



Confronting Anti-Black Racism Newsletter

Summer Edition 2020

Greetings!

We hope this newsletter finds you well, in good health and good spirits!

We begin by acknowledging that the past few months have been difficult and challenging for our city's Black communities. We've been disproportionately dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has considerably exacerbated the chronic social and economic challenges that have plagued our communities for far too long.

Over the last number of months, we have also collectively witnessed painful instances of anti-Black terror and trauma from police and civilians, spurring a seemingly unprecedented shift in our society towards openly discussing the presence and the increasingly harmful effect of anti-Black racism. Though a long time coming, we know that even this shift is an exhausting and frustrating one for many of our community members to bear. We stand with you in strength and resistance as we move to make sense and usher change out of this extended moment of racial reckoning regarding the realities of our people.

We also acknowledge those that have transitioned, a disproportionately high number of whom have been members of our Black communities. We send our heartfelt condolences to bereft families. We honour the brave that have continued to work on the frontlines and we acknowledge and give thanks for all of you who continue to be resilient, to stand tall against injustice, to speak and ask for help and to hold one another in these trying times. Indeed, we have united and heeded to one another's call and shown that our communities are stronger together. That is the true spirit and power of our ancestors living through us and manifesting to take us to better days!

We would like to share an update with you to let you know what we have been doing to support our Black communities during the pandemic. We also want to inform you of our present efforts and what is being done to ensure that our post-pandemic recovery and rebuilding plan is strategic, strong, sound and centres around the particular needs of Toronto's diverse Black communities.



Before we share our update, we feel it is important to acknowledge that it has been curiously long time since you have received an update from the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit. The reason for this is that as soon as the COVID-19 emergency measures were adopted in mid-March, many teams, offices, units, and divisions of the City halted standard communications (such as releasing newsletters) in order to focus on providing COVID-19 communications. The CABR Unit joined its City partners in limiting communications to only those that focused on keeping individuals safe, secure and accessing City services in light of the present pandemic. As Ontario moves into advance stages of its pandemic response, and certain services and public amenities slowly start to re-open, offices like the CABR Unit are now similarly expanding their messaging to communicate beyond COVID-19 communications.

This newsletter, we hope, will provide our communities and supporters with clarity about what the work of the CABR Unit has looked like and will be in light of the pandemic.

Following the emergency orders that were undertaken to flatten the curve, the City of Toronto created the [Community Coordination Plan \(CCP\)](#), a joint initiative between the United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) and the City of Toronto's Social Development Finance & Administration (SDFA) division. On March 20, 2020, all staff of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit were re-assigned to support the implementation of the CCP and pandemic response work.

The CCP continues to be the structure and framework through which Black Torontonians who are vulnerable receive social services supports from the City and its various partners. The CABR Unit has continued to advocate internally on behalf of Black Torontonians during the pandemic. See further updates below to see how we have done so.

The CABR team returned to implementing the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism in late May and continue our community support work during the pandemic. Our reassurance to you is that each and every member of our team is committed to ensuring that our recovery is stronger and that the work is done. Our aim is not to have our communities bounce back from COVID, but bounce forward, as we know that the pre-COVID status quo for our communities was unacceptable.

We thank you all for your endless support, messages of assurance and for walking this trying journey with us. Alone some go fast, but together we go far! Please read this newsletter and connect with us to share how we can support your initiatives or projects and how you can support the CABR Unit in strengthening the work we do in support of the well-being of Toronto's Black communities. Again, thank you for your continued support. We do this work purely because of Black people power. Ubuntu.

-The CABR Unit



For general information on the CABR Unit, please read [Background: Confronting Anti-Black Racism](#) or visit the [Confronting Anti-Black Racism webpage](#) or [Twitter page](#).

Updates:

1. COVID-19 Response and Supporting Our Community
2. Rebuild and Recovery Details & Resources
3. Updates on CABR Actions
4. Upcoming Events & Job Opportunities

1. COVID-19 Response and Supporting Our Community

The Black Resilience Cluster to Support Pandemic Response

Since March 20, 2020, CABR staff were re-assigned to support the implementation of the CCP.

CABR led the establishment of the Black Resilience Cluster (BRC) Table to facilitate collaborative coordination, communication, problem-solving, and issue-identification between the City, UWGT and agencies and organizations supporting African, Caribbean, and Black communities in Toronto.

