BLACK
NEW YORKERS ON THEIR
EXPERIENCES
WITH
ANTI-BLACK
RACISM

NYC Commission on Human Rights
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS CONSULTING GROUP
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Authors

This report was authored by the New York City Commission on Human Rights based on research led by Tracy Pugh, who served as Special Project Partner at Strength in Numbers Consulting Group, Inc.

About the New York City Commission on Human Rights

The New York City Commission on Human Rights (the “Commission”), led by Chair and Commissioner Carmelyn P. Malalis, is the City agency responsible for enforcing the New York City Human Rights Law (the “City Human Rights Law”), one of the most comprehensive anti-discrimination laws in the country. The Law prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations based on race, color, religion/creed, age, national origin, alienage or citizenship status, gender (including sexual harassment), gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, marital status, and partnership status. Interns, whether paid or not, are considered employees under the Law. In addition, the Law affords protection against discrimination in employment based on unemployment status; arrest or conviction record; credit history; caregiver status; status as a victim of domestic violence, stalking, and sex offenses; and sexual and reproductive health decisions. The Law affords additional protections in housing based on lawful occupation, family status, any lawful source of income, and status as a victim of domestic violence, stalking, and sex offenses. The City Human Rights Law also prohibits retaliation, discriminatory harassment, and bias-based profiling by law enforcement.

The Commission has three primary divisions: The Law Enforcement Bureau (“LEB”), the Community Relations Bureau (“CRB”), and the Office of the Chairperson. LEB is responsible for the intake, investigation, and prosecution of City Human Rights Law violations, including those that raise systemic violations. CRB, through borough-based Community Service Centers in all five boroughs, helps cultivate understanding and respect among the City’s many diverse communities through pre-complaint interventions, conferences, workshops, and training sessions, among other initiatives. The Office of the Chairperson houses the legislative, regulatory, policy, and adjudicatory functions of the Commission and convenes meetings with the agency’s commissioners. If you have experienced or witnessed discrimination, bias, or harassment at work, home, or in public spaces report it to the NYC Commission on Human Rights at (718) 722-3131.

About Strength in Numbers Consulting Group

Strength in Numbers Consulting Group, Inc. (www.sincg.com) is a small MWBE-certified social justice research and evaluation firm located in New York City. Strength in Numbers Consulting Group specializes in working with the most marginalized groups to do participatory research projects driven by community needs and accountability to those most affected by the work. Tracy Pugh—a Black-identified social science researcher with over ten years of experience investigating various forms of structural stigma and racism—served as Special Project Partner for this effort. Pugh developed the research design and instruments, conducted desk research, led all the key stakeholder interviews and ran each of the focus groups. The Commission is deeply thankful to Pugh as well as to Kevin Montiel for their invaluable hard work and support.
rife with examples of violence, discrimination and harassment targeted at Black people and communities. We attempt to chart some of that history here. Still, contemporary forms of anti-Blackness are often normalized and, as a result, rendered all but invisible. In recent years, the work of local advocates for racial justice, the Black Lives Matter movement and others has helped to shift this. Now, as the city and the nation strive to push back against white supremacy and white nationalism, the various forms of hate that spring from them and efforts at division that they produce, understanding the particular nature of anti-Black racism and its persistence is especially crucial. This report represents an initial effort in this direction.

The Commission’s own focus on anti-Black racism has been informed by conversations agency staff have had with Black New Yorkers in recent years. These individuals have admired the agency’s efforts on behalf of Muslim, Arab, South Asian, Jewish and Sikh New Yorkers. They have cheered the creation of initiatives to better support and increase the visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities. They have commended recent public hearings that have provided outlets for New Yorkers to speak openly and candidly about their experiences with particular forms of discrimination. And they have emphasized the importance of the Commission centering the experiences of Black New Yorkers and creating opportunities for New Yorkers of African-American-, African, Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latinx heritage to describe their experiences with anti-Black racism in their own words.

