ENGAGING BLACK PEOPLE AND POWER

A PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND URBAN POLICY PRIMER

Jay Pitter in collaboration with leading Black urbanists across North America, students, scholars and policy experts

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ENGAGING BLACK PEOPLE AND POWER

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FACULTY MESSAGE

Our Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change is honoured to support and collaborate with alumna Jay Pitter in her efforts to address anti-Blackness in planning practice and urban spaces. Jay designed and taught Engaging Black People & Power in Fall 2020 as a planning course through which students reviewed theoretical texts, interviewed leading Black urbanists, and began to codify culturally respectful practices and policies for redressing anti-Blackness within urbanism sectors. The course embraced experiential education and community-engagement to expand and extend student learning beyond the classroom. Student experiences of the course were nothing short of inspired and pivotal: they praise Jay's ability to foster a collaborative and safe space where all are encouraged to share their opinions, and the insights gained by critically engaging with language and practices that inherently marginalize Black scholars, practitioners, and populations. The resulting eponymous publication offers 10 compelling case studies aimed at transforming place-making practice in tangible and meaningful ways; it will be an invaluable resource for scholars, policy-makers, practitioners, students, and community members.

Ultimately, Jay Pitter's curation of Engaging Black People & Power as a university course and resource signals a notable step forward in acknowledging and including Black thought, communities, and ideas into higher education. Such steps are vital in addressing systemic anti-Black racism and realizing transformational change and are fully embraced by the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, given our long-standing commitment to anti-oppression pedagogy and socio-environmental justice. Such steps are also embraced by the university more broadly, given York University's development and implementation of a new Anti-Black Racism Framework and Action Plan. During the past academic year, York University has, for example, committed to hiring 12 new Black faculty members by 2023; establishing a Post-Doctoral Fellowship award for Black scholars; creating a new physical space where Black people can feel safe; establishing a new, culturally safe tool for complaints about racial discrimination and harassment; and increasing funding for scholarships, bursaries, and other forms of financial aid in support of Black students. York University and the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change recognize that these actions, as well as inspired initiatives such as Engaging Black People & Power, are needed to begin to dismantle the deeply ingrained structures of power and systemic racism within the higher education section. Working together, we can attain a more just and sustainable future.

Alice J. Hovorka
Dean & Professor

FACULTY MESSAGE

I had the pleasure of advising Jay while she worked towards her graduate degree in the Faculty of Environmental Studies, now the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change. Following her graduation in 2011, I am fortunate that we have remained connected. Now - 10 years after her graduation - I am so pleased that we were able to journey together towards completing this much-needed and timely publication. As an international urbanist, Jay is a vocal advocate for equity-based placemaking in cities across North America. She advocates for and delivers projects that respond to equity-seeking groups traditionally harmed by urban development and design. She also creates space for insights and stories that she states are far too often drowned out by status quo, self-proclaimed urban experts who dominate the urban policy and practice scene. In addition to co-designing public spaces and co-writing design guidelines, she has spent significant time researching and rewriting urbanism policy with municipal collaborators. In this volume, Jay applies her practice and policy expertise to guide a process with a group of graduate students and professors. This publication centres the knowledge of Black urbanists on the forefront of transforming urbanism policy and practice, sometimes putting their lives on the line in doing so.

L. Anders Sandberg
Professor

THE POWER OF CO-CREATION

"It is empowering to lead but it is divine to serve."
Jay Pitter

My placemaking practice experiences have taught me that intractable urbanism challenges cannot be resolved within siloed disciplines or through top-down approaches propelled by a singular voice. The act of equitable placemaking is a radical act of collaboration and on-going process of knowing when to lead, cede space, listen deeply and ask courageous questions. It is not strictly a professional pursuit but rather purpose rooted in a commitment to on-going professional and character development. It is a constant renewal of new cultural contracts—both institutional and community—that guide new ways of designing, developing, creating knowledge, mentoring and policy-making. Deepest gratitude to all of my esteemed co-creators.

Engaging Black People and Power
EUC Faculty & Student Contributors

Engaging Black People and Power

Engaging Black People and Power
Our Esteemed Featured Black Urbanists

Mitchell Silver, Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks & Recreation

Chase L. Cantrell, Executive Director, Building Community Value

Judge Rochelle Ivri, Co-Founder Ubora Mweusi

Orlando Bailey, Director of Engagement, Bridge Detroit

Anthonia Ogundele, Founder, Ethọs Lab

Anthony Taylor, Commissioner, Metropolitan Parks & Open Space Commission, Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities

Aisha Francis, Founder & Executive Director, Project: Restore FIBI

Phasha Shabazz McKenley, Co-Founder, Metamorphosis Art Project

Lauren Hood, Co-Founder, Deep Dive Detroit, Chair of the Detroit Planning Commission

Mercedes Ward-Samba, Landscape Architect, NYC Department of Parks & Recreation

Camesha Cox, Founding Director, The Reading Partnership
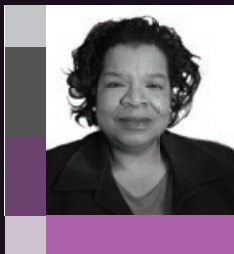
Melissa Gaston, Co-Founder, North End Community Coalition

Darryl Gaston, Co-Founder, North End Community Coalition

This publication is dedicated to Darryl Gaston—he was a pastor, placemaker, and community champion who passed suddenly during this project.

Engaging Black People and Power
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Daniele Zanotti,
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& CEO

GETTING STARTED

HOW CAN WE USE URBAN POLICY TO ADDRESS ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN CITIES?

This publication is primarily centred on this question. The answer to this question is centred on the community. Cities bring us in close proximity to each other. This closeness can erupt in conflict and fear, or foster empathy, curiosity, and an appreciation for difference. Urban policy, along with civic participation and compassion, will determine the outcome. It's time to make a choice. We created this publication, intended to be an action-oriented resource for urbanists across various sectors who choose to contribute to cities where everyone is equally valued and thrives.

This resource is for:

+ **Policy-makers in government or non-governmental organizations** who are in a position to influence policy development and resource allocation.

+ **Urbanism practitioners** who are involved in planning, development, and community engagement.

+ **Urbanism students** interested in learning equitable community engagement approaches.

+ **Urbanism and interdisciplinary scholars** committed to experiential education and diversifying the canon.

+ **Community members** who live in urban centres interested in learning more about the historical policies and pedagogy impacting place-based experiences.

We urge you the reader to engage with this publication. Here are some questions to consider as you review its contents:

1. What issues related to anti-Black racism and urban policy make me uncomfortable? How can I grow past my discomfort?
2. What issues related to anti-Black racism and urban policy can I directly influence?
3. What issues related to anti-Black racism and urban policy can I work with others to collectively influence?
4. How can I respectfully bring Black peoples' lived experiences to the centre of my work?
5. What can I do to demonstrate servant leadership and cede space?

INTRODUCTION

Black skin is distinctly branded, forever seared by policy and place. The transatlantic slave trade is one of history's most pernicious place- and policy-based attacks on humanity, and a licentious contradiction of democracy. Cheryl Harris, legal scholar, explains that enslaved individuals of African descent became "propertized human life," governed under both private property and constitutional laws. Like all forms of property, these commodified human beings "could be transferred, assigned, inherited, or posted as collateral" (Harris, 1993, p. 1720). This state-sanctioned violation created the foundation for legal and quasi-legal urbanism policy that has perpetuated the continued exploitation of Black labour, restriction of Black bodies, and denial of dignified space for Black lives to flourish.

Urban policies guide the geographic, economic and social growth of cities. They have numerous articulations in municipal codes, official plans, orders, zoning by-laws, and ordinances. These policies are an invisible yet powerful force that shape the lives of all urban dwellers, in both positive and adverse ways. When this force isn't intentionally directed toward socially good outcomes, equity-seeking groups are most impacted.

This has been further accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which is disproportionately impacting the physical and economic health of Black communities.

While urban policies reference inclusion, safety, health, beauty, and resilience, they privilege the built environment and economic growth over the quality of human life. For example, "highest and best use" of a parcel of land is most often calculated by assessing permissible uses (meaning what can be built on the land) and financial feasibility. This narrow definition does not place enough emphasis on social value and accountability to communities. Everyday people do not understand urbanism jargon or the force of urban policy, although the former emerges in public discourse when there are contestations about how our cities are growing or amid social conflict (Teitz, 2001).

On May 25, 2020, a 17-year-old convenience store clerk called the police on a Black man he suspected of using a counterfeit $20 bill to purchase cigarettes. Within two hours, that Black man, George Floyd, was slowly executed in a bike lane located at East 38th Street and Chicago Avenue in Minneapolis, with bystanders looking on (King, 2020). Like most everyone else, I have seen photos of this heinous act of inhumanity but I have not watched the video. I didn't need to watch a cell phone snuff film—a contemporary phenomenon that I predict will result in a new form of cultural trauma—to awaken to the reality of Black peoples' risk in cities.

Despite being a pragmatic optimist with the deep belief that we can indeed co-create cities where everyone thrives, I am acutely aware that violent systems, shaped by racist laws and policies, beget violent acts against racialized bodies. Since emancipation from the auction block, state power has enacted urban policies such as redlining, racist housing covenants, and police profiling; constituting what revered geography scholar Katherine McKittrick describes as "domination and deliberate attempts to destroy a black sense of place" (McKittrick, 2011, p. 947). The George Floyd tragedy cut through to the cartilage of place-based racial tensions in Black cities across North America, but it was neither shocking nor new.

What was new was the extent to which urban policy was interrogated in both street-based protests and on professional platforms. Black people came together across class, sexual identities, religions, and cities to uncover the role of this and related tragedies through an urban policy lens. For the first time in urbanism history, there was a critical mass of us working across urbanism professions. A number of articles and academic papers making clear linkages between urban policy and loss of Black lives were published during this time. Black historian Robin D. G. Kelley, Professor of American History at UCLA, wrote a paper stating that communities undergoing gentrification and targeted for aggressive redevelopment are policed through no-knock raids as a strategy for driving out existing Black and other racialized

residents (Kelley, 2020). The attorneys of Breonna Taylor, a young African American woman fatally shot in her Louisville, Kentucky home by plainclothes law enforcement, have since uncovered evidence linking gentrification to her tragic death (Kelley, 2020).

These types of awareness-raising and advocacy efforts are particularly noteworthy because racialized violence tends to be explored through the lens of social identity and critical race theory, which is, of course, incredibly valid. However, by delving into urban policy, we made the invisible visible, and, in so doing, expanded the narrative and exposed the blunt force of policy across hostile urban landscapes. Many of us were commended for speaking truth to power, but I consistently clarified that *we were speaking power to power,* standing on the shoulders of ancestors who defied the force of policy, creating and transmitting Black place-based wisdom across generations.

At the height of this advocacy, I was approached by York University's Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change to teach the ENVS6120 Public Involvement and Planning Course that had been taught by Professor Ute Lehrer for the past 15 years. Given the faculty's long-standing history of leadership in the area of experiential education and our shared commitment to urban equity, I accepted the invitation and developed a new course syllabus and title, Engaging Black People and Power.

Despite 2020-21 being an academic year of physical distancing, I created a studio-style experiential education course—learning through doing and reflection—enabling my ENVS6120 urban policy graduate students to virtually travel across North American cities to gather wisdom from Black urbanists within my close-knit network. Aligned with my practice and cultural values, I used a storytelling approach, because "the ancient tool of using stories to communicate knowledge, has the potential to give evidence meaning, motivate and engage audiences and give relevance to their realities" (Greenhalg; Schank; Wyer, as cited in Sundin et al., 2018, p. 2).

The course was foregrounded by an exploration of place-based oppression, beginning with the violent colonial project, which displaced Indigenous peoples and disrupted their reciprocal relationship with the land. Theoretical texts, case studies, and contemporary media were used to unpack "ignored and oppressed publics" and to examine various urban policies using a broad, equity-based lens considering gender, class, ability, age, and other social identities.

Having explored foundational concepts, a special lecture was organized featuring 12 Black urbanists across several North American cities. Students had the opportunity to select the three presentations that had the most resonance for them, based on their research and personal interests. They were provided with the following simple template for collecting case study data:
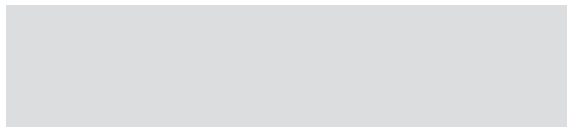
ENGAGING BLACK PEOPLE AND POWER
Case Study Template

🖉 **Introduction + Project Details**
+ Organization Name and Type (for example, municipality, not-for-profit, design firm etc.)
+ City and Black Demographic Engaged
+ 1-2 points re: historical context related to the initiative or region because Black communities are not monolithic
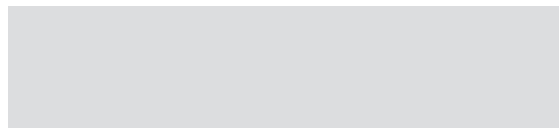
🖉 **Briefly Outline the Challenge**
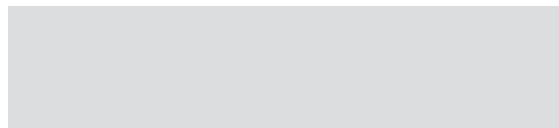
🖉 **THREE Public or Community Engagement Interventions (DEEP DIVE):**
+ What did you do to connect with the community and why?
+ What Black cultural norms or barriers did you consider?
+ How did you earn trust, create excitement, and meet people where they were?
+ How did you honour Black people, provide accommodations, and demonstrate reciprocity?
+ How did you respond to challenges, historical inequities, community engagement fatigue, mistrust, sadness, and anger?
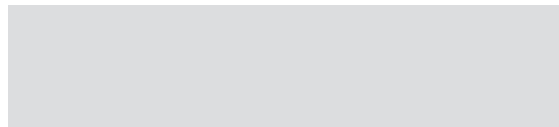
🖉 **Notable Moment**
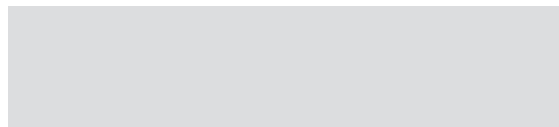
🖉 **Impact Statement**

🖉 **Lesson Statement**

🖉 **Policy Notes**

© Jay Pitter

After gathering stories from Black urbanists, the students reviewed academic literature and urban policies to add additional context to their studies. This process centralized lived experiences. The pedagogy and policy, analysis followed—as it should in every academic, policy and practice process. Equally important, the students forged meaningful relationships with the Black urbanists they were paired with. Overall, the learning journey helped them to:

+ Develop an understanding of the historical and theoretical underpinnings of public involvement in planning processes;

+ Outline the ways numerous equity-seeking groups have been excluded from public consultation/engagement processes, with resulting adverse impacts;

+ Audit and interrogate urban policy documents across various municipalities;

+ Locate public engagement and urban policy within a reciprocal, ongoing, community engagement paradigm;

+ Research and develop case studies as a way of contributing to the codification of Black place-based wisdom and professional expertise.

The course, and this related publication, are informed by my practice spanning 25+ cities (including numerous cities with Black-majority neighbourhoods) and the policy advocacy co-led alongside my esteemed Black urbanist colleagues following Floyd's public execution. Created in collaboration with students and scholars in York University's Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, they highlight engagement practice and policy approaches for addressing spatialized anti-Blackness in cities across North America. This work draws on the seminal scholarship and ancestral example of W.E.B. Du Bois, a foremost scholar and civil rights activist, who was commissioned to conduct a sociological case study of Philadelphia's Seventh Ward in an attempt to understand what was then referred to as the "Negro problem."

Du Bois, who in 1895 was the first African American to earn a doctorate degree from Harvard University, moved into the district and personally went door to door distributing a survey pertaining to health, occupation, and family life. He also mapped every residential household, local amenity, and business. Although this study took place outside the formal bounds of urbanism, its findings related to housing, mobility, and community safety highlighted clear linkages between the state's policies and urban inequities, while seeding Black geographies scholarship. Building on these ancestral and intellectual lines of inquiry, this book, *Engaging Black People and Power* seeks to both amplify the exceptional work of Black urbanists and provide a tangible resource that can help us transform recent and long-standing conversation toward action. While I revere Du Bois' thought leadership, given this contemporary era and my refusal to pathologize Black communities, I reframed the idea of "understanding the Negro problem," to respectfully engaging with Black people and power.

IT'S TIME TO CENTRE BLACK PLACE-BASED EXPERTISE AND WISDOM.

The course case studies submitted as final assignments by the graduate students served as a starting point for this publication. I am proud of their genuine commitment to the process and the quality of work submitted. Case studies have been significantly reduced by 40-60% in most instances by myself and Professor Anders Sandberg, my beloved former academic advisor and experiential learning innovator. I wrote additional content and conducted follow-up interviews, being mindful to preserve core ideas emanating from conversations between the students and Black urbanists. Additionally, most of the policy notes at the end of the case studies were summarized using the original student text by Professor Luisa Sotomayor.

