the 1860's (8). Indentured servitude was also a practice that existed, and under this system, individuals were expected to provide unpaid labour for a contracted time in exchange for transport, shelter, and food (6). To be Black in Canada meant that you were either free, enslaved, or an indentured servant, who although considered free was still required to work for several years. These were the primary systems of control. The late 1700s saw a change in attitudes towards slavery which eventually led to the abolishment of the slave trade in 1807, making it illegal to buy and sell human beings as slaves, and the abolishment of slavery as a practice in 1834 throughout the British Empire (6).

Black people were considered one monolithic group by the end of the nineteenth century, dismissing their wide divergences and confusing Loyalists, Maroons, Refugees, and the descendants of the enslaved with each other (1). Once the groups started to unify through religion, poverty, and shared experience, it was too late to change the assumptions created by white discrimination, as all Black people were viewed from a narrow range of expression simply due to the colour of their skin (1).

2.2 By the Numbers: A demographic and epidemiological portrait of Black people in Canada

The question, "What is Black in Canada?" can be understood and answered in a census data-driven way which quantifies different Black identifying groups. Thinking about Black Canada in these terms (pluralistic) allows for an awareness of difference across Black communities geographically, providing a portrait that speaks to the richness of the people (13). For instance, in 2019, Statistics Canada released a publication entitled, *Diversity of the Black Population in Canada* which aimed to highlight Black diversity in Canada in terms of ethnic and cultural origins, languages and places of birth (9). This publication revealed a richness in diversity and background for Black people in Canada and spoke to the contributions they made to the development of the country, whether through those who have immigrated or those who can trace their roots for many generations (9).

Half of the Black population were immigrants who arrived at different points in time, ranging from before 1981 to 2016 (9). Canada's immigration policy changed in the late 1960s and reflected a points-based system to select economic immigrants based on occupational skills, education, and knowledge of official languages (9). The majority of Black immigrants who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s were women of Jamaican and Haitian descent, who were sponsored by a family member already living in Canada (9). The largest percent of newcomers (40.3%) were admitted under the economic program, and

the top countries of birth for economic newcomers were Nigeria, Haiti, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Jamaica (9). The top countries of birth/origin of new refugees were the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Haiti, Somalia, and Ethiopia (9). As of 2016, about 44,285 Black people were considered non-permanent residents temporarily living in Canada on a work or study permit, or as asylum seekers (9).

There is much more diversity in language reported among first generation Black populations as compared to third generation (9). While English was the mother tongue for 59.8% of the Black population, French was the mother tongue of 19.6%. Among the other top mother tongues most reported, were Creole languages, Somali, Amharic, and Niger-Congo languages. Overall, more than 100 languages were reported as a mother tongue by the Black population in the country (9). Based on the 2016 census data, 94.3% of Black people lived in Canada's census metropolitan areas, compared to 71.2% of the total population (9). Toronto has the largest Black population in the country with 442,015 people or 36.9% of Canada's total Black population (9). Quebec has the second largest, with 26.6% of the total Black population. While the Black population in Quebec is mainly first generation living in the country, some have also called Canada home for many generations (9).

Nova Scotia has the largest Black population in the Atlantic provinces, and the majority of the Black population in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were born in Canada (9). The ethnic and cultural origins that were the most frequently reported by the Black population in this region included: Canadian, African, English, Irish, Scottish, and French (9). The 2016 census results report the Prairies as having the fastest growing Black population in Canada, as it more than quadrupled in size in a span of 20 years (9). Growth in Black population size is largely attributed to immigration from African countries (9). The Black population in British Columbia nearly doubled in size between 1996-2016, but the province has experienced a slower pace of growth in comparison to neighbouring provinces (9). The Territories has the fewest number of Black people in Canada.

According to census data from 2016, the Black population accounts for 3.5% of Canada's total population with close to 1.2 million people identifying as Black (9). The Black population has doubled between 1996-2016, and projections suggest a continued increase that could lead to 5% of Canada's total population (9). The 2016 census showed that long-established Black immigrants were mostly from the Caribbean, but recent immigrants were predominantly from African countries (9). More than 170 different places of birth have been reported for Black immigrants in Canada, with Jamaica and Haiti being the two main countries (9). Overall, there are more than 200 ethnic or cultural origins as reported by the Black population, and the 10 most frequently reported origins were Jamaica, African, Haitian, Canadian, English, Somali, Nigerian, French, Ethiopian and Scottish (9).

2.3 Social Determinants of Health and Health Disparities affecting Black Communities

Despite the rich diversity of Black populations in Canada as well as their contributions across sectors, entrenched racism affects every facet of life and disproportionately affects the health outcomes of Black Canadians (15). Food insecurity, low income, and

discrimination are just a few of the social determinants that affect the health of Black populations. For instance, in 2014 29.4% of Black Canadians were food insecure compared to 10.4% of white Canadians (15). In 2016, 21% of the Black population aged 25 to 59 lived in a low-income situation, compared to 12% of their counterparts in the rest of the population, and 27% of Black children were living in a low-income situation, compared to 14% of children in the rest of the population (10). Lone-parent households are two times higher in Black populations than the rest of the population, and 70% of these lone-parent households were women (10).

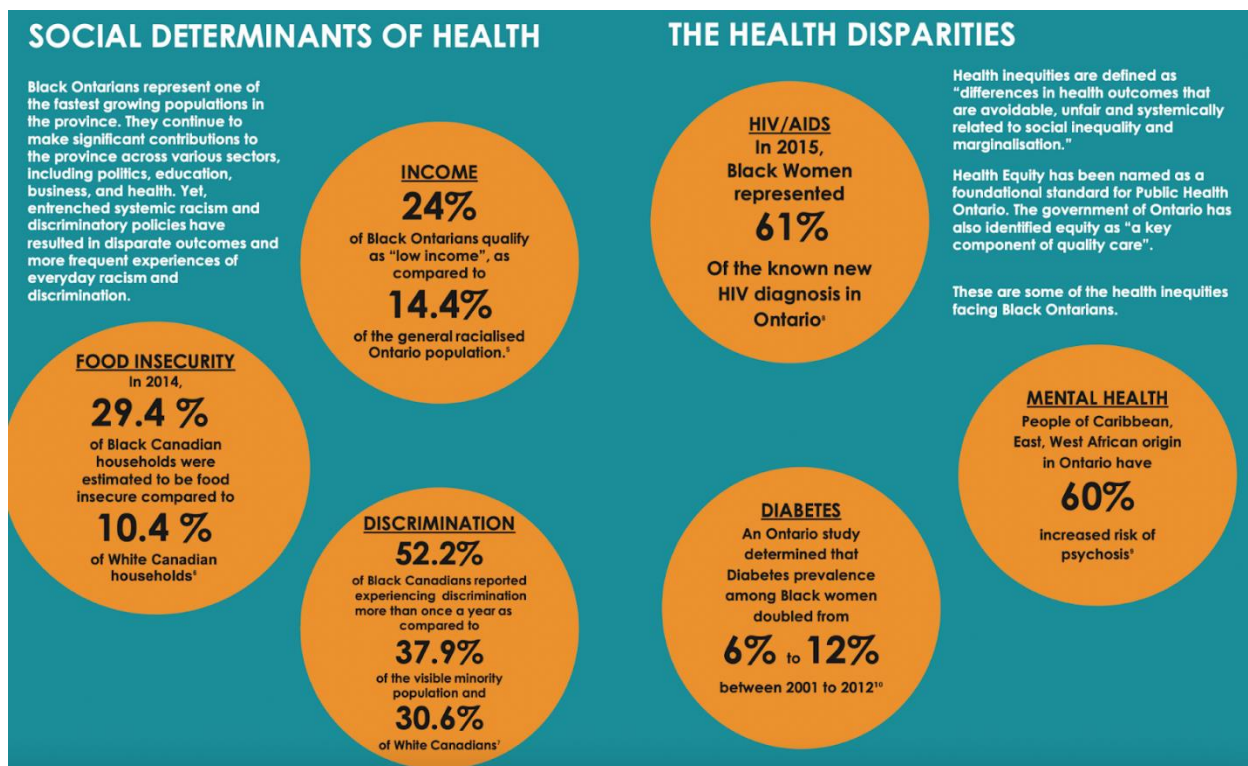


Fig 1 – Social Determinants of health and health disparities facing Black Canadians.

Source: <http://taibuchc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/TAIBU-Addressing-Anti-Black-Racism-in-Ontario.pdf>

In terms of discrimination, 52.2% of Black Canadians reported experiencing discrimination more than 1x a year compared to 37.9% visible minority population and 30.6% White Canadians (15). Over policing is also an area of concern as a 2019 news article revealed that Black people were 4-5x more likely to be stopped for street checks as compared to white people (16). In June 2022, the Toronto Police Service admitted to systemic discrimination in their policing practices (17). Findings from their race-based data collected in 2020 suggested that police officers use more force in their interactions with Black people (17). It is unsurprising then, how 1 in every 15 Black males have been incarcerated compared to 1 in every 70 White males (17).

Health inequities facing Black Canadians creates vulnerabilities that impact communities already facing threats to their health. The issue with disease is that it often does not act alone and often interacts with other determinants of health such as underemployment, gender-based violence, housing insecurity and education to name a few. Between 2001 and 2012, diabetes incidence doubled from 6% to 12% among Black women and in 2015, Black

women represented 61% of HIV cases (15). It has also been noted that Black Ontarians with origins in the Caribbean and Africa have a 60% increased risk of psychosis (15).

In 2020, Statistics Canada released a booklet in conjunction with the United Nations' International Decade for People of African Descent (2015 to 2024) and Black History Month (10). The booklet presents indicators related to education, employment, income, family structures, and perceptions using data from the census and the General Social Survey. It aims to provide insight into some of the key socioeconomic characteristics of Canada's Black communities. The highest level of educational attainment among the Black population varies by sex and immigrant status, but in general - Black women have experienced a greater increase in postsecondary education (10). The 2016 census reports that 94% of Black youth would like to obtain a university degree but are less likely to (10). The employment rate of Black people aged 25-59 is lower than the rest of the population, and unemployment rates are higher than the rest of the population, even at higher levels of education (10).

Data from the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS) showed that Black employees over the age of 15, were more likely to report unfair treatment or discrimination at work in comparison to the rest of the population (10). Median annual wages remained stable at \$40,000 for Black men, while wages increased in the general population from 2000 to 2015 (10). Black women similarly have experienced an increase in the wage gap between their cohort and women in the rest of the population (10). Data from the GSS in 2016 reported strong levels of resilience among Black populations, with 44% saying they were always able to bounce back compared to 33% of the rest of the population, and 65% saying they always learned something from their difficult experiences compared to 48% among the rest of the population (10). Despite difficult experiences, Black populations report a great ability to continue going about life as they normally would when compared to the rest of the population, a skill which is crucial when considering the disparities in education and the workforce (10).