Informed by these conversations, the Commission has intensified its efforts to call out anti-Black racism as a threat to human rights in New York City and provide outlets for the city’s Black communities to speak to the discrimination and harassment experienced by their families, friends, and neighbors. In 2017 and 2018, for example, the Commission hosted forums in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Harlem and Flatbush examining the connections between gentrification and race-based discrimination. In February 2019, the Commission released groundbreaking, legal enforcement guidance stating that policies barring natural hair and hairstyles associated with Black people constitute race-based discrimination under the New York City Human Rights Law (“City Human Rights Law”). Weeks later, the Commission issued a bold, citywide public education campaign, highlighting the connection between the struggle for human rights and the fight against anti-Black racism, referencing incidents in which Black people have been targeted for harassment and discrimination while simply going about day-to-day activities and signaling that efforts to harass, intimidate or discriminate against Black New Yorkers run counter to the City Human Rights Law. And in October 2019, the Commission hosted “400 Years Later: Reckoning with Our Legacy of Slavery and Charting an Anti-Racist Future in New York City,” to explore the history of enslavement in what is now New York City and learn from current-day advocates who are challenging anti-Black racism in its various forms.

The findings described in this report are unfamiliar and surprising use this as an opportunity to reflect on their own responsibility and relationship-building approaches that we believe will allow us to deepen our impact where discrimination against Black New Yorkers is concerned. And we hope that those readers who are deeply committed to eliminating anti-Black racism will partner with us on these efforts, helping us to execute these strategies or to identify new approaches as necessary. We also hope that those for whom the experiences described in this report are unfamiliar and surprising use this as an opportunity to reflect on their own responsibility and in the communities in which you live and work and in the institutions that you are a part of or that are accountable to you? Overcoming the challenges described in these pages—themselves only a small slice of the challenges confronted by Black communities in New York City—will require commitments that cut across populations and operate at the individual, institutional and structural levels. We are dedicated to being partners in this fight, and we hope we can support others to do the same.
Executive Summary

The year 2019 marks the 400th anniversary of what is believed to be the arrival of the first enslaved Africans brought by British traders to what is now the United States. While Spanish colonizers had brought enslaved Africans to Florida and other parts of the Western Hemisphere well before this point, August 1619 has come to be regarded as an important milestone in the history of people of African descent in the United States and, beyond that, the history of the nation as a whole. As journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, who spearheaded the New York Times’ 1619 commemorative issue has written, the contributions of Black Americans are not limited to the immense wealth that emerged from centuries of uncompensated labor. Black Americans have also served, largely unrecognized, as the “perfecters” of American democracy.

The history of anti-Black racism in the United States generally and New York City specifically is long and troubled and full of paradoxes. Anti-Black racism has been a consistent feature of our personal lives, our politics, and our public policy over generations. Yet it has become so normalized that it has been rendered invisible to some. It has shaped and continues to shape our relationships to one another, the opportunities we receive and the outcomes we achieve, and yet it remains on the list of topics most people are uncomfortable discussing. It is a history that has involved startling human rights violations enacted at an astonishing scale — enslavement, sexual assault, family separation, murder with impunity, political disenfranchisement, economic oppression and state-sanctioned and state-sponsored violence. Yet it is a history that we, as a nation, have studiously avoided confronting, despite its deeply ingrained effects.

As the nation and the City reflect on the repercussions of enslavement and the legacy of anti-Black racism that grew from it, this project represents an effort on the part of the Commission to return to the work of challenging anti-Black racism in New York City. Our aim is to examine the role that anti-Black racism has played in our City and the way it continues to manifest in the five boroughs. The report also reflects the Commission’s growing concern about the nature, history and effects of racism that may be universal, shaping and continuing to shape our relationships in all areas of life, including at workplaces, in housing, and in public spaces. Though anti-Black racism is not a new phenomenon, in recent years, we have heard with disturbing frequency, reports of people going about their daily lives and being targeted because of their Blackness—in grocery stores, schools, on the street, in their own homes and neighborhoods—for humiliation, intimidation, and violence. Dehumanizing Blackface depictions continue to surface within retail and in political contexts.

We launched this project to advance the following goals:

- Informing the Commission’s law enforcement, policy, outreach and communications efforts;
- Generating data that would be useful to other government, private, non-profit, or philanthropic actors that work with New York City’s Black communities;
- Building and strengthening relationships with community and faith organizations that work with Black New Yorkers; and
- Educating those who doubt the existence of pervasive anti-Black racism in New York City.

This report describes Black New Yorkers’ experiences with and observations about racism in their city in their own words. As such, the bulk of this report consists of statements from participants in the focus groups. As a qualitative project, it does not aim to speak to the pervasiveness of the experiences and observations that were shared. Instead, it speaks to their impact, elevating perspectives that too often go unacknowledged.

Endnotes, many of which cite research on the nature, history and effects of racism that may be useful to those who are less familiar with such issues, are also provided.