These combined efforts have resulted in 10 co-authored case studies, unpacking topics such as: reclaiming neighbourhoods through local development, preserving Black cultural artifacts during park redevelopment and storytelling for equitable development. I also authored a featured case study highlighting the work of Anthony Taylor (Minneapolis-based Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commissioner and cycling advocate) who has led numerous place-making projects in his community, including the site where George Floyd was murdered. A policy expert round table was convened to answer the question, "How can we use a racial justice lens to address anti-Blackness within the context of urban policy-making?" and we've included a summary of their responses. You will also glean crucial lessons from New York City Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, who is profiled for his incomparable professional contributions and kindness, and we conclude with a list of co-authored recommendations.

This publication has been created during a year of unspeakable personal losses. Weeks prior to teaching the course, a pregnant friend and her late-term baby unexpectedly died. Days later, a young man with whom I worked on a Confederate monument site transformation project in the southern U.S. drowned. Recently, Darryl Gaston, a dear friend and Black urbanist featured in this publication, also passed away suddenly. He'd buried an aunt and brother within the same week in December 2020 while co-leading a project to mitigate the digital divide in Charlotte, North Carolina. He had also been supporting my students with his case study.

These losses along with the public execution of George Floyd and so many other Black lives on both sides of the border have deepened my conviction to disrupt status-quo urbanism. While equitable urban policy-making is integrated in most of my placemaking projects, I am even more determined not to contribute to the design and development of public spaces

fated to become sites of psychological and physical violence. As we tilt our heads upwards to the promise of a new vaccine and building back better, we must also keep the lessons literally learned atop breathless Black bodies at the forefront of our collective consciousness. We must resist exhaustion and the temptation to revert back into comfortable conversations and practice approaches; because, doing so would constitute complicity. So, despite considerable personal grief and practice demands, I am sounding a clarion call for urbanism practitioners, policy-makers and those in its sphere of influence to use their professional expertise and privilege to unequivocally expose, denounce, and redress the anti-Black racism entrenched in the very foundation of cities.

Jay Pitter

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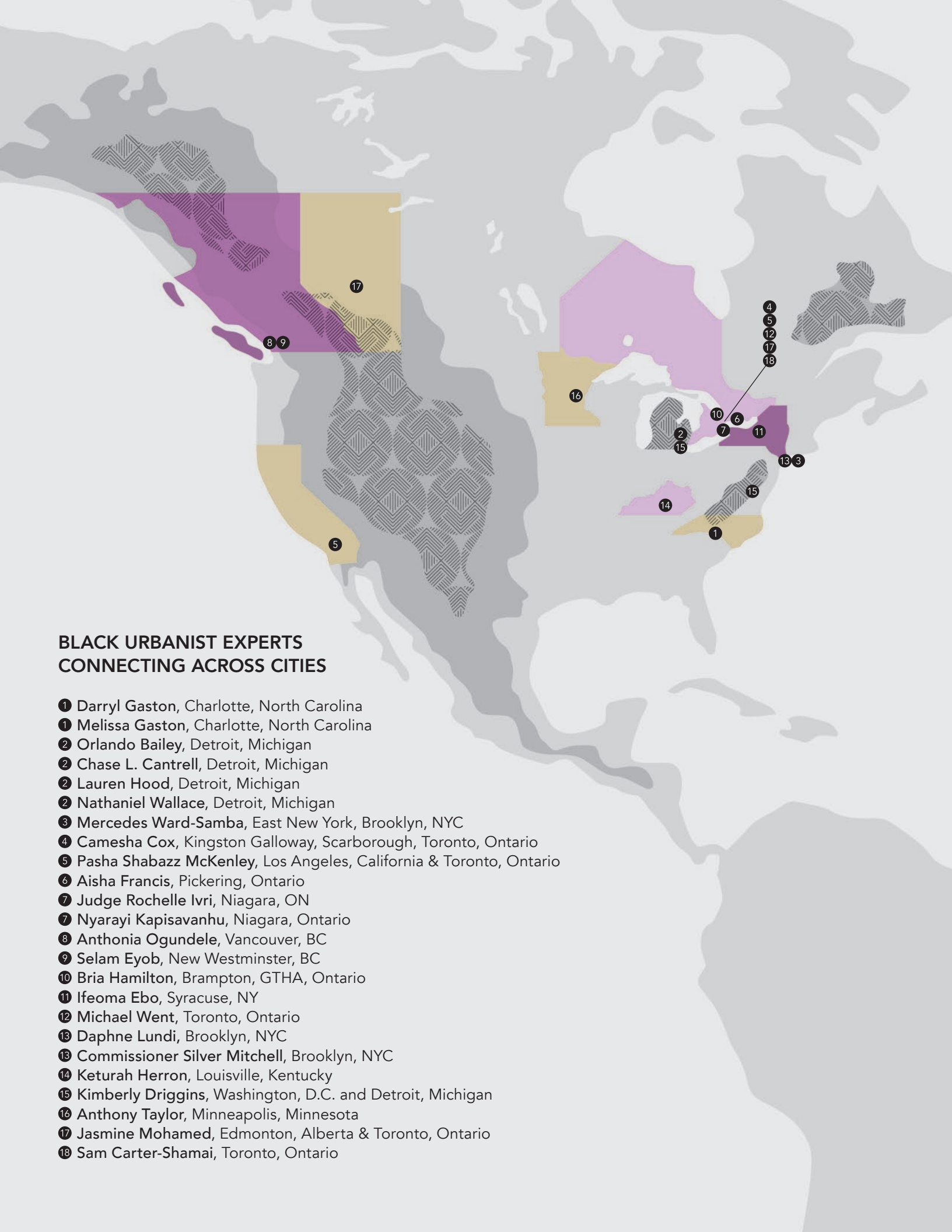
BLACK URBANIST EXPERTS
CONNECTING ACROSS CITIES

❶ **Darryl Gaston**, Charlotte, North Carolina

❶ **Melissa Gaston**, Charlotte, North Carolina

❷ **Orlando Bailey**, Detroit, Michigan

❷ **Chase L. Cantrell**, Detroit, Michigan

❷ **Lauren Hood**, Detroit, Michigan

❷ **Nathaniel Wallace**, Detroit, Michigan

❸ **Mercedes Ward-Samba**, East New York, Brooklyn, NYC

❹ **Camesha Cox**, Kingston Galloway, Scarborough, Toronto, Ontario

❺ **Pasha Shabazz McKenley**, Los Angeles, California & Toronto, Ontario

❻ **Aisha Francis**, Pickering, Ontario

❼ **Judge Rochelle Ivri**, Niagara, ON

❼ **Nyarayi Kapisavanhu**, Niagara, Ontario

❽ **Anthonia Ogundele**, Vancouver, BC

❾ **Selam Eyob**, New Westminster, BC

❿ **Bria Hamilton**, Brampton, GTHA, Ontario

⓫ **Ifeoma Ebo**, Syracuse, NY

⓬ **Michael Went**, Toronto, Ontario

⓭ **Daphne Lundi**, Brooklyn, NYC

⓭ **Commissioner Silver Mitchell**, Brooklyn, NYC

⓮ **Keturah Herron**, Louisville, Kentucky

⓯ **Kimberly Driggins**, Washington, D.C. and Detroit, Michigan

⓰ **Anthony Taylor**, Minneapolis, Minnesota

⓱ **Jasmine Mohamed**, Edmonton, Alberta & Toronto, Ontario

⓲ **Sam Carter-Shamai**, Toronto, Ontario

JAY PITTER IN CONVERSATION WITH ANTHONY TAYLOR

BY JAY PITTER

When asked to provide a professional title for this featured case study, Anthony Taylor pauses, upturns and parts his lips without words, and eventually settles on, "I'm an accidental advocate." His humility and open smile transcend the drone of my perpetually overheated laptop burdened by hundreds of open tabs and new apps enabling me to stay connected with urbanism leaders. Although he is a new friend and colleague, I know there is nothing accidental about Anthony Taylor.

Originally trained as an engineer, Taylor is one of the foremost cycling equity advocates in Minneapolis, and the U.S. more broadly. He is a founding member of the Major Taylor Bicycling Club of Minnesota, the Vice President of the National Brotherhood of Cyclists and he co-founded the Minneapolis Slow Roll based on the Detroit model, which is a movement to meaningfully connect Black people to their communities by bike. He is also a Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commissioner.

I learned about Taylor and his equitable placemaking practice through a mutual friend, a white woman whose teenaged son took to the streets alongside local residents expressing righteous outrage following the public execution of George Floyd. She'd called to check up on me and to provide an update on the unprecedented racial reckoning happening in the city. She confessed to being nervous when her son went out at night to document the uprising, always asking for protestor consent. She also relayed the harmonious community care and clean up efforts between local residents of all races omitted from inflammatory and divisive media headlines. Before hanging up she said, "Hey Jay, there's an urbanist here who fiercely challenges while embracing joy and community building like you, would you like to meet him?" Anthony Taylor and I have been in deep conversation ever since.

We talked about the George Floyd tragedy, which again, took place at East 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, a site where he has engaged communities and co-led placemaking initiatives for many years. The excerpt of one of a series of our recent conversations briefly touches on the Floyd tragedy and then focuses on Taylor's cycling equity community engagement approaches.

JAY: First, I'm sorry for the trauma that's occurred on the streets of Minneapolis, a trauma I feel as a placemaker who has had the privilege of co-leading public space design and policy initiatives in collaboration with numerous Black American communities—a trauma I feel as a Black woman descended from enslaved Africans who understands that plantation estate boundaries have divided us across countries and cities for far too long. Given that our ancestors were strategically displaced from their lands and their tribes, the colonial boundaries of the map represent our continued captivity. I feel your city's pain acutely.

ANTHONY: Thanks for saying that Jay and recognizing our shared struggle, pain and identity. Our community has come together in a really powerful way to process this recent and long-standing collective trauma that has been a fundamental reality of Black people. Being constantly aware of the multiple ways racism can make us vulnerable in public spaces like streets, parks and campsites is central to our survival. And the sad thing is many of us avoid activities that are enjoyable and good for us as a way of surviving. George Floyd was murdered in a bike lane.

Pause

JAY: Yeah, I'm conflicted by the truth of what you're saying especially as a passionate active and public transportation advocate, an avid hiker, and an adult new to cycling. This is a really complex truth for us as Black folks who deeply appreciate the benefits of navigating our cities

"When Major Taylor had won races in the U.S., oftentimes, the band would play a racist tune, such as "Dixie." Well, Major Taylor went to Montreal. He competed in the world championships, and he won the world championship. And when he did that, for the first time in his career, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was played for him. And he said at that time that when he heard "The Star-Spangled Banner" played in Canada, he had never felt more proud to be an American. So it's a sad commentary that he had to go to Canada to hear that. But for him, it tells you he was proud to be an American, proud to be a black American, but was very distressed that he had to go to Canada to hear his own national anthem."

Davies, D. (2019). Uncovering the story of cyclist Major Taylor, Americas first Black Sports Star. *Fresh Air,* Transcript, National Public Radio, June 18. Retrieved March 18, 2021, from https://www.npr.org/2019/06/18/733690233/uncovering-the-story-of-cyclist-major-taylor-americas-1st-black-sports-star

and adjacent landscapes in ways that are more connected to the land and each other. I think so many of us Black urbanists and placemakers are wrestling with the paradox of the reality of advocating for active transportation infrastructure while being aware of the ways urban policies related to public space enforcement and video surveillance provokes violence against Black bodies. How do you reconcile this in your cycling advocacy work?

ANTHONY: Agreed. Well first, I don't approach Black communities focused on the bike. Don't get me wrong, we obviously talk about the bike but we lead with person-centred language. When we situate the person first, we are able to design a bike ride that responds to what people need to have a positive emotional and physical experience. So, we're able to address these important issues related to physical safety and surveillance that you've raised.

I was a co-founder of the Major Taylor Bicycling Club of Minnesota many years ago. As a bit of background, Major Taylor was the first African American professional cycling hero. But he wasn't properly recognized here; he had to be victorious in Canada to receive a semblance of the respect he deserved. Anyways, the cycling club was founded in his name and it was great, still is great, but early on I found we weren't attracting new members. The club wasn't growing because spandex scares many people, Black or otherwise.

JAY: Right. So how did you push past both general and culturally specific barriers to cycling?

ANTHONY: After speaking with a couple of cycling advocates involved in Detroit's Slow Roll, our community joined the movement. We are always sure to credit Detroiters for this approach and over the years my own cycling advocacy and approaches have evolved into a form of placemaking that is specific to our Black, brown communities and other communities in Minneapolis. And one of the things that supported my growth in this work was to stop leading with infrastructure or the bike. I began by talking about community safety, connectivity and joy because these are things that Black people yearn for…things we've been denied.

JAY: Yes, I love the way we both centre joy in our practice.

ANTHONY: Me too, you know we both want to contribute to cities that are equitable and motion creates emotion. There's so much joy to be to seized and shared within our communities.

JAY: Absolutely. What are some of the ways you issue this invitation to move in ways that cultivate personal and community joy?

ANTHONY: Well, we always co-lead rides with a resident from the neighbourhood where we'll be riding. And we keep our messages focused on the values and positive outcomes of riding a bike versus focusing on the bike itself so we don't place an emphasis on details about the route or number of miles covered. We let people know that bikes will be provided to individuals who don't own one but other than that we communicate the opportunity for fellowship and community building.

JAY: Amazing, I completely relate to your approach and know that achieving outcomes like fellowship and community building within a single or even series of engagements requires intentionality and intimacy. How do you create the environment for this?

ANTHONY: We reclaim parking lots and set up tents. We welcome people of all identities. We place a significant emphasis on families because Black women caregivers are motivated to make positive changes if we can clearly demonstrate how it will benefit their children. Black women play an integral leadership role in our program and we prioritize these women for bike giveaways. Also, when individuals and families show up for a Slow Roll they are warmly greeted by a group of caring community members and a DJ playing upbeat music. We help people without bikes or experience riding a bike to get properly fitted and comfortable. And these individuals can be assured that there will no pressure to keep pace because we always have volunteers riding in the back of the group ensuring that no one is left behind.

We stop frequently and chat with local business owners who share their experiences in the neighborhood or a mural artist who reveals the backstory of their public artwork. Our rides have themes such as Urban Garden Tour Slow Roll and Black Business Slow Roll. Once we hosted a Grown Folks Roll and we got 70 people out on a Friday night on an eight-stop urban brewery tour sampling beer and enjoying burgers. The themes really help to connect people with shared interests, which they get to explore together on bikes.

JAY: This is so holistic and thoughtful. How are you able to facilitate such a rich experience every single ride?

ANTHONY: We're fortunate to have residents and local partners eager to support. An interesting thing about our partnerships is that we don't work with cycling or active transportation partners. We partner with community organizations who have something essential to offer participants in addition to the cycling experience. We've partnered with organizations such as Juxtaposition Arts, North Point Health and Youth Farm. These partnerships enable us to provide added value to participants such as providing diabetes healthy living information and opportunities to explore urban gardening. Our partners are interested in connecting with the Black communities we engage, feeling they have something valuable to offer, so there's an inherent reciprocity.

JAY: Your community engagement approaches are clearly steeped in equity, joy, reciprocity and deep regard for local leadership. These values are paramount within and beyond Black communities. I'm so inspired by your practice and I'm wondering what the most inspirational moment in your cycling equity advocacy work has been thus far?

ANTHONY: Shortly after George Floyd's murder we hosted a Black only bike ride. There were 300 of us, all in masks. We paused at the park for a moment of silence and we also stopped at the Say Their Names Cemetery installation, where Black people who've lost their lives to police brutality are honoured. This ride was an expression of our collective grief and the beginning of our collective healing.

Featured Black Urbanist
Chase Cantrell

Title
Executive Director,
Building Community Value

Location
Detroit, Michigan

Case Study Topic
Reclaiming Neighbourhoods
Through Local Development

Student Co-Authors
Alix Aylen & Courtney den Elzen

BACKGROUND

Chase L. Cantrell is the executive director of Building Community Value (BCV), a non-profit *"dedicated to implementing and facilitating real estate development projects in underserved Detroit neighbourhoods"* (BCV, 2020). BCV engages with Black residents in Detroit primarily through the Better Buildings, Better Blocks program. The biannual, six-week training program equips participants with the practical skills and knowledge required to develop their own neighbourhood-based residential and commercial development projects. Since its inception in 2015, the program has expanded across Detroit's seven districts. In addition to regional representation, participants reflect the city's demographics—80% of the participants are African American, 10% Latinx, and 10% other. The program also boasts gender parity, and most participants are in their 30s and 40s, with varying levels of renovation and development experience.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Detroit was once home to the largest number of Black homeowners in the United States. However, the rate of Black home-ownership in the city has plummeted since the Great Recession of 2007-09 and its related mortgage crisis (Michigan Chronicle, 2020). Black homeowners, many of whom were overtaxed for decades, lost their homes to foreclosure, resulting in the displacement of residents and the creation of neighbourhood blight. Although housing and land prices are relatively low, most banks in Detroit are reluctant to underwrite development projects. Market-rate rents are often not enough to pay for the skyrocketing construction costs in the city, so again, most banks are not willing to take on the risk. Consequently, over half of the developers in the city use their own capital to fund their projects. This has created an environment in which wealthy white speculators are buying up property across neighbourhoods, almost single-handedly reshaping the city whilst diminishing Detroit's iconic Black cultural heritage and landscape.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

Building Community Value (BCV) was established in response to this crisis, with the goal of *"building the capacity of a robust group of engaged Detroit residents and community development organizations who understand the opportunities for real estate development in Detroit neighbourhoods, while also possessing the knowledge and tools necessary to complete development projects"* (BCV, 2020). Centring the experiences of Black people, BCV's programs strive to engage multiple Black demographics from across the city, recognizing that Black populations are not a monolith.