2.4 Limitations of Data

Although the data highlights the diversity of Black populations in Canada, it does not provide substantial results on the challenges related to social and racial inequities that much of the population experience. Lone-parent households, immigrant status, lower levels of educational attainment, and high unemployment rates all contribute to poverty, as well as poorer health outcomes. Socioeconomic data for Black populations suggests that there are underlying challenges as income and employment rates continue to remain low (10). While it is not the case that all groups within the Black population experience challenges in the same way, there are important structural issues such as anti-Black racism that are difficult to escape as it is entrenched in society. For instance, the unemployment rates among Black people are higher than the rest of the population, yet Black people only account for 3.5% of the total population in Canada (10).

Race-based data in Canada is scarce, and there has been a call for more data which has led to the emergence of city-led initiatives such as Ontario's Anti-Black Racism Strategy, with an aim to eliminate disparity outcomes by 2024 for Black Ontarians (11). One of the

objectives for this strategy is to improve evidence-based approaches by reducing race-based disparities, which includes the collecting and analyzing of race-based data (11). There are challenges with requesting more race-based data as oftentimes, it leads to heightened surveillance of Black bodies, contributing to the disparities that already exist. When used appropriately in conjunction with the community and using principles of data governance, race-based data could be used to address racial and biased systemic inequalities (12).

2.5 *“Black Canada is not one thing. It's multiple moments of blackness”: Theorizing Blackness in Canada*

“What is Black in Canada?” could also be answered subjectively and reduced to an individual’s lived experience; how a person believes they must show up in society based on an experience of embodied consciousness, an idea put forth by Gordon Lewis (13). As a Black body in the world, the perspective is multidimensional and includes a dimension of seeing, being seen, and the consciousness of being seen by others (13). Gordon Lewis (1996) provides an interesting perspective for instances when questions of Blackness are raised and suggests that it transforms into a rhetorical question that asks what the solution is to the universal hatred of Black people (13). He elaborates further and cites W.E.B. Du Bois whose examination of the meaning of blackness led him to meditations on black suffering, and ultimately serve as an inception point for critical race theory and black liberation thought (13). With critical race theory, Black in Canada means understanding racialized oppression in a conscious body. As identified by Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, the black body is a slave to its appearance* (13). Black is absence where white is presence, which creates a skewed logic, manifesting as disadvantages for black bodies in an anti-Black world (13). To answer the question is to think critically about the positionality of Black peoples in Canada, and how the myriad of unique experiences starting from the arrival of the first Black person to contemporary understandings coalesce and interact with systems that are inherently discriminatory, creating the perfect storm for mental health challenges to not only emerge but to persist. In *Black Like Who*, Rinaldo Walcott addresses our query by suggesting that the Black Canadian is anyone who resists all domination with a vision of emancipation (14). In other words, Black in Canada speaks to liberation and resistance, but also identity and a (re)shaping of that identity. For Walcott, the Black Canadian is in a constant state of becoming (14). More than a narrow view of identity, it is defined by histories of uprootedness, defiance, migration, and self-(re) definition (14).

“Black Canada is not one thing. It's multiple moments of blackness. It's multiple relations to the nation space. It's multiple points of arrival. It's a set of different histories.” - Rinaldo Walcott

In Canada, emphasis is placed on root and origin for identity, rather than the dynamic processes that create Blackness and contribute to the identity of Black Canadians (15). By reducing Black people to their ethnic backgrounds, a form of othering occurs that not only assumes Black Canadians to be rooted elsewhere but shapes public perception of immigrants as underclass (15). When Blackness is viewed as violent, criminal and underclass (as posited by Walcott) it quietly, but purposefully gives justification for racism to exist (15). On the contrary, when identity is defined by Black Canadians, it centers Black

people in a way that highlights struggle and resistance, while encouraging the reshaping of identity and Canada through political action (15).

2.6 Discussion

As the research has shown, in attempting to address and answer the question of “what is Black in Canada” there is a lot of social and historical context that has led to the meaning behind these questions. As the research has shown, both historically and presently, the identity of Black Canadians is diverse, multilayered, and has diasporic and transnational connections to Black communities worldwide. Moreover, for the purposes of this research when we apply an Afrocentric frame of Ubuntu and community it allows for us to see that the Black Canadian community is not an isolated and fragmented community, nor is it individualistic, rather it is part of a global connected community that is connected through collective purpose (Ujima), kinship, spirituality (Imani) and unity (Umoja).

These characteristics and traits are most evident especially when looking towards how various organizations such as the research partners listed on this project attempt to answer the questions of “who is Black in Canada ” and “What is Black in Canada”. When we look to our research partners, we see that these questions are meant to be a guide to creating culturally responsive programming and services that addresses the community and health needs of the Black Canadian community. Moreover, within these partner organizations access to these programs and services for the Black community is based on self-identification, and these services are also intersections with the ways in which there are specific programs that cater to the various needs of Black Canadians, such as Black women, Immigrants, and youth.

The community partner and the research has shown then that this research question can be structured in an “inclusive” rather than “exclusive” framework, especially when addressing the rich and diverse and layered needs of the Black community in Canada. The fluidity of this designation and categorization of “who and what is considered Black in Canada” is an intentional effort to move towards an intersectional and holistic framework. Moreover, the dominant research regarding the mental health detrimental and impacts towards the Black community, is less concerned with defining who and what is “Black”, rather, the research is more acutely interested in defining and naming the various health factors and social determinants towards Black life and well-being.

However, for the intended purpose of this research it is important to have a working definition and scope of the intended and targeted audience. When addressing who is “Black in Canada” it is important to ground this definition not only in statistical and scientific data, but moreover, to use the framework of critical race theory to understand the ways in which race and racialization manifest within society and how “Black” became a racialized category. In understanding the phenomenon of race and racialization, and how Black people became racialized within society various critical race theorists and scholars and foundational Black theorists such as W.E.B Du Bois, James Baldwin, Frantz Fanon, C.R.L James and Audre Lorde to have theorize and the complex ways in which Black individuals and communities have not only becomes racialized in North America due to the complex systems of colonization and white supremacy, but more important, these social theorists

were able to illustrate and articulate the social harm that racialization has for Black individuals and the violence this resulted in. Importantly when defining what is Black in Canada, it is critically important to be mindful of the ways in which race became a social categorization in society, and how Blackness became marginalized as a result. One of the most important theories and concepts in sociology and critical race theory is the concept of “double-consciousness” coined by social theorist W.E.B Du Bois. Du Bois noted that for Black identifying individuals they experienced an inner fragmentation or a “two-ness” because of their racialized oppression and devaluation in a white-dominated society” (19). Therefore, as theorized by Du Bois Black people not only have a level of self-awareness and actualization of their racial identity, but because of how race is structure in society, Black people have internalized their oppression and have developed an internalized critical consciousness of their identity and their interactions in society because of their hyper-visibility.

Therefore, for the intended purposes of this research, which seeks to address the mental health within the Black community, the question can be better understood as a framework to identify the racialized communities who self-identify as Black and how within society, this designation of racialized have played a significant factor in how Black Canadians experience barriers to mental health access and services and what the implications of these barriers are from a public health perspective. For the purposes of this research project this research question can also be expanded to critically inquire the ways in which Black peoples and communities in Canada have experienced discrimination, especially within the health sector. This question can also be framed as an inquiry into the existing infrastructure and services in place that explicitly address the health and wellness needs of Black Canadians. When this research question is reframed to address the socialization of race in Canada and the lived experiences of Black people, the research question then addresses the social and systemic factors that uniquely affect the Black community in Canada due to discriminatory policies and practices, which have historical roots in settler colonialism and anti-black racism. Moreover, it then critically addresses the shared experiences of racism and discrimination that targets the Black community.

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3. Question 2: What Does Anti-Black Racism Look Like in Canada?

3.1 *Defining Anti-Black Racism*

The term anti-Black racism coined by Dr. Akua Benjamin, is defined as policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions such as, education, health care, and justice that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent (1). Anti-Black racism considers the history and the experiences of colonization by people of Black-African descent in Canada, while also highlighting the effects of racism on Black-Canadians (1). It is discrimination that is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, affecting policies and practices that negatively affect Black communities, while appearing normal to the larger white society (2). It is pervasive in nature, present in social systems which lead to unequal opportunities, lower socio-economic status, employment inequities, and poverty (2). Dr. Ibram X Kendi, author of the book *How to be an Antiracist*, defines an antiracist as a person who supports antiracist policy through action and expression of antiracist ideas (3). In his work, he suggests that racism and anti-racism are not reflections of who an individual is, but rather the choices that they are making now.

“...racism and anti-racism is not necessarily who you are, but what you are doing in the moment.” - Dr. Ibram X Kendi (What is Anti-Racism?)

Anti-Black racism is expressed across public sectors from justice to education, and its roots in colonial practices have negatively shaped the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of the public towards Black and racialized communities (4). This devaluing and exclusion of minority groups is a legacy of the anti-Black racism of this country and has had long-lasting effects that have transmitted over generations (4). Examples include but are not limited to mass incarceration, mass deporting and racialized policies that target immigrants. Black people experience higher rates of arrest and are substantially overrepresented in the justice system (5). For instance, 1 in every 15 young Black males have been incarcerated as compared to 1 in every 70 White males (5). Racist ideas create racist policies, and result in racially inequitable outcomes, particularly against Black people. These statistics suggest that it is a systemic issue that disproportionately affects Black people compared to White people. Anti-Black racism is at the helm of mental health concerns, as racialized communities internalize the violence against them and often express in ways that are unproductive and threatening to their health and wellness. In discussions on preserving the life process, clinical psychologist Na'im Akbar, puts forth the idea that Black communities are victims of a domination combined with oppression that serves as the essence of sanity for a people who have built their survival on limiting others (6). As a result, Black people are susceptible to developing an anti-self-disorder, a form of mental colonization where they identify with their oppressors and the hostility directed towards their race (6). The danger lies in the behaviour, as victims seek to restore and maintain white supremacy to gain acceptance from their oppressors (6). Dr. Kendi discusses a similar idea when asserting internalized racism as the real Black on Black crime (7). He coined the term *uplift suasion*, which is a strategy to gain white approval by acting

“respectable” or behaving exceptionally, to model how members of the oppressed group ought to present. Fundamentally, it suggests that Black people are responsible for the racist attitudes that are held strongly by white people towards them (3). Akbar adds that the dominant group will compliment “respectable Blacks” by advising that they are not like the others (6). Racism has the ability to permeate the skin, developing negative impressions of self through stigmatizing and limiting beliefs.

