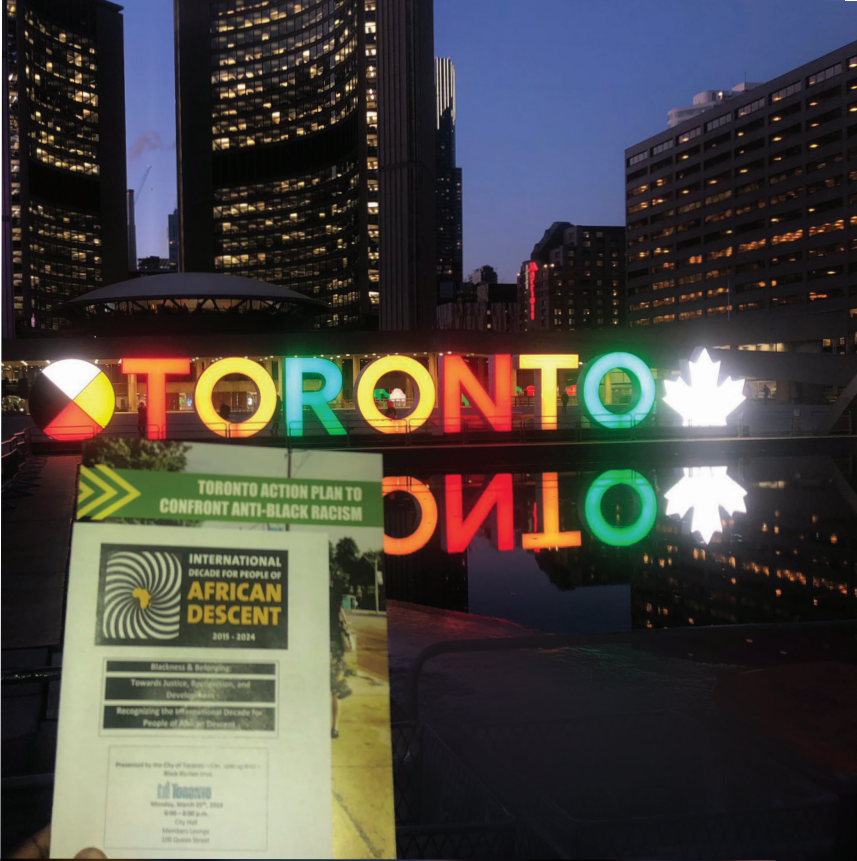




**1st Annual  
Report  
Confronting  
Anti-Black  
Racism Unit  
2018-2019**











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# Introduction

The Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit was established at the City of Toronto to ensure the full implementation of the 22 recommendations and 80 actions of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, which was unanimously adopted by City Council in December 2017.

The Unit permanent corporate office at the City. The Unit is housed in the Social Development Finance & Administration Division (SDF). It is currently staffed with Aina-Nia Ayo'dele Grant, Manager; Mohamed Shuriye, Policy Development Consultant; Anthony Morgan, Training and Development Consultant; Imara Ajani Rolston, Community Development Officer; and Lucy Nyarwai, Community Development Worker. It also has a five-month youth internship program for two Black youth to support career exploration at the City while gaining valuable work experience.

“CABR is here to make sure that the work happens and to drive the systemic change, but it’s for the divisions within the City to undertake the specific actions because the City as a government has a responsibility to the people,” says Grant about the work plans for the



various divisions. She says the entire process has been collaborative, which has worked very well for them.

Over the past year, the Unit has collaborated with City divisions, agencies, boards and commissions, including the Toronto Police Service, to implement key Year One Priorities.



The four priorities were: 1. Creating Culture Change at the City, 2. Investing in Black Children & Youth, 3. Connecting Black Torontonians to Civic Decision-Making, 4. Improving Customer Service.

Anti-Black racism is a historic, pervasive, and systemic issue in Toronto. It is policies and practices that are embedded in Canadian institutions that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization here in Canada.

The legacy of anti-Black racism lies in the current social, economic, and political marginalization of Torontonians of African descent. It is experienced as a lack of opportunity, poor health and mental health outcomes, poor education outcomes, higher rates of precarious employment and unemployment, significant poverty, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice, mental health, and child welfare systems.

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is the result of a collaborative effort between the City of Toronto and Torontonians of African descent to take corrective action that addresses anti-Black racism in the most diverse city in the world.

The 80 actions are the result of an examination of 41 years of reports, recommendations, and research which mainly said similar things about the effect of anti-Black racism on the lives of Black Torontonians. The City took the recommendations of those reports to the diverse Black communities in Toronto for them to determine what were still relevant today. From those community conversations the priorities were determined and divisions in the City were identified that would be responsible for specific actions. These were built into the work plans for the 22 divisions within the City.

Grant says one of the things that came up a lot as they were doing the community conversations, which led to the Action Plan and even as the Unit was being established, was the comment, “You’re not going to do it; we never do it.”

“This is what our Black community has asked for, this is what we’re giving – all 80 actions and more,” she assured.

Morgan says they have been able to connect with City divisions at all levels, speak with leadership across the City so that they have a clear understanding that the Unit exists, ultimately, to help the City as a collective move forward to improve outcomes for Black Torontonians. Once that has been made clear and they have leadership buy-in, for the most part, it has been very positive.

His aim is to coordinate and facilitate learning and development opportunities for all City leadership and frontline workers, with a specific emphasis on increasing their knowledge and application of CABR’s anti-Black racism analysis tool in specific relation the work of their respective divisions.

“If we have staff across the City who at least know that this tool exists and have some



familiarity with how to implement it towards creating change for Black Torontonians, I think we would have been very successful because we're changing consciousness around how we develop policy, how we roll out services, and how we plan the work that we do for all communities but also looking towards better outcomes for Black Torontonians."

Shuriye works with leads from the 22 different divisions, including Toronto Police Service agencies and boards to help them implement the Action Plan.

Lucy Nyarwai, Community Development Worker says she is experiencing how having a plan that focuses solely on Black Torontonians has brought confidence and leadership to the community, allowing them to voice their concerns to the Unit.