1. Equitable Participant Selection

Selecting participants is BCV's first opportunity to ensure multiple Black demographic groups across the city are included. With limited space in each cohort, the organization has established an equitable selection process that includes the following:

+ Amplifying the program through a variety of networks to solicit a diverse range of applications.
+ Asking "Who is part of the selection committee?" The selection committee's composition directly correlates with the selected applicant group.
+ Dividing and assessing the applicant pool by district to ensure broad geographic representation.
+ Establishing gender balance within the selected applicant group.
+ Prioritizing Black and brown applicants most adversely impacted by the recession and mortgage crisis.

2. Culturally Reflective Resources and Experts

Initially, BCV was unable to find a real estate development textbook geared toward small-scale developers and their areas of interest such as affordable housing and community-led initiatives. So, they designed their own textbook. This customized resource has allowed BCV to deliver culturally and geographically responsive real estate lessons. All development experts brought into the class are predominantly Black: developers, bankers, and land bank professionals. For BCV, representation matters. It significantly enhances the quality of experiences and outcomes for all people.

In education, for instance, when Black students are matched with Black teachers, their academic performance and the likelihood of them graduating high school and attending a four-year college program increase significantly (Gershenson et al., 2017). This dynamic applies across

age, class, and other contexts. Similarly, being exposed to Black real estate development professionals helps BCV participants realize, as Cantrell says, "oh, this is possible for me."

3. Developing Tangible Projects

When engaging Black people and other equity-seeking groups, it is imperative to focus on tangible projects that have a material, positive impact on their lives. At BCV, participants come to the class with their own specific vision and are taught key development concepts and skills that apply to their individual projects. This strengthens the learning process while keeping participants wholly engaged. The program culminates with a presentation and an opportunity to win funding toward their projects.

NOTABLE MOMENT

When former Detroiter Kameka Grady returned to her home city with her husband, the pair had no idea that her childhood home was vacant. Prompted by participating in the Better Buildings, Better Blocks program, they located her 100-year-old childhood house—a special place where Grady fondly recalls learning to ride her bike in the driveway and experiencing family milestones. Although the couple had some experience with single-family home renovations, participating in the program deepened their knowledge and enabled them to restore this special property to the point it is now ready for another family to make memories in.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The BCV program has engaged over 100 participants. In any given cohort, 60%-75% of participants complete their final development project proposals, and a quarter implement those projects. What is most impactful to Cantrell is that all participants leave the program with real estate development knowledge, which they use to hold city council accountable and co-shape many local initiatives beyond their projects. In addition, the organization recently purchased a half-acre of vacant land in front of Michigan Central Station, often characterized as a symbol of Detroit's decline. They will work closely with the local community to co-shape all aspects of this development.

LESSON STATEMENT

Black people are not a monolith; engagement approaches must be as diverse as the Black community itself.

POLICY NOTE

Black Americans were long systematically excluded from property ownership, affecting Black families' capacity to create generational wealth in the U.S. (Gross, 2017). There are countless examples of policies and regulations that were set up in the early 20th century to keep Black people from property ownership that still have lasting effects, including redlining, property tax assessments benefiting white neighbourhoods, racial-exclusion clauses prohibiting "non-Caucasians" from ownership, and practices in the National Association of Realtors' Codes of Ethics and Practices that restricted realtors from selling homes in white neighbourhoods to Black families (Chatman, 2020). To redress this, the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA) was founded in 2010 as a quasi-public authority that owns approximately 25% of Detroit's residential properties (Perkins, 2020). DLBA offers numerous incentives and programs, contributing to change across all levels. Still, much work remains to be done in terms of lowering barriers to program participation and implementing an equitable development policy at the municipality level in Detroit.

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Featured Black Urbanist
Mercedes Ward-Samba

Title
Landscape Architect,
New York City Department
of Parks and Recreation

Location
New York, New York

Case Study Topic
Preserving Black Cultural Artifacts

Student Co-Authors
Jasmine Mohamed &
Matthew Willoughby

BACKGROUND

Mercedes Ward-Samba is a landscape architect with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. She is the lead designer and project manager of the Lion's Pride Playground redesign project in the east New York neighbourhood of Brooklyn. The immigrant-rich area is populated by 29,000 residents, over 72% of whom identify as Black, primarily from Jamaican, Afro-Dominican, and Trinidadian and Tobagonian descent (NYC Planning, 2018). This concentration of Black people is significantly higher than the rest of the city, which is 22% Black (NYC Planning, 2018).

The neighbourhood is rich in both culture and history, but it is neglected. Its median household income is $33,685, and the unemployment rate is nearly double that of New York City. Such inequities heighten the stakes of urban design projects, something that was top of mind for Ward-Samba when she encountered an abandoned steel pan drum, an instrument and cultural artifact associated with the politics and performance of Caribbean festivals. Instead of discarding it, she made it a central part in the redesign of Lion's Pride Playground.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Urban planners typically use design frameworks that often exclude local histories and culturally significant artifacts. Culturally informed urban strategies counteract erasure by addressing this gap in cultural heritage management in redevelopment projects. According to UNESCO's (2016) Global Report "Culture: Urban Future," a culture-based approach to urban redevelopment projects is predicated on the following: people-centred cities are culture-centred spaces; place-based urban planning incorporates local history and culture; and integrated policies that employ culture as a tool for sustainability and resilience. Ward-Samba applies these principles through a "planning from the margins" approach, creating community benefit by centring the needs and unique histories of equity-seeking groups (Satterthwaite, 2017).

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

Learning the history of a place leads to radical avenues for remembrance and prompts for community-centred planning. Propelled by the community's vision for the park and her own belief that "the cultural geography embedded in public spaces should be honoured and protected," Ward-Samba undertook informal research and preservation interventions often overlooked in public engagement processes.

1. Cultural Artifact Identification

During a site visit to Lion's Pride Playground in January 2018, Ward-Samba spotted what appeared to be a steel pan drum, with a lion's head affixed to it, installed in the middle of the playground. As an African American with deep ties to the Caribbean, she immediately understood the cultural and historical significance of this installation. The steel pan drum, which originated in Trinidad and Tobago, was created by enslaved workers prohibited from participating in the carnival at the time.

Discarded oil drums were impeccably cleaned and expertly hammered down to create pitch-perfect musical notes. The ruling colonials banned these early steel pan drums before they rose to prominence in the 1950s. Today, drum makers use high-quality steel to construct the instruments.

Upon closer inspection of the Lion's Pride Playground steel pan drum, Ward-Samba noted severe rusting and water damage, along with remnants of spray paint. She wasn't sure if the drum could be salvaged but brought it to the attention of her supervisor. She also initiated research to uncover its story and verify whether there was precedent for restoring similar cultural artifacts. Her research entailed searching the archives for early site drawings and reviewing previous site contracts from the 1960s to 1992. Through these searches, Ward-Samba learned the metal used to construct the drum was provided by a supplier over two decades ago. She contacted the supplier, still active and based in New Rochelle, to learn more about the drum's origins and about Learie Harrigan, the artist who constructed it. She then featured the drum in the inventory-and-analysis presentation at a public engagement meeting.

When the community was asked about the drum, they unanimously supported its restoration. Many residents recalled its installation in the 1990s, back when children played at the handball wall, a half-acre section of the park now closed off.

2. Symbolic Significance

While the steel pan drum is most associated with Black people from Trinidad and Tobago, there is considerable cultural pollination across Black communities in the neighbourhood. The drum holds great significance across Black cultures and geographies. The symbolism of the lion, represented on the drum and in the name of the park, also holds culturally specific meanings for many Black people.

The name of the park, Lion's Pride Playground, evokes the animal's characteristics. In Rastafarianism, "the image of the African lion is representative of the alternative Rasta ideal. The lion is symbolic of a return to Africa and a return to Black originality, Black creativity, and to the ideals of 'Ever Living Life'" (Forsythe, 1980, p. 73). In other Caribbean cultures, the lion is seen as the ruler of the jungle, exuding authority, vigour, quick wit, and pride (Jaffe, 2008). Similarly, the lion image displayed on the Lion's Pride steel pan drum reflects local power and pride.

3. Finding the Original Artist and Making Plans for Restoration

Ward-Samba set out in search of the artist, Learie Harrigan, even though she was told he may have passed away. Her Google searches turned up empty, so she began reaching out to residents through Facebook neighbourhood groups. A resident responded, indicating that Harrigan was indeed alive. When she called the number she'd been provided, she learned he was spending time in Trinidad. A second contact number led to a brief conversation in which Harrigan expressed his interest in participating in the restoration of the drum he'd lovingly constructed over 20 years ago.

Ward-Samba and her team explored the following considerations for the restoration of this important cultural artifact: budgeting money for the artist and restoration process; updating the contractor's scope of work to include careful removal instructions; collaborating with two professional specification writers to outline responsibilities, liabilities, and reconstruction; and identifying safe storage for the drum when the project resumes post-pandemic.

NOTABLE MOMENT

Ward-Samba went to great lengths to find Learie Harrigan, the artist behind the Lion's Pride Playground steel pan drum. It was especially gratifying for her to locate him, decades after the drum's installation, with the help of generous community members.

IMPACT STATEMENT

Through diligent research and perseverance, a cultural artifact with multiple heritage and cultural meanings will be preserved and restored in the next iteration of the park's redesign.

LESSON STATEMENT

The cultural geography embedded in public spaces should be explored, honoured, and protected.

POLICY NOTE

The cultural heritage of a neighbourhood can be honoured and preserved through artifacts. In recent years, policies related to artifacts' restoration and preservation have been in the forefront of conversations pertaining to restitution. The French government has approved a restitution plan for over 70,000 African treasures, artifacts, and cultural items that will eventually be returned to African nations (Cassen, 2019). In Canada, museums have taken steps to give back artifacts to Indigenous communities (Owen, 2020). Restoring cultural artifacts in their rightful, original locations allows people to view them without a colonial perspective. These artifact policies relate to the Lion's Pride Playground steel pan drum in that its restoration allows visitors of all races to celebrate the cultural and historical significance of the installation.

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Featured Black Urbanists
Melissa Gaston and
Darryl Gaston

Title
Founders, North End
Community Coalition

Location
Charlotte, North Carolina

Case Study Topic
Bridging the Digital Divide

Student Co-Authors
Enxhi Daci & Eleonora Gagliardi

BACKGROUND

Darryl and Melissa Gaston, a husband-and-wife duo lovingly referred to as "Team Gaston," are founders of the North End Community Coalition (the Coalition), a collaborative partnership of eight neighbourhoods just north of uptown Charlotte, North Carolina. Their program, Bridging the Digital Divide, addresses inequities in access to and use of information technologies related to income, class, race, ethnicity, gender, and place. These inequities, which worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, result from an array of issues, such as the physical infrastructure of bandwidth networks and the lack of financial resources to access expensive digital devices and services.

Team Gaston initiated the Wi-Fi Lending Library program after encountering a mother who had taken her two children to a fast-food restaurant to do homework. The family, like so many other community members, did not have access to internet service at home. The Gastons learned that in addition to a lack of in-home internet services, many residents lack basic internet navigation skills and do not own personal digital devices. To help overcome these barriers, the program provides residents with access to Wi-Fi hotspots, lends out laptops, and facilitates internet workshops for beginners. Residents who successfully complete the seven-week program receive

a free laptop. The program serves 5,000-6,000 households that are part of eight communities within Charlotte's inner city: Lockwood, Graham Heights, Druid Hills, John Taylor Williams, Brightwalk, Genesis Park, Oaklawn, and Green Ville. Over 85.2% of the residents identify as Black or African American, with an average age of 35 and an annual household income of $26,693 (Bradley, 2017).

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

In 2019, Charlotte, one of the fastest growing cities in the United States, announced a three-year digital alliance and smart city initiative with Microsoft. Yet, as of this writing, the communities served by the coalition still do not have equitable access to the internet, reflecting a pattern experienced by historically marginalized, Black communities across the country. The necessary hardware and expenses required to connect with bandwidth networks, both through public infrastructure and in individual households, are often beyond the reach of these communities. In addition, many community members lack the digital literacy to access and interact with the digital world. This is a significant impediment because digital access and literacy play an integral role in accessing educational programs, employment opportunities, housing, and life-saving public health information.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

The North End Community Coalition's Wi-Fi Lending Library program bridges the gap by educating and connecting community members with varying levels of digital literacy.

1. Learning the Ins and Outs of Technology and Online Platforms

Most people assume everyone knows how to use the internet, but unfortunately, this is not the case with many residents across North American cities, including Charlotte. As Melissa Gaston explains, "We are an area that has a great digital divide; because of their income, a lot of our residents are unable to navigate digital devices and the internet itself." To address this issue, the coalition teaches the fundamentals of internet access and supports residents in establishing social media, personal email, and Zoom accounts. They also teach participants how to use apps and navigate websites for employment, grocery delivery services, and COVID-19 health information.

Experts have found that digital literacy interventions are heavily impacted by political and regulatory factors. Kaba & Said (2014) argue it is the responsibility of governments to promote and provide information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructures, which are essential services.

2. Connecting the Unconnected

The North End Community Coalition utilizes traditional, offline engagement approaches to reach digitally unconnected community members on a personal level. They send out post-cards to households across the eight communities, use neighbourhood phone directories to call people, and post flyers in high-foot-traffic areas like grocery stores and community centres. The coalition also leads door-knocking campaigns to apprise residents of the initiative, making sure to comply with physical distancing protocols while doing so.

In addition to engaging local residents, the coalition forges partnerships with the local government and community agencies to establish free public Wi-Fi hotspots. They strategically identify locations that can serve the greatest number of individuals and families. For example, five public housing communities were selected as Wi-Fi hotspots, immediately extending coverage to numerous households.

NOTABLE MOMENT

Through the North End Community Coalition, a formerly isolated elder living in a seniors'

building is now able to connect with her family through Zoom and attend virtual church services. Rather than risking a trip to a crowded market during the pandemic, she is now able to order groceries online and receive them at her door. Being connected to Wi-Fi service, having a digital device, and knowing how to use it have immensely restored her quality of life during an especially difficult time.

IMPACT STATEMENT

In collaboration with the local government and partners, the North End Community Coalition established 13 free Wi-Fi hotspots to serve residents across numerous neighbourhoods. It has also acquired 50 iPads with prepaid internet access for two years and other digital devices that community members can borrow for three weeks at a time, and longer if necessary. This critical COVID-19 intervention connected individuals who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and urban inequities to life-saving information, social networks, and hope.

LESSON STATEMENT

The notion that residents who are older or low-income are uninterested in, or incapable of, learning digital technologies is a fallacy. We can overcome this stereotype, and the digital divide overall, by taking the time to meet people where they are, offering education, and providing resources to support individual, digital-learning goals.

POLICY NOTE

Governments have a responsibility to ensure that all people have access to the internet, an essential right and service (Ben-Hassine, n.d.). The Cities Coalition for Digital Rights, a United Nations-supported network of 50 cities worldwide, promotes and upholds digital rights for all. While many major cities have joined this initiative—including Toronto, Amsterdam, and New York—there are still a significant number of American cities that have yet to do so, including Charlotte. In the United States, the National Broadband Plan, launched in 2010, has led some states such as New York to implement Broadband for All initiatives (New York State, 2020). New York City has developed an Internet Master Plan to provide equitable access through investment in infrastructure across its five boroughs (New York City, Mayor's Office of the Chief of Technology, 2020). Canada's Broadband Fund similarly provides funding to projects such as Toronto with Connected Communities/Smart City TO (NCSL, 2020).

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Featured Black Urbanist
Lauren Hood

Title
AfroUrbanist, Community Developer, and Chair of the Detroit Planning Commission

Location
Detroit, Michigan

Case Study Topic
Storytelling for Equitable Development

Student Co-Authors
Selam Eyob & Sean Karmali

BACKGROUND

Lauren Hood is the chair of Detroit's Planning Commission and a community development professional whose practice values are grounded in AfroUrbanism—an urban planning approach that considers the lived experiences, cultures, and aspirations of Black people (Stateside Staff, 2020). She leads Deep Dive Detroit, a consultancy specializing in community engagement, equitable development, and social justice. As a multidisciplinary independent practitioner, Hood has worked on a wide array of urbanism projects, including the Wayne State Master Plan, East Warren Cadieux Strategic Neighborhood Plan, and Ann Arbor Mobility Study. Her practice seeks to honour Detroit's rich Black history, and she has coined the term "community Ph.D." to articulate her respect for local knowledge.

Much of this knowledge is shared through storytelling. As a native Detroiter who grew up hearing stories of white flight and the 1967 Uprising—a series of bloody confrontations between Black Detroiters and law enforcement—Hood understands how place-based stories profoundly shape the way urban dwellers feel about themselves and their cities. Within the context of redevelopment and city-building more broadly, place-based storytelling is a powerful communicative mode for redressing past harms, inviting both long-time and new residents to respectfully co-create a shared vision for their city. This approach and aspiration are especially urgent for cities like Detroit undergoing unprecedented development.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Detroit's changing landscape, both cultural and spatial, is often referred to as the city's "comeback story." Most of this narrative is set in the downtown core and focused on so-called "desirable residents", who can bolster the economy. While the city is writing its new chapter in the name of economic recovery, the intangible cultural heritage—oral stories, lived experiences, roadside rituals, and festivities—of Black Detroiters is going unheard.