3.2 Rooted in White Supremacy

Oppression faced by Black communities is sustained by white supremacy and anti-Black racism. Racialized communities face challenges in society and it is the role of community workers to advocate on their behalf for social justice, while organizing against resistant and oppressive forces (7). Social justice educator Eli Clare encourages those in positions of power to name their privileges (otherwise luxuries), so as to reflect on the basic human rights that so many are deprived of (8). To create a more just and equitable world, inherited luxuries must be dismantled by the people who benefit the most.

“As long as white supremacy exists, white people will have the privilege of being able to forget, deny, dismiss our whiteness, assume our experience is the norm, even as our denial and assumptions diminish us, make us less able to connect, build community, and be honest allies. Every day I can hone my awareness, learn more of the history, listen hard to people of color, work to let go of the luxuries embedded in being white, and still, I will have access to them.” (8) (Eli Clare, 2003, Digging deeper: Thinking about privilege.)

You can have (or lack) privilege based on your identity, which makes it not only necessary but vital to consider those who do not share the same experiences so as to offer genuine, and meaningful solutions in the struggle between racial progress and racist progress. A world of justice is one where rights are shared by all (8). Equity deserving groups require support, not judgment. They need understanding, not criticism. They need guidance, not interrogation. Service providers must be intentional in their efforts when dealing with service users. Listening to understand, using empathy, and being flexible in offering help to clients to access opportunities available to them, are critical aspects of the work. Every individual’s situation is unique to them and working from an anti-oppressive lens ensures that the diversity and the inclusivity of all service users is honoured.

3.3 Using Race-based Data to Address Anti-Black Racism

Ontario established an Anti-Racism Directorate (ARD) in 2016 to build a more inclusive society that identifies, addresses, and prevents systemic racism (12). The aim of this directorate is to advance racial equity for Black and other racialized populations by supporting community initiatives that raise awareness on racism and its impact in all forms. The ARD is a part of Ontario’s larger Anti-Black Racism Strategy (ABRS) which seeks to reduce disparities for Black Ontarians in the justice, child welfare and education sectors in alignment with the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent. It was specifically developed to address anti-Black racism and to improve access to life opportunities, as Black Ontarians have faced unacceptable barriers because of policies,

practices, and procedures. In the *2017 Anti-Racism Act*, strategies are meant to assist Black, Indigenous and racialized groups who have been most affected, and they include implementing initiatives which (1) Eliminate systemic racism, (2) Advance racial equity, and (3) Measure the strategy's effectiveness. The metric used to identify and monitor systemic racism and racial disparities within the public sector are *Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism*, also referred to as Ontario's *Anti-Racism Data Standards* (Standards). The Standards aim to promote racial equity and eliminate racism by establishing consistent practices for producing reliable information that support decision-making and public accountability (13).

Race-based mental health data in Canada is extremely limited and unfortunately, some believe that this is yet another way that violence is done against Black people. Without current and substantive data, it is impossible to effectively address the needs of a community. Activist Angela Robertson in her talk at the 2020 Black Experiences in Health Care Symposium called for a commitment to the collection and use of race-based data to drive improvements that she believed would make it possible to assess delivery on what is good for all Ontarians (14).

“...This involves collecting the data so we can monitor for our inequalities, in exposure and opportunities as well as for disparities in outcomes. We must collect that data and do that work so that there can be examination of structures, policies, practices, norms, and values. We must require interventions of societal structures and attention to systems of power. We’re talking about power. Folks who don’t have the power to make change, folks who have the power to make change and have not done so, and folks that can demand change. And we have the power to demand change. Just because we’re not sitting at the decision-making table does not make us without power.” - Angela Roberston

While race-based data helps with service planning and delivery, its role is to foster accountability. The ARD has made it their mandate to address the lack of race-based data by working around a framework for data collection that not only creates an accountability system but is predicated on the guiding principles of systemic focus, collective impact, targeted universalism, intersectionality, inclusivity, evidence based, and sustainability (16).

3.4 Lived Experiences of Anti-Black Racism

Health is strongly correlated and sustained by a broader set of social, economic, and political factors. In Black communities, structural racism amplifies risks for mental health and illness and exposes how racial disparities create social vulnerabilities (9). Mental health patterns and risks in Black communities show that there is a need for race-based mental health data in Canada, as Black people are at the higher end of the risk spectrum when compared to other Canadians (9). Anti-Black racism is experienced from childhood and persists throughout the course of adulthood. Statistics show that youth and adults alike, are confronted with barriers to success in reaching their full potential. For instance, Black children are at an increased likelihood to be in foster care, and lower academic streams (10). With respect to education, Black women show higher levels of education but are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed: 8.8% of Black women with university degrees are unemployed compared to 5.7% of white women with high school diplomas

(10). In terms of the justice system, Black men experience higher interactions with the law than white men and are disproportionately arrested at greater rates (10). The data overall is indicative of the anti-Black racism that exists and is felt by Black people, at every level of society. The 2019 General Social Survey (GSS) on Canadians' Safety reported that 46% of Black people above the age of 15 years, reported experiences of discrimination in the past five years, while only 16% of non-visible minority and non-Indigenous populations reported the same (11). Data from the 2019 GSS also showed that instances of discrimination towards Black people nearly doubled as statistical reports were at 28% in the 2014 GSS (11).

Anti-Blackness, expressed through racial discrimination and stigma, undermines the social mobility of Black communities, and exacerbates instances of disease and poverty. In recent years, racism has been highlighted as a driver of inequitable health outcomes for racialized Canadians (16). In 2021, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) funded a study on depression and racial discrimination involving 846 Black Canadians (17). The findings of the study determined that those who reported experiences of high levels of racial discrimination were 36x more likely to be diagnosed with severe depression (17). Toxic stress, defined as the body's response to chronic and serious stress without adequate support, is a common reality for Black individuals and often manifests in the form of disease. Anti-Black racism drives the burden of disease through structural barriers, and through use of a syndemic framework we are better able to understand how such processes affect access, as expressed by Dr. Justine Joseph (9). The term syndemic, derived by Anthropologist Mary Singer speaks to the ways in which epidemics are synergistic in nature and often reveal other threats to health (9). The COVID-19 pandemic for example, has accomplices such as chronic disease and racism which cause racialized communities to become more vulnerable and susceptible to exposure and transmission. Black Ontarians are among the most burdened by health inequities and experience increased prevalence of diabetes, obesity, and hypertension which increased risk for stroke (18). Anti-Blackness, then, must be addressed as it contributes significantly to the toxic stress and burden of disease encountered and experienced by Black people on a daily basis. Gaps in health, employment, and achievement negatively affect the mental health of the Black community and reinforces internalized racism.

3.5 Acknowledging Disparate Outcomes and Moving Towards Progress

The Toronto Police Service's admission of systemic discrimination in its practices truly speaks to the dangers of anti-Black racism and how these injustices aggressively violate Black populations on a daily basis (19). Unfortunately, the over-surveillance of Black bodies leads to the overrepresentation of Black people in the prison system, making it challenging to access education, housing and jobs that could improve the quality of one's life (20). According to Dr. Camara Jones in *Levels of Racism: A Theoretical Framework and a Gardener's Tale*, there are three levels of racism: institutionalized, personally mediated, and internalized (21). To mitigate the impacts of racism, we must first be aware of the structural issues that disproportionately affect Black bodies. This requires humanity coupled with advocacy that promotes social justice on all fronts. Our aim should be a more equitable world where everyone has what they need, without starting from a place of deficit as is often the case among Black populations. Understanding that important change

occurs at the institutional level is key and will help inform strategies to eliminate disparities and promote health and wellness for Black Canadians.

“...once institutionalized racism is addressed, the other levels of racism may cure themselves over time.” - Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones (Levels of Racism: A Theoretical Framework and a Gardener’s Tale)

When talking about anti-Black racism, it is critical to create spaces that allow Black people the opportunity to share their stories. The Art Gallery of Ontario did just that and hosted a talk specifically on the topic of anti-Black racism, which included a panel of Black artists and educators who spoke candidly about their lived experiences and the impact of racism on mental health (22). Throughout the conversation, it became evident how important it is to engage young people early by introducing these topics to classroom and community settings (22).

“Laying the ground of collective responsibility is necessary prior to giving students tools and strategies to develop critical consciousness and think through these issues of anti-black racism and why it is a collective responsibility. One of the starting places is exploring identity. Talk about personal identities, intersecting identities, and multiple identities. Youth have that social location and they can start from that place. Good conversation encourages reflection and listening. We should be centering black voices in that conversation. Teaching students the language of power, the language of oppression and the resilience of Black folk.” — Joy Martyr-André (How to Talk about Anti-Black Racism Part One)

In educating our community, we are encouraging meaningful dialogue on race and society. Art can be an entry point to discuss racism and mental health, as it serves as an expression of the struggle (22). When brought together with spiritual practice, it can provide a space for Black healing (22).

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4. Question 3: What are the impacts of Anti-Black Racism on the mental health and wellbeing of Canadians?

4.1 Recent Incidents of Anti-Black Racism in the Canadian Consciousness

In speaking of the impacts and effects of anti-Black racism in Canada it is imperative to mention the names like that of Abdirahman Abdi and Regis Korchinski-Paquet who were victims of the stigmatization of mental health within the Black community and ultimately were murdered by the anti-black institutions of policing who are ill-equipped to handle crisis calls related to mental health (1). Extensive research has been done on the institution of policing as it relates to a social determinant for health. The research has shown that categorically across North America, especially within countries such as America and Canada, the institution of policing has had a detrimental impact on racialized communities, especially towards Indigenous and Black communities (1).

For example, in the Canadian context in the case of Abdirahman Abdi was a publicized high-profile case of anti-black police violence in which Abdirahman was murdered by Ottawa police in 2016 after they responded to a crisis call (1). His death sparked a heated national outcry denouncing the use of police intervention towards crisis calls involving mental health especially for racialized members of the Black and indigenous community. As a result of his death local community members as well as activists formed the Justice For Abdirahman coalition which fought to seek justice for Abdirahman's death on the provincial and local level. In their own words the Justice for Abdirahman Abdi coalition is "an Ottawa-based group advocating for justice for the late Abdirahman Abdi and his family. The group is supported by local and national advocacy groups and has been working to obtain greater transparency in policing, challenge racial inequity, and bring positive change in local and provincial institutions in honor of the late Abdirahman Abdi and his family" (2).