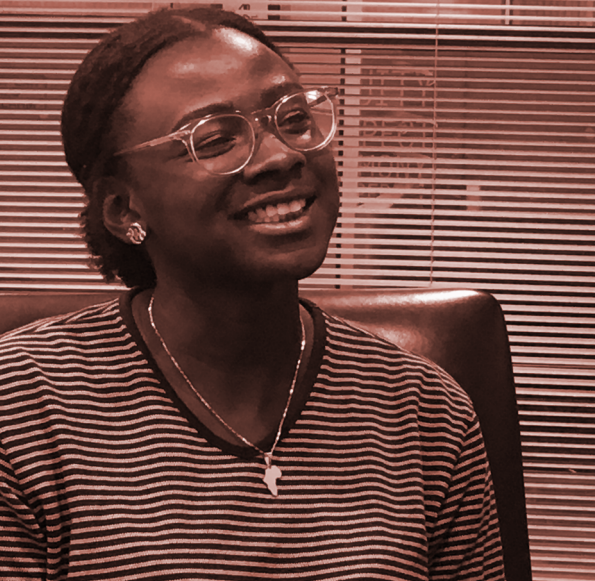
"This, in return, influences policy changes and positively impacts their lives. A case in point is the 'Black Lives Getting Better Together Sposium' that we held for Black queer and trans youth and service providers. There are also the 'Black Youth in Tech' initiatives that enable Black youth to experience possibilities of the current tech world in its highest forms. The impact of these engagements has continued to create positive ripple actions across City divisions as we aim to implement the changes for these Black youth. It's amazing to see what the voices of the community can do."

The intent of implementing the Action Plan's directions for each division is to help make life better for Black Torontonians, to figure out where, for example, in Children's Services are there barriers or obstacles for Black parents or Black children, and how to remove them, he said. Many of the divisions came in with that mindset and they wanted the Unit's expertise and support to figure out how to identify obstacles and barriers, and then, more importantly, to dismantle them.

Through interviews, this creative CABR Unit annual report includes the voices of the political leadership, senior administrative leadership, staff of Social Development, Finance and Administration, and Shelter, Support & Housing Administration divisions of the City of Toronto, the CABR Unit, community funding recipients, and CABR community partners. They all shared their perspectives on the impact of the work of the CABR Unit during its first year.



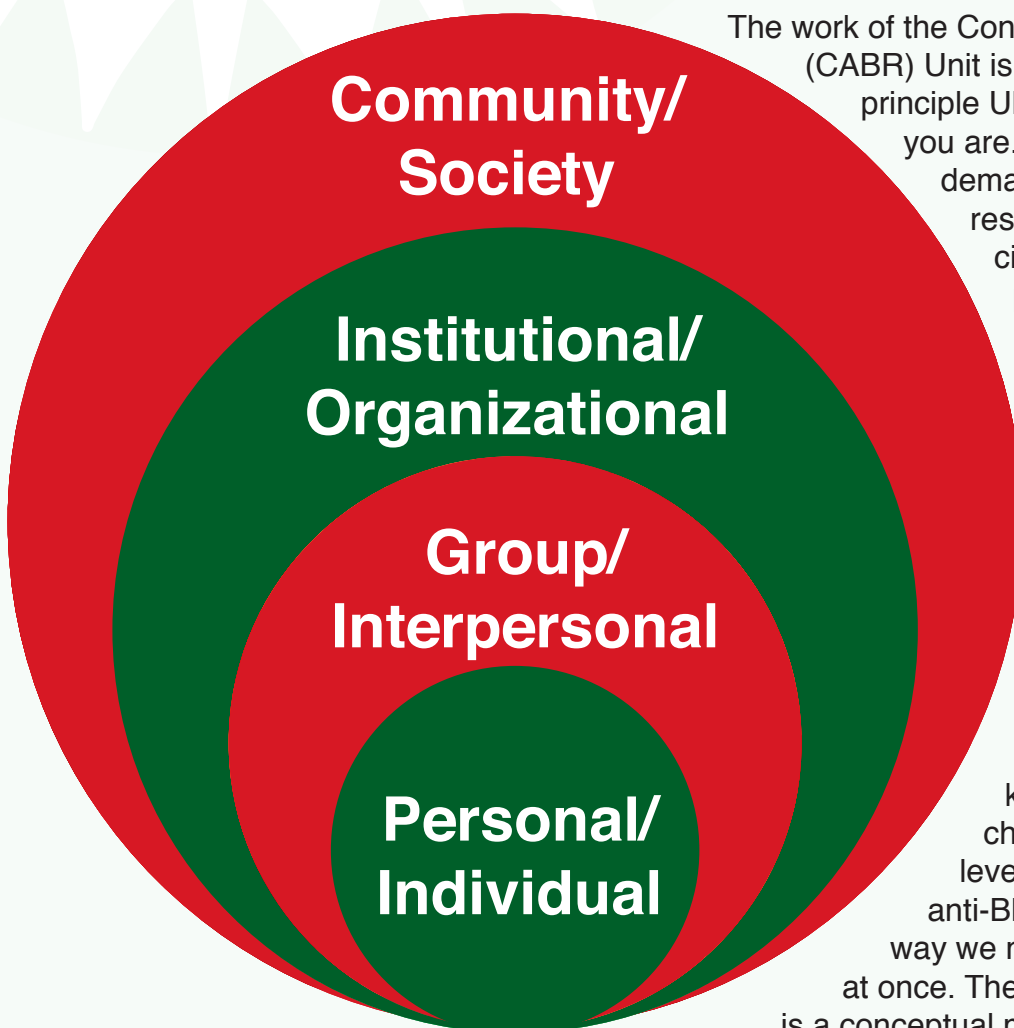




# CABR Ubuntu Framework - How We Work to Change

The work of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit is guided by the African principle Ubuntu: “I am because you are.” Ubuntu speaks to a demand that all people deserve respect no matter what their circumstances may be. This principle has guided the Unit’s work to influence, promote and activate social harmony by identifying and removing barriers for Black residents of Toronto.

The CABR Ubuntu Framework has become a lens through which the Unit sees and evaluates its change story. “We know that deep and holistic change takes place on all levels. To challenge and disrupt anti-Black racism in a sustainable way we must work on multiple levels at once. The CABR Ubuntu Framework is a conceptual model that helps us define



how we go about activating and contributing to deep and holistic societal change,” says Rolston.

CABR understands its work through four spheres of change to help the Unit imagine more robust and multilayered impact-driven work while remaining rooted in African practices and principles. The Unit is committed to holistic change, which happens at the individual, group, and institutional and societal level.

**PERSONAL/INDIVIDUAL:** To activate, sustain, and promote change at the personal and individual level. Confronting anti-Black racism depends on change in individuals at the psychological, emotional, spiritual and intellectual level.

**GROUP/INTERPERSONAL:** To transform group dynamics on the small-scale to form a foundation for broader institutional and communal change. CABR has been engaging teams, working groups, and committees in disruptive conversations that upset the dominance of white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, and class in small to mid-size group dynamics.

**INSTITUTIONAL/ORGANIZATIONAL:** To transform and cultivate new cultures within organizations and institutions. These are cultures that promote robust engagement with the root causes of systematic disadvantage and inequity built on and sustained by anti-Black racism. This level is about our shared psychologies, emotions, systems, policies and practices.