Storytelling has always been a central aspect of Black resistance. For enslaved Africans, it was "a way to commit to memory the language, sights, sounds, smells, and textures of their homeland, and acted as a means of keeping in touch with friends and family, developing new kinships, sharing information across plantations, learning more about their new environment, and perfecting language skills" (Banks-Wallace, 2002, p. 413). Much like their enslaved and violently displaced ancestors, Black Detroiters are fighting to maintain place-based memory,

cultural practices, and placemaking wisdom through oral storytelling. This unyielding pattern of resistance, however, both in terms of conversations and initiatives, has taken its toll on them. Being forced to perpetually resist discriminatory place-based practices and policies detracts from being able to imagine new possibilities for neighbourhoods and the wider city.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

When a municipality or developer is planning a community engagement process, they must consider the relationship between place, communication, and psychological safety. Selecting the right spaces makes it possible to share stories and strengthen local bonds (Mesch and Manor, 1998, p. 505). Hood's practice is aligned with this important scholarship. As a highly trained community development professional, Hood employs multiple community engagement approaches, including storytelling.

Hood recognizes the home as a sacred and important site of refuge. Acknowledging that this space can be unsafe, the home is still one's personal location within social life (Stedman, 2002, p. 563) and is often a space where a wider range of emotions are freely expressed. It has distinct historical importance due to anti-Black urbanism policies like redlining, segregated public amenities, and police profiling, which continue to restrict Black peoples' public lives. Black residents have held church services, after-hours parties, and community organizing meetings around kitchen tables and in basements. Hood engages residents in their homes where they are comfortable, can more readily connect, and are on more equal footing. During these conversations, residents often expressed gratitude for having had space to express criticism or vulnerabilities they would not have otherwise shared in the presence of the municipal and institutional leaders who wield power over their lives.

She also listens to resident stories in unconventional locations like vacant lots and abandoned storefronts that have proliferated since Detroit's bankruptcy. To many outsiders, these sites signal a lack of safety or neglect. To many Black Detroiters, these vacant lots have evolved into community gathering spots for cultural activities, live music, and local markets. Hood, and many other residents, view these spaces as potential sites for community animation. She repurposes them by inviting residents to imagine future uses.

Once, while leading her Speak Easy series—events designed to create a comfortable space for residents to share their lived experiences, stories, and insights with each other and institutional leaders—a local resident suggested Hood include youth. She happily complied and organized a convening where two high school seniors shared how their experiences of not being heard by institutional leaders diminished their self-worth and contributed

to their feelings of depression. When the institutional leaders in the room asked what it was they wanted, the youth replied, "hope." A pause fell over the room. They could have asked for a park or recreational space but instead, rooted in the authenticity of their own stories, the young people asked for the one thing institutions often take away from Black communities.

Outside of formal community engagements, Hood welcomes opportunities to organically exchange stories with residents. She once asked a local handyman and informal vendor if she could spend the day with him in the vacant parking lot where he sold small flea-market items such as bookcases, used clothing, and the odd record player. He agreed, and so she purchased groceries for a barbeque and pulled up a table alongside his. She then redirected all of her meetings to their adjoining tables. The handyman grilled lunch for residents as organic, small-group storytelling circles emerged in the parking lot.

These and other storytelling interventions are imperative, because most community engagement conversations prioritize individuals who possess systemic power and knowledge of technical terminology. Stories are an effective way to counter this power imbalance. People who are historically marginalized tend to have powerful stories. Hood creates space for this narrative power to be expressed.

NOTABLE MOMENT

When the COVID-19 pandemic first emerged, Hood along with many other Black residents, witnessed the heightened rate at which their Black neighbours, friends, and family members were dying. She advocated a pause in planning processes so that Black people would have time to heal. The response she kept getting was, "Why do you keep talking about COVID-19?" She was finally heard when the story of George Floyd's murder travelled across the globe, igniting protests in numerous cities. This is what it took for many of her non-Black colleagues to explicitly acknowledge racism and alter the pace of planning processes.

IMPACT STATEMENT

As an independent consultant, Hood has worked with numerous organizations across 30 neighbourhoods, engaging 2,600 individuals. Additionally, she co-shapes important urbanism conversations around gentrification and the cultural integrity of Black neighbourhoods in Detroit. Hood is regularly featured in media and has received many fellowship awards, including the 2020 AIA Detroit Charles Blessing Award and the 2020 BMe Vanguard Fellowship.

LESSON STATEMENT

As a leader committed to changing community development norms and processes, Hood has faced considerable resistance. Her most significant lesson is trusting her instincts while advancing unconventional, authentic, and equitable approaches.

POLICY NOTE

Community development policy-making opens the door to storytelling because community development is intrinsically focused on dialogue (Westoby & Dowling, 2014, p. 4). Within the context of cities, this dialogue tends to be storied—people share their lived experiences about transit policy, public safety policy, and health policy (Sandercock, 2003, p. 26). However, urbanism policy and community engagement processes do not explicitly create space and time for stories to properly unfold. Stories are often cut short in contexts like public hearings, deputations, multiple choice online surveys, design charrettes, and public meetings. It stands to reason that the invisible force of urban policy drives incongruence and conflict, arresting dialogue—particularly deep, responsive, enriching, transformative, and challenging dialogue. This is especially concerning because scholars have made clear the linkages between story-telling and democratic urban policy-making:

"A better understanding of the work that story does, or can do, and how it does it, could produce more persuasive plans and policy documents. It could help us to analyze such documents. The creative use of or responsiveness to stories in planning processes can also serve many purposes, including widening the circle of democratic discourse, and shifting participants in such discourses out of their entrenched positions and into more receptive or open frames of mind" (Sandercock, 2003, p. 26).

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Featured Black Urbanist
Camesha Cox

Title
Founding Director,
The Reading Partnership

Location
Toronto, Ontario

Case Study Topic
Building Black Futures
Through Literacy

Student Co-Authors
Bianca Whiffen & Merve Kolcak

BACKGROUND

In 2010, Camesha Cox, an Ontario-certified teacher with a graduate degree, travelled to London, U.K., to lead a literacy program for high school students reading at a primary-school level. While there, she observed that due to large class sizes and distinct individual learning styles, students required support beyond the classroom. This realization was the genesis of The Reading Partnership (TRP), a non-profit Cox founded upon returning to Toronto. Much like the students she taught in London, young people in Cox's community were not realizing their full potential because they were not getting the additional help they needed. To address this issue, Cox's organization provides parents and caregivers with resources and tangible approaches to help teach their children how to read.

TRP is located in the Kingston-Galloway-Orton Park (KGO) neighbourhood in eastern Scarborough where Cox resides. As of 2016, T.O. Health Check (2019) states that Black people constitute 9% of Toronto's population, most of them residing outside of the downtown core in communities similar to KGO. Cox collaborates with fellow educators and community groups to support her hyper-local programming and advocacy efforts within the broader education sector.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Although Scarborough has a diverse population, Black students there are still subject to the systemic racism that pervades Toronto's education system. Statistics show that Black students in Toronto are four times more likely to be expelled from school than white students (Das Gupta et al., 2020). Black students also face racial inequity and violence in schools (O'Grady et al., 2010). Fewer than 70% of Black students within the region complete high school, and 43% do not pursue post-secondary education. Racism is embedded in the education system, and Black families need more support.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

TRP employs three public engagement interventions using an Afrocentric perspective, defined as "the philosophical viewpoint and study of global history of people of African descent" (Chawane, 2016). Afrocentrism is pan-Africanist and therefore considers all Black peoples' cultures, histories, and identities.

1. Grassroots Outreach and Marketing

Grassroots organizations "are constituent-driven and often use a bottom-up approach, which allows those affected by a problem or potential problem to be part of the solution" (Rowel et al., 2012, p. 126). Their engagement and marketing tactics tend to be cost-effective and responsive to the local context.

Cox and members of her organization approach Black families in unconventional spaces to build rapport and trust before encouraging them to join the program. She sparks conversations in spaces such as bus shelters, laundromats, grocery stores, and school parking lots. Cox also highlights how essential it is to develop marketing materials that portray the Black community's diverse languages, religions, and cultures. Doing so helps to build trust and allows Black parents and caregivers to see that this program is designed for them.

2. Customized Culturally Responsive Program Materials

Many early learning books and resources do not represent racialized communities. Academic researchers Ishizuka and Stephens (2019) critique Dr. Seuss, noting that his books inculcate the "dehumanizing and degrading of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)" (p. 1), reinforcing racial bias within children and youth. Recently, Hirchberg (2019) analyzed the 805 characters from the bestselling children's books in 2018 and found only 15% of them were BIPOC.

Cox believes families and children need to see themselves reflected in books. She has taken it upon herself to create and customize early learning books and resources for her program that reflect equity-seeking groups. "It is not only important for Black kids to see Black kids in books," Cox states. "It's equally important for all kids to see Black kids in books."

Consequently, TRP developed a series of books, "Tiny Tales," that reflects stories and characters from racialized communities. Each child who attends the program is provided with a take-home "lit kit," including a collection of "Tiny Tales," letter sound cards, and sight word cards. TRP also publishes an ongoing series of anthologies that allows children to write,

illustrate, design, and develop their own stories. TRP then publishes anthologies that feature every child who helped create them. To date, 53 children in the KGO community can say they are published authors.

3. Interactive and Lively Public Engagement Gatherings

The Reading Partnership has a planning committee that hosts fun and lively convenings. Their signature event, "Spotlight on Literacy," is hosted every spring and features various guest speakers, live music, workshops, and information booths. At each celebratory gathering, participants receive free child care and meals, as well as over 1,000 books representing diverse communities, donated by Frontier College and Children's Book Bank. Young adults also receive valuable volunteer opportunities to support their neighbours.

NOTABLE MOMENT

A single mother of three who had dropped out of the 12-week workshop series resubmitted her application for the following program cycle. Cox contacted her to express empathy for her demanding parenting situation and, given the limited number of spots, confirm commitment. The mother expressed her determination to learn skills that would support her children's literacy development. She kept her word, even on the evening of a snowstorm. She trudged through mounds of snow on the sidewalk with a baby in a stroller and a pair of children in tow. Completing the program with perfect attendance encouraged this single mother to enroll in a post-secondary education to pursue her own academic goals.

IMPACT STATEMENT

With the help of multi-year government grants, TRP has taught over 250 Black parents how to teach their children to read and write.

LESSON STATEMENT

The word "partnership" in the organization's name represents the complexity of establishing mutually reciprocal and respectful partnerships essential for the work of promoting children's literacy.

POLICY NOTE

The upswell of strategies targeting/confronting anti-Black racism in Toronto has focused on

building initiatives, policies, and spaces that materially improve Black lives in the city and beyond. The Toronto District School Board (2019) created the Transforming Students Learning in Literacy and Mathematics policy in 2018 to "ensure professional learning addresses the existing systemic bias and barriers to student achievement, and the development of strategies to address the bias and eliminate the barriers" (TDSB, 2019). Meanwhile, the City has adopted the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism (2017). In March 2017, the provincial government released its own anti-racism plan, A Better Way Forward: Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, which includes initiatives to address systemic racism and create equitable outcomes for Indigenous and racialized communities (A Better Way Forward, 2017). Together Ontario's Anti-racism Act (2017) and Anti-Black Racism Strategy (2017) promote a co-productive approach between government ministries and community partners to take steps toward racial equity. At a global level, in 2014, the U.N. declared 2015-24 as the International Decade for People of African Descent (United Nations, 2014). This declaration prompts nations to implement policies and regulations that address disparities and adopt effective legal measures that acknowledge systemic anti-Blackness around the world.

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Rochelle Ivri

Title
Citizenship Judge,
Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Location
Niagara Region, Ontario

Case Study Topic
Mentorship for Increasing Youth
Civic Engagement

Student Co-Authors
Corals Zheng & Chhavi Narula

BACKGROUND

Rochelle Ivri is a citizenship judge at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Together with Nyarayi Kapisavanhu, Ivri co-founded Ubora Mweusi (meaning "Black excellence" in Swahili), a mentorship program for Black youth in the Niagara Region. As a judge, Ivri stresses the importance of citizenship in affording individuals the rights and responsibilities of full participation such as voting, free(r) mobility, serving on juries, and contributing to institutional boards. This is why the mentorship program not only connects young people to mentors but also to spaces where decisions are made and their culture is reflected. Socio-spatial connectivity is particularly important because the Niagara Region has a population of just over 447,000 people, of which about 8,000 identify as Black (1.8%), according to the 2016 Census. The region is large (total area: 1,852 square kilometres) and lacks a robust public transit system. Only half of the 12 local municipalities in the region have a local municipal transit system (Niagara Region, 2017). Given the small Black demographic and large disconnected region, the Ubora Mweusi mentorship program plays a critical role in reducing social isolation and ensuring that Black youth are supported in their personal and academic pursuits.

The program operates out of Brock University. Youth participants are paired with mentors who are generally Black experts and professors from the community. They meet weekly and engage in conversation circles, capacity-building workshops, and meetings with public officials, as well as field trips to Black historical sites in the region.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

There are several challenges to promoting civic participation of Black youth through mentorship. First, Black communities have historically been forced to prioritize survival within hostile systems and spaces. Due to systemic discrimination, there is also a lack of representation of Black people in positions of power and influence as role models. This discourages Black youth as they do not see themselves in these leadership positions or have confidence that their voices will be respectfully heard. Finally, there is a lack of Black mentors who have the ability or luxury to take on mentees (Cukier et al., 2020). In the Niagara Region, these barriers are further complicated by the small Black demographic that exists over a large geographic area with a poor public transportation system.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

The Ubora Mweusi has set these primary goals:

+ Connect Black youth to Black mentors who can assist them in attaining their academic and personal goals.
+ Create a space for Black youth to more safely express feelings and frustrations evoked by navigating systems and spaces where they are unable to express their full selves.
+ Accompany Black youth to spaces where decisions are made and their culture is reflected to foster a sense of spatial confidence.
+ Train Black youth on civic participations skills like making a public deputation or applying to boards as a way of contributing to change.

The program recognizes that the primary elements of successful mentorship programs are contingent on creating a safe(r) space for mentorship to occur and ensuring that youth "see themselves" and their culture reflected in their mentors. It is also important for multiple education and career pathways to be equally valued as many mentorship programs focus on the "professions" thus overlooking equally valuable fields like the trades, arts, and entre-preneurship. Consequently, Ubora Mweusi exposes youth to a wide range of mentors such as nurses, carpenters, lawyers, financial advisors, professors, small business owners, artists, and more. This same approach is taken when planning excursions and special events. The youth hear from Black Lives Matter activists challenging the system from the outside and the Black Caucus comprising senior leaders working at Queen's Park.

1. Identifying a Safe(r) Space

There are no such things as fully "safe" or "accessible" spaces. Daily lived experiences and scholarship both show that spaces are constructed and mediated by layers of power and privilege (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994; Yiftachel, 1998; Neely and Samura, 2011). Recogniz-ing the contested nature of spaces, especially for Black youth, it was important for Ivri (and Kapisavanhu) to select a meeting location that is safe and accessible for participants.

They settled on Brock University.

Brock University is centrally located and smaller than other institutions in the GTA, mak-ing it approachable and accessible to the community. It regularly hosts community events and is well-integrated into the Niagara Region in a way that's distinct from its function as a post-secondary institution. "I can't tell you how many times I've been to Brock for enriching

events catering to my family and wider community; the university doubles as a local hub for everyone," Ivri comments. Community events hosted at Brock include the annual Niagara Catholic Regional Heritage Fair and Niagara Student Summit. In addition to hosting Ubora Mweusi at Brock, Dr. Gervan Fearon, the University's first Black president, is deeply involved in the program. All of these factors have helped to create a safe(r), productive, and nurturing space for Black youth participants.

2. Matching Youth with Culturally Credible Mentors

Mentorship programs are especially valuable for Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) in early career development. However, academic researchers have found that opportunities to connect with mentors are not equally distributed. They have observed that graduate students of colour often experience more isolation within their fields and have less access to mentors compared with their white peers. Access to productive and high-quality mentorship opportunities is especially important to students from equity-seeking groups that have been historically excluded from higher-education institutions and face significant structural challenges related to their perceived academic abilities (Jenkins, 2006; Palmer et al., 2011). Oftentimes, mentorship programs seek to redress these issues, fundamentally rooted in race and class disparities, without considering the same when matching mentees with mentors.

Mentee-mentor relationships are complex. When racial and ethnic backgrounds are not considered, they can hinder the participation of Black youth and the effectiveness of such mentorship programs. Research shows that mentees who are racially different from their mentors may feel suspicious or awkward around them. The mentees may even be reluctant to participate in such pairings out of a fear of perceived dependence (Boice, 1993). Moreover, when racialized youth are presented with mentors outside of their own cultural communities, it can inadvertently reinforce a sense of racial inferiority or lack of racial agency. It can send the message that individuals within their own racial and cultural communities lack knowledge.