4.2 Black Communities and the Police in the Literature

In addressing this research question, we have been able to come across and mined through an extensive stream of literature that has been published regarding the mental and physiological effects of anti-Black racism on the Black community within North America. Within North America the manifestation of anti-Black racism as an ideology has been seeped into the various systems and institutions in part due to the legacy of colonialism and white supremacy (3). According to the American Psychological Association, racism is a form of trauma, and experiences of police brutality, stigma, and harassment can lead to serious psychological distress. Additionally, the prevalence of severe mental health problems within the Black and African American Community is related to the lack of cultural competence in mental health care, racism, and stigma inherent in Black lives, and historical trauma witnessed by the Black community at the hands of health care professionals (3)

In a powerful study conducted by Bor. et Al (2018) titled Police killings and their spillover effects on the mental health of Black Americans: a population-based, quasi-experimental study, they address the ways in which social and systemic violence at the hands of anti-black and colonial institutions such the institution of policing has directly led to

psychological and mental health conditions. Within this study Bor et. Al explicitly calls out the institution of policing as one of the most detrimental factors in the wellness and well-being of Black communities within North America. They identify the ways in which this violent institution perpetuates anti-Black racism and based on their participant research and data they note that:

“Police killings of unarmed black Americans have adverse effects on mental health among Black American adults in the general population. Programmes should be implemented to decrease the frequency of police killings and to mitigate adverse mental health effects within communities when such killings do occur” (4).

Therefore, based on their research, a critical call to action proposed by this study is that in an institution the system of policing is detrimental to the health and well-being of Black peoples, and therefore for Black communities to live a fulfilling life there needs to be radical and drastic change to this institution. Within this text, the authors also notes that studies show witnessing or being the target of anti-Black racism throughout our lifespan has had adverse effects on the mental health and physical wellbeing of Black individuals and communities within society (4). As an intuition, the system of policing is detrimental to not only the physical livelihood of Black peoples, but moreover, as the studies have shown it also has mental health and psychological effects. Research has shown that “Black Americans are nearly three times more likely than are white Americans to be killed by police, with the disparity even larger for individuals who are unarmed (4). Studies have also shown the mental health spillover effects of police violence, though this is an underreported area of research, studies are now starting to illuminate the adverse mental health effects that impact Black women and especially Black mothers following incidents of police violence, in addition to studies that are now addressing the mental health impact on Black youth and the heightened levels of depression that is affecting Black communities (4).

In the Canadian context, the city of Toronto published a review on the impact of anti-Black racism and mental health and in this review, they noted that:

“These experiences can lead to or add to existing mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. For Black communities, these and other mental illnesses are often overlooked and have increased rates of misdiagnosis, under-treatment, and failure to diagnose. Mental health issues can also exacerbate the risk and harm of other illnesses, for which Black communities already face increased risk, like hypertension, stroke, and heart disease” (5).

The large and growing body of literature has shown the associations between racism and health outcomes, emphasizing the pathogenic roles of discrimination and differential access to socioeconomic opportunities (6). However, the experience of anti-Black racism by different segments of the Black community are not monolithic nor uniformed due to complex and layered ways in which race, class, gender, and other social factors play a role in an individual's lived experience (6). Moreover, the most marginalized with society, such as those with precarious immigration status, Black and Queer women face a layered form of oppression due to the way in which ant-Black racism and misogynoir have compounding socio-political effects.

Though there are diverse lived experiences due to anti-Black racism, the research has shown that overwhelmingly anti-Black racism is a direct factor of social and systemic distress and violence. For example, it was reported that “92% of Black Americans in a 2017 survey believed that discrimination against their racial group existed today, with at least half reporting personal experiences of discrimination in the workplace or with police. Viewing our results in the context of the widespread prevalence of events perceived as originating from structural racism reinforces arguments that the health consequences of racism are likely to be large and pervasive (6).

4.3 Ongoing Initiatives and Activism

Within the Canadian context various organizations such as the City of Toronto and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) have taken measures to address this growing epidemic and call for concern. For example, in order to addressing this growing and undeniable crisis the city of Toronto has partnered with TAIBU community Health Centre to launch Black Mental Health week, which was an initiative started in 2020, as a response to as a response to the not only the high profile anti-Black racism cases within 2020 such as George Floyd, but to also undo the social, physical, psychological and systemic harm caused by “400 years of oppression” (7). This initiative has continued, and its outreach continued to grow. In 2021, the week was expanded to a week to provide greater opportunity to facilitate and cultivate greater awareness of the impacts of anti-Black racism on Black communities, families, and individuals. It has also started to partner with other organizations such as Tropicana and Studies Toronto to greater its outreach to the Black community within Toronto and across the GTA (5).

4.3.1 Art as Activism

The health issues and impacts of anti-Black racism extend beyond the medical field. The research as well as grassroots activists and organizations are sounding the alarm and raising the awareness for how damaging and pervasive anti-Black racism is and its detrimental health impact on the Black community and those of marginalized status. Moreover, in terms of raising awareness to the precarious lived experiences of Black people in North America, artists such as Jon Henry are able to use various mediums such as photography to showcase how everyday experiences of anti-Black racism impacts the health, overall quality of life and Nia (purpose) of Black people.

Within the Black community, Art has been a powerful tool and a liberatory tool to not only give voice to important ideas, but moreover, art has a long tradition and history of being a tool to combat against anti-Black racism, Eurocentrism, and white supremacy within society (8). This tradition has extended beyond the Black Arts Movement in the 1960’s and still lives on in Black artists, intellectuals, and creatives today. For example, in the modern-day context in the photovoice project titled “Stranger Fruit,” photographer Jon Henry (2020) features intimate portraits of Black mothers with their sons across the United States and illuminates the daily lived experience, reality and trauma at how violence permeates the daily lives of Black families across the United States. These portraits are powerful and moving. They also serve as a humanizing medium towards all the data and statistical research regarding anti-black racism and police killings. In viewing these portraits, Jon

Henry allows for the audience to be confronted with the stark reality behind the names and stories that are part of the lived experiences of Black families and communities across North America (9).

In addition to the medium of art, raising awareness to the health issues and impacts of anti-Black racism and police violence has also been an ongoing collective community effort. Historically social movements and resistances such as the civil right, Black liberation and Black consciousness have been a concerted effort to platform the need of the Black community and create radical and subversive change amidst the ongoing dehumanization due to colonial violence and white supremacy (10). These efforts have been ongoing, and in the present day this effort is taken up within the Black Lives Matter movement by grassroots organizations, individuals, and platforms. These organizations have called for immediate policy changes as well as radical systemic changes to critically address the ways in which anti-Blackness has manifested within society and are detrimental to Black life and holistic well-being, especially through the institution of policing.

4.4 Black Women and Anti-Black Racism

Though the experiences of anti-Black racism and even interactions with police violence are not monolithic, the experiences of Black women and those who identify from the LGBTQ+ community issues need to have special care and attention for the ways in which race and gender intersect and the ways in which identity politics manifest in society. Within North America there are various movements and institutions that explicitly hold space for and address the issues of anti-Black racism in this community and raise awareness about their lived experiences. For example, the #SayHerName campaign is one of the ways in which anti-Black racism and police violence is highlighted. Following this campaign and initiative the African American Policy Forum (AAPF) is an organization that was founded in 1996 that seeks to

“Connect academics, activists and policy-makers to promote efforts to dismantle structural inequality” (11). This organization was co-founded by Kimberle Crenshaw, who is a radical Black feminist activist and social scholar, who also coined the term intersectionality. As an organization, AAPF perfectly demonstrated the ideological concept of intersectionality, which is an ideology that seeks to address “how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics intersect” with one another and overlap (10). Kimberle Crenshaw first coined this term in 1989 and in her words, she notes that “Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times, that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things” (12).

4.5 Policy Recommendations:

As part of the extensive research that has been done of this topic illuminating and highlighting the various ways in which anti-Black racism has manifested itself within society and has directly affect the livelihood and Nia (Purpose) of the Black community, many organizations and individuals have also proposed a critical call to action and various policy recommendations to mitigate this effect. From the extensive research that has been

done on this topic, there are a few recommendations and proposed solutions to addressing the epidemic of anti-Black racism. As per the recommendation suggested by the city of Toronto, addressing the barriers and burdens of anti-Black racism on mental health begins with:

Breaking the silence

Confronting stigma

Ensuring access to timely, appropriate, and culturally responsive health care.

Neglecting these issues also hinders Black communities' opportunities to actively participate in building a Toronto that better serves them, including the need to rally and advocate for systemic change (5).

In terms of implementing an intersectional approach to addressing the social and structural issues of anti-black racism, the African American Policy forum (2022) suggest:

- Reallocate police budgets and divert those resources back to where they were taken from: mental health services, domestic violence services, shelters for people without homes, education, increasing jobs, etc.
- End the practice of sending officers to mental health and domestic disturbance calls. Officers should not be first responders to mental health crisis calls.
- Create and pass reforms that specifically address the home as a site of police violence against Black women.
- Use an intersectional gender and racial lens when developing policy platforms to ensure that comprehensive solutions to state violence are being built and that the myriad ways in which it impacts the lives of all Black people are addressed.

4.6 Discussion - Race Based Data: Policy or Politics?

Based on our findings within our research we have noted that that much of the psychology and bio-medical research related to Black community and their mental have noted that the lack "race-based data" about the Black community is what has led to sub-par infrastructure and services in place to address their health needs. As a result of this limitation and gap in data, most programming and services within the health sector have cited that it has been challenging to be able to respond with culturally appropriate programming and services (4).

Within this research project we wanted to call attention to this gap of knowledge and acknowledge its legitimacy, while also presenting a caution regarding the push and the calls for race-based data, especially within the Canadian context. We also wanted to call attention towards a mutual aid- community based framework, that expands what "community" means and allows for individuals within their respective community to become agentic mediums of agency and change (13).

Within the Black community there have been many intellectuals, activists and organizations that have cautioned against and indiscriminate push for race-based data. For example, social scholar Rinaldo Walcott has critically addressed the concerns and skepticism that surround calls increased race-based data and the increased surveillance of the Black community. Within their text which highlights their concerns, Walcott (2020) poses an important critical question which is: who benefits from race-based data

collection- especially when it comes to the Black community, and what are the experiences of race-based data collection in Canada which has followed an equitable model that has not been extractive and or caused harm. Walcott highlights these concerns based on the history and experiences of research-based institutions such as the government, and their experiences within the Black community (14). Moreover, based on this history, Walcott (2020) notes that there already exists a mine of pre-existing data such as in school, census, hospitals...etc., and based on this data, Walcott inquires what has become of this extraction and what policies have been put in place using this data that have improved the lived experiences and realities for Black communities across Canada by leading to transformative change as a result (14)?