**COMMUNITY/SOCIETY:** To sustain and contribute to broader societal and communal change. Anti-Black racism is embedded in all parts of society and must be confronted in all of its societal incarnations, whether it is racial profiling, disproportionate levels of mental health challenges, or a higher vulnerability to gentrification and displacement.

These spheres of change are not new or novel. They simply help CABR understand and reflect on the change it aims to catalyze, incubate, and activate inside and outside the City.

The story of the CABR’s first year is a narrative of activating change across the multiple levels of the Ubuntu framework. This report also tells a much broader story about the lifecycle of CABR’s work, and how it aims to honour the ancestors and the long history of work, organizing, and engagement that led to the creation of the Unit. It also lays the foundation for a better Toronto for the generations of people of African descent that are yet to be born. The CABR’s work and its commitment to the principle are about legacy. This report and the levels we aim to work on through the framework tell the story of the first year of this legacy.





I do this work because I value participatory democracy and the agency of Black people. I am contributing to <sup>(the)</sup> deconstruction of systems of oppression and this makes me feel like I am giving <sup>(paying)</sup> back.

# CABR Year 1 – A Year of Change

The CABR Unit has worked diligently during Year 1 to lay the foundation for culture change at the City. The team has completed or has in progress 28 per cent of the 80 action items of the five-year Action Plan.

“Everything that we do is about these action items, every single thing. If it’s something that we’re going to do that is not a part of those 80 it must be aligned somewhere to the 80. That is what guides us, because that is what Black Torontonians have asked for and so it’s critical that we make sure that that’s what happens,” says Grant.

The Unit is committed to working inside and outside of the City and lists among its achievements the Black Staff Network, Partnership and Accountability Circle, and the “Blacks on Boards” initiative. As a result of this initiative, applications for board positions went up by 24 per cent in the first two quarters of 2019. The Unit’s next step is to ensure that the practices, protocols and policies to get people on boards are equitable.

“We went non-stop in the first year,” says Grant, noting that she is leading a group of Black people who are absolutely committed and brilliant, but self-care is very important so every three months they stop, reflect, and plan.

Grant feels that the Unit has had many collaborators, which has been good for the team. The Unit had 61 engagements internally with approximately 2,700 staff and 53 external community engagements with 3,500 community members.

Morgan notes that they have an excellent team with amazing chemistry and they are grounded in the same vision of Black freedom, Black dignity and humanity, and trying to bring that “to the work that we do with creativity, with openness and collaborating with folks across the City creating new ideas to try to open up spaces for new possibilities for what can be done.”

He says the past year has gone by fast but it has been one of breaking grounds and new possibilities.”

Like Shuriye and Grant, Morgan highlighted the ceremony at which the City recognized the International Decade for People of African Descent, 2015-2024, as an important achievement. He says it was important for the City to do this when one considers the presence and place of Black people within Canada, Ontario and Toronto, especially against a backdrop of erasure “where too often what we have done, who we are, what we are, how we’ve contributed has been erased, silenced, marginalized, overlooked.”

The City of Toronto became the second municipality in Canada to declare the Decade, its principles and the goals, which are recognition, justice and development for people of African descent.

Shuriye says this really showed the City’s commitment towards addressing anti-Black racism and supporting Black Torontonians. The event brought together almost 150 people including Mayor John Tory and former Poet Laureate, George Elliott Clarke. It provided a lot of energy for the team and according to him, “Put a lot of wind behind our sails, in terms of that we’re on the right path, that we’re helping to integrate and change the culture of City of Toronto to make sure that Black people are included in City building and we’re at the forefront of helping to make our city better.”

Shuriye notes that over the last year the Unit has had some key successes and wins including the setting up of a City Leads Circle, a table composed of different City departments that have actions in the Action Plan. It is an opportunity to provide support and share in best practices and also see where people could collaborate with each other.

He thinks where they are going to see some major developments and changes coming from the actions they have taken today is primarily around embedding the idea of an anti-Black racism analysis within the City organization in policy making and policy development. Toronto’s Children’s Services is developing a five-year strategic plan, and for the first time ever it has reached out to Black organizations and will embed anti-Black racism analysis to help develop their strategic plan.





“This for me shows the development of and the embedding of the Black community at the forefront of the City’s policy development and program delivery.”

Shuriye is looking towards the end of five years to see the fruits of their labour, to see where the experiences are for Black Torontonians when it comes to accessing City services and programs, where the City is in terms of thinking how to engage Black Torontonians from the beginning when developing programs and services to ensure that the Black community is part of the conversation from day one, not at the very end, and to remove systemic barriers.

“The work that we do here to remove anti-Black racism is not easy, nor do I think it’s going to happen overnight or within a couple of years, but I think we have a unique opportunity having this Unit exist to help drive the systemic change and helping to plant the seeds of future change.”

## Creating Culture Change at the City: Political Level

**“I think we’re in that unique stage where we can take great satisfaction from the fact a lot of things have been started but the sort of true accountability phase is just about to begin where enough time is now passed where you should be able to ask a constituency group ...Have you noticed a difference, can you see some openings beginning to take place?”  
- Mayor John Tory**

Mayor John Tory is the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Toronto whose role includes participating in and fostering activities that enhance the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the City and its residents. His leadership supported to the development and implementation of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism and its goal of eradicating anti-Black racism which creates systemic barriers for Black Torontonians.

Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson is the only Black member of Toronto City Council. He keeps a portrait of William Peyton Hubbard, a Toronto alderman from 1894-1914 and one of the first politicians of African descent to be elected to office in Canada, in his office as a reminder of the City’s Black history.

### Choosing the Right Team for the Job – the CABR Unit

Mayor Tory is delighted that in recruiting the staff of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit the City of Toronto got people who are outspoken and noted that with them onboard the City is much more likely to get things actually happening.

Looking at the first year of the Unit’s work, he is pleased with the accomplishments such as the fact that: staff training is happening: the CABR Unit now sits on the Anti-Racism Advisory Panel, which is subcommittee of the Toronto Police Services Board: there are youth leadership programs that are funded; and the City brought together a group of 100-plus people who are

board-ready to be appointed to City boards.

“These were all the things that are necessary prerequisites to addressing these kinds of things in a way that I think will contribute to seeing very positive results in the coming years,” says Mayor Tory.

Meanwhile, Councillor Thompson believes the structure is in place to systematically address and confront anti-Black racism in City government and its agencies, which employ 50,000 people.

“Toronto is incredibly diverse, but that diversity is not yet reflected within the City’s leadership,” he said. That’s a shortcoming we have to address.”

