

Introduction

The City's Confronting Anti-Black Racism unit (CABR) is responsible for rolling out the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism¹. Action 19.2 in the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism calls for the City to out-reach, recruit, and appoint diverse people of African descent to advisory bodies in the City of Toronto. The Partnership and Accountability Circle (PAC) was established to guide and support the full implementation of the Action Plan.² The PAC is informed by African values, principles, and practices and reflects Torontonians' diversity of African descent. Membership of the Circle comprises 12 Torontonians with diverse lived experiences, education, professional expertise, and historical knowledge of anti-Black racism in Toronto. This includes:

- (4) Four elders who represent the wisdom of the community to hold the integrity of the Circle's principles, values and practices;
- (4) Four youth, defined as being between the ages of 13 to 29 with diverse lived experience; and;
- (4) Four people who represent key stakeholder groups of Black Toronto communities.

As part of reflecting on Year Two of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, the Partnership and Accountability Circle (PAC) has written this report, organized by the key priorities approved by the City Council for the Year One work plan and is structured as follows:

1. Building an Inclusive and Equitable Economy
2. Community Capacity Building
3. Continuing to Create Culture Change at the City
4. Investing in Black Children & Youth
5. Improving Customer Service

Key Achievements

- Planning and execution of Black Community Roundtable with Mayor John Tory, Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson, and (10) ten stakeholders represented Black-led and Black-serving organizations; this resulted in five key commitments from the Mayor (Black Representation during Recovery, Food Security, Race-Based Data Collection & Reporting, Employment & Income Support, Procurement)
- Planning and engaging in a consultation with Toronto's Office for Recovery and Rebuild (TORR), highlighting 4 areas: (1) Black Representation, (2) Social and Economic Recovery, (3) Gentrification and Rebuilding, (4) Healthcare
- Planning and engaging in a consultation with Mayor John Tory regarding defunding the police and police reform
- Continuous working partnership with CABR Unit, enabling continued progress towards key commitments to the Black community

¹ City of Toronto. (2020, October 01). Confronting Anti-Black Racism. Retrieved October 08, 2020, from <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/confronting-anti-Black-racism/>

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Priorities	Action/PAC Perspective	Recommendations
<p>Priority 1: Building an Inclusive and Equitable Economy</p>	<p>PAC is very satisfied with the progress the different divisions and units have made in year two work plan and action summary, in particular:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development of a list of Black-led employment focus agencies and participation in job fairs; and 2. Partnered with John Howard Society to conduct an online e-learning program for individuals in conflict with the law, supporting them to understand their legal rights regarding criminal background checks and employers on how to remove barriers to employment. <p>PAC was not satisfied with the lack of focus on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black-led employment agencies in the City's Action Summary. Many Black-focused employment agencies and community spaces have had their operations and income streams impacted by COVID-19.</p> <p>PAC is satisfied that the City has been actively supportive of Black-owned businesses to better compete and thrive in Toronto. For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The establishment of the Mayor's Business Roundtable for Black Businesses; and 2. The CABR's leadership with the City's Economic Development & Culture division to address the displacement and gentrification actively occurring in Little Jamaica and Jane-Finch neighbourhood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAC recommends that the City divisions within these specific priority areas engage with the Black-led employment-focused agencies in their working partnership with John Howard Society. The aim is to ensure that Black youth and adults with a criminal record, in conflict with the law, or are facing barriers can have access to employment and are fully informed of their legal rights. It is therefore pertinent that the City build a coalition of partners instead of working in silos with different organizations. • PAC also calls on the City to improve outreach to Black-focused employment agencies to keep a regular and steady flow of outreach (instead of just putting out an ad at a time). • CABR should advocate for additional COVID-19 relief funds targeted specifically to Black-focused employment agencies and community centres. • PAC recommends the City to address the low percentage of City procurement of services from Black-owned businesses. • PAC recommends the incorporation of data collection and critical analysis in this priority area. • Black communities in conversation with city planners, developers, and other external stakeholders must be supported in the breakdown of power imbalances in typical community engagement strategies. For example, high-level jargon and ways of speaking between (predominantly white or non-Black) city planners and developers result in inaccessible communication to many people within the Black community.