Walcott is weary of the calls for more race-based data and surveillance because in their own words they note that:

“Race-based data collection does not correlate with good policymaking, as shown by the history of African American life. In Canada, the belief that the collection of race-based data will result in better policymaking urgently needs to be uncoupled from policy conversations. All data can do is inform policymaking if anything at all. Policymaking, after all, is ultimately about political decisions” (14).

These concerns are based on the lived experiences and history of data-collection within marginalized and racialized communities. As noted by Walcott **“the history of data collection — with Black people in particular — is a difficult and torturous one. Most often, the collection of data benefits the researchers collecting the data more than the people being researched” (14).**

In the modern-day context, these tensions are further echoed as well by other members of the Black community, especially following the eye-opening report that emerged in 2022, following the Police chief's historical apology for using race-based data against the Black community (15). According to the CBC this apology was due to the data within this report that “reveal the extent to which race has played a role in its use-of-force and strip searches” (15).

However, following this “apology” by Toronto police Chief James Ramer, many members of the Black community voice their concerns and spoke up against not only the against how colonial and violent institutions like policing use race-based data, but moreover, against the calls and push for the surveillance of the Black community, which often comes in the form of “policies” and recommendations for increased “race-based data”. For example, following this discussion members from Black Lives Matter, Parents for Black Children, and various activists and intellectuals like university professors like Dr. Tanya Sharpe called for abolishment and reform against these outdated modes of practice. They cited the historical and ongoing trauma and racialized and minority communities such as the Black and Indigenous communities within Canada have faced from these systems, and because of racists and coded practices of discrimination like the collection of race-based data, the trust has been fractured within these communities (12).

However, despite this violence and trauma that has come at the hands of the misuse of race-based data, it has also allowed for members within these racialized and minority communities to become critically aware of their needs and also advocate for themselves. As an alternative to race-based data, there are a few recommendations that also function with the same purpose. These recommendations include:

1. Trust communities and their experiences. Know that communities can and do diagnose their problems/issues and have evidence for their conclusions. Additionally, actively refuse the idea that communities require professional researchers to validate their evidence.
2. Political demands based on communities' experiences of the world must be accorded the same measure as professionally researched driven analyses.
3. Seek out community research protocols that take the research relationship between communities and professional researchers seriously. For example, the Indigenous health research protocols that attempt to limit and or mitigate against research extraction, exploitation and harm that can be caused to Indigenous peoples by professional researchers is a case in point. Scholar-activists in Black communities are building a similar protocol: LLana James (doctoral candidate, Medicine UofT) and Ciann Wilson (Associate Professor, Waterloo) community research protocol and the REDE4BlackLives protocols.
4. Empower community researchers and work with them to make sure that they have the adequate resources to run their own identified research projects in the interests of their communities.
5. Recognize that local community organizations are fully informed about their localities and when given the resources, they can and do enact practices that improve lives based on the evidence they already have and know.
6. Be honest about the differences between what professional researchers need data for (it rarely is about helping communities) and what communities need for their well-being. (15).

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5. Question 4: What does a culturally appropriate and holistic approach to Black Mental Health and wellbeing look like for different segments of Black populations in Canada?

5.1 Community Partners

For this research question, we primarily scoped the research partners and organizations that were listed on this research project. We looked for the relevant programs and services that these partner organizations had in terms of addressing Black mental health from a culturally appropriate and holistic standpoint. A few of the organizations and programs that stood out were TAIBU, Women's Health in Women's Hands (WHIWH), the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities (NABC), and Tropicana.

These organizations stood out because the programs and initiatives that they had in place to address Black mental health needs for their local communities were also specialized and catered in terms of which segments of the community they served. For example, Women's Health in Women's Hands is an organization that caters their services, especially to individuals and communities who identify as female, and they also take on a radical intersectional feminist lens and approach to their services. As part of their programming, they offer a mental health council and services that cater to BIPOC women within the city of Toronto. Initiatives and programs such as the one offered by WHIWH demonstrate an inclusive and intersectional framework that centers on certain segments of the community, such as women and Black women who require specialized care and attention that is relevant to their experiences and needs. Other partner organizations such as TAIBU Community Health Centre also demonstrate specialized care and services to the Black community within Toronto. For example, their mental health initiatives and campaign launched in 2020 offer diverse and inclusive programming that targets different segments of the community such as Black Queer youth. The Mental health services and programming offered by TAIBU toward the LGBTQ2+ community include a PhotoVoice project that allows individuals who identify with this community to share their self-care strategies as part of holistic healing (1).

Moreover, organizations such as NABC and Tropicana offer culturally responsive programming that is also holistic for the diverse Black communities across the GTA. For example, the programming, research, and services offered by NABC take on an inclusive and intersectional framework to accommodate the diverse needs of the Black communities that it serves. As part of this culturally responsive approach language is also factored in to address the needs of the Black francophone community. For example, concerning the creation of the Center of Black Excellence for Black Youth Empowerment. Tropicana is another organization within the list of partner organizations that has various services that cater to various segments of the Black community in terms of mental wellness based on gender, age, and migration status. For example, Tropicana has specific programming and services that cater to the psychosocial needs of the Caribbean diaspora community within Toronto.

5.2 *Psychological and Political Dimensions of Black Mental Health*

From the research, what we came across is that the psychosocial needs of the Black community related to Black mental health and healing are intrinsically linked to Black the Afrocentric concept of *Nia* (purpose), and determinants to Black mental health are encoded in the policies, institutions, and systems that seek to undermine and extinguish Black life and livelihood in North America (2). From the research, what emerged was that there is a deep historical root and connection related to how anti-Black racism and the social violence of white supremacy and colonization have directly led to physiological and mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD...etc. (3). As a result of this systemic and psycho-social harm Black individuals and communities within North America, experience a phenomenon known as “historical trauma”. Historical trauma is a phenomenon that is unique to oppressed communities and it is defined as “a collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation—ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation” (4). In addition to this historical trauma Black individuals and communities also experience a myriad of other psychosocial issues such as political oppression, psychological oppression, and cultural trauma that impact their conceptualizations of wellness (5).

Moreover, from the research what emerged was the inextricable theme between the psychological and political dimensions of mental health for marginalized and oppressed communities. The psycho-social state and conditions of oppressed communities, especially in North America are not individualized conditions, but rather, have resulted from a multitude of socio-political factors that work in concert to “disempower” marginalized groups and therefore affect their wellness (6). Therefore, the psychological dimensions of enduring racism (including historical, cultural, and individualized processes) must be key considerations in any effort designed to move the Black community out of its present condition” (4).

Therefore, as advocated for by various sociologists, psychologists, and social scientists, for Black individuals and communities to be able to heal holistically and have culturally appropriate mental health services that cater to their needs, these mental health interventions and programming need to be able to explicitly tackle the root causes and determinants to Black mental health and well-being. Moreover, an intersectional and “humanistic” frame is needed to explicitly identify how these various systems manifest and cause psychosocial trauma and harm to various segments of the community such as Black women, Black Queer Youth, Black men, immigrant, and migrant communities...etc. (4). For Black communities to live a holistic and fulfilling life within North America, the systemic violence and racism, such as anti-Black racism and imperial systems and institutions such as policing, Black individuals and communities need to be critically examined and addressed for how these systems perpetuate harm and trauma and therefore impact all levels of well-being (3). These anti-Black and racist systems lead to systemic oppression and marginalization and perpetuate harmful and dangerous ideologies that oppressed individuals such as the Black community have internalized. One of the greatest determinants perpetuated by this systemic of colonial violence and oppression is anti-Black racism and the ideology of “Black inferiority” (4). As noted by Grills et al. (2016):

“The lie of Black inferiority underlies the often-unconscious biases against people of African ancestry, which, in turn, lead to discrimination against them in every area of life, including in policing and in the use of deadly force”.

Consequently, it is through this lens and mental health intervention Black communities within North America can attempt to work through the social and psychological harm and damage that Black people and communities that internalized due to the perpetuating evil of “Black inferiority” that is an ideology that seeks to undermine Black life in North America (4).

5.3 Holistic and Culturally Relevant Healing

Therefore, to implement a culturally relevant mental health intervention and move toward holistic healing, work needs to be done to address the internal and psychological dimensions of the trauma and the harm that Black communities have internalized due to an all-encompassing and prolific system of anti-Black racism and discrimination. One of the ways that many psychologists have called for holistic healing is through raising a level of “critical consciousnesses” into the care and support that Black individuals and communities receive as part of a move toward “radical healing practices” (2). The process of reaching critical consciousness in radical healing is done by interrogating issues of power, history, identity, and the impact of collective struggle (7). Part of implementing a critical consciousness and developing culturally relevant mental health interventions and programming is for historically oppressed communities and individuals to attain a level of “emotional emancipation” (4). Emotional emancipation requires admitting that all Black people are, to one degree or another, victims of the lie and that they can be victors by acknowledging the power of the truth, drawing on their collective cultural heritage working together to overcome the lie and the emotional legacies of enslavement and racism that continue to keep them captive” (4).

This radical approach and intervention actively seek to work against the internalization and individualization of mental health conditions by addressing the large social and macro cases within society Black communities and individuals can develop critical consciousness. Critical consciousness of “conscientization” as described by Paulo Freire has been advocated for by the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi). Freire's (1970) conceptualization of conscientization was the belief that

“[T]he more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled” (8).

Therefore, implementing this radical praxis into mental health interventions and programming paves the way for holistic healing practices and programming within an oppressive system rooted in colonial violence. Moreover, as part of strengthening this level of critical consciousness and conscientization is also to name the determinants that impact Black life and well-being such as the institutions of policing white supremacy, and how colonization has manifested historically and in the present-day within North America is imperative in terms of being able to identify the root causes, allows for the Black

community to move from a “trauma-informed care” into a “healing informed care” and also adopt critical interventions and radical approaches in how they adapt and address mental health interventions and programs (2).

For example, one of the most radical and effective community-based initiatives that has emerged recently to address Black mental health and well-being has been an initiative that was undertaken by the Community Healing Network in collaboration with the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) in 2006. This initiative was the creation and implementation of “Emotional Emancipation Circles” (EEC) (4). Other critical intervention forms of holistic healing that have been adopted based on a psycho-social model have been rooted in art and returning to a community-based African American “folklore tradition” as a means of radical preservation and critical interventions against colonial violence (9). Stories and narratives are ways in which Black communities can not only empower themselves, but moreover, Black stories matter because they “engender empathic pathways in the soul and heart and can change the way we deal with race in this country” (10).

