

NEXT STEPS

This report provides an overview of the central themes that emerged from the Black Experience Project results, bringing to life important dimensions of the life experiences of individuals identifying as Black or of African Heritage with respect to identity, community and interactions with broader society. This document is by no means a comprehensive or complete analysis of the material captured through the extensive interviews with the study's 1,504 participants (such an analysis would require several hundred pages to properly document).

Rather, this report provides a foundation for further exploration, discussion and action. It is intended as a call to action to the many organizations, institutions and individuals in the Greater Toronto Area (and beyond) who have an interest and a role in the success of the Black community, and the well-being of all communities and individuals in society. This includes:

- Organizations and individuals within the GTA's diverse Black communities, who will be informed by the research to better appreciate the rich diversity of their communities, and can use the study data and insights to strengthen their assets and community resources;
- Governments and public institutions (e.g., education, police services, social services) at all levels, that can make effective use of the data to better reflect and serve the aspirations of the Black population, and help remove institutional barriers to success;
- Educators and researchers who can use the research to explore the data in greater detail, and incorporate new insights into educational programs;
- Community-based organizations, which can improve their programs, services and supports through the insights provided by this study;
- The business sector, which can make use of the study in strengthening human resource practices and creating new employment opportunities for racialized populations; and
- The media, in how they can improve their coverage and stories about the Black community. The data in this study support deeper understanding, alternative framing and more focus on successes and contributions of the Black community.

The BEP results and insights provide a new and compelling focal point around which diverse stakeholders can gain greater insight in advancing their missions. This encourages stakeholders to come together to constructively discuss what the research has revealed and how it points to a meaningful way forward. The results point to aspects of success and contributions that should be acknowledged and celebrated, as well as to obstacles and challenges that require thoughtful attention and effective solutions.

As the project moves into Phase 3, next steps cover three broad areas:

1. Further exploration of the data. Along with the public release of this report, the BEP survey data will be made available to community researchers, scholars, and organizations in all sectors. They will be encouraged to conduct further in-depth study on issues of most relevance (such as life aspirations, health and mental health, experiences with institutions, and comparisons between urban and suburban experiences). This report touches on only a portion of the extensive data collected through the survey, which encompassed more than 250 survey questions, and includes more than 60,000 qualitative responses to open-ended questions.

The Jean Augustine Chair (JAC) in Education, Community and Diaspora at York University will become the permanent home of the Black Experience Project, and serve as the primary access point for further research with the data. The JAC is also developing plans for additional programming initiatives around the study results.

It is hoped that the Black Experience Project will inspire further research studies initiated by the Black community (and others) that focus on particular issues of need. One of the primary objectives of the BEP is to strengthen the capacity within this community for effective community-based research. As well, the BEP may prove to be a valuable model for racialized communities in other Canadian cities (and other countries) that see the value of harnessing the power of social research to document their experience in a way that can lead to meaningful change.

2. Community and public discussions. The results from the Black Experience Project are intended to provide a strong impetus for initiating meaningful discussions about what the findings reveal and how they may be leveraged to identify opportunities and priorities for strengthening the health and capacities of the Black community. Organizations in all sectors will be encouraged to develop programming (e.g., internal discussions, public events, educational initiatives) based on the BEP study findings. The goal of the research is to serve as a catalyst; bringing diverse stakeholders together to work toward a common understanding of the issues and devise strategies for effective pathways forward.

3. Providing a more balanced and honest public narrative. The Black Experience Project provides the media with a strong empirical basis for improving its coverage of the Black community generally, as well as the stories of Black individuals. This is an important opportunity and responsibility, as most non-Blacks have a limited and often stereotypical view of their Black neighbours. At the same time, it is increasingly important to confront the reality of anti-Black racism in the GTA and its pervasiveness regardless of ethnic background, socio-economic status or gender identity. There is much to learn from the study results.

A research study such as the Black Experience Project cannot on its own fully capture the strength and contributions of the GTA Black community, nor can it address the persistent challenges and systemic inequalities in society. What it does provide is an empirically-based understanding of what it is like to be Black in the GTA. This can help create new conversations that lead to transformational change, by providing a more realistic and constructive focal point for discussion and a way forward.