Thompson believes that it is essential for the City of Toronto to have its own house in order before it can be an effective advocate for change within society as a whole. “By uncovering and highlighting the vestiges of racism within City government, the CABR Unit helps the City identify its own systemic shortcomings, and take action to address them.

“No one is denying that anti-Black racism is still found buried deep within business practices and attitudes in many dark corners of our governance structure,” he said. “The CABR Unit’s value is in its ability to shine a light on these corners and encourage the introduction of new operating principles and practices that promote positive change.”

For Councillor Thompson it is important that the Unit’s results are monitored and measured, so the City can gauge its progress and adjust its methods and approaches. “It is essential that the changes we make are effective and structural, not merely cosmetic,” he said.

“Accepting the status quo stifles the City’s performance and diminishes the effectiveness of its employees,” Councillor Thompson noted. “If we do not address the problem of racism, we restrain the progress, productivity and advancement of a significant portion of our workforce which, in turn, limits the City’s potential. The CABR Unit has an opportunity to unlock a tremendous amount of human capital for the City.”

“Ultimately, the CABR Unit may identify the City’s racism problems, but it is all of us, from the Mayor and City Manager to Councillors and staff at all levels, to get engaged and champion change,” he said..



# Creating Culture Change at the City – Decision Making Structures (Blacks on Boards and Black Staff Network)

The Public Appointments Secretariat in the City Clerk’s Office is responsible for the recruitment and retention of board members to sit on the City’s Agencies, Boards and Committees. Aretha Phillip is the Manager of Public Appointments and underscores the importance of Black Torontonians being involved in the decision-making process within local government. Phillip is also a co-lead of the Black Staff Network alongside Jacqueline Kiggundu, a lawyer who is one of the City’s Real Estate Solicitors, in which the goal is to support and engage Black staff in the Toronto Public Service. Both of these initiatives create an opportunity for Black Torontonians to have a voice in matters that impact their lives.

## Recruiting Black Torontonians for Public Appointments

The idea for the ‘Blacks on Boards’ event held in February came out of the City Clerk’s involvement with the CABR Unit and an action item of Recommendation 19 of the Action Plan which calls for increased opportunities for Black Torontonians to participate in City decision-making. This was in line with the Public Appointments Secretariat’s desire to have more Black people represented on the City’s boards, committees and tribunals. In collaboration with the Unit, they spoke about having an event where they would specifically focus and target their invitation to people within the Black community. They invited those who were board-ready to attend the event and encouraged them to forward it to people who they know were also board-ready. It was quite successful and gave the City an opportunity to talk to the community about the opportunities that were available, whether at a corporation, an arena board, a service agency or a tribunal.

**“One of the important things is to ensure that these boards reflect the diversity of the City of Toronto so as part of our application, we collect confidential volunteer diversity information and this helps us assess how are we doing and where more work potentially needs to be done.”**

**- Aretha Phillip, Manager, Public Appointments**

The aim was to create awareness about what type of opportunities are available, helping people unpack where they might be along their board journey and also to network with other people in the community. The event included a panel discussion in which the panelists spoke about their board journey and things that they had to take into consideration.

The Public Appointments Secretariat is responsible for the recruitment and retention of board members to sit on the City’s agencies, boards and committees. There are about 300 positions across 50 boards. It seeks to ensure that these boards reflect the diversity of the City of Toronto.

“For me it’s about taking the narrative from we want skilled and qualified people for our boards [to] and we also want diverse people. It’s about marrying the two and getting people to understand that there is no division. There are people that are board-ready, ready to go from those different communities.”

Given that the city is 50 per cent ethno-racially diverse, the Secretariat has been working on being more representative of it. Fifty-two per cent of their applicants are from the white community, but 76 per cent of those appointed are white. This is an issue and so they decided to be proactive, but purposeful in their approach by going out and finding applicants.

Phillip says her office has been going out and working with community and professional organizations in the Black community for some time. Being on a board helps to affect change at the top as individuals participate in local decision-making and have a voice at the table.

## Establishing a Black Staff Network

Action 11.5 of Recommendation 11 of the Action Plan calls for the engagement of Black City staff to create a Black Staff Network (BSN) to support professional development and engagement. For Phillip and Kiggundu, the Black Staff Network is the fulfillment of a dream. There might have been a few initiatives to get things started in the past but this is the first formalized one. The network has a presence on the City’s intranet site, it is included in the Action Plan and has executive sponsors within the organization.

Phillip, who has been with the City for 18 years, thinks it is time for something to pull together the Black community within the Toronto Public Service. They are excited about being involved with this from its infancy and helping to shape it and see where it goes. The aim is to give it some presence within the City and help to show Black staff that it is important to the City and the City that it is important to staff. Kiggundu says there is a lot of energy in the group, which is refreshing and wonderful to see.





Black staff are excited and energized by the prospects of the BSN. Its presence reassures them that they are not the only one in their division. The City has thousands of employees and the challenge, which seems daunting, is how to set up a structure where people are being informed.

The BSN, which was launched in September 2018, has partnered with the Unit to hold two Black History Month events in February. Its first anniversary featured the launch of the network's logo and an event to recognize Toronto Public Service Week in September. They are also planning some meet-ups and summer socials.

Their aim is to let people know that the group exists and that Black staff at the City can reach out to it. They are working on building the Network by finding staff within the City, organizing engagement events, hosting professional development opportunities and connecting people to resources as needed. The goal is not to be advising individuals about their specific employment issues, but to provide a platform where opportunities are explored to make Black staff succeed as members of the public service. The co-leads want to make sure that they are consulting the network and giving their colleagues the things that they want, and that it grows in a sustainable way.

"I think that's very incredible," says Kiggundu while Phillip notes that, "It's very empowering."

## **Creating Culture Change at the City – Changing Policy in the City**

The fact that the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is mandated by the Mayor and City Council has resulted in more consciousness about being mindful of the experiences of various groups, including Black staff, when trying to get opinions to create a strategy within the corporation. Stephen Linton and Natricia Drummond of the City's Shelter, Support & Housing Administration Division (SSHA) are actively engaged in this process in which they encountered challenges and also won support.

Chris Brillinger is the Executive Director and Chris Phibbs, the Acting Director of Social Policy, Analysis in the SDFA where the Unit is located. Brillinger described the work of the CABR in its first year as spectacular while Phibbs says it has been deeper and broader than she thought it would be.

### **Aiming for an Institutional Shift in the City**

Some divisions are more proactive and the potential to do more intentional work is there.

Linton noted that there is excellent senior leadership that wants to be a part of this change in their division and is making CABR a priority that is resulting in a cultural and organizational shift.