<p>Priority 1: Building an Inclusive and Equitable Economy (continued)</p>	<p>PAC is somewhat satisfied with the initial stages of the project but would like to see the project expand across the city. The Growing in Place initiative has worked with the City of Toronto on a community engagement plan. This included a preamble that was done with the Black community to have conversations around planning, cultural assets, including what needs to stay/change in the reshaping of predominantly Black communities like Little Jamaica. PAC has observed the challenge of translating what Black communities have articulated as needs into language that developers and planners can utilize in planning efforts.</p> <p>PAC was particularly satisfied that CABR funded Black Urbanism Toronto (BUTO) and Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA) to promote the "The Little Jamaica" campaign, which successfully raised awareness about how the LRT construction intersected with COVID-19 to threaten these businesses. However, the people who worked on this initiative at the grassroots level still felt the City did not adequately resource them. In other circumstances, city planners and consultants tasked with mapping assets would have likely been paid fees for work that volunteers of "The Little Jamaica" project have been doing without adequate financial support. Ultimately, this work is essential not only because the survival of Little Jamaica depends on it, but this is an example of what could happen to other Black communities primed for gentrification in the future.</p> <p>PAC is overall satisfied with the short-term outcomes as promising steps towards building an inclusive and equitable representation of Black City of Toronto staff. However, PAC is not satisfied that the specific data about such efforts' success have not been adequately collected. For example, assessing the effectiveness of targeted recruitment efforts could be measured using statistical data collected on numbers of Black applicants to city positions compared to the actual number of Black hires.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAC recommends developers, planners, and City staff prioritize anti-oppression principles and provide adequate time consideration when engaging with the Black community to address historical inaccessibility in language and communication with external stakeholders. • PAC recommends clear accountability measures to ensure that city services such as the TTC are accountable for inclusive and equitable hiring efforts and promoting existing Black staff. • PAC calls for the collection of data around the hiring practices and experiences of Black applicants and employees of City, as well as non-profit and private sector employees to illuminate the efficacy of the efforts made. Data collected should also uncover to what extent Black talent has positive experiences in these workspaces. • The City should be clear about how they define diversity in terms of confronting anti-Black racism. Supporting initiatives to promote "Diversity" is an unclear statement; in a space that has been dominated by the presence of white men, diversity could mean increased representation of women, LGBTQ+ persons, other POC groups and persons of diverse ages. However this does not explicitly mean that Black communities would specifically increase in representation. • Gentrification and Black displacement initiatives should be full resourced financially, hiring external consultants who can lead a Black empowerment process. Resources should also include any city services that can support the engagement in identifying planning and development issues faced by Black people around the city. • PAC also recommends a Black advisory table/body be established per community to foster intentional partnership when engaging around community changes that affect the social determinants of health of Black people. • All learnings from the Little Jamaica initiative should be used to develop a framework that will be applied to all planning projects in and around the city to ensure equity and growth for all Black Torontonians.
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<p>Priority 2: Community Capacity Building</p>	<p>PAC is satisfied that the City has collaborated with the Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR) on anti-Black racism in school board sessions.</p> <p>PAC is very satisfied with the CABR and Toronto Public Health partnership with the Black Health Alliance (BHA) to support the Pathways to Care project. Pathways to Care aims to remove barriers and improve access to mental health and addiction services for Black children, youth and their families in Ontario by making interventions at the policy, sector, and population levels.