Part of developing a critical consciousness and decolonizing mental health care and interventions within North America is by returning to holistic and culturally relevant practices that are rooted in indigenous and Afrocentric principles. Historically and present day, art and arts-based interventions are critically important tools within mental health spaces (10). As noted by Alex Castro (2020):

“Many in the Black community create art to take in the pain and struggle and release a beauty that heals and teaches. Black creatives are always working, trying to find some understanding, envisioning a better world” (10).

As such, art, in particular Black art, is an effective and holistic medium for mental health and wellness. Moreover, this medium has historically played a critically important role and intervention for Black individuals and communities to illuminate and transcend their psychosocial conditions within North America (11). For example, there are numerous examples of Black artists and cultural icons within the North American context that have used their artistry, whether it be through film, music, movie, or television to counter the harm of anti-Blackness and use their artists as a medium to creative creating spaces of joy, re-imagination, and transcendence (11). In the present day within North America there are a few notable organizations that emphasize and encourage art-based mental health programming and interventions for holistic healing such as Workman’s Art – Art Cart (12) and Reaching Intelligent Souls Everywhere (RISE) (13).

5.4 Discussion

Therefore, as the research shows, there is no singular answer to answering the research question of “what does culturally appropriate and holistic healing look like for different segments of the Black community”. Rather, for mental health programming to be both “culturally appropriate” and “holistic” for the Black community it needs to be able to embody a radical as well as a “healing centered approach” to addressing historical and also racial trauma that various segments of the Black community face (2). In adopting a healing-based approach, mental health programming and services can become more culturally

appropriate and holistic and “moves beyond ‘what happened to you’ to ‘what’s right with you’ and views those exposed to trauma as agents in the creation of their well-being rather than victims of traumatic events” (2). Moreover, healing centered engagement is akin to the South African term “Ubuntu” meaning that humanness is found through our interdependence, collective engagement, and service to others (2). As a philosophy, Ubuntu emphasizes collective healing and collective care and responsibility.

“Ubuntu is borne out of the philosophy that community strength comes from community support, and that dignity and identity are achieved through mutualism, empathy, generosity and community commitment” (14).

Therefore, an empowered and unified Black community will allow for collective care and holistic healing for all segments of the Black community, especially the most disenfranchised and marginalized within society.

Programming such as the ones that exist within TAIBU, WHIWH, Tropicana, and also Network for the Advancement of Black Communities (NABC) are part of a critical and also radical approach to implementing culturally appropriate and also holistic healing for the Black community within North America. As these community partners have demonstrated and the research has shown specialized care and services to address Black mental health and well-being primary needs to affirm the Nia (purpose) of Black life and Black communities within North America. These services also need to be proactive, and not reactive, in dealing and addressing with social, political, and psychological factors to Black life such as tackling the root of the anti-black institutions and systems within society that seeks to undermine Black life. Central to holistic healing, Black mental health programming and services need to be able to understand that “healing and well-being are fundamentally political, not clinical” (2). For these programs and services to be culturally appropriate and adopt a humanistic and holistic framework these services must be able to identify the unique and specialized needs of different segments of the community by taking on an intersectional lens in addition to having a critical consciousness and radical framework.

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6. Question 5: What is Afrocentricity, and how do Black communities in Canada understand it?

6.1 What is Afrocentrism?

Molefi Asante describes Afrocentricity as “a mode of thought and action that centres African interests, values, and perspectives” (1). In theory, it is the placing of African people in the center of any analysis of African phenomena. In terms of action and behaviour, it is a devotion to the idea that what is in the best interest of African consciousness is at the heart of ethical behaviour. Afrocentricity seeks to enshrine the idea that blackness itself is a trope of ethics. Thus, to be Black is to be against all forms of oppression, racism, classism, homophobia, patriarchy, child abuse, pedophilia, and white racial domination.

Afrocentrism as a concept has a history and is rooted in a particular time and place. Even the term Afrocentrism itself has undergone transformations such as the popularizations of the term “Africentrism”, a shift on its earlier iterations such as “Afrocentricity”¹ in important texts like Molefi Asante’s *“Afrocentricity: A Theory of Social Change.”* Importantly, Asante, who is widely credited for popularizing the term in the 80s did not develop the concept in isolation but in concert with long histories of Black intellectual communities in North America. The term “Afrocentric” was first coined by W.E.B Du Bois, an American sociologist, historian, socialist, and Pan-African civil rights activist born in Massachusetts in the early 1960s (...). Du Bois used the term to describe a proposed Encyclopedia Africana that would document the histories and cultures of Black people of African descent in ways that centered their African lineage. He describes that this encyclopedia should be “unashamedly Afro-centric” in focus. Afrocentrism as a theory is, in part, shaped by the experiences of enslaved Africans during the transatlantic slave trade, the structural oppression of Black peoples in the Americas, and the centring of white-supremist, Eurocentric ways of being and knowing. Summarily, the experience of enslavement, and the lingering legacies of anti-Black racism in the United States created the conditions in which Afrocentric theory emerged.

In 1980, Molefi Asante reintroduced the term in his work “Afrocentricity” envisioning new directions in its application to the lives and livelihoods of Black people of African descent. By the late 80’s, the term “Afrocentric” as used to describe a range of Black intellectual activists with a diverse range of ideas and cultural politics. Although the term has been used to categorize both credible and controversial activists, Afrocentricity is simply an attempt to place Africa, instead of Europe at the centre of analysis of the lives of people of African descent. In 1987, Asante published another book, *“The Afrocentric Idea,”* arguing for an Afrocentric paradigm. In this text, Asante clearly defines Afrocentricity as “the placing of African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour” (p. 6).

¹ Afrocentrism and Africentrism are used interchangeable within this text. However, scholars such as Dr. Patrick Kakembo argues that the shift from Afro to Afri marks an evolution in terminology, education, and consciousness of people in Canada (7) Yet both terms are used to capture the same set of ideas in the Canadian context among community members, organizations and so forth.

Despite its emergence in US political and intellectual traditions, Africentrism has taken hold in many places across the globe. In Canada, the emergence of Africentrism in public discourses attempts to assert the self-determination of Black Canadians of African descent in the face of a systemic anti-Black and structurally violent conditions. Black communities, scholars, and activists advocate that the centring of Eurocentric worldviews (re)produces and sustains the oppression of Black communities. In response, communities began to advocate that it is in the best interest of Black communities that systems and structures begin to reflect their histories, their knowledges, and lived experiences. Much of these earlier conversations were within the field of education with considerable emphasis on providing Black students with culturally meaningful curriculums. Such efforts lead to tremendous milestones such as the establishment of the first Africentric school in Canada in 2009 (2). To date, most scholarship on Africentrism is concerned with education. However, more fields such as social work, and healthcare have since adopted the Africentric paradigm to shift institutions, systems, and structures in ways that better support diverse Black Canadians. These trends are similar to that of the United States where the topic of Africentric education and the introduction of Africentric curriculums provided the foundations of much of Africentric theory.

Although there are striking similarities and trends in Afrocentric theory and practice in Canada and the US, Afrocentrism as a theory and practice differs in various ways as Black Canadian communities grapple with Blackness in the Canadian context. Specifically, as notions of Blackness differs across the US and Canada, so does the multiple and fluid ways in which Black communities experience and express themselves across Canada themselves. As a result, Africentrism comes into dialogue with distinct material and systemic realities and is articulated to reflect varying migration histories and experiences, distinct systems and structures in Canada, geography and location, relationships and connections to lineage. Therefore, while Africentrism centres African interest, values and perspectives, it does so in plural and multiple ways with no singular expression. This requires that Africentrism in Canada be understood in its own right, and at large as a fluid praxis that centres plural, historical, contemporary, and evolving African interests, values, and heritages.

6.2 *Knowledge Gathering*

Considering the vast diversity across Black communities across Canada, there is also a variety of ways in which Blackness is understood, experienced, expressed, and celebrated. The implications of such are that Africentrism in theory and practice will also take distinct forms in the interest of diverse communities to accommodate these differences shaped by location, migration experiences, historical contexts, lived experiences, and the intersection of diverse embodied social identities. Thus, to better understand how Black Canadians understand Africentrism, there is a demand to engage with this plurality across Black Canadian communities. Towards these ends, we conducted interviews with Black Canadian Elders across the country. Participants were chosen using purposive sampling techniques to prioritize community leaders with the appropriate and relevant knowledge and experiences (3). Elders are the gatekeepers of culture and wisdom in African communities whose lived experiences provides invaluable insights in understanding our past and present realities while helping us continue (4). As the African proverb teaches, "*What the*

elders see while sitting, the young ones standing on their toes won't see." Given their role in communities, we centre Elder's experiences and insights in conversation with narratives of Africentrism in Canadian popular media such as newspapers, grassroots organizations and community groups.

We seek to put these varying texts in conversation with each other to identify some of the salient elements underpinning Black Canadians understanding of Africentrism as well as to capture the nuances within these articulations with specific attention to the ways in which Africentrism manifest at varying embodied intersections. In doing this, the themes presented below are in no way neat nor particularly distinct but overlap in many ways and cannot be alienated from each other.

6.3 *What we Learned*

6.3.1 *Embodied Praxis*

Many elders defined and described Afrocentricity as a consciousness of oneself and one's Blackness, identity, community, and culture. Importantly, these Elders point out that this consciousness is linked to an everyday expression of ones embodied self, the knowledge they hold, their experiences. One Elder explained;

"I would think of Afrocentrism as thinking in terms of a Black culture. Unfortunately, I don't do it in a conscious way myself. Okay, I've never done it. You know if I walk into a room. and most of the rooms I walk into, there are a bunch of white people and I never think of myself as being Black when I walk into that room, I think of myself as being me.... I just see myself walking into that room and operating from that perspective with all the knowledge and information about myself that I've gained over the years, and if I'm not conscious of myself as being Black, it's being Black"

Notably, this Elder's notions towards a form of embodied praxis that does not separate themselves as a Black person as African descent from their knowledges and experiences. In this way, Africentrism is more than just a set of ideas or set of practices but an everyday expression of being rooted in diverse lived experiences of Blackness. As such, Afrocentric knowledge and practices are inherently emergent from Black peoples themselves both consciously and unconsciously pointing towards the significance of Black peoples embodied beings as sites of knowledge production about Black peoples and for Black peoples.

