The Power of Mentorship: The University of Alberta Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program

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Land Acknowledgement

• I am located on Treaty 6 territory, and respect the histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

• I acknowledge my positionality as a settler.
Agenda

• HIPP Research Program

• Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program
HIPP Research Program
Health and Immigration Policies and Practices Research Program (HIPP)

Goal:
- To address the gaps in immigration and health policies and practices.
- Address health inequities by improving the health in Canada
- Around 55 funded research projects in the area of immigrant health
- Interdisciplinary collaborations: Social Policy, Sociology, Psychology, Public Health, Nursing, Women and Gender Studies, Political Science, Epidemiology, Anthropology, Psychiatry, Law, Pediatrics, Demography
- Collaborators in over 30 countries
HIPP Strategic Direction

- Drive high-impact policy and practice research on migration
- Mentor and train diverse talented researchers
- Build cross-sectoral networks to improve immigrant health
- Shape Canadian & International policy and practice on immigrant health
HIPP Research Findings

- Anti-black and intergenerational tensions are important factors that contribute to the mental health of Black youths.
- Income and community belonging have the strongest influence on immigrant mental health in Canada.
- A strength-based perspective to health service delivery is needed that capitalize on the strengths, agency and values.
- Self-reported mental health of immigrants declines after 5 years in Canada (from Statistics Canada data).
- Immigration status is a major determinant of health, with impacts on ability and willingness to access health services.
- Strength-based community engagement is critical to improve immigrant health.
HIPP Past Findings on Anti-Black Racism

- Black People Experience Racism at Work
  - "So this person was from Africa and he was hired at a certain department. He was supposed to work the same job as others, regardless of the colour but they give him a cleaning duty because of the colour of his skin" (Immigrant Service Provider Focus group on Mental Health - 2016)

- Black Children Experience Racism in the School System
  - "And people talk about like racism within the (school) system, like our kids are really being looked at different as soon as they walk in. So if the Somali kid does the same thing as a white Canadian kid, they’re going to be looked at different" (African Parent Interview, 2016)

- Anti-Black Racism Contribute to Health of Black Youths
  - “I grew up with so much internalized anti-blackness. God, I hated myself. I wanted to be white so bad. I wanted to have straight hair. I wanted to have lighter skin....” (Black Youth Mental Health Interview, 2020)

- Non-Black Health Professionals are Often Unable to Provide Anti-racist Health Services
  - "When you call Health Link ... So they are asking you if your child is blue. And being a black person, my child never turns blue. So then it makes you wonder how well these health personnels have been trained to know more about other races and how to address." (2018 interview)
  - “Oh, like I’m experiencing #racism” They’d be like, “What? Oh, what? Are you sure? Okay, let’s get you some like other strategies you can deal with like the workplace or something.“ (Black Youth Mental Health Interview, 2020)
HIPP Mentorship and Training

• Over 40 individuals have been trained or mentored (all except 2 are BIPOC)
• Trainees have published several papers in peer reviewed journals
• Trainees have won major awards
  • 2 Canadian Vanier Awards (only nurse researcher in Canada to supervise two Canadian Vanier Awardees)
  • 2 IDRC Awards
  • 3 Women and Children’s Health Research Institute Awards
• Trainees have landed successful careers
  • 1 Associate Professor
  • 2 Assistant Professors
  • 1 prestigious postdoctoral fellow
Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program
How it Started

• University of Toronto Black Youth Mentorship Program

• Department of Heritage, Government of Canada funding: Specific Focus on Black Youths

• 17 Black Faculty Members
Organizational Structure
Goal and Objectives

• The Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program seeks to socially and economically empower Black youths to contribute meaningfully to the society. The program has the following anticipated outcomes:

  • Increase the leadership skills of black youths
  • Increase the postsecondary entry and completion rate for black youths;
  • Foster community belonging for black youths
  • Create a positive cultural identity for black youths
  • Increase ability of black youths to tackle issues of racism and discrimination.
Recruitment and Selection

• Diverse recruitment strategies
  • Social Media
  • Community Networks and Channels
  • Email listserv