The report also describes City initiatives designed to address concerns referenced by participants in the focus groups that are either in place or in development. In doing so, the report acknowledges long-standing and emergent efforts to promote racial equity on the part of New York City government and points to areas where those who advocate on issues covered in the report may want to engage moving forward.

Based upon the insights shared by Black New Yorkers, the Commission has identified the following steps for strengthening the agency’s work to combat anti-Black racism:

- Dedicate additional resources for law enforcement, community relations and policy work focused on race- and color-based discrimination and, specifically, manifestations of anti-Black racism. These additional resources will help to ensure accountability for violations of the prohibitions on race- and color-based discrimination, promote racial justice through policy, and address behaviors that perpetuate anti-Black racism.
- Develop and advance legislation and other policy measures that will protect Black New Yorkers and other groups targeted for discrimination, drawing upon insights shared by participants. The research reflected in this
The report indicates that anti-Black racism is a complex phenomenon that is experienced at the multiple levels and across multiple areas of life. And as the forms of discrimination confronting Black New Yorkers evolve, it is essential that anti-discrimination law evolve with it. While the federal government is actively retreating from civil rights protections, localities like New York City are well positioned to expand protections for those within their boundaries. The Commission has and will continue to develop and advance policy proposals that will serve this goal in partnership with community, faith-based, and other organizations that work closely with Black New Yorkers.

- Host public hearings on race-based discrimination in predominantly Black neighborhoods in the city. Such hearings would allow the Commission to gather additional information from New Yorkers about what they are experiencing and educate New Yorkers about the agency’s reporting, investigation, and litigation processes and available remedies.

- Develop new strategies for addressing race-based discrimination and harassment in places of public accommodation across the city. Many participants reported humiliating interactions in places of public accommodation. These interactions are damaging to the individuals involved and have the potential to contribute to tensions within and across communities over time. The Commission should continue, through its Law Enforcement Bureau, to accept and file complaints involving these incidents, to investigate such complaints and to seek justice in cases where it finds probable cause. Where appropriate, the Commission should also explore addressing these through the application of restorative approaches that center the needs of harmed individuals while also improving the understanding of the party responsible for the harm, reducing the likelihood of such encounters in the future.

- Provide training on race and color discrimination under the City Human Rights Law tailored specifically for staff at New York City agencies. Such workshops will help to normalize conversations about race and racism and create space for agency staff to reflect on how they, as City government workers, can challenge racism and race-based discrimination and identify sources of support for doing this important work effectively. The Commission has already begun to pilot such trainings with several agencies and should work to expand this list in coming years.

- Create programming for implementation in gentrifying neighborhoods to build understanding of how anti-Black racism operates in modern-day New York City, such as through the weaponization of local government, as well as the harm that it causes. In doing so, the agency should partner with local community boards, community groups, faith institutions and other stakeholders. The Commission will also deploy programming in predominantly-white communities across the five boroughs, where the Commission has traditionally had a lower degree of engagement, but which are an important target for education on protections and obligations under City Human Rights Law.

The Commission is committed to supporting the fights against anti-Black racism through these steps and others that will be identified in consultation with its partners.
1. At the Foundations of a New Settlement

The first person of known African Ancestry to arrive in New Amsterdam—the Dutch settlement that would ultimately become New York City—was Juan Rodriguez, a free, Black sailor from the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo who arrived in 1613 and began trading with the Lenape soon after. The first enslaved Africans were brought to New Amsterdam in 1626 by the Dutch West India Company. These Africans were immediately forced to transform the southern Manhattan landscape from which Peter Minuit, director of the settlement, had removed native inhabitants shortly before. In the following years, enslaved Africans would clear land for farms and docks that fueled the colonial economy, construct the colony’s earliest forts, build new homes, expand trade networks, and accommodate new inhabitants into narrow streets—like Broadway—that could accommodate horse-drawn carriages and build and operate sawmills that provided lumber for shipbuilding and export.