The BRC includes 26 Black-focused organizations that meet regularly to collaborate, coordinate and resolve urgent and immediate issues in areas such as food security, housing and shelter, health and wellness and social service's needs.

Support for Black Community Organizations

On June 23, the City announced \$4.97 million to support community-based agencies working to meet the needs of those affected by COVID-19.

CABR was able to work with the City's Community Funding Unit to carve out \$1.29 million to support the work of Black-led community-based agencies providing critical mental health supports, distributing culturally appropriate prepared meals and food hampers, baby food, traditional medicines, air conditioners, hygiene kits, Wi-Fi hot spots and more. Further details can be found in the [City of Toronto announces funds for community services to do more for vulnerable populations news release](#).

Mental Health Supports

As part of the COVID-19 response, the City supported emergency investment in culturally responsive mental health supports for Black residents by partnering with and supporting Black-serving organizations such as Across Boundaries and CAFCAN. Through this support, both organizations offer warm-line emergency mental health supports to Black residents

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seeking mental health services. The strategy also offers supports to workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response.

If you or anyone you know needs mental health support, please contact 2-1-1.

Food Access

The City is working actively with the Jamaican Canadian Association, African Food Basket, Black Creek Community Farm, FoodShare Toronto and Delta Family Resource Centre to make sure Black Torontonians continue to get access to culturally appropriate food.

During the week of April 13, through partnership with Metro, the CABR Unit was able to secure \$20,000 in grocery gift cards to these organizations so that they could purchase culturally appropriate food to keep Black Torontonians properly fed. The City continues to work with the aforementioned organizations and other Black-serving organizations such as Black Daddies' Club, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, and CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals to address the food security needs of Black Torontonians.

The City is working closely with Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention to ensure delivery of food hampers to community members.

CABR has also facilitated the distribution of Uber vouchers to community organizations to assist with food and care package deliveries and transporting client to access essential services like medical appointments.

Supporting Black Businesses

The Black Business and Professional Association (BBPA) is actively involved and helping to support the development and implementation of the City's task force on economic recovery. You can learn more about resources and supports available for Black-owned businesses on the [BBPA website](#).

Collection of Race-Based Data and Mapping of COVID-19 Cases

Toronto Public Health has been regularly updating data on its website about COVID-19 infections, recoveries and deaths by neighbourhood, race and other socio-demographic details. Early data is confirming what Black communities have known and suspected, namely that COVID-19 is having a disproportionately negative impact on the health and well-being of Black communities in the city. The CABR Unit is working with Toronto Public Health to use the data to inform community outreach efforts for COVID-19 health information. For a visual summary of cases, visit the [COVID-19: Status of Cases in Toronto page](#).

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Community Forum on COVID Rebuild & Recovery

On April 29, with the support of the CABR Unit, the Unit's Partnership and Accountability Circle organized a tele-town hall with Mayor John Tory with Toronto's leading Black-serving organizations. The purpose of this engagement with the Mayor was to discuss and provide guidance on the City's emergency response and recovery plans and share with him, Black communities' priority needs and expectations during the pandemic. The organizations that took part in this town hall are TAIBU Community Health Centre; Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce; CEE Centre For Young Black Professionals; Toronto Community Benefits Network; Black Business and Professional Association; Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC); and FoodShare. Also present and participating on the call were Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson (Ward 21 Scarborough Centre) and Councillor Cynthia Lai (Ward 23 Scarborough North).

Ultimately, this collective of Toronto's Black-serving organizations managed to secure concrete commitments from Mayor Tory on matters such as: Black representation in City's COVID recovery and rebuild processes; enhancing food security for Black individuals and families across the city; advancing the collection and reporting of race-based disaggregated data in relation to COVID-19 infections, deaths and recoveries; enhancing employment and income supports for Black workers to ensure they're not left behind; increasing the number of Black-owned businesses on the City's Diverse Vendors list to augment the number of Black businesses awarded procurement contracts from the City.