In more concrete terms, Black peoples, in their everyday being possesses the knowledge and capacity to strive for collective and individual self-determination. Notwithstanding, that these forms of knowledges and practices are in constant relation to broader structures and systems of oppression and domination in Canada. Still there is a mountain of evidence pointing towards the radical possibility of centring Black peoples of African descent and their own understanding of their lived realities. At the organizational level, The Ubuntu Village Program, an older adult initiative housed under TAIBU Community Health Centre, a CHC in Toronto provides a particular useful case. This project engages over 3000 older adults in activities across 24 programs aimed at promoting and maintaining health active

lifestyle and aging with self-reported physical activity amongst participants recording up to an increase of 200 hours per year in some programs (5). The success of the Ubuntu program relies on its leadership of older-adults and professionals who draw upon their wide breadth of experiences to lead the development, construction, and direction of the Ubuntu village in ways that reflect the lived realities of aging Black older-adults in the area (5). This centring of Black peoples of African descent at the intersections of age, and location allowed senior community members to strive for better health outcomes by activating their everyday experiences of being black alongside the appropriate support systems and infrastructures. The Ubuntu Village Program reflects and empirically affirms Elder's beliefs that the most effective way to serve diverse Black communities is to centre their knowledges and experiences. One Elder explains:

“...there are so many people who aren't aware of what it means to be Black, and what it means to be afro from an Afrocentric community... I think the only way you can overcome that is, by having people from the Afro community or the diverse community become part of the service to Afrocentric people. People who understand the community...”

6.3.2 Community and Collective Responsibility

At the hearth of Black Canadian understandings of Africentrism is the idea and practice of community and collective responsibility. The Elders emphasized the importance of community and also healing together and being united, rather than fragmented and divided as Black Canadians, based on factors such as age, ethnicity, sexuality and forth.

“we remember principles like holding community, building community, nurturing as a community, and nurturing each other within a community. Those types of principles. Each person brings the best of what they have to opportunity. Situation to support each other, you know, share and share of the gifts that we carry right each person individually”

The emphasis on community building and collective responsibility is consistent across many, if not all interpretations of Africentrism. Indeed, Africentrism moves beyond individualistic standpoints, considering the relationships among members of a community and the responsibilities we have to each other. This notion aligns particularly with Ubuntu, a Buntu relational philosophy that emphasis collectivity. Ubuntu espouses that our humanity is bounded up in the humanity of others and it is through this relationship that we become ourselves. This is emphasized in the phrase “I am because we are, and because we are, I am.” At the same time, respondents point to the valuable role of individuality within collective responsibility captured in participant response that *“each person brings the best of what they have to opportunity, to support each other, and share the gifts that we carry, each person individually.”*

Respondents believe that each member of the Black community hold gifts and attributes at the individual level that offers tremendous potential in the nurturing of the collective. Additionally, respondents point to a relationship between individual gifts and collective responsibility in distinct ways. For example, participants identify the roles and responsibility of older community members in transmitting knowledge, wisdom, and their

experiences to younger generations in order to continue cultural practices and strengthen community. One participant described that *“sharing [wisdom and experiences] to the younger people, bringing them up building them up that they can come and take over, and we can move on and then just having that happen.”* Nurturing and building community require that each members understand the gifts they have to offer and how to meaningfully activate their agency in the interest of the collective. Consider for example Africentric fashion and the promotion of African centred aesthetic expressions in Canada. Appearing on Global News, Eilish Bonang a Nigerian Canadian living Halifax, Nova Scotia, provides a great example of the blending of Nigerian cultural practices, art, sewing practices and patterns alongside Canadian fashion trends to produce Afrocentric clothing-an expression of her own (and many other Black Canadians) Nigerian heritage in Canada (6). Bonang describes that her maternal grandmother in Nigeria use to be a Seamstress with plenty of African fabrics and sewing machines in her household. While she was only 10 years of age, she got into sewing and fashion design without any formal introduction to such. In fact, Bonang reveals that she only learned that her maternal grandmother was a Seamstress in recent years. Her fashion draws upon her Nigerian culture and contemporary Canadian trends creating distinct works of art that are neither distinctively Nigerian nor distinctively Canadian. Bonang illustrates the importance of embracing difference, individual gifts, while centring one's African lineage to guide collective innovations and expression in ways that reclaim, recapture, and promote African cultural practices.

For Black Canadians, community is both temporally and spatially inclusive considering connection to African heritage over time and across different spaces. One participant argued that:

“We need to stop saying Oh, You're, Jamaican, and oh, I'm Ethiopian... we need to just come in and say, Okay, we are people of African heritage. We have shared experiences. We have various cultures, and we all come with different skills, different knowledge. But everything that we have. If we use it wisely, we can uplift our generation we can build and uplift, the generation coming after.”

Profoundly, building community entails acknowledging and embracing difference across peoples of African heritage. These differences serve as a unifying element and an essential asset across peoples to strengthen the collective project of striving towards self-determination in ways that affirm the lived historical, contemporary and future relations of Black people of African descent.

The emphasis on unity also recognizes and seeks to counteract narratives that promote division across Black communities on the account of difference. One Elder shared that *“Possibly we've tried to come together as one group, but then it's splintered the Jamaicans got their own group, and everybody wants to be a big fish in a small pond.”* As noted in previous chapters, the experiences of Black communities are shaped by legacies of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, and systemic anti-Blackness here in Canada and abroad. At times these histories and legacies promote divisions amongst Black peoples on the basis of difference in gender, age, country or origin and so forth with implications for a collective

sense of self, and responsibility. In some cases, many Black communities have to compete for resources in a market driven society fostering tensions.

6.3.3 Co-created Knowledge

The co-creation of knowledge is a prominent theme in Black Canadian understanding of Africentrism. More specifically, respondents identified the importance of gathering knowledge within community to form collective understandings. One elder describes that **“I think it’s still having conversations with the community. Okay listen to the community we are within and give the community the equal standing.”**

A distinguished method to achieve these forms of knowledge creation is the idea of listening to learn. An Elder shares that **“If you’re listening to learn then maybe we can come together, if you’re listening to reply, then you’re only concentrating on what should I say about what he said or she said, you know but if you’re listening to understand and come together and that then It’s the different kind approach. And then maybe we could come together if we begin to listen to each other and listen to learn.”** Participants believed that the ability to be in authentic dialogue with each other is an effective way in coming together as well as beginning to form shared truths.

Knowledge co-creation also involved the transmission of knowledge through intergenerational dialogues and storytelling. One Elder described that **“we know that a lot of the knowledge was passed around the talking circle. Grandma and Grandpa handed down information to the children and grandchildren. That is the solution. So, a lot of our information is handed [down] through that process.”**

6.4 Discussion

The emergence of Africentrism is significant in Black peoples of African descent strive towards self-determination in ways that affirm their diverse and complex histories and African lineage. Although Africentrism emerged from African American intellectual and cultural-political traditions its practices and ideas have since and continue to be evolved and adapted across various places and times. In Canada, Africentrism holds radical potential in reclaiming, rediscovering, and promoting healthy and strong Black communities through a meaningful centring of lived experiences and histories. These realities are distinct from that of their African American counterparts leading to different forms of Afrocentric knowledges and practices. At the same time there is also immense difference across Black communities across Canada. However, Black Canadians identify difference as a unifying factor within Afrocentric paradigms and a salient element of Africentrism in Canada.

Undoubtedly, Black Canadians understanding of Africentrism are in relation to systems and structures of anti-Blackness that shapes the conditions in which we come to know and how we come to know. For example, many Elders highlight the need to move beyond divisions. While the Afrocentric approach seeks to unify across differences, it simultaneously recognizes the present-day reality of mistrust, divisions, and tensions across and within Black communities. Yet, expressions of Africentrism seeks to reconcile these in productive

ways, demonstrating a key element of Black Canadians understanding of Africentrism, that it is, it is firstly, a theory of community rooted in African heritage, contemporary contexts and liberating futures and secondly, a practice of connecting the past to the present for the future.

6.5 References

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7. Conclusion

In this comprehensive exploration of 'Black' identity in Canada within the context of the Amandla Olwazi - The Power of Knowledge project, we have navigated a spectrum of profound questions that define the experiences and challenges faced by Black communities in this diverse nation. Through the lens of Afrocentric principles and values, we have sought to illuminate the nuances of 'Black' identity, expose the insidious nature of anti-Black racism, and shed light on the impact of such discrimination on the mental health and wellbeing of Black Canadians.

This project has not only broadened our understanding of 'Black' in Canada but has also underscored the importance of fostering awareness, dialogue, and transformation. It has affirmed that the strength and resilience of Black communities in Canada are invaluable resources in the face of adversity, and Afrocentric principles provide a powerful framework for addressing the multifaceted challenges they encounter.

In the spirit of Amandla Olwazi, we have embarked on a journey to empower individuals to take pride in their heritage, promote a sense of belonging, and strive for a more equitable and inclusive Canada. The project's objectives, including knowledge creation and synthesis, development of Afrocentric principled knowledge mobilization products, building strong collaborative partnerships, and engaging diverse Black community members, have all contributed to a more profound understanding of 'Black' in Canada.

As we conclude this literary exploration, it is our hope that the knowledge created and shared will serve as a catalyst for positive change. It is our hope that the insights gained will not only inform academic discourse but also inspire tangible actions that work towards dismantling the barriers created by anti-Black racism. Amandla Olwazi - The Power of Knowledge is more than a project; it is a movement that unites a diverse range of individuals and organizations, all committed to addressing the impact of systemic racism and promoting the wellbeing of Black communities.

In the evolving landscape of Canada's multiculturalism, we strive to celebrate the rich tapestry of Black identities and support the diverse and resilient individuals who contribute to the mosaic of our nation. Amandla Olwazi reminds us of the power of knowledge, the importance of shared values, and the transformative potential of collective action in building a more just, inclusive, and empathetic society for all.

8. Appendix 1 – Artist Appendix: Healing with Arts and Culture

Within her text ‘Ga (S) P’ M.NourbSe Philips (2008) beautifully poses a question: What Does it mean-breathing for an Others or Others? Or being breathed for? Philips’ (2008) inquiry is an invitation for community care and holistic healing. This inquiry embodied the Afrocentric principles of Ubuntu and Nia. To be part of a greater whole, a collective. To move away from an individualistic mindset and to care for the needs and “breath” of others. Within the frameworks of Black mental health and holistic wellbeing, the concept of breath is critically important and extremely relevant. The phrase “I can’t breathe” has become notarized as a collective call to action following the murder of George Floyd in 2020 (Gordon 2021).