While these efforts largely generated wealth for their owners, enslaved Africans who were able to secure their freedom were in some cases able to acquire the means to build wealth of their own. In February of 1644, for example, eleven formerly enslaved men were freed and were granted land in the area north of the Dutch settlement between what is now Canal Street and 34th Street. They settled and established farms in this region, which later came to be known as the "Negro Frontier" or the "Land of the Blacks." At roughly the same time, a series of land deals under Minuit and subsequent directors extended Dutch control to areas of land now Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx. Diseases like smallpox, diphtheria, typhus, and measles reduced the Lenape population, while Dutch practices, like clear-cutting forests for firewood and allowing cows to graze un-shepherded through Lenape cornfields placed pressure on native communities. This was followed by a brutal five year Dutch campaign, which resulted in the death of an estimated 1,500 more Lenape people. By 1647, when Peter Stuyvesant arrived to lead the Dutch colony, the war had been over for two years but the settlement remained in disarray. Stuyvesant established the first police force on Manhattan, consisting of nine individuals. Displacement of native people also continued during this period, with many of the region’s Lenape residents, such as the Canarsie and the Rockaway people of Queens, moving further east to Long Island or west to New Jersey. Others were forced to move to Pennsylvania as part of the Lenape Removal. Still others intermarried and faced considerable pressure to hide their ancestry under the laws of the time, which prohibited interracial unions.

2. An Expansive Regime of Enslavement

By 1703, some 42% of New York City households held enslaved people, more than Boston and Philadelphia combined and seconded only to Charleston, South Carolina. As New York’s Black population increased and the investment in slavery deepened, its “Black Code”—the set of laws that evolved to control the activities of Black people in the settlement—grew more and more robust. Legislation enacted in the early 18th century expanded owners’ authority to punish enslaved people and limited the ability of enslaved persons to congregate and engage in commerce. Increasingly inhumane conditions under New York’s slavestapped organized and resistance on the part of Black New Yorkers. Smaller uprisings in 1689 and 1708 were followed by a major insurrection in the spring of 1712. The response was harsh. Once caught, several alleged participants were hung, burned alive, “broken at the wheel” or otherwise executed. Officials suspended one man by chains while he was alive and denied him food or drink until he died. In the wake of the 1712 insurrection, the colony’s “Black Code” was further amended to discourage owners from freeing enslaved people, requiring any individual who wished to do so to post a bond of 200 pounds as a guarantee that the newly freed would not become “public charges,” virtually ensuring “a practice of forced emancipation for a time.” As historians have noted, while these “Black Codes” were designed to further the economic interests of a small number of individuals who derived economic benefit from forced, uncompensated labor, they had the broader effect of erecting a “wall of suspicion” between the races and inviting “all whites [to] police the boundary” between those who were enslaved and those who were free.

For those enslaved Africans who managed to escape bondage, fear was ever present. By the early 1700s, any Black person suspected of being a runaway was subject to arrest and detention by local sheriffs. This policy resulted in many free Black New Yorkers losing their liberty alongside those who had fled enslavement. These individuals bore the burden of proving they had not in fact been enslaved. They could be turned over to their masters as a result of any individual who claimed to own them and who reimbursed the local sheriff for the costs of arrest and detention or sold into slavery by local law enforcement. Because they had no real legal rights, those Black people in New York who were forced, uncompensated labor, they had the ability to own land was particularly important, as it allowed some to satisfy the property ownership requirements that made it difficult for enslaved men in New York to vote. However, as plans for Central Park evolved, residents of Seneca Village found themselves in the pathway of the new development. In the midst of a period of economic crisis, the community was condemned and its churches, schools and homes destroyed. By 1857 the last of the residents of Seneca Village were gone. While landowners were paid for their property, the money they received was insufficient to purchase new land in other parts of the City.