Stephen Linton, who is in service delivery, does not think the City will start seeing the outward facing part of the implementation for at least another year. Regarding the creation of better service for the Black 2SLGBTQ youth in the shelter system, he says the City does not actually operate any youth shelters. They are all contracted out so ultimately there are conversations and dialogue that would be needed with partners to look at how this is implemented.

In terms of the Street Needs Assessment, SSHA collected the race-based information since the end of 2018 and now wonder what the strategy will be to examine the implications and how to shift to accommodate the results.

Natricia Drummond says she feels more credible when she brings up issues around anti-Black racism knowing that there is now a system to lean on and research that she can refer to that is evidence-based. She noted that this work takes time and hopes that it will lead to an actual institutional shift and not become a check mark. The Black staff complement in the division is high, but not in most of the management and director positions.. The frontline staff has been very supportive from the start.

### **This is the Right Time to Do This Kind of Work**

“I thought that we would spend the first year taking small steps into the corporation itself and slowly reaching out at a certain level within the corporation, like at a management level and below. But it’s not been like that at all, it has been more an explosion of activity, events, training and information sharing since the office staffed up,” says Phibbs about the CABR Unit.

There are directors, division heads and people in the City Manager’s Office who know about the Unit’s work and the training being done. Phibbs says they want training to expand and to come into their own shop and that other parts of their division and frontline staff are not forgotten. The response of staff coming forward and saying they want to be involved and engaged in this has been overwhelming. From a staff perspective, she says they have been





running since they got to the City and she is amazed at the amount of work that they have done.

For Brillinger, the work of SDFA is wholly and completely about inclusion and seeing a Toronto that works for every single Torontonian.

**“If it doesn’t work for every single Torontonian it’s not working for any so when in the 30-odd years that I’ve been in the business of community development it has always been clear that the Black communities in Toronto have experienced something that other communities have not”  
-Chris Brillinger, ED of Social Development, Finance & Administration**

“If it doesn’t work for every single Torontonian it’s not working for any, so when in the 30-odd years that I’ve been in the business of community development it has always been clear that the Black communities in Toronto have experienced something that other communities have not and that it has never been fundamentally addressed. So it was clear that this is what we need to be doing right now. It’s what this division does.”

He says this initiative has been blessed in terms of all of the right people putting up their hands and saying, “I will step on this train.” Politically, in terms of the individuals who took the jobs, the community members who engaged in the original discussion but also signed on to the Accountability Circle that is “holding our feet to the fire so all of that tells me it’s the right time, that there had been enough, and it was the right people to move forward on an incredibly complex, difficult and intractable issue.”

He says a conversation has been opened that one cannot put in a box. That is the foundational work, “the fact that people have been given the support, the security, the embrace that allows them to start, and once you start it’s not going back.”

“It is a slowly changing face in the City bureaucracy and in the higher levels of the bureaucracy,” Brillinger said.

Phibbs says the architecture of the Action Plan is very solid and commended Denise Campbell and Aina-Nia Grant, the architects of it.

Brillinger is hoping that the City of Toronto will be a different kind of organization in five years’ time but notes that anti-Black racism will continue to be an issue that the City struggles with.

# Funding Black Futures

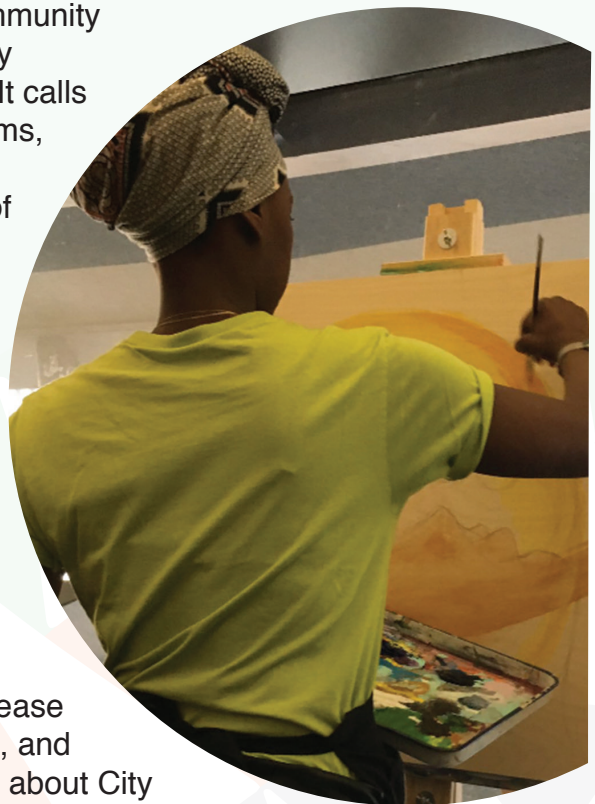
## Changing the Way We Fund Community (Community Funding Unit)

“That has been a real gift of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Plan that we’re actually recognizing there’s institutional racism in the City, like in the corporation, and that no doubt we are part of that system and that we have been part of perpetuating that and that we have to dismantle that through the ways in which we make grants.”

- Barbara Powell, SDFA Manager of the Community Funding Unit

Working in collaboration with the CABR Unit, the Community Funding Unit in SDFA designed funding for community partners in response to Action 1.3 of the Action Plan. It calls for support of effective Black youth leadership programs, including rites of passage, civic and community leadership. The City, in partnership with United Way of Greater Toronto awarded the Black Youth Leadership Program a grant of \$520,000 to three Black-led organizations to provide Black youth leadership programs.

Barbara Powell, SDFA Manager of the CFU, and Agency Review Officers, Okeima Lawrence and Caroline Wai, were instrumental in applying an Anti-Black Racism Lens to implement the actions, including two from Recommendation 21 of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. The recommendation calls for investing in Black arts and culture and two of its four action items are to increase stable funding and supports for Black arts and culture, and outreach to diverse Black people to share information about City grants processes for applications and deadlines.



### Community Funding Unit Takes a Different Approach

Prior to the Action Plan, while working in the Public Health Division, Wai helped to provide research support for the theming of the 41 reports going back as far as 1974, and later assisted with some of the consultations. She says it was a very humbling experience as she could see a pattern of oscillation where something happened, reports were written, some actions were taken, and then things tapered off.



Powell examined all of these years of recommendations and saw that there was so little to show for it. “I thought this a tragedy, this is terrible, how can this possibly be?” She thought about what she could do as the Manager of Community Funding with \$20 million to invest in community organizations. Powell decided that she could not impact many of the recommendations in the Action Plan, but thought about where she could start and what she could do.

