

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

African Canadian Community Coalition Raises Serious Concerns About Black Experience Project Report

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A coalition of African Canadian organizations and concerned individuals has expressed serious concerns about the recently released **Black Experience Project (BEP)** report, a project of Environics Research Institute and multiple partners.

Coalition members commend the BEP partners for engaging the Coalition in meaningful discussion about the BEP - especially the report and the process for producing it. This occurred after the Coalition raised significant concerns about the initiative, beginning in October 2016, with the objective of ensuring that the lived experiences of African Canadians are accurately interpreted and reflected.

Over that period of time, the Coalition has provided proactive leadership, strategic input, content expertise and persistent advocacy that directly informed the development of the final report. Coalition members believe that:

- While some of the report's content will be beneficial to the African Canadian community, we have serious reservations about the overall process and content. Protecting the integrity of the stories and experiences entrusted to BEP researchers by the community is our number one priority.
- The project partners have yet to fully publicly acknowledge and apologise for the lack of respectful engagement and follow up with the African Canadian community after a gap of 3 years since the collection of data. The overall management of the BEP process has not adhered to the project's stated commitment of prioritizing research conducted respectfully, by and with the community.
- The project has either ignored or downplayed community advice on critical issues. For example, white supremacy is referenced as an afterthought rather than a framing concept in the report. As well, Coalition members believe that the report lacks a robust and comprehensive gender analysis, there is scarce discussion of health, and LGBTQ realities and perspectives are generally absent. While there may have been a need to make choices about the elements of the black experience that would be profiled in the report, the rationale for these choices remains weak or non-existent.
- African Canadians have made outstanding contributions to the political, economic, social and cultural landscape of the Greater Toronto Area and Canada. The story of our triumphs and challenges is also the story of our city and this country. We are rich in our diversity of perspectives and experiences, but this diversity does not diminish the existence of a collective Black experience - an experience that is complex, layered and requires the application of a nuanced lens to reflect the fullness of our realities.

We recognize and applaud the tremendous data gathering and community engagement ground work done by many community interviewers as well as the research leadership of members of the project's **Research Advisory Group** in moving the project forward.

Tabono Institute will be leading a **Community Research Forum** at Ryerson University in **October 2017** to continue building a comprehensive, community-led research agenda; to engage community stakeholders about the development of a community research ethics protocol for the African Canadian community to guide future research efforts; to critically analyse the recent BEP experience; and to identify community research gaps, needs and options for moving ahead.

We urge members of the African Canadian community to contact us with your ideas about how to make the upcoming Community Research Forum meaningful and relevant to the needs of our community.

Our partners include: All Afrikan Peoples' Revolutionary Party, Black Community Action Network of Peel (BCAN), Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP), Dejinta Beesha, Jamaican Canadian Association, Tabono Institute, Zero Gun Violence Movement, Sankofa Juba.

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