On May 8, the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit's Partnership and Accountability Circle partnered with the Black Canadian Chamber of Commerce (BCCC) and the Black Business and Professional Association to host a tele-town hall that featured Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, and Minister of Finance Rod Phillips. The forum included 600 virtual attendees who were represented by various Toronto-based Black-serving organizations and agencies who informed Premier Ford and his attending Cabinet ministers of the important and pressing issues facing Toronto's Black communities. Several commitments to address issues of job security, support for Black businesses and enhanced social well-being supports were made during the call and are currently being followed up on.

Culturally Relevant COVID Awareness Campaign

The CABR Unit initiated and supported the African, Caribbean, Black (ACB) COVID-19 Public Awareness Initiative, led by University of Toronto's Black Medical Students Association (BMSA), Black Health Alliance (BHA), and Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP). The initiative supports African, Caribbean, Black communities to respond, regroup and recover in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The current crisis has surfaced the need for

specific and culturally appropriate COVID-19 messaging for ACB communities. With this in mind, ACB specific material development and outreach has been ongoing. This includes three themes of content: encouragement, resources and safety messaging.

We've also recognized that there are many challenges associated with parenting during the pandemic, and will soon respond by facilitating a Parent Appreciation Week. We aim to celebrate the voices of parents, specifically Black parents, by expressing our gratitude while highlighting culturally relevant parenting & family-related resources. For more information, see link to [BHA Bulletin](#).

COVID-19 Information & Resources

For information about the latest COVID-19 updates, health resources and information on City services and programs, visit the [COVID-19 page](#).

2. Rebuild and Recovery Details & Resources

Survey on How the City Can Recovery and Rebuild from COVID-19

Get involved in discussions about how the City can rebuild and recover from COVID-19 by completing a survey to inform the City's plan. The [survey](#) closes on July 15. Black participation in completing these surveys is critical as the data gathered will inform the City's COVID response.

Host Community Conversations

The City is partnering with Social Planning Toronto to encourage residents to host community conversations about what recovery and rebuilding from COVID-19 looks like. The deadline to get involved is July 24. Learn more: www.socialplanningtoronto.org/torr_consults

COVID-19 Response Micro-Grants for Emerging Black-Led & Black-Serving Organizations

The CABR Unit is proud to partner with CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals to support the Black to the Future Initiative providing COVID-19 response micro-grants to emerging Black-led and Black-serving organizations in Toronto. Applications are due July 31. Priority is given to organizations that primarily serve continental African populations in the City. Learn more: blacktothefutureto.com.

Anti-Black Racism Analysis for COVID Recovery Plans

In developing effective responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, governments, non-profit agencies, foundations and community groups should pay particular attention to the unique and distinct histories, experiences and needs of Black communities. To support community stakeholders in this regard, the CABR Unit has prepared this [PDF resource](#).

3. Updates on CABR Unit Actions

Policing Reforms & Public Consultations

The Toronto Police Services Board will be holding virtual town halls (July 15 & 16) to provide an opportunity for the public to depute on matters concerning police accountability, reform, and community safety priorities. The town hall meetings follow an open format, and allow the Board to listen, hear the voices of our communities, and to create space in discussing the critical issues of reform, accountability, and community safety. Signup to depute or to watch the town hall at: tpsb.ca/mmedia/news-release-archive/listid-2/mailid-197-virtual-town-hall-additional-information

Toronto Board of Health Declares Anti-Black Racism a Public Health Crisis

At its meeting on June 8 the Toronto Board of Health acknowledged anti-Black racism as a public health crisis and outlined steps to be taken to address it including requesting the Medical Officer of Health to prioritize resources to address anti-Black racism. Learn more here: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL17.9>

Black Food Sovereignty Alliance

The CABR Unit is partnering with the Afri-Can Food Basket to support a Black Food Sovereignty Alliance. Recommendation 8 of the [Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#) mandates that the City of Toronto "Improve food access for low-income Black Torontonians". At its meeting of July 2, the Toronto Board of Health passed a motion to work with Black-led organizations to ensure the development of a Black Food Sovereignty Plan that will look at expanding access to affordable, healthy and culturally-appropriate food. Community partners will include Afri-Can Food Basket, FoodShare, Black Creek Community Farm and the Toronto Food Policy Council. Learn more: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL18.1>

Launch of Little Jamaica Campaign

In 2019 the CABR Unit officially partnered with the BBPA and Black Urbanism TO, to protect and promote Black businesses on Little Jamaica during the pandemic. Recent outcomes of

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this work include the official of launch of the "The Little Jamaica" campaign that includes the creation of a website dedicated to the Black businesses as well as targeted financial management support and digital marketing support for each of the businesses. Learn more: thelittlejamaica.com/

CABR also supported Black Urbanism TO efforts to engage Black businesses in conversation about the impact of the Metrolinx project and the future of the neighborhood redesign. Black Urbanism TO will be releasing its report to the public in late July 2020.