This isn't to suggest that cross-racial mentorship experiences are all negative. To the contrary, they can help to build cultural understanding and empathy. Also, due to systemic racism, many racialized individuals have internalized discriminatory ideas about themselves and their own communities or may harbour biases pertaining to class, ableism, and gender. Given all of these variables, matching young people to mentors should not be prescriptive or prohibitive. What's essential is matching young people with safe, responsible, and compassionate adults eager to share insights and opportunities. These adults should be open to explicitly acknowledging all forms of power imbalances and committed to their own continual personal

growth. In the case of the Ubora Mweusi program, Black youth are paired with vetted, credible Black experts.

NOTABLE MOMENT

During a field trip to the Follow the North Star exhibit at the St. Catharines Museum, a young participant commented that he had no clue Black soldiers had fought in World War I. Up to that point, history had just sounded like someone else's past, and he didn't feel connected to those narratives. During another field trip to the Voices of Freedom Memorial, a site dedicated to remembering and honouring the Black history of the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, participants learned about an established Black community called Colour Town. These experiences helped the Ubora Mweusi participants understand the multigenerational histories and contributions of Black Canadians.

IMPACT STATEMENT

In its inaugural year, Ubora Mweusi paired 20-30 mentees with Black experts in the Niagara Region. The mentorship program provided an opportunity for mentees to connect with local politicians, learn about the Black history of the region, and empower mentees with leadership tools and connections to affect more opportunities and change in their communities. A number of mentees were encouraged to apply to their respective municipality's youth councils. The mentorship experience increased spatial entitlement and pride of the Black youth and entrenched a deeper connection to their immediate surroundings.

LESSON STATEMENT

Connecting Black youth to supportive mentors and public spaces in their city is the key to increasing their sense of civic participation, belonging, and personal agency.

POLICY NOTE

Traditional engagement models are insufficient to encourage civic participation as youth from equity-seeking groups do not see themselves as full citizens due to a historic legacy of exclusion, which is a key barrier to meaningful participation. Additional barriers to civic participation for equity-seeking groups include insufficient civic knowledge (Levinson, 2007; NCES, 2011), lack of economic security (Andres and Wyn, 2010), and family-level patterns of political disengagement (Terriquez and Kwon, 2015). There are few entrenched and long-standing progressive policy models in Canada that are youth specific, but there is a "patchwork" of

strategies that vary by province or territory (Jeffrey, 2008). Examples include the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (City of Toronto, 2014), which was devised in consultation with young people and formally outlines an outcomes-based vision for youth in Toronto.Canada's Youth Policy aspires to have 75% of Crown corporations include a young person on their boards within five years (Government of Canada, 2020). The United States currently does not have a national youth policy.

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Featured Black Urbanist
Aisha Francis

Title
CEO, Aisha K. Francis;
Founder and Executive
Director, Restore FIBI

Location
Ajax, Ontario

Case Study Topic
Breaking the Cycles of Incarceration
and Isolation

Student Co-Authors
Bria Hamilton & Divina Aseo

BACKGROUND

In 2004, Aisha Francis' then-husband was sentenced to prison for seven years, which adversely impacted the family's housing, mobility, social networks, and mental well-being. After several years of not being able to find appropriate supports for her family, Francis founded Restore Families Impacted by Incarceration (Restore FIBI). The organization takes a family-first approach to provide grassroots services such as family therapy, justice system education, and community care. Her organization also provides emergency response services when families have their doors kicked in during raids or are mercilessly evicted for one individual family member's poor choices. During COVID-19, Francis is supporting families receiving relatives exiting unsafe carceral environments to reintegrate them into their homes. The organization also collaborates with scholars on research projects and provides professional development to social service organizations.

Restore FIBI is based in Ajax, which is a town just east of the Greater Toronto Area. According to the 2016 Statistics Canada Census, the Black population in Ajax is among the fastest growing Black populations in Canada. This unprecedented growth has been the impetus for local groups like the Durham Black Educators Network and the Black Queens of Durham to ensure that culturally responsive amenities, services, and policies are included in the city's growth plan.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

Black and Indigenous peoples are over-represented in prisons due to a history of colonialism, systemic racism, and over-policing. Black people are 50% more likely to be arrested than their white counterparts (John Howard Society of Canada, 2017), and are over-represented in the correctional system by over 200%, in relation to the overall Black population in Canada (Bronskill, 2020). A 2013 study found that Black inmates were more likely to be put in maximum-security institutions even if they were classified as a lower risk to reoffend (Bronskill, 2020). These and a plethora of other equally disturbing and discriminatory findings pertaining to Black communities and the justice system are fundamentally rooted in the North American state's original policy of holding Black people captive. Revered Black geographer Katherine McKittrick elucidates, "The logical extension of the plantation and acts of racial violence, as well as urbicide, is the prison industrial complex. A rapidly expanding, taken for granted, and familiar institution, contemporary prisons mimic, but do not twin, the plantation" (McKittrick, 2011, p. 955).

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

Having established that the prison is the state's preferred post-plantation site for Black populations, Francis is an unapologetic prison abolitionist. She believes the entire system should be dismantled and resources should be redirected to initiatives that redress harm using an approach that focuses on restoration rather than punishment. Prison abolitionists also believe that resources to keep individuals of all racial backgrounds captive should be redirected to community capacity-building and care. With this larger aspiration in mind, she currently works within the system to provide support to incarcerated individuals and their families by providing culturally relevant services, and she participates in advocacy-based research projects.

1. Culturally responsive approaches:

Francis adamantly believes that individuals who commit crimes should be held accountable, but not in ways that are dehumanizing or block pathways to redemption, and that their families are deserving of culturally responsive, compassionate services. Her core culturally responsive approaches include, but are not limited to, the following:

+ Despite being cautioned against sharing her family's personal story with the prison system, Francis always begins with absolute transparency. She understands that maintaining a balance between conventional notions of "professionalism" and being personally accessible is paramount for earning trust with Black families. Additionally, many families believe that they are the only ones to suffer the humiliation of having their front doors torn off the hinges during a raid, or the terror of having guns pointed at their children's faces in the middle of the night. By sharing her own experiences of family trauma and public shaming with clients, they are able to see that they are not alone.

+ Having survived 500 years of brutal place-based displacement and captivity, Black people have come to pride themselves on being extraordinarily resilient. However, an overemphasis on Black resilience can be detrimental, and this is especially the case while navigating traumatic experiences like coping with a family member's incarceration. Family members, most often Black women and children, feel obligated to present a brave or strong front while concealing feelings of fear, shame, anger, guilt, and depression. These emotions have been historically ignored within Black communities because Black people are expected to suppress them. Francis encourages her clients to process these emotions and seek professional help when required as a way of maintaining their resilience and overall well-being. This reframing tends to have resonance with the Black families she serves.

+ Black men who've been incarcerated often experience homosocial bonding with other male inmates. Homosocial bonding refers to social bonds between individuals of the same sex and is often applied to research exploring male masculinity (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014). Men in prison often experience these bonds by assuming heteronormative spousal roles in cell maintenance, sharing intimate feelings related to their shared incarceration experience, or by having sex. This often creates confusion or a sense of emasculation for the men. In particular, Black men are distinctly impacted because they were forced to be breeders on the plantation to ensure the constant production of human chattel. Post-slavery, sports, and entertainment are two of the prominent spaces where Black men have achieved some level of success and spotlight in North America; these spaces also unfortunately tend to reinforce male dominance and aggression. All of this has contributed to a certain degree of cultural hypermasculinity, and shame around desire and male intimacy. Francis supports formerly incarcerated Black men and their partners to explore homosocial bonding in prisons in a manner that doesn't reinforce shame or homophobia.

2. Advocacy-based research partnerships:

Restore FIBI is an evidence-based organization that values the role of research in validating effective community approaches and policy reformation. Francis collaborates with and lectures at academic institutions, and provides placements for students across a diverse range of post-secondary faculties. The following are examples of the research projects she has participated in as the primary community partner:

+ MD Program, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto.

   A community-based service-learning (CBSL) program that investigated three core questions of healthcare: What is community? Where is community? And, why are some people healthier than others? The program engaged with medical doctors, applying a socio-medical lens to incarceration. It also developed an infographic that educates doctors on incarceration and provides them with questions to add to their patient intake/assessments that can help determine if the conditions of their patients are connected to trauma arising from the impact of incarceration. The goal was to lead toward more adequate treatment and/or referrals.

+ Families Impacted by Incarceration, Gun Violence and Trauma: A Community Action Report on Achieving Resilience and Healing Within the Black Community

   A discussion and problem-solving forum for communities most vulnerable to incarceration and gun violence. Hosted by Ontario Tech University in collaboration with partners

across the post-secondary, health, public, and media sectors. This culturally attentive and generative public event addressed a range of topics, including risk factors for youth and children of incarcerated parents (behavioural disruptiveness, educational underperformance, etc.), increased likelihood of intergenerational trauma, media influence, and disrupted parent-child relationships. The final report was published by Restore FIBI and co-authored by Francis.

+ Mothers Affected by the Incarceration of a Spouse or Child: Exploring and Addressing the Health Impacts

A research project funded by a WomensXchange grant from Women's College Hospital. It explored the effects or impacts of incarceration on the health (physical, mental, emotional, financial, social) and general well-being of the invisibilized population of crime victims: mothers who have an incarcerated spouse or child. It directly addressed the research gap in this area, referenced studies that speak to the importance of the family to an offender's success during and after incarceration, and advanced suggestions for programming focused solely on mothers who are positioned as the primary and responsibilized caregiver in the incarceration cycle. Francis was a team member of this project, through Restore FIBI.

NOTABLE MOMENT

A single mother once contacted Francis to express relief that her son was being transferred from youth detention to adult prison because she didn't want to "deal with him anymore." Apparently, she was growing weary of their frequent conflicts and the pressures of incarceration. Instead of judging the mother, Francis began to ask questions and learned that beneath the apparent callousness, the mother was extraordinarily unsupported and also triggered by the son who resembled his dad who was no longer in the picture. Being able to get to the root of the conflict opened a pathway for both mother and son to explore intergenerational hurts such as loss and abandonment. They learned new communication techniques and the mother is now committed to supporting her son as he completes his sentence in adult prison.

IMPACT STATEMENT

To date, Restore FIBI has served over 400 clients, worked with 15 social service organizations, and contributed to numerous research projects that have been instrumental in forwarding culturally responsive and holistic approaches to serving those impacted by the prison system.

LESSON STATEMENT

Families are integral to the process of interrupting and disrupting the cycles of incarceration. With proper support, they can more adequately combat the multifaceted impacts of this system, as well as aid in the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals.

POLICY NOTE

The Correctional Services and Reintegration Act of 2018 was passed in Ontario to respond to the need to support the process of rehabilitation and reintegration for those in custody to be well-equipped upon their release back to their families and community (Government of Ontario, 2018). There is a recognition of the importance of families and community connections in the Act's preamble, which is followed by ensuring that when courts are determining where the inmate should be detained, they need to consider the individual's accessibility to home community and family. In addition, the Act allows correctional institution ministers to develop programs that improve family support and contact with family.

The policy has the underpinnings of a progressive approach but lacks the specificity and guidance needed for a clear, impactful policy. There is significant room for individual interpretations and biased understandings of justice, rehabilitation, and appropriate measures. Francis has highlighted that many incarceration systems have no programming whatsoever as a result of ambiguous policy.

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Featured Black Urbanist
Orlando Bailey

Title
Director of Engagement,
BridgeDetroit

Location
Detroit, Michigan

Case Study Topic
Resident Leadership and
Mutual Education

Student Co-Authors
Justin Minor & Nigel Carvalho

BACKGROUND

Orlando Bailey is the director of engagement at BridgeDetroit. While working with the Eastside Community Network in Detroit, he played an integral role in their award-winning Lower Eastside Action Plan (LEAP) (LEAP Coalition, 2012). This project established an equitable, resident-led community planning process for four adjoining neighbourhoods in southeastern Detroit. When the project began, 44% fewer Black people lived in these neighbourhoods compared with a decade earlier, when it was 80% Black, similar to the city as a whole. Household incomes averaged between $26,000 and $29,500 a year, less than half the statewide average and equivalent to barely making above minimum wage full-time (Detroit (city) QuickFacts, 2006). Home-ownership rates had declined to just above 50% in 2010 and have continued to drop since, exacerbated by the foreclosure crisis of the Great Recession (Dunn, 2020). There are now over 10,000 vacant lots in the area, most of which are publicly owned, constituting the largest contiguous amount of open space in the city.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

The primary challenge for LEAP's equitable community engagement efforts is earning trust and establishing meaningful relationships with residents who have endured racial and place-based traumas over multiple generations. A stranger knocking on these residents' doors is hardly assumed to be a benevolent community engagement team member. Rather, as Bailey points out, "it could be the sheriff trying to evict them; it could be the water company delivering a shutoff; it could be someone coming to tell them that their house is in property tax foreclosure."

Individuals facing such dire hardships may feel a justified defensiveness toward questions that relate to the redevelopment of vacant lots or green infrastructure instead of their immediate concerns. The fast pace of traditional community engagement processes further complicates the trust-earning process. This sentiment was well summed up by a resident, quoted by Bailey, who told him, "date me before you engage me."

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

1. Meeting People Where They're At

The cornerstone to LEAP's approach to public engagement is meeting people where they're at. This is the key to working with Black communities that have been neglected and unseen, if not actively harmed, for too long by inequitable planning processes. Here is how Bailey and his team met people where they're at:

+ Hiring Outreach Corps members to canvas door to door, introducing themselves and LEAP to residents, and asking them what they would like to see happen for their neighbourhoods.
+ Making sure the Outreach Corps members are residents from the area, fostering trust and mutual understanding with residents.
+ Establishing open-house style "command centers" where residents can come at their leisure for casual chats or to discuss project updates.

2. Mutual Education

Scholars describe the mutual learning model as an approach that recognizes all participants hold valuable information that others may not possess themselves; differences in opinion pose opportunities for learning; and people are trying to act with integrity given their situations (Schwarz, Davidson, Carlson, & McKinney, 2005, pp. 41-45). At LEAP, these mutual education principles have informed the following actions:

+ Acknowledging that planning jargon can be inaccessible and alienating to residents and that plain language is essential for meaningful participation.
+ Establishing small listening sessions to present information on specific issues or public policies to give residents a chance to speak directly to public and private officials.
+ Elevating lived experiences to the status of professional expertise, where "uncivil behaviour," trauma, or anger are treated as learning opportunities rather than as expressions to be quelled or diverted.

Bailey's recollection of how LEAP team members address residents profoundly exemplifies the mutual learning model: "Hey, what outcomes do y'all want? You all are smarter than us, and we want to amplify and uplift your expertise. We want you to educate us, and we want you to be open to being educated by us because we do possess certain technical expertise that shouldn't be understated as well."

3. Enabling Resident Leadership

The Eastside Community Network treats public engagement as a form of leadership development focused on drawing out the aspirations of participants, encouraging them to speak out and organize, and motivating residents to "come to the table" while inspiring their neighbours to do the same. Bailey says LEAP "knew that in order for this plan to be both actionable and sustainable, residents had to own it." To achieve these goals, LEAP provided residents with the following resources and opportunities:

+ Paying residents for their time and knowledge to ensure continued involvement in the process while attributing value to lived experiences.
+ Allowing residents themselves to analyze the conditions of their neighbourhoods by surveying land parcels with the assistance of maps created by University of Michigan students.
+ Having committee meetings chaired by residents, making LEAP's engagement process resident-led to such an extent that power brokers and partners at the table had to answer to the community.

Enabling resident leadership is especially transformative as it significantly contrasts with status quo public engagement laden with token consultations. Bailey feels this type of intervention fosters leadership that extends beyond the outcomes of singular public consultations as residents become aware of how to hold developers and other city-builders accountable. After sharpening their leadership skills at LEAP, residents "know how to advocate for the right percentage of low-income housing within mixed-use developments," Bailey adds. "They know the language now." However, he clearly emphasizes that residents had already been advocating for themselves prior to LEAP, and that this capacity and collective local power "just needed amplification."

NOTABLE MOMENT

When residents gathered around large maps to discuss their neighbourhood's assets, rather than its deficits, Bailey notes how "it was a challenge for residents to think about what was actually going on right in their neighbourhoods." Through this engagement exercise, residents encouraged each other to personally define what an asset was and shift their focus to their community's abundance of positive features. Participants would often tell Bailey, "I never knew all this was here in my neighbourhood." For him, seeing residents uncover value in their neighbourhoods and relating to each other in ways that might not have happened without LEAP was gratifying.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The most important impacts of LEAP are centred on capacity-building: residents emerging as new community leaders, collectively elucidating their most pressing issues and crafting viable strategies to address them. As Bailey reminds us, people are "equipped and smart enough to advocate for themselves," so he is confident "these residents have the tools and the knowledge to broker the kind of deals they need for their neighbourhoods, without us being a gatekeeper." As someone who has lived and breathed these neighbourhoods, and their ongoing transformation, this is what success really looks like to Bailey.

LESSON STATEMENT

Meaningful community engagement is a long-term commitment. LEAP's action plan calls for updates every five years. The Phase 3 update was completed in 2017, and Outreach Corps members continue to engage the community.