• Applicants Submitted
  • A one page essay
  • High school transcript
  • Application form

• 72 Youths Applied
  • 36 youths were selected
Two Streams

• Mentorship Stream
  • 26 Youths
  • Group mentorship by an undergraduate student
  • Group paper
  • Presentation
  • Workshops
  • Paid $500

• Research Stream
  • 10 Youths
  • Individual mentorship by a faculty member
  • Work experience
  • Workshops
  • Paid $15 per hour for 15 hours a week for 12 weeks
  • 2 Received High School Credit
Mentorship Stream

• Nursing, Psychology and Speech/Language
  • Black populations have a high rate of mental health problems. There are several factors that contribute to the mental health of Black people in Canada. Complete a review of the literature on factors that contribute to the mental health of Black people in Canada. What is the role of diverse health professionals (e.g. nurses, psychologist etc) in addressing the mental health of Black people in Canada?

• Law, Social Work and Social Justice
  • Evidence indicate that Black people experience racism in schools. Complete a review of the literature on racism in the school system as it relates to black populations in Canada. What can be done by diverse professionals such as lawyers, social workers, educators and criminologist in addressing racism in schools?

• Engineering
  • Engineering applies the principles of science and mathematics to solve real-world problems. As a result, the practice of engineering produces many positive outcomes for society. In Black populations, especially those in developing countries, engineering can be used to help make people’s life better from providing clean drinking water in homes to helping to combat climate change through integration of renewable energy technologies. Conduct a literature or internet review on how engineering can be used to improve the lives of Black populations in developing countries. Provide a summary of the improvements and the net benefits for a region, country, or local community.

• Medicine
  • Sickle Cell Disease rate is high among people of African decent. Bone marrow transplant has recently been used to cure sickle cell disease in Alberta. Complete a review of the literature on bone marrow transplant as a treatment for sickle cell disease. Develop recommendations for physicians on how to treat patients with sickle cell disease who are undergoing bone marrow transplant.

• Business, Management and Administration
  • Evidence indicate that Black populations experience racism within organizations. What factors contribute to racism within organizations? What is the role of leadership in addressing racism within organizations?
Workshop

• Faculty Member Career Panel
• Conducting Literature Searches and Literature Reviews
• Improving Your Writing Skills
• Thriving in University: A Career Panel with University Students
• Economic Empowerment of Black Youth
• Effective Study Skills
• Experience of Applying for Awards
• Financing your studies
• Public Speaking Communication and Professionalism
• Mental Health Promotion
• Your Brand Matters
• Leadership and Conflict Resolution
• Virtual Campus Tour
• Thriving in the world of work: A professional panel
• Tackling Racism in Canada
• Black History and Afro quiz
Final Reflection by a Mentee

• “As a result of participating in these projects and learning many useful lessons, I now have a lot more knowledge about not only what it means to be the best version of myself academically and mentally, but what it means to be a person of colour. Being a person of colour is a privilege that I now pride myself in but I have learned that it should not be my main drive for accomplishing my goals. My love for what I am doing should be my motivation. Because as wonderful as it is to be black, my colour is not what defines me as a person, but my actions in my everyday life. One of the most important things that I have learned while being in this mentorship program/ research assistant job is a lesson from Dr. Salami, to always say thank you for every opportunity I get. So to Dr. Salami and to everyone who was involved in this program I would like to say thank you. Thank you for how much you have helped me and prepared me for the future. It is something that I can only repay you back for by going out and using all the tools you have equipped me with to make society a better place for future generations.”

Anjola Oyelami’s Written Reflection
Logo Competition

• We chose green as our main color as it represents ambition, growth, financial prosperity, and successful advancement in life. We believe that all of these ideals are what the Mentorship Program represent and strives to inspire within the Black Youth.

• The maple leaf in the background serves to represent the youth as being Canadian and its black color to show our connection with the black community.