Heritage Toronto

As part of Pride celebrations, the CABR Unit partnered with Heritage Toronto to create public awareness about the history of 101 Dewson St., which served as the heart of the Black LGBTQ activism. For more information, see Heritage Toronto's [Instagram post](#) about 101 Dewson St.

Investing in Black Youth to Attend Collision

As part of Action 1 in the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism to invest in Black children and youth, the CABR Unit supported 265 Black youth to attend the Collision conference for free. Collision is the world's largest technology conference and was held virtually this year.

Training of City Staff & Elected Officials

The CABR Unit has relaunched online training for City staff focused on anti-Black racism with a training recently completed for Mayor John Tory and his political staff team. Further training is to be scheduled with senior City staff and City Councillor offices in the coming weeks as City Council recently adopted a motion to ensure that this happens.

#SoulFoodProjectTO

CABR is supporting work led by the #SoulFoodProjectTO and FoodShare to create a youth-led community cookbook. Deadline for contributions is July 31. Learn more: www.instagram.com/explore/tags/soulfoodprojectto/

4. Upcoming Events & Job Opportunities

Black LGBTQ+ Townhall

Join BlackCap's LGBTQ+ Townhall on July 17 to discuss issues affecting Toronto's African, Black and Caribbean LGBTQ+ community and our city's response to anti-Black racism and COVID-19. Special guest will be Mayor John Tory. [Register](#).

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8th Annual Emancipation Day Underground Freedom Train Ride

ALL ABOARD! Join us in supporting A Different Booklist Cultural Centre's 8th Annual Underground Freedom Train Ride taking place on Friday, July 31 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:15 a.m. (August 1). You, your family and friends are invited to join as we welcome Emancipation Day, August 1 to commemorate the official abolition of slavery in (most of) the British colonies on August 1, 1834. [Details](#)

Da Mic Is On Online Series

The CABR Unit is proud to partner with the Harbourfront Centre to present Da Mic Is On. The online series will be curated and hosted by Ashley McKenzie-Barnes and Trey Anthony. Da Mic Is On is a free online series of candid conversations, comedy, spoken word and art focused on the Black experience, including discussions of love and pride, the use of new and emerging platforms in activism, and what it means to be Black and/or a person of colour in these times. Upcoming conversations are taking place on July 14, 18 & 25. [Details](#)

A History of Styling Black Hair in Canada: Past and Present

On July 20, join Ryerson University Professor Dr. Cheryl Thompson as she facilitates a conversation on Black hair and the beauty industry. The presentation will examine the history of styling Black hair, drawing from examples from across the country, as well as some triumphs that have happened over the last 10 years in the natural hair care industry. [Details.](#)

Call for Applications for Citizen Lab Fellowship on Surveillance Technologies

Citizen Lab is seeking Black applicants for a fellowship exploring surveillance technologies and race. Fellowship is compensated and the deadline to apply is July 27. [Details](#)

Funding for Projects to Improve Black-Led Organizations' Workplaces and Community Spaces

The Government of Canada has established a [Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative](#) and is investing \$25 million in projects and capital assistance to Canada's Black Canadian communities.

A call for proposals has just launched as part of this initiative to invite eligible, Black-led organizations to submit proposals of up to \$100,000 for capital projects including purchasing work-related equipment and/or undertaking renovations or retrofits to community and work spaces to improve functionality. Applications are open between June 26 and July 27, 2020 and selections will be made in late September 2020.

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Job Opportunities

The City is always hiring for new positions and interested in welcoming new talent. Below are links to job websites for the City and some City Agencies and Corporations:

- [City of Toronto](#)
- [Toronto Region and Conservation Authority](#)
- [Toronto Public Library](#)
- [CreateTO](#)
- [Toronto Transit Commission](#)