</p> <p>PAC is somewhat satisfied that the "Blacks on Board" campaign led to the promotion of the City's public appointments and opportunities on program advisory bodies. This is to ensure that Black Torontonians have opportunities to participate in City decision-making. However, this initiative was mostly led and organized by CABR, and PAC is not satisfied with the divisions within the City tasked to take active leadership in this process because they have not been fully engaged with Black leaders in the City of Toronto. PAC is also not satisfied that City recruitment of Black talent to join City Boards has not actively engaged with PAC to provide the talent pool needed to address these gaps.</p> <p>PAC is satisfied that the CABR Unit partnered with the Afri-Can Food Basket to support a Black Food Sovereignty Alliance. The partnership will support pivotal community and key stakeholder-led conversations that will bring together residents and key Black food leaders, actors and activists in Toronto to develop a framework and focus for a long-term Black food sovereignty incubator. This is an area PAC was actively engaged with the Mayor and CABR, and PAC is satisfied that real progress has been made in this area, which was severely impacted during COVID-19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAC recommends the collection of disaggregated data on racism in teacher-student relationships in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and works collaboratively with TDSB and Teacher's unions to develop a strategy to confront anti-Black racism within the school system. PAC also recommends that CABR work in collaboration with TDSB to take the lead from Afrocentric schools and spread to schools across Toronto. • The CABR should hire new staff to be assigned to the education portfolio. • The City should build long-term inclusive leadership rather than one-off consultation and potential pool of Black talent to join public boards. Instead, PAC strongly recommends the City imbed Black voices, experiences, knowledge and expertise in the decisions the Mayor, City Manager, and City staff are making at all municipal levels. • PAC recommends the development of a strategy to support the health (mental and physical wellness) of Black frontline workers (i.e. personal support workers) and Black staff at the City during COVID-19. • The City should develop COVID-19 public health messaging targeted to the Black community to support safety in a culturally appropriate way. CABR's active engagement in this process with appropriate divisions will be crucial. • PAC calls for the review of health and safety policies by staff to better capture and address racially-motivated violent incidents towards clients and staff. • PAC also recommends the City develop decision making alliances with Black-oriented and other racialized health-care organizations, such as TAIBU Community Health Centre and the Alliance for Healthier Communities, to address supports for PSWs, safety within long-term care homes, and the broader Black community. • PAC recommends the development of enhanced youth spaces and recreation centres to engage Black youth in physical health in safe spaces during COVID-19.
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<p>Priority 3: Continuing to Create Culture Change at the City</p>	<p>PAC is very satisfied with the CABR’s targeted growth of The Black Staff Network, which was implemented to increase employees of African descent at the City of Toronto. The Black Staff Network has grown to over 700 members.</p> <p>PAC is satisfied with the CABR’s continued delivery of comprehensive, mandatory learning on anti-Black racism for City staff and Law Enforcement Officers in the Toronto Police Service; however, PAC is concerned about the lack of longitudinal impact associated with the training to help identify substantive change, and the potentially didactic nature of this training.</p> <p>PAC is very concerned with the lack of mental health and social support for City staff who were stressfully re-deployed and municipal health workers (i.e. personal support workers at municipally run long-term care homes).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAC recommends that the City divisions identify opportunities for innovative delivery of professional development workshops depending on how the COVID-19 proceeds. • The City should identify opportunities for follow-up learning (beyond one training session) to be prioritized across City departments and the Toronto Police Services. • When possible, written/recorded narratives from first-person perspectives of individuals negatively impacted by anti-Black racism in the Toronto Police Services and interactions with City staff should be incorporated in training sessions • PAC recommends providing mental health supports for staff, having a trauma-informed discussion with staff, emergency daycare for frontline workers. • PAC also recommends ensuring senior staff in community-facing departments are reflective of the community that they are serving, including race, gender, and other important intersections.
