

## BLACK YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### 2.1.

Jabo, now 21 and at the University of Ottawa, felt at a loss in the pandemic's early days. He was in Grade 12 then and had big plans for graduation and beyond. When everything was suddenly cancelled, Jabo found himself feeling helpless and anxious about his future, but he chose not to tell his parents about his struggles: "I didn't understand it as a problem to be shared. It's just not something that's brought up." His family moved to Canada in 2009; being newcomers meant his parents had to worry about a lot of things – from employment to housing and more. "That doesn't leave space for talks on mental health," Jabo said.

"The cultural perception of mental health is, like, of people being crazy."

*Adapted from a CBC News story.*



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### 2.2.

"I have experienced bullying by college colleagues that resulted in triggering my suicidal depression. I have experienced ableist bullying at my previous office workplace in which I was verbally and socially bullied by co-workers and supervisors for being 'slow' and different... I have experienced blatant, overt or explicit homophobia, biphobia, and ableism from close immediate relatives, and anti-Black racism from the mostly non-Black POC community I reside in. I do not feel safe, valued or accepted outside of the emotional support from my assigned Social Worker."

*From the Ontario Youth Sector Compass survey by YouthREX.*



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### 2.3.

"I remember feeling targeted by my high school teacher. He consistently put me down, questioned my beliefs (I am a Black hijab-wearing Muslim), and made inappropriate comments... This was done publicly in front of a room full of 27 students. I felt humiliated, picked out, and depressed. I began questioning my identity and beliefs because this was only happening to me and my friends did not understand my frustration. People chose to believe that his comments were jokes and that I should learn to not take the comments too seriously."

*From the Ontario Youth Sector Compass survey by YouthREX.*



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### 2.4.

Angel is a counsellor in a youth mental health agency. In addition to providing therapy, Angel engages in extensive client advocacy and family work. Youth see Angel, a young Black queer woman, as a role model. In a team meeting, Angel chats with her colleague, Sarah, a white counsellor. The talk shifts towards compensation. Angel is stunned to learn that her hourly wage is \$10 less than Sarah, though their qualifications are similar and their titles and job descriptions are the same. Sarah explains that she negotiated better and it might be because Angel was only there because she was a 'diversity' hire. Angel can't help but cry at work. Her mental health rapidly declines; she becomes depressed and anxious at work, and her family doctor prescribes anti-depressants.



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### QUESTION 1

What's happening here?

### QUESTION 2

What are the assumptions I'm making in describing what's happening?

### QUESTION 3

What are the harms for Black youth, families, and communities?

### CALL TO ACTION

How can this be made right?

What can I/we do to support racial healing?



The Kit for Centering Black Youth Wellbeing:  
Call-In-Cards for Anti-Black Racism Action  
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