POLICY NOTE

Between phases 2 and 3, LEAP's Stakeholder Advisory Group approved a list of standards for removing blighted structures in the city. The Detroit City Council unanimously adopted the list after LEAP presented it to them in 2015. These standards are found on page 68 of the "LEAP III: A Community-Driven Vision for the Lower Eastside" (LEAP Coalition, 2018). They emphasize the need for spaces that foster meaningful dialogue with municipal agencies and companies involved with blight removal, and call on public and private entities to contribute substantial community benefits when redeveloping properties. These benefits include creating economic opportunities and incorporating land uses that beautify the area and renew its ecology. Accountability to residents is also promoted through legally binding benefits agreements between community organizations and blight removal entities, as well as making government subsidies or incentives for eliminating blight contingent upon providing ongoing benefits to the affected community. This list of proposals can be adopted by organizations interested in prioritizing equitable development. However, many challenges remain, including limited impact, bureaucracy, and the need for greater transparency.

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Featured Black Urbanist
Pasha Shabazz McKenley

Title
Educator and
Storytelling Advocate

Location
Los Angeles, California

Case Study Topic
Community Art to Reduce Urban
Inequities and Gang Violence

Student Author
Vidya Rajasingam

BACKGROUND

Prior to relocating to Los Angeles, Pasha Shabazz McKenley pursued an acting and arts education career in Toronto, Ontario. She was a lauded performer and equally respected co-founder of Artists Mentoring Youth (AMY), an organization that supports young women who explore and tell their stories authentically. Upon moving to L.A., Pasha's daughter struggled with the lack of arts education in her school. More broadly, Pasha felt concerned for children from far less-privileged households who did not have parents who could fill this gap. During that time, McKenley learned about the mayor's Summer Night Lights (SNL) initiative, a public-private partnership launched in 2008 to reduce gang activity, build community trust, and create safer environments for youth engagement during the summer months.

McKenley received funding through the SNL program to co-lead Metamorphosis, a project aimed at using arts-based interventions for helping gang-involved youth rewrite their personal narratives. This was an ambitious project considering the backdrop; the county and city of Los Angeles are often referred to as the "gang capital" of the United States (Gangs, n.d.). Two notorious gangs with significant membership and notoriety in this region are the Bloods and the Crips, which originated in California in 1969 and 1972, respectively. These two gangs, and smaller gangs or "sets" that adopted the Bloods' and Crips' names, are linked to high volumes of conflict, homicide, and drug trafficking (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011). In spite of these statistics and reputations, McKenley looked beyond the violent veneer of these gangs and sought to create a safe(r) environment for youth to explore positive aspects of their cultural and place-based identities.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

There is no singular cause for gang involvement or even a definition for the word "gang." That stated, there is general consensus that gangs originated in cities like Los Angeles as social and political gatherings, but have since turned into criminal youth groups heavily influenced by urban inequities (Alonso, 2004). Understanding urban inequities and their interplay with gang cultures is imperative because conversations about these groups tend to highlight the psychosocial factors that cause youth, oftentimes Black and brown men, to join gangs. As Jay has pointed out in the course, this can then pathologize these communities, negating the fact that "urban inequity itself is a form of violence." The late professor Irving A. Spergel elucidates the myriad personal and systemic factors that contribute to this challenge: "Race

or ethnicity and social isolation, interacting with poverty and community disorganization account for much of the gang problem" (Spergel, 1990, p. 213). Given that gangs are generally located in racialized, low-income neighbourhoods, considering identity, place, and systemic challenges like poverty are crucial in addressing gang-related issues.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

SNL prioritized program sites in neighbourhoods that required the greatest need for resources, prevention, and immediate intervention. In one particular neighbourhood, the recreation centre became a hotspot for drug dealing; Bloods and Crips were actively recruiting youth to transport drugs. Metamorphosis established its program at this location and operated every weekday over the summer from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m., during peak gang activity hours, to draw youth away from gang involvement and provide necessary enriching experiences. The program was initially for youth aged 9-13, but due to requests from participants who were either babysitting siblings younger than nine, or wanting gang-involved friends older than 13 to share in the experience, the age range was expanded to accommodate youth 3-19 years old. It is not generally advisable to mix age groups in this manner, but it is crucial to recognize that due to high rates of single mother-led households and parents who work shift work, Black and other racialized children have child-minding responsibilities that prevent them from participating in youth programming. McKenley did not want to exclude youth faced with these challenges so she opted to provide additional supervision and took safety measures to facilitate the youths' participation.

1. Culturally Responsive and Accessible Arts Activities

Community arts projects are guided by professional artists working with residents to co-create murals, theatrical productions, spoken word performances, and other forms of art. Historically, the themes explored in this process, that is at once artmaking and community-building, have been rooted in the politics and culture of a specific place. Whether creating murals, performing in talent shows, or breakdancing in subway stations, young people have always been drawn to art. The Metamorphosis project created a brave space for youth affiliated with rival gangs to explore their shared interests and desire for creative expression. The creative interventions were designed to help youth develop new artmaking skills, as well as the vocabulary for articulating and pursuing new possibilities. A couple of the creative and accessible artmaking exercises McKenley facilitated were as follows:

+ Given inequities across the education system, young people in low-income communities often have literacy challenges. This can be demoralizing and embarrassing for youth. In

response, McKenley provided youth with flashcards containing keywords and culturally relevant visual images that they could use to build their script plotlines and dialogue. She also provided blank flashcards so that youth could add their own words if something they wanted to express was missing from the flashcard deck. This also helped visual learners sketch out their ideas. Youth who had typical or more advanced reading and writing skills could opt to type out their ideas and play a leading role in compiling everyone's ideas. This flashcard intervention was integrated into the script-writing process and positively framed as responding to the youth's equally valid communication preferences rather than as an accommodation for youth who were atypical communicators or struggling with literacy. This protected the youths' dignity and made the storytelling creation process accessible to everyone.

+ Many young people living in low-income neighbourhoods plagued with violence learn to suppress their vulnerabilities and emotions as this can leave them open to multiple forms of violation. This coping mechanism can stunt their emotional vocabulary and interfere with their ability to build emotional intelligence through interactions with peers and parents alike. To address this challenge, Pasha would have the young people select a new word like compassion, gratitude, respect, or excitement each day, and strive to demonstrate the emotion with other group members while co-creating theatrical scripts, dancing, and visual art pieces. Blank cards were also provided so youth did not feel pressured to perform a positive emotion or character trait that wasn't aligned with their capacity or well-being on any given day. This activity encouraged youth to explore the expression of positive emotions and character traits without being overly instructive, and reinforced expectations for group conduct without being authoritative.

These two activities reinforce the importance of creativity and choice when engaging Black youth who are typically unafforded the privilege of a wide slate of good options in their lives. Additionally, proactively providing seamless, invisible accommodations for young people whose dignity is constantly assaulted by neglected neighbourhoods and discriminatory systems is paramount for earning trust and ensuring emotionally accessible and safe(r) programming.

2. Personal and Spatial Transparency

McKenley's SNL Metamorphosis project used a two-pronged approach to transparency and building trust. One was personal transparency, and the other was transparency of the built environment. As a former professional actor with extensive experience supporting youth to shape and share their authentic stories, McKenley is emotionally demonstrative and transparent. While distributing flyers and speaking to youth and their parents in the park adjacent to

the recreation centre, she was asked about her accent. McKenley is Caribbean Canadian, so despite being Black, she initially resonated as an outsider. She used her personal experiences as a mother, cultural humour, and shared concerns as a way of inviting honest conversations with the community. Black people have plenty of reasons to be mistrustful of systems and the people who work within them, even other Black people, so this kind of transparency was important for establishing the foundation for this program.

The design of the physical program space, the recreation centre, also emphasized McKenley's transparent approach. In urban design and architecture, "literal transparency" indicates a clear visual boundary and "experiential transparency" is defined as ease of access (Erkartal & Uzunkaya, 2019). Literal and experiential transparency was provided by the large glass wall abutting both the program and outdoor spaces, allowing parents to monitor their youth, especially during the earlier stages of the program. Parents could casually walk by and peek in without interrupting the flow of their children's creative process. This proved to be impactful because these parents also began to interact and build relationships across rival gang lines. In this instance, the glass wall created a sense of movement, choice, and connectivity with the larger community, which both the youth and their parents responded to positively.

NOTABLE MOMENT

During Metamorphosis, a child in the neighbourhood was murdered by a parent. While painting a beautiful mural to honour their deceased friend, a participant asked, "How mad do your parents have to get before they kill you?" For McKenley, this question was a poignant reminder of the complexity and precarity of these young peoples' lives.

IMPACT STATEMENT

SNL has been a resounding success. As of 2010 (compared to the 2008 baseline), 24 parks and recreation centres have been engaged. In those two years, neighbourhoods with an SNL program have had 55% fewer gunshots fired, a 57% reduction in gang-related homicide, and 45% fewer gunshot victims. The programs have registered 710,000 participants, served 382,000 meals, and created over 1,000 jobs. The Metamorphosis project has transitioned from a 12-week summer program to an ongoing, year-round course offered by McKenley in an LAUSD school. The capacity of the project has gone from approximately 30 short-term participants to 100 youth who participate for up to seven years at a time and earn credits toward their high school diploma. This engagement has become part of a system with the capacity to produce ongoing benefits, and reduce barriers to artistic extracurriculars and longitudinal Black mentorship in communities that need it.

LESSON STATEMENT

The word "risk" is often used when describing the engagement of Black and other racialized youth living in low-income communities. These young people are often referred to as "at-risk" youth when in fact they face risks due to discriminatory urbanism and social policies. The framing of risk should not be projected on young Black bodies and their neighbourhoods because this is both inaccurate and stigmatizing. The concepts of risk should be redirected and interrogated within a systemic context from where they originate.

POLICY NOTE

Educational, cultural, and arts policies at different jurisdictional levels have the potential to empower Black students' engagement in arts-based programming. The Los Angeles Charter School Authorizing Policy provides for the funding of Black schools, although the requirements to receive funding need more flexibility to meet the needs and abilities of the Black education experience (Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education, 2010). Additional potential policy supports include 1. The Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture's new policy on cultural equity and inclusion (section 3.180) (Soluna Group & Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, 2020); 2. a Los Angeles County Public Works' policy which allocates 1% of design and construction fees to civic art programs (Los Angeles County Arts Commission, 2016); and 3. the state-based Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), which aims to ensure an even quality of education for children and youth.

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Featured Black Urbanist
Anthonia Ogundele

Title
Founder, Ethọ́s Lab

Location
Vancouver, British Columbia

Case Study Topic
Seeding STEM Fields with
Black Possibilities

Student Co-Authors
Debby Wong & Joanna Delos Reyes

BACKGROUND

What might place/space-making look like when you centre the humanity of the Black experience?
–Ethọs Lab

Anthonia Ogundele is the founder of Ethọs Lab, a nonprofit organization based in Vancouver, B.C., that leverages the cooperative model to develop creative co-working spaces for youth 13-18. Ethọs Lab works at the intersections of the physical realm (hubs) and virtual realm (virtual reality, artificial intelligence), which Ogundele defines as the "4th space." She uses this term to describe the terrain between our digital and physical realities impacting how individuals interact within the public realm. Ethọs Lab has initiated partnerships with entities like Urbanarium for Smart Cities and Microsoft, and created opportunities for its youth participants to design their own virtual worlds, participate in architecture and urban planning workshops led by industry leaders, and create a video game focused on self-care. These and other leading-edge programs are informed by Ogundele's extensive professional knowledge as a disaster planner. More personally, she is a Black mother committed to finding safer spaces (virtual and physical) for her teenage daughter and other Black youth residing in cities.

Many Ethọs Lab's programs can be attended online, but the organization itself is located in Vancouver, a city with a very low Black demographic. According to the 2016 Census, Vancouver's Black community only makes up 1% of its total population (City of Vancouver, 2020, p. 32). Like many cities, Vancouver's small Black population is partially the result of exclusionary and racist urban redevelopment processes and policies. The construction of the Georgia Viaduct is a key example of this phenomenon. Completed in 1972, this public construction project destroyed Hogan's Alley, a once-thriving hub of Black culture and community in Vancouver.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

There is a lack of Black representation in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. STEM is often characterized as comprising the careers of the future, yet its overt exclusion of equity-seeking groups exemplifies long-standing structural racism within the workforce and academic institutions. Scholars have found that our society has "developed a racial hierarchy of mathematics that places Whites and Asians on top and

Blacks, Latinx people, and Native Americans squarely on the bottom." (McGee & Martin, 2011, p. 48). This intelligence hierachy applies to the other STEM fields as well.

For Black people, this lack of representation is acutely felt in the creation of virtual spaces and digital identities. Much like the offline world, Black youth are often denied space to explore possibilities whilst also being subjected to blunt and inaccurate stereotypes. This double, place-based erasure impinges on the well-being of young people. The journalist Neuhauser (2014) found that online games often reinforce "harmful stereotypes" through the negative representations of Black avatars. Ogundele believes that acknowledging the lack of representation both in the STEM field and virtual realities "calls for a critical conversation about racism and the digital space."

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

Ethọ́s Lab believes STEM is critical for solving intractable urbanism problems. The organization designs and delivers programs centred on skills acquisition but also places an emphasis on the political, relational, and empathy-building aspects often overlooked within STEM discourse and programming. Ogundele reminds us, "It's not just about the technology. It all comes down to supporting youth in establishing relationships between themselves and the environments they navigate."

Guided by this relational approach to STEM, Ethọ́s Lab works very closely with all stakeholders. The organization encourages youth participants to take on leadership roles in co-developing the curriculum and goals of their co-created space. They are also directly involved in the creation of the organization's terms of reference, guidelines, and frameworks. It fosters a supportive community that celebrates successes while also allowing for failures. The importance and effectiveness of this approach are evident for Ogundele based on the fact that youth attendance has been consistent at Ethọ́s Lab, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ogundele also locates and establishes cross-sectoral partnerships within fields such as technology, municipal politics, and creative industries. This paves the way for a strong foundational framework that not only strengthens youth access to programming and resources but also intentionally includes Black youth as active creators and contributors in STEM spaces that are traditionally white and exclusionary (Burbanks et al., p. 12). To date, Ethọ́s Lab has partnered with Microsoft, the Vancouver municipal government, Solid State Community Industries, Vancouver Foundation, Urbanarium, and others. These and other partnerships enable the organization to engage youth, primarily but not exclusively Black, in processes that centre project-based mentorship and co-creation workshops that foster critical place-based thinking.

1. Project-based Mentorship and Co-Creation Workshops

Project-based mentorship involves connecting experienced professionals with interested youth to provide them with hands-on learning and guidance. Ogundele explains that implementing project-based mentorships enhance the youths' learning experience and provides them with culturally relevant professional development tools and opportunities. Her organization's innovation lab and STEM start-up approach allow for a constant exploration of new ways to engage youth and connect them with learning avenues that are not readily available to them in mainstream educational settings.

As an example, youth at Ethọs Lab were provided an opportunity to work alongside a STEM professional to learn about 3D modeling software, such as SketchUp and Tinkercad. Hogan's Alley was used as the site to build their virtual 3D models. The primary steps of this intervention are as follows:

+ Identifying race, space, and place as the main themes of the workshop, as well as identifying the 3D modeling software tools to carry out their work.
+ Collaborating with the 3D modeling facilitator to co-create a curriculum comprising learning modules aligned with the themes.
+ Learning the historical significance of Hogan's Alley and practising their newly acquired technical skills within that context.
+ Creating the features and characteristics for their own virtual world.

These 1.5-hour sessions allowed youth to understand the relationships between space, race, and place. It prompted questions such as, "What do monuments mean? Who is included? Who is not included? What is our position in space?" (Ogundele, 2020).

During the pandemic, the group also hosted a virtual hackathon in partnership with Microsoft. Hackathons are one-time events where computer programmers get together for a short period to collaborate on a project or a challenge. Youth participants were supported by 12 mentors (four tech professionals, four urbanists, four Ethọs Lab members) along with a panel of judges that represented fields such as music, architecture, and technology. The youth were given the question: How can urban design, architecture, and technology intersect in a way for youth to co-create a community during this time of isolation and distancing? Gathering around one problem, each group of youth was tasked to respond to the challenge question and ideate on what a digital community might look like to them. In other words, youth were in control of co-creative human design processes. The winning group had the opportunity to share its ideas with the general manager of Planning, Urban Design, and Sustainability at the City of Vancouver.

Another event, the AI coding workshop, further allowed the young people to understand how they can impact the world around them and deepen their knowledge about biases built into technology. The problem with coding in AI and interacting with Siri—Apple's built-in, voice-controlled personal assistant—is that it is an English voice speaking French. Ethọs Lab partnered with two local start-ups to carry out these workshops and ensure that French translations from text to speech sounded like natural French. In integrating culturally relevant ways of programming, the AI coding workshop addressed ethnolinguistic diversity of Black Francophone youth.

NOTABLE MOMENT

The project-based mentorship between Savion, a 12-year-old participant, and Jibola, an experienced artist, is a successful demonstration of the values and approaches that Ogundele wants to instill in her work. The two came together over 10 days to intensively design a mural titled "Afrofuturist Playground" in Atlanthọs, Ethọs Lab's online environment. This allowed them to become "besties," building a strong bond between their two families; when Jibola had a baby, the news was shared to both families, and Savion was there to celebrate. When their mural was completed, both of their families and everyone at Ethọs Lab, including the board, were invited to witness the unveiling.