3. Migration & the Growth of Black New York

At the beginning of the 20th century, New York City’s Black population grew dramatically after gaining their freedom at the age of 25 and men doing the same upon turning 28. Children were deemed the property of their mothers’ masters until reaching the statutory age. Subsequent legislation enacted in 1817, required that enslaved people born prior to July 4, 1799 be freed by 1827. However, it was not until 1841 that laws allowing out-of-state owners to bring enslaved people into New York were abolished. The situation with respect to civil rights for Black New Yorkers also shifted during these years. For example, while Black men who owned property worth $100 were initially able to vote following emancipation, in 1821 the New York State Constitution was amended to increase the property threshold for Black men to $250 dollars. Strikingly, at the same time, the threshold for white men was eliminated entirely. Those Black New Yorkers who were not men and those who were not property owners had no access to the franchise.
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The earliest part of the Great Migration also overlapped with a period of increased immigration of Black people from the Caribbean, despite a national origin-based quota system that limited entry into the U.S. by non-European migrants. The first wave of such immigration occurred at the turn of the 20th century. In 1899, an estimated 412 Black immigrants were admitted to the country. By 1908, that figure had risen to somewhere between 5,000 and 8,000 per year, peaking at over 12,000 in 1924. Of the nearly 99,000 foreign-born Black people who resided in the United States in 1930, just over 72,000 came from non-Spanish speaking Caribbean nations, and more than half of all Black immigrants settled in New York City. Passage and implementation of the 1965 Immigration Act, which included amendments to quotas that had the effect of limiting the number of non-European immigrants, led to a significant increase in the number of Black immigrants in the United States, with Afro-Caribbean immigration increasing rapidly in the years following the legislation. Once in the United States, these immigrants confronted a rigid system of racial categorization. Many found that the upward mobility they had sought by moving to the U.S. was offset by a dramatic reduction in the economic mobility they had sought by moving to areas like Hamilton Heights and Harlem that were adjacent to African-American communities. Large-scale migration from nations on the African content came significantly later. From 1980 to 1990, voluntary migration of African immigrants only totaled 74,510, but from 1991 to 2003, immigration increased dramatically, totaling 805,564. After passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, the United States became more accessible for people from African countries. African immigration increasing sevenfold between 1968 and 1988. In 2015, there were 2 million African immigrants living in the United States, accounting for about 4.8% of the U.S. immigrant population. The Refugee Act of 1980 made it easier for those fleeing conflict to come to the U.S., and in 1990 the diversity of those who were attracted to encourage immigration from under-represented nations. Between 2000 and 2011, New York City’s own African immigrant population grew by 39%, reaching over 128,000 and accounting for 4% of the City’s foreign-born population. African immigrants have established a presence across the city, with migrants from Ghana settling in the West Bronx, Senegalese immigrants establishing communities in West Harlem and Liberian immigrants settling in Staten Island among many others.

4. Documenting Racism in New York City

The Commission’s own roots are deeply connected to the struggle for racial justice in the city and can be traced back to the Depression era, which saw episodes of unrest in Harlem where many Black residents were concentrated due to pervasive housing segregation. In response, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia established the “Mayor’s Commission on Conditions in Harlem” to better understand the plight of area residents. The report subsequently released by the group not only illuminated the specific details leading up to the events in question, but also examined the City’s role in perpetuating systemic racial discrimination. Specifically, the Commission documented the need for:

• Efforts to address widespread race-based discrimination in employment,
• Inconsequentially accountable and improved relationships with Black New Yorkers on the part of agencies administering public assistance programs,
• Improvements to public housing in Harlem, in part by seeking federal funding, as well as support for tenant organizing,
• Investments in the physical plant of area public schools and increased support for at-risk youth;
• Expansion of health care facilities to counter combat disparities in health services;
• Efforts to address racist attitudes among police officers and creation of an independent accountability structure and meaningful discipline for officer misconduct.

In 1944, based in part on these findings and following another uprising of Black residents in Harlem, Mayor LaGuardia established the Mayor’s Committee on Unity to improve inter-group relations across the boroughs. The Committee would eventually evolve into the New York City Commission on Human Rights. Over the course of its history, the Commission and other City entities have made a number of efforts to address the impact of racism and discrimination on Black New Yorkers. Starting in the 1960s, for example, the Commission began releasing reports on racial disparities in housing, strategies for improving intergroup relations, school integration, fair housing law and tenant organizing, bias in the construction industry and teacher training and school curriculum. Nonetheless, long-standing racial disparities remained and continued to be the subject of intense scrutiny and vigorous advocacy. In January 1986, Mayor Ed Koch established “The Mayor’s Commission on Black New Yorkers.” Koch tasked this Commission with development of recommendations for improving quality of life for Black New Yorkers “in the areas of education, economic and community development and training.” The Commission completed its work in November 1988. The Commission found that Black New Yorkers faced persistent barriers to high-quality education and economic power. In 1989, the City responded with a series of initiatives linked to the recommendations. These included:

• Enhanced access to City procurement opportunities and greater financial support for minority businesses;
• Creation of an employment policy committee to review city policies related to private sector and youth employment opportunities;
• Development of multicultural curriculum by the Board of Education and expansion of night and year-long programs designed to expand opportunities for schooling; and
• Launch of targeted recruitment efforts to increase representation of people of color in certain City positions.