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<p>Priority 4: Investing in Black Children & Youth</p>	<p>PAC is very satisfied with the CABR’s development of workshops in collaboration with tech industry partners to support Black youth interested in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math).</p> <p>PAC is content with the development of a resource toolkit by Parks, Forestry and Recreation to inform the embedding of anti-Black racism analysis in the development of community recreation programming and after-school programs. Notably, PAC is concerned about the applicability of this toolkit to tangible action that will benefit Black youth. PAC is also very concerned about the lack of after school programs focused on Black youth empowerment and the lack of Black representation in Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department staff.</p> <p>PAC is very satisfied with the CABR’s use of grant funding to support three Black-led organizations: Dance Immersion, the Centre for Young Black Professionals, and Delta Family Centre.</p> <p>PAC is satisfied with the Children’s Services hiring of a consultant to work with the early and child care sector and Black queer and trans youth to support inclusive practices and professional learning materials. PAC is satisfied with the planned development of learning modules for EarlyON and child care operators. However, PAC is concerned that the materials developed may not be incorporated into common practice or be reflected more broadly in programs adopted by Children’s Services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAC recommends that the Parks, Forestry and Recreation department document the programs that have utilized this resource toolkit and any recorded impacts on Black youth due to the toolkit and training. • Parks, Forestry and Recreation should collect race-based data on how programs and services are allocated. • Parks, Forestry and Recreation should invest funding and targeted recruitment efforts to support the hiring of Black staff to support before and after-school programs that intentionally cater to Black youth. • CABR and the City more broadly should continue to invest in community-led initiatives, especially those whose operations have been impacted by COVID-19. • CABR and the City should improve the transparency of decision-making processes for the funding of community initiatives that target Black communities and neighbourhoods.
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<p>Priority 5: Improving Customer Service</p>	<p>PAC is very satisfied that divisions, agencies, and corporations associated with the City of Toronto have incorporated race-based and other socio-demographic data collection into at least 15 surveys, program records and other data collection activities. PAC looks forward to reading and reviewing the report to be released fall of 2020.</p> <p>PAC is satisfied Toronto Police Services Board adopted the Race-Based Data Collection, Analysis and Public Reporting Policy on the collection of socio-demographic data, which documented socio-demographic data in all use of force incidents and strip searches. PAC is also looking forward to the upcoming training of officers on the collection, data analysis, and reporting, which is expected by the end of 2020.</p> <p>PAC is not satisfied that Toronto Police Service Board did not implement the collection of Race-Based Data under COVID-19 Municipal and Provincial mandated Emergency Act. Due to the broad parameters the Provincial government gave to police officers in their engagement with the public and the ticketing of those deemed to have 'violated' public health guidelines and regulation, this was a missed opportunity to collect race-based data, conduct analysis and publicly report the impact these regulations had on the Black community.</p> <p>PAC is very satisfied with the research conducted by Corporate Services that assessed the user experience of Black communities when filing complaints to the City. PAC is also satisfied that this generated recommendations based on the challenges that emerged for Black community members when filing complaints.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAC recommends the findings of all nine pilot projects are accessible and shareable with the Black community. PAC also recommends public discussion and community consultation to ensure racialized community voices, the Black community, in particular, is heard to improve customer service. • The City should use data about the challenges faced by Black community members attempting to file complaints to make other interfaces (beyond filing complaints) more accessible.
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Impact of COVID-19 on Black Communities