Although demographics have changed over 30 years the same agencies are being funded but looking ahead, the plan is to prioritize funding requests instead of being open to everybody. Powell says it has shifted the CFU’s funding practice and prioritized who they are interested in funding. They did some very targeted granting of more than \$800,000, specifically linked to confronting anti-Black racism.

## **Black and Indigenous Entities have Historically been Denied Access to Funding**

As the CFU thinks about its \$17 million of community–funded service partnerships, it plans to hone the definition of vulnerability and state that an overarching condition of it is systemic barriers, like racism, and naming it explicitly.

Powell notes that another recommendation states that Black organizations are underfunded – they have been systematically excluded from funding.

One of the things the CFU did was to bring together the Black-led organizations it already funds and inform them that there was funding to help them build capacity. It also brought onboard a Black facilitator, an independent third party and a Black staff member was recruited to the team.

The meeting was held at Warden Woods Community Centre where they were told that they could determine how they want to strengthen their organizations with the money. They could have it all for themselves or they could do something more broadly in the community. This resulted in, for example, For Us From Us (FUFU), which Powell describes as a good opportunity for leaders “to step up and be leaders and to do that in a way that is African-centred and makes sense to them.”

CFU is also trying to bring this into the Community Service Partnership funding which more is challenging because many of these groups had been funded pre-amalgamation of the City. It has a partnership with United Way and Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) regarding a client level demographic collection tool that the Unit will ask agencies to embed to determine who they actually serve. This is a common tool for funding agencies. Regarding the importance of the collection of disaggregated data, Powell says it has been too easy for organizations to check Black or LGBTQ, but now the Unit will actually hold them to account for who they service.

Wai says it is also an opportunity to ask them if they have an intersectional lens. The CFU’s goal within the next little while is to use pilot projects to embed things within organizations and encourage them to adopt them as part of their core funding in the years ahead.

This funding will be for Black and Indigenous organizations, which all can make a strong case for having been historically denied access to funding.

“Change happens through people and through relationships. Anything we can do that kind of strengthens that, breaks down barriers, increases trust, I think these are positive stepping stones,” says Powell.

## **African-Centered Co–designed Method of Grantmaking**

The funding unit is far more intentional now about the level of investments that are being made into the B3s – Black-led, Black-serving and Black-focused organizations in the not-for-profit sector. This framing has allowed the CFU to engage with the B3s in the city in a new way. This is something that Lawrence attributes to the great work that was done in the research, interviews and focus groups that inform the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism.

According to Lawrence it has opened many doors and opportunities resulting in them reaching more people in the Black community. Like Powell, he mentioned FUFU, a co-designed initiative that is a partnership in which Careers Education Empowerment (CEE) Centre for Young Black Professionals is the lead agency and its partners are the Harriet Tubman Community Organization and Black Moms Connection.

They entered into a seven-month conversation and engagement series with the B3s to develop what has turned out to be a very robust set of activities and interventions that will help to strengthen small, emerging and grassroots B3 organizations in the City of Toronto.

Lawrence says this African-centered co-designed method of grantmaking is being continued by the three community organizations. Black To The Future, a summit organized by FUFU in June 2019, was themed around capacity building, influencing and networking.





There is a group of young emerging professional leaders in the Black community and in the not-for-profit sector that is working to implement these activities and interventions that will support small emerging grassroots B3s in the city of Toronto.

“I think if it wasn’t for the anti-Black racism work and team we wouldn’t have, I don’t think, the same gravitas and the same influence that we would to such a large group of leaders in the community.”

There is a rethink of the way the selection of who gets funding is done; instead of panels there are more discussions. “The needs are quite specific and tailored and that also led to us developing activities or interventions that met the specific needs of the Black community,” says Lawrence.

For the Community of Practice, they are thinking of not just having it as a traditional Community of Practice but building it into an institute where people can have their work certified or accredited by universities and institutions.

## Changing the Grassroots

The culture change in the Community Funding Unit has resulted in these three new youth projects – all of which are collaborative ventures – being supported by the City in ways they hadn’t before. The Legacy Leadership Initiative Program is an eight-month internship training initiative in arts administration. The partnering agencies work with youth, provide mentorship



and try to empower the community through artistic practices. They are COBA, UrbanArts, KasheDance, Ngoma Ensemble, Esie Mensah Creations, Piece of Mind Arts and Roots and Branches.

Niche, a social service pathway for young Black professionals, is led by the Harriet Tubman Community Organization, in partnership with the CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals. It provides frontline training and some placements to young Black youth who are seeking to get into the sector and may have lived experience, but not the professional experience to get in.

The Olori Project is a collaborative civic engagement initiative of five Black organizations: Delta Family Resource Centre, Somali Women and Children’s Network, For Youth Initiative, Urban Rez Solutions and Black Creek Community Health Centre.

Recommendation 2 of the Action Plan calls on the City to meet the specific needs and aspirations of Black queer and trans youth. In April 2019, the CABR Unit collaborated with the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP) and Sherbourne Health – BQY to facilitate a symposium for Black 2SLGBTQ youth and service providers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. It was entitled “Black Lives Getting Better Together (BLGBT) – Spill the Tea.”

Garfield Durrant, MSM Prevention Coordinator at Black CAP, a CABR Unit community partner, notes that this was an opportunity for service providers to learn from each other’s experiences related to serving Black queer youth and to learn about the challenges as well as the successes and best practices. They also had the opportunity to hear from the youth directly on how their programs affect them and how these programs can be improved on or expanded to better serve their needs.

## The Legacy Leadership Initiative Program

**“There is this sense of calmness that happens. When you create that kind of safe space what happens is some of the vulnerabilities and insecurities come forth because they feel that they can do so. In essence, this is a healing process for these youth.”**

**- Cassandra Belafonte,  
Program Director of  
Dance Immersion**

Collectively, with Dance Immersion as the lead, the partnering agencies thought about another avenue they could undertake to empower youth. Nine participants spent the first half of the program in classes and then did a placement with the artistic partners, which led them to consider whether to work with organizations or to become entrepreneurial and create their own opportunity.

Cassandra Belafonte, Program Director of Dance Immersion, says what is great about the program is it is for Black youth, it is being offered by Black organizations and the facilitators are Black professionals. The facilitators provide not only their professional expertise but their lived experience regarding workplace issues and how to navigate them.



She says having this leadership at the City that reflects community concerns and needs has been valuable and heartwarming. The program director has never seen that type of accessibility and space in the City before, and the corporation offering the ability for organizations to create something that matters to the community that they serve.

“Being able to kind of come together and create this program and then it being funded and us doing this type of work has just been transformative, at least for me, and I know for the partners and for the participants especially.”