IMPACT STATEMENT

Although the program is open to all youth, 95% of its participants are Black. Atlanthọs is the first of its kind Black-led virtual space. Three Ethọs Lab youth are now pursuing STEM education, and the program is in the process of creating five project-based mentorship opportunities. Ogundele's goal is to reach 50 young people every week online, and she plans to scale up the programming while retaining person-to-person connections.

LESSON STATEMENT

STEM programs are often narrowly geared toward youth deemed "exceptional." While the Black youth who participate in Ethọs Lab's workshops are indeed brilliant, the program's success has been predicated on creating an inclusive and supportive environment where youth of all aptitudes are able to participate. The youth themselves have stressed the importance of building community and cultural pride while building virtual worlds.

Ethọs Lab is a new organization; its approaches and workshops are both iterative and evolving.

POLICY NOTE

In 2019, the Canadian federal government launched Canada's Youth Policy. This document was created in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Youth Council, established in 2016. The Youth Policy provides a governmental framework with the objective of improving youth engagement and outcomes in federal decision-making. The policy identifies six major priorities:

+ Leadership and impact
+ Health and wellness
+ Innovation, skills, and learning
+ Employment
+ Truth and reconciliation
+ Environment and climate action

Of the six priorities listed above, innovation, skills, and learning addresses the need for building a culture of innovation, experimentation, and entrepreneurial thinking amongst Canadian youth (Government of Canada, 2018). It supports youth ingenuity and skill-building in the STEM fields. However, this priority and the policy overall don't sufficiently address the digital divide that persists amongst racialized youth, and especially Black and Indigenous youth.

Canada's Youth Policy is an important first step to equip the youth of today for the world of tomorrow. To meaningfully follow through on the stated objectives, policy-makers and leaders from all sectors must work toward not only mitigating the digital divide and biases inherent in the STEM fields but also ensuring young Black innovators are fully supported so they can counter the lack of representation and the distortion of Black people and stories in the digital realm. Canada's Youth Policy's vision will remain incomplete until Black youth are supported and trained to not only access digital spaces equitably but also shape them actively.

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Mitchell Silver Profile

Commissioner Silver
not only runs in parks;
he *runs* the parks.

By Selam Eyob, Jasmine Mohamed,
and Merve Kolcak

Mitchell Silver is an award-winning planner and a pioneer in the realm of urbanism. Silver is known for his equity-based, forward-thinking, and community-oriented approach to urbanism. With over 35 years of experience, he is internationally recognized for his leadership in the planning profession and his contributions to contemporary planning issues. A graduate in Urban Planning from Hunter College, Silver is well-known for his previous role as the Planning Director at the City of Raleigh, North Carolina, and his current role as commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks), which he will be transitioning out of in the early summer of 2021, fulfilling his tenure. Silver will be joining the leadership team at McAdams, a multi-disciplinary civil engineering, land planning, and landscape architecture firm headquartered in the Research Triangle in North Carolina. He will be one of the principals of the firm.

As one of the nation's most-celebrated urban thinkers, Commissioner Silver has been elected to Planetizen's list of the 100 Most Influential Urbanists in the world (2017). In addition, he has been honoured as one of the top 100 City Innovators in the world by UBM Future Cities, and in 2012 the Urban Times named him one of the top international thought leaders of the built environment. Silver is also the first African American elected president of the American Planning Association and the American Institute of Certified Planners.

CAREER HIGHLIGHT

One of Commissioner Silver's proudest achievements is Juneteenth Grove, part of an ongoing initiative launched on June 19, 2020, to rename specific parks in boroughs throughout New York City to honour Black Americans with local, national, or historical relevance. A grove in Cadman Plaza, Brooklyn, was the inaugural site of this initiative. It was named "Juneteenth Grove," in celebration of the special day as well as the homegoing (return to the Creator) of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless others (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, 2020). Nineteen new flowering trees were also added to the existing tree presentation at Juneteenth Grove, symbolizing the date as well as the Black community's complicated relationship with trees; their roots representing the depth and connectivity Black people have to America, their branches the thousands who were lynched on them.

This initiative was launched in response to protests against police violence and racial injustice across North America. It was also a recommitment by NYC Parks to actively address concerns brought forth by community members as well as its 6,000+ workforce, of which approximately 34% are Black. Juneteenth Grove is a tangible example of Commissioner Silver's leadership, values, and commitment to creating safe, inclusive spaces for both staff and park-goers alike.

CAREER LESSON

Commissioner Silver identified two career lessons:

1. "A good design is just one more design away"

Silver has carried this lesson throughout his entire career, sharing that it's always worth it to try just a little harder and look at challenges from different perspectives. He does this by refusing to be stuck, and always striving for more.

2. "Hindsight, foresight, and insight"

Silver always keeps these three things in mind when analyzing the historical context of space before planning for a vision of its future.

NOTEWORTHY PROJECTS

1. RALEIGH UNION STATION

This particular project was a new build in the City of Raleigh to create a transit hub and a rail station.

The visioning process and proposal for Raleigh Union Station began in 2010 and the first train service began in July 2018. The new station is built on 26,000 square feet of land and was funded through contributions from the State Department of Transportation ($15 million), the federal government ($10 million), and the city ($19 million) (WRAL News, 2015). The result of this project was a state-of-the-art urban transportation hub centre with endless amenities (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, n.d)

2. PARKS WITHOUT BORDERS

Parks without Borders is an NYC Parks project that addresses crime prevention through environmental design strategies in public spaces by dismantling barriers and creating accessible, safe, and seamless public realms.

This project is close to home for Silver. He dedicated the entrance of Prospect Park in Brooklyn to his late brother who passed away in 2008. He hopes to eventually rename the park in his brother's name.

3. COMMUNITY PARKS INITIATIVES

This NYC Parks project is an equity-based, data-driven initiative to invest in neighbourhood parks with the greatest needs. It aims to distribute over $318 million to create thriving public spaces in neighbourhoods that have been historically excluded from park reinvestment.

4. WEST HARLEM PIERS PARK

This NYC Parks project is a landscape transformation of the historic Manhattanville shoreline that had been cut off from the neighbourhood due to the adjacent traffic and the highway above. As a consultant, Silver worked with community activists for a total re-envisioning of West Harlem Piers Park resulting in a master plan. A comprehensive community-based planning model facilitated the missing link in achieving the development of the park and reconnecting residents to the water.

5. 2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that was first adopted by the Raleigh City Council in 2009 and was later updated in 2019. The plan provides a vision for the City of Raleigh, and directs growth and development to be achieved by 2030.

ADVICE FOR ENGAGING BLACK PEOPLE AND POWER

Commissioner Silver states that having courage is central to engaging Black people and power.

Early in his career, he was motivated and guided by his sense of purpose, which was

underpinned by his courage to speak up. He also highlighted the importance and significance of "living by your passion." Silver is profoundly moved by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which has equipped him with even more courage and clarity to speak powerfully to power. As a Black man in positions of authority, he had been "checking his Black identity at the door" for years. The BLM protests and actions have helped him be more forceful in making the changes that he believes will be authentically impactful and long-lasting.

Inspirational song: Rise Up by Andra Day
Inspirational book: The Bible

Dr. Vanessa Leon, Assistant Clinical Professor of Urban Planning and Public Service; Director of Urban Planning Program at NYU

"I came of age professionally in the wake of the 2010 Haiti earthquake and I could not have had a better mentor than Mitchell J. Silver. He dared to believe that I wasn't just the future—I was (and am) the now. Much like the communities he works with, Mitch committed to understanding my character and soul before providing his honest assessments in time. In addition to being my mentor, colleague, and friend, I cherish him most as my professional dad."

Schency Augustin, MPA: Urban Affairs/Urban Planning & MA: City/Urban, Community, and Regional Planning

"When I think of Commissioner Silver, I think of him as a regal, renaissance man. His smile conveys peace, but also control. To me, he's not just a mentor, but a MANtor. As a Black man pivoting from a career in criminal justice into a field where not many look like me, Commissioner Silver stepped outside of his office, and announced to his staff, "When you see him, you see me." That statement validated me on a profound level.

Angela Brooks, Director, Illinois Program at Corporation for Supportive Housing

"I was able to serve on the American Planning Association's first Diversity Task Force under Mitch. That experience engaged me with APA in ways that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. He has always encouraged me to find my voice, and be committed to the next generation of professionals after me."

PICTURES FOR THE PROJECT:

Number of miles
As an avid runner, Mitchell Silver runs 15-25 miles for half marathon training and 25-40 miles for full marathon training.
To keep up with his running, follow his hashtag #iruntheparks.

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A POLICY AND PLACE PLAYLIST

Author

Sam Carter-Shamai

Title

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Black resistance and revolutionary moments are steeped in musical tradition. As communications scholar Kesha Morant Williams notes, "Through Black popular music, the struggles, faith, and joys of a people are expressed. More than mere entertainers, Black musicians are the village griots, the revisionist historians, and the voice of a people. African American music solidifies messages of societal concerns, offering snapshots of social conditions and defining moments within a society" (Morant, 2011, p. 71).

Angela Davis wrote about music as an instrument of analysis and critique that allows one to simultaneously construct and reinterpret the conditions of "a new black consciousness" (Davis, 1998, p. 26). This consciousness was channeled and invoked intensely as Black people had to contend with not only the inordinate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but also the tragedy and trauma of modern-day lynchings, whether outside in the public realm (George Floyd) or inside their own homes (Breonna Taylor).

From civil rights freedom songs to Beyoncé getting the ladies in *Formation* at the 2016 Super Bowl halftime show, or Tobi Nwigwe's 2020 viral earworm and call to action, *I Need You To (Breonna Taylor),* our social movements have always used cultural expression as a tool to mobilize and push back against systemic oppression through songs that call out injustice, celebrate community, and yearn for freedom and love (Pariseau, 2020; Dennis, 2016). As an urban planner committed to equity and a lifelong music lover, I innately connect music to considerations of politics, urban policy, protest, and place.

I began making these connections at an early age. My father used to tell me stories about when he was coming up in Virginia in the '50s and '60s. Down in Gloucester County, where we lived, there was no YouTube, but there was the Wagon Wheel. Gloucester is about halfway between Washington, D.C., and Raleigh, North Carolina; it's a frequent stop for touring Black musicians who played the segregated South along the Chitlin' Circuit, a

network of Black clubs, theaters, and venues. The Wagon Wheel was the place to be if you were Black and wanted to catch some music and a reprieve from the Jim Crow South. All the greats played the Chitlin' Circuit: James Brown and Sam Cooke, Billie Holiday and Etta James, Marvin Gaye, Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Ike and Tina, and more. My dad is getting up in age now and has a hard time remembering the details of those shows, but when I ask him what the Wagon Wheel was like back then, his entire being lights up.

"Would you say it was a vibe, Dad?"
"Oh, it was a vibe."

It's hard for me to imagine the exuberance and urgency of those performances in the face of such violence and brutality. Then again, I don't have to strain too hard because we are still facing those oppressions today.

This mixtape is an act of respect and love. I've tried to chart a musical journey that traces a through line from the '60s civil rights era right up to the present day. These are songs of protest and revolution, determination and defiance, celebration, reflection, and cosmic exploration. Each song has been selected with intention, with respect for you, the listener, and love for Black people and our music. From the sacred to the secular, there is a legacy of Black music that connects old-time spirituals and the blues to funk, hip-hop, house, and beyond. These are some of the Black songs

that resonate with me and my particular heritage and experience as a Black man here on stolen Indigenous lands. Understanding that this playlist is one expression of a collective that contains multitudes of Black stories and identities, my hope is that at least some of these songs resonate with you and offer an alternate or augmented epistemology of our vulnerabilities and irrepressible audacity.

When considering questions of space and identity, it's important to think about the rhythms, rituals, celebrations, and memorials that imbue a given location with meaning and history. As much as any physical trait, these qualities contribute to character of place. It is essential that this does not get lost in policy. The following songs can be seen as a means of speaking powerfully to power and effecting material change through creativity and collaboration—a metaphor and a model for advocacy and community building. These are traditions of adaptation, innovation, invention, and perseverance: It is the blues, jazz, and soul; it is sampling, remixing, and adaptive reuse; it is resistance, resilience, and joy.

I look forward to dancing with you soon.

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THE POLICY AND PLACE PLAYLIST:

All songs in the track list below are hyperlinked.
A Spotify playlist is available at https://spoti.fi/3lB9scx

A SIDE:

1. A Change Is Gonna Come – Aretha Franklin
2. I Wish I knew How It Would Feel to Be Free – Nina Simone
3. Everybody Loves the Sunshine – Roy Ayers Ubiquity
4. Expansions – Lonnie Liston Smith & the Cosmic Echoes
5. Bourgie Bourgie – Ashford & Simpson
6. Can You Feel It (Chuck D. Mix) – Mr. Fingers
7. Good Life – Inner City

B SIDE:

8. Respiration – Blackstar ft. Common
9. A Long Walk – Jill Scott
10. Alright – Kendrick Lamar
11. Almeda – Solange
12. Lockdown – Anderson .Paak
13. Pressure – Koffee ft. Buju Banton

POLICY ROUND TABLE SUMMARY

By Jay Pitter and Sean Karmali

Co-Authors: Kimberly Driggins, Jenna Dutton, Ifeoma Ebo, Jake Tobin Garett, Ken Greenberg, Dave Harvey, Keturah Herron, Cailean Kok, Kyle Kutuchief, Daphne Lundi, Gil Meslin, Lizette Soria, Christof Spieler, Nathaniel Wallace, Michael Went, Daniele Zanotti

In the winter of 2021, a group of policy experts convened to unpack the following question: "How can we use a racial justice lens to address anti-Blackness within the context of urban policy-making?" Our coming together across difference exemplified a vital part of the answer to this question. Demonstrating a willingness to collaborate across cities, siloed disciplines, and identities creates the foundation for the kind of equitable and intentional process required for untangling such a provocative question. This field of work often overlooks the nuance of process characterized by William Ascher, professor of government and economics, as "multidisciplinary, contextual, eclectic, intentionalist, process-sensitive spirit" (Ascher, 1986, p. 372).

Ascher's call for holistic policy-making is a contestation of positivistic processes. However, the moment calls for radical institutional agility that better aligns policy and provision of services with the places where people's lives unfold. To begin, we must gather both qualitative and quantitative data to inform policy priorities, and advance contemplative processes that evaluate the impact of policy decisions on Black communities. To achieve this goal, we must concurrently expand our collective policy vocabulary. Current concepts are entrenched in the force of law (legislation, regulations), performance standards, guideline-making, and discretionary best practices. Correspondingly, community discourse is guided by concepts such as vulnerability, healing, and reconciliation. We believe that current policy-making concepts must align with evolving community concepts to establish good ground for equitable placemaking.

This Policy Expert Round Table summary illustrates how planners and policy-makers can use their expertise and privilege to help build back better with a stronger sense of justice.

The previously mentioned primary question is answered through these ancillary questions:

Q1. Based on your expertise and experiences, what does it mean to explicitly address anti-Blackness in policy-making processes?

Q2. What is one tangible step that can be taken to address inequity and anti-Blackness in policy-making processes?

Q3. What is one urban policy or law that needs to be reformed to redress hostile physical and cultural Black landscapes?

The following collective roundtable responses have been summarized using a simple data-collation process. As conscientious urbanism practitioners and stewards of cities, we have heightened accountability to people and places. We hope the following insights will spur generative and iterative conversations pertaining to anti-Blackness and, more broadly, equitable urban policy-making:

POLICY EXPERT ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Q1. Based on your expertise and experiences, what does it mean to explicitly address anti-Blackness in policy-making processes?

+ Generally speaking, urbanists and policy-makers are not good at talking about race, due to gaps in academic programs, lack of professional development opportunities, disconnection

Ken Greenberg, Principle of Greenberg Consultants:

"As a designer, I deal with landscapes and the physical world. Too often, we have erased the culture and history of public places, and we need to rectify that. Look at Charleston, South Carolina, for example. As long-time mayor, Joe Riley began acknowledging the city's history in the slave trade through public art and historical markers. In his retirement, he has championed the establishment of an African American history museum on the site of Gadsden's Wharf, where many enslaved Africans arrived in North America. There are many ways to make the Black presence in a city visible—past, present and future. It's extremely important for everyone, especially children, to see themselves represented in the physical city, in the ways stories are told about the city, and in the roles that leaders have played and continue to play throughout history."

from historically marginalized communities, and fears of liability. As well, oftentimes, aggregated data has been used in policy-making to make generalizations—for example, gathering data in opportunity zones or at-risk neighbourhoods. Accounting for race in data design and collection can later reveal the deprivations and inequalities experienced by Black people. This kind of disaggregated data can also avoid over-generalizations of society and support evidence-based policy-making.

+ Planners in the development industry need to deeply and sincerely get to know existing communities.

+ What kind of life do we want together in the city we live in? Urban life has everything to do with how we collectively make choices in society and the kind of life we collectively aspire to have for our city. So, while municipalities have articulated nice goals around equity, diversity, and inclusion in value statements, official plans, and municipal records, these goals usually lack any kind of benchmark or strength for policy-making or program evaluation in respect of these goals.