George Floyd murder was one of the many instances in which Black life was extinguished in by the hands of anti-Black and violence colonial institutions within society. Within the North American context, minority and racialized communities have historically been oppressed and “asphyxiated” by the white-supremacy and colonization. As noted by Gordon (2020) “Colonialism, saturated with racism, degrades this insight by limiting it to the view that only one kind of people matter, and, in doing so, attempts to block the dignity of art to the rest. It confuses reality with a seriousness through which there is little room for the rest of humanity to breathe”.

However, despite this violence and historically and ongoing oppression, racialized and minority communities have been in a collective and unified struggle to affirm life and create pathways for holistic healing and well-being. Philips (2020) notion of “breath” and “breathing for others” is one of the ways in which Black and racialized communities have been able to come together to care for each other, while also creating pathways for radical social change.

As a knowledge product of this research project, we wanted to also highlight and feature various Black art and artists who are using their platform to raise awareness about the mental health impact of anti-black racism and are also creating pathways for healing, emotional emancipation, and holistic well-being within the Black community. As part of centric the africentric tradition of Kumba and Imani that is emergent within the methodology of this research project, these artists and programs are a critical part of the work and programming that is done within the community for wellness and holistic well-being, and these artists and organizations have been able to give Black and racialized communities space to “breathe” and heal.

Name and Hyperlink	Description
RISE (Reaching Intelligent Souls Everywhere)	We create safe and inclusive spaces for youth and emerging artists to express themselves in a positive way. Through our Edutainment methodology, we empower performance artists to create meaningful art rooted in self-knowledge and self-expression. We believe art has the power to transform the lives of many youths we often see lost to the system and its streets. Our programs provide youth with platforms to perform, learn and develop leadership skills. Our model encourages youth to dive deep into their stories while using art as a

	<p>cathartic practice to explore their vulnerability and create room to best deal with their mental health.</p> <p>We believe safe platforms encourage self-expression and self-reflection. In many cases it is an opportunity for youth to experience the power of community healing through art and vulnerability.</p>
Workmans Arts	Various artists and programming that center Black mental health and holistic healing
Workmans Art - Art Cart	Art Cart is a partnership between Workman Arts and Gifts of Light, which pairs established Workman Arts member artists with CAMH client services to provide peer-to-peer arts instruction with an emphasis on skill development and creative exploration
Artist :Apanaki Temitayo Minerve	She is currently the Artist-In- Wellness for CAMH. Workman Arts Artist-In-Residence for 2017-2018. As part of Workman Arts Art-Cart Program at CAMH, she teaches art to participants with mental health and drug addiction
Nikkolas Smith	Protest art and Black Lives Matter Activism
The Verge-Alex Castro	Alex Castro collection of Black art and Black artists that has helped heal and ground them
Jon Henry	<p>Stranger Fruit was created in response to the senseless murders of black men across the nation by police violence. Even with smart phones and dash cams recording the actions, more lives get cut short due to unnecessary and excessive violence.</p> <p>Who is next? Me? My brother? My friends? How do we protect these men? Lost in the furor of media coverage, lawsuits and protests is the plight of the mother. Who, regardless of the legal outcome, must carry on without her child.</p> <p>I set out to photograph mothers with their sons in their environment, re-enacting what it must feel like to endure this pain. The mothers in the photographs have not lost their sons, but understand the reality, that this could happen to their family. The mother is also photographed in isolation, reflecting on the absence. When the trials are over, the protesters have gone home and the news cameras gone, it is the mother left. Left to mourn, to survive.</p> <p>The title of the project is a reference to the song "Strange Fruit." Instead of black bodies hanging from the Poplar Tree, these fruits of our families, our communities, are being killed in the street.</p>
Healing in Color (2022)	"When you are playing with color, it's much harder to be disingenuous." Too often, Black women are expected to adhere to unrealistic standards of perfection. They must be elegant, possess "magic," and are seldom granted the space to pause, reflect, and prioritize their own mental health. Culture's deniability as it relates to Black women's pain only leads to greater stigma surrounding the issue. In this way, HEALING IN COLOR asks, how can Black women

	<p>create spaces of respite amidst the heartache? One solution: art. The film is born out of a desire to weave together intimate interviews of Black women with a community-grounded art therapy workshop. In this meditative and vulnerable space, five Black women are encouraged to confront their personal struggles with mental health, body shame, self-harm, and much more, freeing from the constraints of the stigmatized habitual thinking. What unfolds is a mutual recognition about the realities of living in their skin, and the understanding that healing is lifelong, imperfect, and ultimately, best done in community</p>
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9. Appendix 2 - Partner Organizations at a Glance

All partner organizations that are in collaboration with this research project are aligned with the overarching goal of improving the mental health of Black Canadians.

1. Mental Health Black Canadians

As part of the new initiative on Promoting Health Equity: Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is partnering with community-based organizations, researchers, and others in Black communities to generate new evidence on culturally focused programs and interventions that address mental health and its determinants for Black Canadians. This work will include supporting the implementation of this initiative by also undertaking knowledge development and capacity building efforts.

2. V-TraC Lab - Ottawa

The Vulnerability, Trauma, Resilience and Culture Research Laboratory (V-TRaC) directed by Dr. Jude Mary Cénat is pursuing a research program in youth and adults. The V-TRaC research lab studies the impact of vulnerability and trauma in relation to coping and resilience strategies. Our research aims to integrate clinical, developmental, individual, community, family, social and cultural factors in order to develop culturally appropriate assessment, prevention and intervention tools that meet the real needs of individuals and communities. The V-TRaC lab has three main research axes: Vulnerability & Trauma, Racial disparities in health and social services, Global mental health.

3. Network for the Advancement of Black Communities, NABC

The Network for the Advancement of Black Communities, (NABC) aspires in building a strong Black community sector in Canada.

4. TAIBU

TAIBU Community Health Centre is a community-driven organization, located in Malvern, serving the Greater Toronto Area's Black-identifying communities. Racism, poverty, systemic oppression & issues related to housing, education & employment are all social factors affecting health & wellbeing. TAIBU's programs and services are delivered in a culturally affirming Africentric environment to support our community. As an organization, TAIBU is even more resolute in its commitment to the journey toward becoming a Centre of Excellence.

Imara Generation Project

Through this project, the TAIBU Community Health Centre will collaborate with Black youth to co-develop a youth focused, culturally appropriate mental health awareness and support program. The program will be delivered through community organizations in the Greater Toronto Area that serve Black youth. It will engage the families of Black youth to teach them about positive parenting and mentorship and their influence on mental health. The project will align with TAIBU's recently developed and adapted Model of Black Health and Well-being, as well as the Afrocentric principles of self-determination, collective work and responsibility, and unity.

5. Women's Health in Women's Hands - ACB Mental Health

Our primary healthcare model focused primarily on African, Black, Caribbean, Latin American and South Asian communities in Toronto and the surrounding area has always been grounded on an anti-racism and anti-oppression framework that recognizes that intersecting dimensions of oppression impacts women's ability to access care and navigate systems that are supposed to support their health and wellbeing.

6. Tropicana

At Tropicana we offer culturally aware and supportive programs to those in need, including but not limited to counseling, settlement services, childcare, education, personal development, and employment services, with a predominant focus on the Caribbean, Black and African communities of Toronto. Tropicana Community Services was founded in 1980 as a non-profit community organization in Scarborough, Ontario by Jamaican-born Robert Brown and cofounder Derrick McLennon. Their goal was to serve disadvantaged youth and their families, particularly those from a Caribbean, Black, and African heritage. Each year Tropicana's staff, with the assistance of its dedicated volunteers, is able to help thousands of people in need.

7. Rexdale Community Health Centre

In 2022, the Board of the Rexdale CHC led a process to update our strategic plan. We engaged community members, partners, staff, and the board in different facilitated activities designed to learn more about our strengths, opportunities to improve, and where we should focus our resources during the next 3 years. We collected 100 ideas and organized them into themes. It wasn't easy to select our priorities, but we did it while keeping the needs of our community front and center at all times. We also used this as an opportunity to make the wording clearer, and to make our goals specific and measurable. We invite you to join us as we work hard to achieve our ambitious plan. We'll continue to check in with you as our plan moves into action.

Our Vision

A healthy and empowered community.

Our Mission

As a leader in health system transformation, we use our deep understanding of community

needs to improve lives through strategic advocacy, strong partnerships, and innovative programs and services.

8. Aspire for Higher

Vision:

Our vision is to implement a social inclusion framework where young people can develop, learn and play in a context that is responsive and supportive of their needs, aspirations, and interests.

Mission:

We use comprehensive sports-based programming as a vehicle to engage youth from all communities to foster their growth and development into healthy adults, community leaders and responsible citizens.

Values:

At A4H no child is turned away due to financial circumstances. As an organization we are committed to ensuring all children have the opportunity to play and benefit from sport participation. Families unable to pay for programming are invited to apply for our internal subsidy programs.

9. Jane-Finch Wellness Advocates for Youth Project - Black Creek CHC

The Jane and Finch WAY project will research, implement, and evaluate interventions for supporting hard-to-reach Black youth and improving their mental health outcomes. The project will build on the strength and resiliency of the community. The primary target population of the project is hard-to-reach Black youth in the Jane and Finch area of Toronto. A cohort of youth will directly take part in pilot testing of targeted interventions. The project will also deliver interventions and activities for families, social service organizations and the broader youth community.

10. Africa Centre, Mental Health Project

Our Mental Health and Wellness Mentorship program is an initiative to support Albertan youth of African descent aged 15-24 with their Mental and Emotional health. Over the course of six months, mentees are paired with a mentor who will offer tips and resources to help them tackle the various stresses in life.

ArTeMo project is an alternative collaborative approach to promoting mental health among Black Canadian youth and their families in Edmonton and Calgary to improve their psychological, emotional, and social well-being. We create awareness, understanding, and acknowledgment that various factors affect our community in different ways, and providing tools & strategies to assist our communities to address barriers to the Mental Health & Wellbeing of Black Canadians. The ArTeMo Project engages diverse Black youth

and their families to improve overall mental well-being, including the empowerment of Black Canadians who identify as

11. Barbados Association of Winnipeg

The aim of the project is to develop a Mental Health Promotion Toolkit that will be easily available for practitioners/clinicians as well as members of the population to use as a guide/resource for promoting positive mental health among black people in Manitoba. We aim to do this by exploring current best practices for culturally relevant tools and resources that already exist and generating information that will be specific for the Afro-Caribbean population of Manitoba. With a focus on collaboration, the project's goals will be achieved through continuous input from members of the community in each aspect of the project to have a final revised version that is by the population that it is created for.