• The figure in the center shows the black youth developing into better leaders. The graduation cap is added to show that the youth has graduated or are going to graduate. Both leadership and higher graduation rates are both core objectives of the BYMP which we both thought should be represented in our logo.
The logo I created was inspired by what I have learned throughout my days in the program and also learned about myself as a black individual. The title of being a black individual in society is weighed heavily, sometimes in a negative form. During this program, I was able to learn and acknowledge the brighter aspects of being a person of color rather than from the perspective of society's standards as a person of black ethnicity. In my logo, I wanted to truly highlight that idea. That is why I created more detail and style to the acronym letter B, which stands for Black. I believe that this program provides more than just advice for future goals and ideas, or address certain issues in our society related to our race. The BYMP provides us with advice and inspiration so we can grow as our own unique individuals and have greater success in a brighter future. This why I created the graduation cap with different cultural flags on top of the "B" and having the letter "B" filled with plants emphasizing the thought of growth. In summary, the logo is an expression that all black youths have a great chance at success no matter their background. We all wish to reach success and we are sometimes on sure where to start, this program is a great place to begin, filled with encouragement and wise words. The Black Youth Mentorship Program really helps all individuals grow as their own unique selves, not just based on ethnicity.
The Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program has become a staple in my life, filled with wisdom, incredible stories, inspirational speakers, and amazing like-minded youth. For these two logos, I used five colours that I feel encompasses some of the key achievements of this program. The first colour is red. I chose that colour as it represents self-confidence. Personally, this program has really helped me come out of my shell, speaking to people I would not have ordinarily piped up to speak to, making friends and being inspired, being told and shown by impactful teachers and professionals that I can achieve what I want, that I can succeed no matter the discrimination or odds stacked against me. I can only imagine how my fellow mentees and RAs feel as well. Green, the next colour, is for health. The speakers you brought helped us build healthy habits and patterns not just for high school, but for beyond. Skills like how to write a resume, manage credit and finance, studying and writing skills, and saving skills, all of them critical to a healthy and positive lifestyle, all of them a stamp of success. Not every youth is exposed to these lessons, and we all as a collective are blessed to have such experts and academics guiding us. Next, yellow, for the deep well of knowledge that this program has exposed us to. Teaching and training us simultaneously is quite a feat, and I cannot articulate the extent of what I have learned, and the impact it will forever have on my life and the lives of my fellow mentees and RAs is pretty much immeasurable. Brown represents practicality and security, clearly for the way the knowledge and assorted benefits of this program makes us more adept in our practical skill sets and results in more security in our futures. Lastly, orange, for the joy and energy of our RAs, mentees, professors, experts, and assorted visitors have brought. We have had so much fun, spread so much energy and kindness. It really has created a community among us.
Logo Competition

• This logo represents the power and strength that education provides. The fist in the logo represents black power and the pride that we have in our race. The book at the top represents the influence that education has and how we are uplifted through it.

• I chose the University of Alberta coat of arms to represent the black faculty of the UofA community leading this program. I also chose the various doodles as a representation of what we are receiving through this program. This program is giving us many skills to succeed in post secondary education.
Logo Competition

- The brown squares represent the different shades of black youth that could be in the program. It is to show that no matter how dark or light you are you are still black and will be able to find that representation. My motivation for this design was colorism and prejudice towards darker skinned people. It is a very prominent thing in our society; the different colours standing together with the white letter represent how we are all equal, and are able to find a place together harmoniously, because we are the future.
Logo Competition

• Fist/Fist bump- Depending on your perspective, the logo can either look like a fist or a fist bump to you. I chose to have the fist/fistbump represent the BYMP because the black fist represents solidarity and unity among black people and the fistbump represents friendship and respect. The fist/fistbump represents what I and many others are experiencing in the BYMP. We feel like we belong in the program because of our shared life experiences, we are being represented, we are given the opportunity to make new friends and possibly form lifelong connections.

• Shape- Another cool thing about the logo is that the Logos shape spells BYMP.
Logo Competition

• The logo represents the diversity of the bymp to the right showing multiple countries with majority black population and home countries to many of the young leaders in the program. Through all the flags there is a graduation cap that we used to represent the group's drive to succeed. On the right is a basic style of the BLM fist in the air under the Canadian flag basically showing the black population of Canada fighting to be over achievers in Canada.
Thank You