+ Planning does not actively teach enough about the impact of redlining, segregation, and environmental racism in Black communities. As well, planning and policy-making have somehow detached themselves from the lineage of rights-based advancements and approaches. Without a doubt, community planning and policy-making must draw straight lines to the histories of Black people instead of seeing these lines thwarted by privileged narratives.

+ There is still a stark "pipeline" and representation issue in the field of urbanism. There are many people of colour on the outside. White people on the inside often act as champions or advocates. There is, however, a disconnect here. Urbanism needs Black people on the inside—in positions of power—to represent communities that urbanism serves and to aid in systemic change. To achieve this goal, we need urbanism governance and policy to be taught in grade schools, in secondary schools as part of civics and civic participation, and to have more urbanism overall. The advocates and champions on the inside should be responsible for actively mentoring people across races. In the interim, it is about filling positions of power, and it is ongoing good practice to have under-represented communities at the table to speak for themselves.

+ Meaningful initiatives on anti-Black racism must also consider how we serve Black communities and communities of colour, and what we serve them.

+ The community should have more than a say on what to build in the community. The community knows what is good for it. The policy-maker needs to listen and reflect on what is good for the community. One expert shared, "I have to make sure it's not just me who is partnering with people—I need people who share the experiences of the people we're working with. It's my job to listen and partner to make decisions about what is good for the community." The emphasis on community is about process, leadership, and partnership.

+ Urbanists and policy-makers need to recognize the significant weight of systemic injustice and how that injustice has shaped the current narrative. It should come as no surprise that expressions of distrust are the reactions to a long-standing system of neglect. Those expressions need to be understood and accepted in all processes.

Q2. What is one tangible step that can be taken to address inequity and anti-Blackness in policy-making processes?

+ Another expert shared that we desperately need accountability, which means gathering good data, including disaggregated data, analyzing this data, and exposing patterns of inequity.

+ There needs to be a necessary emphasis on local knowledge which includes local expertise. In Detroit, there are conversations underway about making sure voices of equity-seeking groups are represented in every level of decision-making, especially in the policy-making process.

+ Mostly white legislatures in majority white states too often make rules for cities which are majority Black. Detroit is an example. It is vital for cities to make their own decisions rather

Christof Spieler, Director of Planning Huitt-Zollars:
"We often disguise policy issues as if they are technical issues, and the results can perpetuate inequities. It's common in transit, for example, to plan commuter rail so everyone gets a seat but plan bus service so half the riders are standing at rush hour. That's not inherent to the equipment. It's actually easier to stand on a train. It's a decision about what level of comfort different riders deserve. But if we act like that's a technical decision best made at the staff level, we never have that conversation. As practitioners, we should call out when something really is a policy decision that the public and elected officials should have a say in."

than receive them from a higher level.

+ Akron, Ohio, created the Office of Integrated Development tasked with trying to align municipal resources with racial-equity goals citywide, and to provide better services and engagement in neighbourhoods, especially those that have been historically marginalized.

+ One expert mentioned that we need to address how we name things, how we make sure there is research to name something, how we fund or not fund specific groups, and that we ensure there is space for tough and awkward conversations. We need to have the courage to make intentional and inclusive choices.

+ Part of the journey of Black people is a power relationship with people who have dollars and are invested in the community. But, who is deciding on what the priorities are, what the interventions look like, and what success looks like?

+ The way we currently treat land uses can lead to Black people being excluded from land-use processes. Black people live in lower-income areas, where there is significantly less green space and lower tree canopy cover.

+ Gathering the right data to make things evident is one step. But we have to be careful we are not privileging quantitative data over qualitative inputs. How about starting off with how existing policies affect Black people? How to capture these stories is just as important. Storytelling is a legitimate and rich source of qualitative data.

+ One expert shared that New York City has explicitly acknowledged housing discrimination and segregation inflicted upon Black communities. But, Black people are still over-represented

Ifeoma Ebo, Founding Director and Urban Designer, Creative Urban Alchemy LLC:
"The inequities revealed during COVID have led many planners to talk about "building back better" through innovation, but we need to be careful in how we proceed so that we don't inadvertently cause more harm. Social justice advocate and urban designer Destiny Thomas talks about innovation injustice, warning that unless the underlying injustices are addressed, we risk overlaying new ones. We need to examine the histories of a place, understand the root causes of the disparities we see, before we can innovate."

in rentals with maintenance issues.

+ We need to recognize gender-based approaches in making the invisible more visible through the work we do. Data helps us get to visibility. Policy-makers tell us they need data. But sometimes a report containing important data is left on someone's desktop. How do we help people know something is important and potentially urgent? Who decides?

+ Let us remember that many people do not go to city hall meetings. So, technology and community engagement should be harnessed to engage community knowledge. For example, young Black men and women have a wealth of experience of being confronted by urbanism policy and its impacts. Young Black men and women also have solutions as to what community changes and needs look like.

+ Where there are places where nothing is changing and the people are frustrated, it could be helpful to find partners and platforms for having conversations where policy-makers can listen to communities. Still, we need to recognize that, while many of these spaces might purport to be equitable, they might be anti-Black.

Q3. What is one urban policy or law that needs to be reformed to redress hostile physical and cultural Black landscapes?

+ Black history, Black culture, Black landscapes, Black presence need to be intentionally brought back into the public sphere. For example, if we look at our history and where cities did their archaeological digs, those sites were places of landing for the underground railway. It is important for kids growing up to see themselves represented in the physical city and in the way stories are told about the city.

Jake Tobin Garrett, Policy and Planning Manager, Park People:
"Gathering the right data to understand how policies affect people is critical. Quantitative data is usually privileged over qualitative information when making decisions. But story-gathering is equally important and can often convey the specificity and nuance that numbers can't. "

+ All policies need to be audited for racial equity.

+ The Official Plan in Toronto, Ontario purports to be about shaping the city's collective future and aspiring to create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive city with an enviable quality of life. Yet, the next four chapters of the Plan are about neighbourhood physical character. One way the Plan can be improved is by finding creative ways to obtain the views of Black communities in respect of planning matters.

+ Policy-makers need to rethink park development policies. The lack of park spaces in Black communities is a serious public health concern. Careful tools need to be developed to collect demographic data and see where investment is needed to develop parkland.

+ Decision-makers should work out a collaborative power-sharing model between the government and the nonprofit sector to develop better informed policy.

+ A relatively simple policy change is to remove any anti-loitering ordinances for park spaces. The point of a park space is to personally and collectively enjoy it.

+ Policy-makers in education need to recognize the lack of access in learning. For example, Black students are ill-equipped for remote learning because many of them do not have access to laptops.

+ Policies and guidelines in law enforcement must correct police conduct in terms of how police interact with Black people in public spaces.

+ Urban planners and policy-makers working to develop affordable housing policies need to recognize that affordability equations when applied to middle- to high-income areas would still make it difficult for equity-seeking groups to qualify for an affordable home in those areas.

+ Seeking justice must be about understanding the root causes of injustice and then investing in and developing longer-term, deep-wound-healing policies.

+ Putting things under light or making invisible things visible is crucial for establishing just policies.

+ Moving from "anti-Black" to "pro-Black" in education could convey a sense of a shared destiny for Black students.

+ Policy-makers should recognize that why development happens and where development occurs is often based on economic development drivers. But solely looking at these drivers is inadequate. Instead, we need to apply an equity lens, lest we create a map of different cities of different peoples.

+ Why does land involve concepts of ownership and private property?

+ The idea of neighbourhood is gaining relevance, particularly during this time of COVID-19. Where we live has a direct impact on the use of public space. Amenities are missing from Black communities, and urban policy-making must address that.

+ Increased accountability of urban policy-making is crucial to challenge consultation barriers and prevent inequitable decisions.

+ Policies that establish quotas for hiring in city government would be a start to ensure equity-seeking groups are in positions of decision-making power.

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EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP IN THE FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND URBAN CHANGE

By EUC Faculty and Professor Ute Lehrer
(Links to courses and projects are embedded)

What these days is often referred to as Experiential Education has been part of a range of teaching styles at the Faculty of Environmental Studies (FES), and now the new Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change (EUC), for a good number of years. Some of them feature Black scholars and/or Black content. Some examples among many include: Professor Honor Ford-Smith's life-long engagement with the Jamaican community and performance studies that involve student participation; Professor Sara Flicker's work with students on the effort to tackle the health and well-being of Indigenous and Black youth; Professor Jin Haritaworn's work with their students and community members on queer and colour histories in Toronto; Professor Emerita Deborah Barndt's Earth to Tables Legacies project on rethinking food systems with the local BIPOC community; Professor Joseph Mensah's publications on the history and experience of Black Canadians; Professor L. Anders Sandberg's Alternative Campus Tour interrogating invisible narratives and policies on the campus; and Brandon Hay and Nigel Barriffe's teaching a planning workshop on Black

Love Matters, a workshop open to community members that identify as Black or African Canadians (https://www.yorku.ca/alumniandfriends/2021/02/alumni-profile-brandon-hay/).

The Faculty also regularly hosts events that address experiential learning, such as a panel on race, equity, and inclusion featuring members of the Mentoring Initiative for Indigenous and Planners of Colour (MIIPOC). MES graduate Jamilla Mohamud has recently blogged on anti-Black racism and the liveable city in Canada (https://ontarioplanners.ca/blog/planning-exchange/july-2020/anti-black-racism-in-the-liveable-city-and-canada).

Prior to Jay Pitter developing and teaching the *Engaging Black People and Power* course, Professor Ute Lehrer taught a related course, *Public Involvement in Planning.* The latter course has its origins at SUNY Buffalo (where Lehrer taught before coming to York), where it was revamped from using a technical approach of learning the rules and regulation of public engagement in planning to a format where students worked closely with communities. In one prominent example, the students worked on the "Harriett Tubman Memorial Garden" for the A.M.E. Zion Church under the guidance of Reverend G. Stewart and the direction of Lehrer. This studio focused on the rebirth of Durham Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church's small greenfield, that was surrounded by the scars of urban renewal, where the houses of Black people had been eradicated, without compensation, throughout the early 1960s, leaving behind a desolate landscape. With both a desire to educate the public about the Underground Railroad and commemorate local African American history, the studio was an attempt to provide the church community with a feasible project that marks not only the place but the history of Black people and the role that the underground railroad, and in particular Harriet Tubman, played for Buffalo. Therefore, the students came up with a proposal that included a design for the memorial in the small park next to the church as well as for street banners and insignias in the pavement, connecting this place to all the other sites in Buffalo where the underground railroad played a role. The students, who worked closely with Reverend Stewart and his congregation, broke grounds symbolically, when they planted bulbs for the Spring, marking the location of the memorial for Harriet Tubman. The engagement between students, the Reverend and his congregation allowed to imagine a rebirth of this neighborhood under strong Black leadership.

Previous examples of engagement between students and specific communities as part of *Public Involvement in Planning* has been around housing for the unhoused with so-called "Abandonment Issues" where students investigated a list of empty and boarded up houses, arguing that the City should take possession of them and make them available for unhoused people (http://abandonment-issues.blogspot.com/). Another example is the engagement with "Active 18", a community group that was arguing for affordable housing and community benefits as part of condo development (https://www.active18.net/).

Experiential education has been also front and centre in a series of *Critical Planning Workshops* where research and teaching were integrated with each other with the main component to engage with and learn from communities and their lived experiences. As part of a multi-year research project on "Global Suburbanisms" (with Roger Keil as the Principal Investigator), students travelled to various cities in Canada as well as abroad. One such instance was the workshop in Johannesburg from Fall 2016, where eleven graduate students were able to engage with various representatives and community organizers in and around Johannesburg, including Soweto and Cosmo City, and to reflect on their learning experiences through the writing of a report. (https://suburbs.info.yorku.ca/africas-new-suburbanisms-workshop/).

These are just a few examples of exemplary experiential education initiatives within the faculty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By Jay Pitter and L. Anders Sandberg

This publication and related Engaging Black People and Power course are the first phase of an upcoming bi-national research project, led by Jay Pitter, focused on auditing and reforming urban policy and healing Black communities. This first phase deliberately privileged deep listening and demonstrating an approach for beginning to codify Black place-based wisdom, which is intrinsically process-oriented. The following recommendations are not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive. They are prompts for further examination and action.

The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.
Audre Lorde

Place-based law and urban policy have been used to render Black people sub-human property so we cannot rely on urban policy to make Black people whole. That stated, urban policy-making is a complex tool that can indeed render increased levels of safety, dignity and joy for Black people and all urban dwellers. This aspiration can be achieved if we approach urban policy with healthy skepticism, continually interrogating top-down systems, representation among decision makers, and data collection and translation processes.

Value Oral History and Storytelling

Urbanists, policy-makers and scholars often dismiss oral history, local knowledge, and public memory. These ways of knowing and communicating are fundamental to our understanding of place. Storytelling is not simply artistic or cultural, it is quite literally a dynamic performance of placemaking and a valid form of policy-making data. This communicative mode creates an opportunity for people to co-create a future vision for their neighbourhoods and cities while prompting us to redress place-based trauma and inequities. The excavation of unrecorded and oral accounts and memories of Black communities and other equity-seeking groups provide an informed foundation and premise upon which to build urban policy and law.

Expand Urban Expertise

Urbanism professionals, particularly those with land use training and competencies tend to be enmeshed in practice silos. They often conflate designing and building places and spaces with placemaking. The city is a complex socio-political landscape mediated by uneven power relations, population growth, economic downturns, shifting government agendas and public health crisis, from contagions to the loneliness epidemic. While land use professionals play an important role in shaping both built environment and social environments, the process of creating place requires a multi-disciplinary approach, which pushes the bounds of professional silos.

Embodied Engagement

Places are experienced through all of our senses, the respite of a street free from car engines and gas fumes, the fragrant smell of herbs emanating from a community garden, and the unexpected delight of live music flowing from a patio. All of these inform how we describe and interpret the character and quality of urban places and spaces. However, most community engagement processes occur away from the site where urban development and design is being proposed. Embodied engagement decentralizes community conversations from officious municipal buildings and staid meetings halls to locally owned bookstores, streets and recreational centres at or adjacent to redevelopment sites. In addition to mitigating power imbalances, embodied engagement allows communities to participate in ways that are kinetic, intellectual and emotional.

Reverse Code Switching

The notion of code switching is often referred to as the ability of African-Americans to adopt their language to unfamiliar colonial settings. Here the opposite is recommended,

that urbanists, policy-makers and scholars should translate technical jargon and adapt their communication styles and modes to the residents of local communities. It is also advised that the vernacular language of place be embraced and honoured to planning and development initiatives. This is to build a bridge and common ground between the equally valuable and rich worlds of professional expertise and local knowledge and insights.

Interrogate the University Campus

Many universities are at the point of reckoning, acknowledging and seeking to remediate the under-representation of Black teaching faculty, the lack of Black histories in their curricula, the presence of Anti-Black racist names and symbols on buildings, and the lack of any histories that document the contribution of Black labour to the building and maintenance of the university. It is recommended that planning educators and their students examine the Black presences, absences and racist practices on their own campuses in order to promote self-criticism, self-reflexivity, and more inclusive institutions.

Understand the Dimensions of Place-Based Trauma

Within trauma discourse, there is a term called the "spatial turn," which explores the relationship between trauma and space. This is consistent with the trauma response itself, which triggers a visceral and repeated return to sites of physical and emotional harm. This is especially germane to Black communities, especially those descended from enslaved individuals who were bought, sold, beat, and sexually violated at everyday sites—in front of court houses, at the centre of bustling markets and on insignificant streets, as well as Black people from the African continent who've faced other forms of place-based harms such as displacement due to climate injustice and civil war. These experiences reverberate across generation, time and space causing a cultural wound that is reopened each time a Black person is profiled or harmed in the public realm, or when entire Black communities are forced further into the margins by gentrification and redevelopment schemes that erase Black cultural heritage. It is imperative for urbanists, urban policy-makers and scholars to not only refrain from doing further harm but to implement trauma-informed placemaking approaches that foster healing.

BIO

Jay Pitter, MES, is an award-winning placemaker whose practice mitigates growing divides in cities across North America. She spearheads institutional city-building projects specializing in public space design and policy, forgotten densities, mobility equity, gender-responsive design, inclusive public engagement and healing fraught sites. What distinguishes Jay is her multidisciplinary approach, located at the nexus of urban design and social equity, which translates community insights and aspirations into the built environment. Ms. Pitter also makes significant contributions to urbanism theory and discourse. She has developed an equitable planning certificate course with the University of Detroit Mercy's School of Architecture and taught a graduate-level urban planning course at Ryerson University, among others. Jay also delivers keynote addresses for entities such as the United Nations Women and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She is the co-editor of Subdivided: City-Building in an Age of Hyper-Diversity, and her forthcoming books, Black Public Joy and Where We Live, will be published by McClelland & Stewart, Penguin Random House Canada in 2021. Ms. Pitter was recently the John Bousfield Distinguished Visitor in Planning at the University of Toronto. This publication and related Engaging Black People and Power course are the first phase of an upcoming bi-national research project, led by Jay Pitter, focused on auditing and reforming urban policy and healing Black communities. For further information about this upcoming research or her broader placemaking practice please contact:

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Black ink on white pages, in response to Black blood on white streets, is not enough.

Jay Pitter