As someone who has been working as an arts administrator for the last 10 years, especially in the work that Dance Immersion does in the community, Belafonte has had to explain repeatedly what they do and why it matters, and the community that they serve had to do the same. Dance Immersion, a not-for-profit organization, produces, promotes and showcases dancers and dances of the African diaspora. They had felt like they were not being seen, heard or understood but with the establishment of the CABR Unit they feel that a space has been provided where their work is appreciated.

“I think that CABR is actually creating a space for there being leaders in this type of conversation and the opportunities that they are providing to the community they’re making other people be better – other funders, organizations be better.”

One of the things she loves about the Unit is that it has pockets of opportunities in different avenues for youth. For example, 50 Black youth were able to participate in the first Collision Conference held in Toronto. The conference hosted more than 25,000 technology experts and companies from all over the world. She says the funding from the Community Funding Unit is changing the conversation and people have to take notice and so other funders are taking notice. “It’s a powerful shift that happens and is beginning.”

It has been a positive experience for the Black youth participants because they had never been able to enter into this kind of training program where their peers and the facilitators look like them, and they are able to benefit from the life and professional experiences of experts.

The Legacy Leadership Initiative Program started in January and will be completed in September. In the future, they plan to create a certificate program.

## **The Olori Project**

‘Olori’ is a Yoruba word for leader, and as a civic engagement project it initially focused on how to get the youth involved in the electoral process and how to engage in community movements and grassroots organizing in Black communities that influence the way that the City engages with these communities.

The Olori Project includes an initial 13-week Leadership Series that focuses on different aspects of the Black Youth Experience each week to prepare them to do youth council work. This involves them choosing an issue that relates to their community, advocating for it and mobilizing around the issue.

Vanessa Oraekwe of Delta Family Resource Centre says this creates a way for Black youth to focus on leadership, not only through the lens of excellence, but making it accessible for them and showing them that it has already been present in their lives though unacknowledged.

The funding has allowed the partners to reach a broader scope of youth and to connect with each other for resources that they do not necessarily have in their own organization. Black Creek is health and wellness focused so the other partners can rely on them for aspects that are service gaps at Delta Family Resource Centre. They can refer youth to Black Creek or to resources outside of the Olori Project. Urban Rez has a good media team and helps with branding so the partnership solidifies a network for the project.

“It’s been a way not only to connect with more youth but utilize all of our resources to build a bigger pool of resources to tap into for us as leads.”

Oraekwe says the project is unique in getting youth to talk about anti-oppression, systemic barriers and challenging those issues. She noted that in their budgeting and planning for a smooth year the reality proved otherwise because there was no blueprint for them to follow.

It was a lot of emotional labour for the youth to learn the deep histories and the systemic issues concerning their communities, she says, noting that the City of Toronto acknowledging the issue and confronting it has made it more understandable for Black youth. This opened up an opportunity for the youth to make a change in the way that they are being seen, but also the way that they can imagine their future. Oraekwe says this type of funding is important for that education because they do not get it in school and they learn to advocate for themselves.

The gains include having the ability to tap into each other to learn about different experiences and common challenges. This provides them with a sense of solidarity and awareness that they have support in other spaces and access to elders.

They plan to hold conferences, develop action plans and do things collectively and disparately. She thinks having this support system has been the greatest benefit to the youth because they do not have parents who are well-versed in these things or have the time to educate them about how to advocate for themselves.

The youth are excited about not only the program being a resource where they can learn, but also where they receive an honorarium. They planned a panel discussion in July about several issues, including the intersectional ways in which Blackness gets erased, but is also hyper-visual and the cultural





appropriation and different things that happen in Toronto. The aim is to have a certification for the youth for having completed the leadership series.

## **Targeting the Specific Needs and Aspirations of Black Queer & Trans Youth**

Durrant says there were learning opportunities from the symposium that will inform the Unit's further planning of events or target enhancing the resilience and capacity of the 2SLGBTQ Black Torontonians youth. One of the strong highlights was having the wellness supports on site which helped to ground the space, especially for the youth. The conversations tended to be heavy and so throughout the day there was a designated space with individuals that were given specific roles to provide wellness supports when triggers occurred.

In terms of learning opportunities, the youth expressed the need to have more time to discuss additional issues and to come up with recommendations for actions. They suggested a two-day symposium to focus on some of the ways they could better contribute to the process, as well as give them the space for many voices at the event to participate fully in the discussions. The breakout sessions were useful and a way of encouraging engagement even for the youth who were quieter. Individuals in the smaller groups also felt that they did not have as much time.

"People felt it was useful as a first step and they felt empowered because the service providers were in the space but the service providers didn't take up the space. The youth had the chance to speak openly and the service providers sat back, listened and took notes," says Durrant.

The symposium has allowed the Unit and the partner organizations to gain a better understanding of the varied lived experiences of Black queer and trans youth in the city. The approach is to improve the gaps in service as well as highlight the learning opportunities for service providers to better understand the unique experiences of Black queer and trans youth in Toronto. Whenever governments and service providers work to target the removal of systemic barriers experienced by the most disadvantaged communities all residents benefit, says Durrant. The actions when taken as a whole and executed fully will definitely benefit all Torontonians, especially other Toronto communities experiencing racism and marginalization.

The overarching goal of the event was to foster networks of collaboration, to build trust between Black queer and trans youth and service providers. Durrant thinks part of the existence of the Action Plan was to connect with the various community-based agencies and partners doing the work to create knowledge transfer and exchange and to also give guidance.

The symposium was designed to facilitate collaborative discussion as well as engagement of individuals and organizations committed to addressing social inequality, especially among Black 2SLGBTQ youth. Its aim was also to consult and invest in meeting the specific needs and aspirations of Black queer and trans youth, as well as expanding the resources for Black

queer and trans youth to work with Black parents, service providers and youth to create culturally relevant education and support services for parents of Black queer youth and trans children and youth. It wanted to highlight often unnoticed and ignored lived experience of Black queer and trans youth in order to affect policy changes and to encourage further research on how to improve outcomes and the overall quality of life for these youth.

The aim was also to create opportunities for co-designed programs with the BLGBTQ youth themselves – social justice, social service, education reform and youth services. The participants felt that the Action Plan was providing support to inclusive and affirming environments to ensure that the 2SLGBTQ Black Toronto youth are healthy and supported mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, as well as financially.

## Changing the City by Bringing in Community – The Partnership and Accountability Circle (PAC)

“We have started on a good footing to open up the City, so to speak, to a new paradigm. Anti-Black racism now is slowly being mainstreamed within the City.”

- Amanuel Melles, Partnership and Accountability Circle

The CABR Unit established the Partnership and Accountability Circle (PAC), which is made up of 12 Black Torontonians, to guide and support the full implementation of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. This is in keeping with Recommendation 19 of the Action Plan, which calls for increased opportunities for Black Torontonians to participate in City decision-making. Surranna Sandy, Fatima Hirsi and Amanuel Melles are members of the PAC.