While the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened communities' livelihood across the world, it is clear that Black communities have been disproportionately impacted, including Black communities in Toronto. From May to September 2020, Black individuals represented 23% of those who tested positive for COVID-19 despite being only 9% of Toronto's population³. This overrepresentation has been linked to anti-Black racism as a public health crisis, a reality that permeates every facet of our society. COVID-19 merely exacerbated pre-existing systemic racism, and is a stark reminder of the necessity of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. This action plan needs to be upheld by not only CABR and PAC, but by all City divisions and City Councillors.

Lessons Learned

“Many efforts on anti-Black racism have been put on pause because of COVID-19, but COVID-19 has impacted the Black community the most.”
- PAC Member

During the height of this global and national pandemic, City of Toronto, under its COVID-19 Emergency Order, decided to disperse the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit (CABR) across different internal teams. This meant that the urgent work to confront anti-Black racism was put on hold by and large, which created a breakdown in communication and workflow between CABR and PAC. This decision by the City led to PAC taking on a larger role beyond its mandate to ensure the Black communities' urgent needs and concerns under the 22 recommendations and 80 action plans were not derailed. Both the City of Toronto and Toronto Public Health considers anti-Black racism a public health crisis. Therefore it is pertinent to assess the disproportionately devastating impact of COVID-19 on racialized and Black communities due to anti-Black racism. It is critical on the part of Mayor Tory, Deputy Mayor Thompson, and City Councillors to understand that any crisis and/or pandemic that impacts Toronto's communities will acutely felt Toronto's communities due to economic and political disenfranchisement. Thus, the full implementation of the Action Plan to Confront Anti Black racism will look different to the Black community in the City of Toronto, and approaching this process with an equity lens and a holistic framework is critical to ensure effective and actual systematic change will be felt tangibly. PAC strongly believes that the City of Toronto cannot adequately address COVID-19 and its health and economic impact without fully ensuring the Action Plan to Confront Anti Black Racism is incorporated into all work plans and decision-making processes in its divisions and departments.

With this thought in mind, on April 29th, 2020, PAC reached out to Mayor John Tory and his team to hold a roundtable with Black thought leaders from all different sectors - from health experts to businesses. The Mayor was fully engaged in making this a reality, and PAC greatly appreciates his quick response and that of his team. This created an opportunity for CABR and PAC to engage in productive discussions around the COVID-19 impact on the Black community. At this meeting, it brought out key promises and action items that led to CABR and PAC reconnecting to ensure the key promises made by Mayor Tory and the actionable items discussed were realized during the government recovery and reopening of Toronto. As you will see above (under key achievements), these successes would not have been possible without the leadership and follow-through of the CABR Unit.

Lastly, during this challenging time, one of the lessons learned was the importance of innovative solutions to amplify the Black community's voices to City leadership. In particular, the need for social media to engage the community during the pandemic and social distancing. PAC in its mandate is accountable to the Black community, as the acting steward and convener between the Mayor/City officials and the public, to increase opportunities for Black Torontonians to participate in City decision-making and engage with both CABR and PAC in the implementation of the 22 recommendation and 80 action plan. During COVID-19, where social distancing became mandatory, PAC members were challenged on how to best engage with the broader Black community and update them on the work being done to address anti-Black racism, without access to social media. The limitation imposed by the City of Toronto restriction around social media meant consistent and transparent communication with everyday Black residents was not feasible. PAC and CABR need to improve their presence and public awareness within the Black community, to represent the Black community accurately and equitably. Therefore, PAC

³ City of Toronto. (2020, October 05). COVID-19: Status of Cases in Toronto. Retrieved October 08, 2020, from <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-latest-city-of-toronto-news/covid-19-status-of-cases-in-toronto/>

members advocate for changing PAC rules that prohibit the creation of a social media presence. Social media is a critical tool that PAC and CABR could use to improve accountability to the communities they represent. PAC members would like to see more engagement with the city councillors and the Mayor's office due to more active engagement with the Black community.

Now that we are at the halfway mark with the City of Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti Black Racism, our observation, lessons learned and recommendations are founded in, and guided by, this Action Plan. Throughout the City of Toronto internal work plan report and action summary, many sections state that key outputs from the City of Toronto departments and units are “In-Progress,” which is an unclear indication of what exactly is being done. It will be useful to implement quarterly or periodical assessments for each section to measure progress throughout the year (as opposed to one year reporting period) for PAC to review and respond to. How the City, Councillors, and CABR chooses to take into account this report will determine, yet again, who is left behind if we do not fully engage in the process of equitable progress and significant actionable changes. PAC’s aim has always been to ensure that the Mayor's and elected City Councillors' decisions are informed by the progress made by CABR and City divisions, including PAC report in a way that fully and adequately prioritizes the socio-economic interest of Black Torontonians to correct the blind spot the City has historically had during policy-making processes.

References

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