One of the strengths of this body is that its members are from diverse backgrounds bringing their different expertise to collaborate and build a team. The PAC recognizes that there is a tall order in terms of expectations of the Unit but its members are pleased with the progress made so far.





## Achievements of the CABR Unit

The PAC members list as progress the Unit engaging the Toronto Police Service to look at the kind of training and interventions that the organization has in place to better understand anti-Black racism and its impact on the community. Another indication of progress are the training, support and networking activities the City provided in response to the low number of Black Torontonians who are members of boards in the city of Toronto.

**“We have started on a good footing to open up the City, so to speak, to a new paradigm. Anti-Black racism now is slowly being mainstreamed within the City.”**

**- Amanuel Melles,  
Partnership and  
Accountability Circle**

Sandy says the work that the Unit has done in training, internal relationship building and creating allyship within the City is foundational. She hopes the outcome will be more equity and an understanding of anti-Black racism within the City and its impact on Black City workers’ mental health and ability to progress into leadership roles.

“I think the big thing is our community has been involved at various levels, intimately if you want, before the Council approved the recommendations so there has been an expectation of what is the City going to do now,” says Melles.

He thinks the work of the Unit within the City is sometimes invisible to the community and that the City is a huge machinery with many divisions which several of the recommendations address. “I think this is the challenge of the first year in terms of our goal as members of the PAC.”

There has been a lot of work done and the Unit has been responsive to things that evolved. For example, the work that has been done to get the City to recognize the International Decade for People of African Descent or on the carding issue when the Ontario Human Rights Commission released its interim report.

The first 18 months involved outlaying the foundations for success and Melles thinks telling that story is an important part of informing Black communities about the 5-year strategy. The important milestones over the Unit’s 18 months in existence includes the rolling out of the grant programs to support some of the Black-led organizations.

There is more work that needs to be done and he thinks within some of the senior levels in the City, including the Mayor’s Office, there is a bit of mainstreaming of anti-Black racism, recognizing that it is a challenge that needs to be tackled and recommendations built. To get word out about the gains of the Unit recorded in its annual report, Melles thinks it should be done through traditional channels such as local media in Black communities. It is also useful to be present at important events that are happening in these communities and to utilize them as platforms to talk about some of the work.

## Telling the Story of the CABR Unit and PAC to the Community

The PAC has been busy supporting the Unit in the first year laying the foundation to do the internal work that is important and it is now considering whether its members have missed some opportunities to engage the community. This could be through a roundtable that allows PAC to tell “this incremental and progressive invisible work, but important that’s happening in the City,” says Melles.

For Year Two, Sandy wants to see more media awareness happening for the CABR Unit team. She thinks there should be more media engagement from PAC members who will try to respond to specific issues. Hirsi wants to see the work of divisions of the City of Toronto aligning with the Action Plan and in a sustainable way to address anti-Black racism long-term.

Melles says the key for him is that given the political climate, locally and nationally, there is an increase in hate for which data shows that Blacks are consistently the group that is most under attack. He says it is important to identify allies within and outside of the Black community and the political sphere, and to remain connected with the traditional organizations in the Black community that are doing programs and service on the ground.

“We need to strengthen our capacity to work collectively, not just depending on the Confronting Ant-Black Racism Unit. My concern is that there’s a lot that’s now gravitating into this Unit for follow-up.”

“My hope is that we will have greater focus to look at further strengthening the gains but also ensuring that this Unit doesn’t become the jack of all trades. There’s some work to be done, there’s an accountability that PAC needs to speak to the community around the implementation of these recommendations.”





# The Next Four Years

The CABR Unit is only one part of a large constellation of activists, residents, and organizations working to protect and promote the lives, livelihoods, and futures of African, Caribbean, and Black peoples. For the Unit, leaving a legacy involves working with, alongside, beside, and behind the various Black communities to move forward our broader aim to promote freedom, liberation, and justice for all African, Caribbean, and Black peoples in Toronto.

The first year has been a foundational year for CABR. The stories in this report speak of the work done to establish CABR as one of many forces in the City aimed at transforming the lives, livelihoods, and futures of African, Caribbean, and Black peoples across this City. With a full staff complement and stronger understanding of the City and what it means to activate change within its walls, the CABR is looking up and out to the next four years. The Unit's aim is to expand and intensify its work, both internally and externally.

With a full roster of expert trainers, CABR will extend its organizational transformation work across City staff ensuring that all divisions are trained on Anti-Black racism, starting with the City's senior leaders. These trainings are not an end in themselves; they have opened and will continue to open new pathways for collaboration across divisions at the City.

The CABR Units' policy work will continue to ensure that an anti-Black racism lens is applied to new and existing policy across the City. In particular, the team's aim is to ensure that through disaggregated race-based data City divisions are able to actively reflect on how services, policies, and programs impact African, Caribbean, and Black communities across the city. The CABR policy arm continues to head a City Leads table of decision-makers of divisions, agencies and boards who have committed to moving forward key actions in the Action Plan. This table and the broader policy work will continue to be one of the many vehicles through which CABR activates the Action Plan across the City.

Externally, the CABR will be moving into new areas of community development work. In its first year, the team focused on raising awareness of the Unit and its mandate. Moving forward, the

Unit will be venturing into doing deep work in the areas of Black food sovereignty, gentrification and Black displacement, arts activism, mental health supports and supporting Black queer and trans youth to lead service redesign. These are a few of the areas in which the CABR will focus its efforts. As a Unit, CABR has firmly positioned itself as an incubator and catalyzer working in partnership with B3 organizations, residents, and communities to activate initiatives that may not have been supported otherwise. It does this while focused on building legacy (sustainability) for all its initiatives.

While the first year was about setting the foundation, the next four years will be focused on legacy (beyond sustainability). It is not by accident that the CABR finds itself doing this work during the International Decade for People of African Descent. The Unit is not just part of a long history of a citywide movement; it is a part of a global movement to promote the lives of people of African descent. Anti-Black racism will not subside in the near future, but the CABR Unit is committed to standing with the community to make the Decade count; for our ancestors, for those of us that are here today, and for those that will come tomorrow.







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# The City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit

is responsible for rolling out the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism and responds to the priorities identified by Toronto's diverse Black communities.


## Visit the CABR web page to learn about:

- ▶ The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism and accomplishments made during the first year of implementing the plan
- ▶ the Partnership and Accountability Circle and its members
- ▶ resources and upcoming events
- ▶ how to sign up for the CABR newsletter

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