That year saw the election of David N. Dinkins as New York City’s first Black Mayor. Mayor Dinkins entered office with the support of a coalition of Black, Latino and progressive white voters. His term was marked by a declining crime rate, avoidance of a state fiscal takeover and new investments in public schools and libraries. In addition, however, long-standing racial tensions and disparities persisted during his tenure. These tensions were apparent in the public response to the beating and rape of a white woman in Central Park, for which five Black and Latinx young people were wrongly arrested, convicted and imprisoned. Contemporaneous coverage of the event trafficked in some of the same stereotypes about the criminality of Black people and the need to subject the Black population to harsh methods of control that have haunted Black people since New York’s earliest days. Tensions also came to a head with the Crown Heights uprising in 1991, which began after a seven-year-old Black boy, Gavin Cato, was struck and killed by a car in a rabbis’s motorcade.

5. 21st Century Challenges

In the early 21st century, New York City’s Black population reflects the cumulative impact of over...
a century of migration from within the U.S. and abroad. Some 25.9% of New Yorkers—roughly 2.23 million people identify as Black or African American, either alone or in combination with other racial or ethnic heritage. Brooklyn is home to the largest share of the city’s Black population, followed by the Bronx, Queens, Manhattan, and Staten Island. Per 2017 Census Bureau estimates, over 200,000 of these residents claim sub-Saharan African heritage, with Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and Ethiopia among the most frequently-identified nations of origin. Nearly 600,000 New Yorkers claim West Indian ancestry, with Jamaica, Haiti and Barbados being the most frequently-identified points of origin.

Black New Yorkers today face many of the same challenges confronted by their predecessors and documented by the Commission and other City bodies over time. Racial disparities in education, access to housing and interactions with law enforcement remain prominent concerns. This is compounded by the increasing number of hate crimes and bias incidents reported in the city in recent years. These include the scrapping of a racist slur on signage at the African Burial Ground monument just feet from the Commission’s own offices, an attack in which a Black woman was called “a Black bitch,” punched and stabbed at the Church Ave subway station in Brooklyn— as well as racist appeals to white New Yorkers, such as flyers that posted in the Woodlawn neighborhood of the Bronx.

The full history of Black people in New York is impossible to chart in a single report. However, this brief survey demonstrates that evolving forms of racism, economic oppression and violence have always been part of that history, as have consistent organizing, resistance and strategic flyovers that posted in the Woodlawn neighborhood of New York City.

This report represents the next phase of this Commission effort and designed to advance the following goals:

• Inform the Commission’s law enforcement, policy, outreach and communications efforts;
• Generate data that would be useful to other government, private, non-profit, or philanthropic actors that work with New York City’s Black communities;
• Build and strengthen relationships with community and faith organizations that work with New York City’s Black communities; and
• Educate those who doubt the existence of pervasive anti-Black racism in New York City.

In recent years, the Commission has taken steps to respond to these requests. In 2018 and 2019, the agency partnered with artbreaker Tahaya Fayzabedah on a public art project focused on anti-Black racism and gender-based street harassment producing a series of murals currently installed across the city. In winter of 2019, the Commission issued precedent-setting legal enforcement guidance clarifying the City Human Rights Law’s prohibitions on race discrimination covered grooming policies targeting hairstyles and textures typically associated with Black people. The guidance inspired and informed similar measures in New York state, New Jersey, California and other jurisdictions. Months later, the Commission released a public education campaign that ran on subways, bus shelters and across social media. Affirming the experiences of Black people in New York and around the country who had been targeted for harassment, intimidation and discrimination while simply going about their day-to-day lives, the campaign reinforced that living “white Black” is a human right. It further encouraged New Yorkers who had experienced such discrimination to report to the Commission. This commitment to centering issues of concern to the city’s Black communities has also been reflected in programming. In October of this year, for example, the Commission hosted “400 Years Later: Reckoning with Our History of Slavery and Building an Anti-Racist Future in NYC,” an event commemorating the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans brought to U.S. shores by the British and exploring the particular history of enslavement in what is now New York City.

This report surfaces Black New Yorkers’ experiences with “structural racism,” racism that occurs across multiple institutions and integrated into politics, culture and daily life, creating a system that negatively impacts communities of color.

To complete this research, the agency partnered with Strength in Numbers Consulting Group (“Strength in Numbers”), a small, woman-owned and led nonprofit specializing in participatory approaches and rigorous research methods. Tracy Pugh, a Black-identified social science researcher with over ten years of experience investigating various forms of structural stigma and racism, served as a Special Project Partner at Strength in Numbers.

The research phase of the project took place in the spring and summer of 2018 and benefited from close collaboration with community groups, faith-based institutions, labor unions, advocacy groups, city agencies and other institutions primarily serving populations matching the project’s sampling frame supported this project, helping to recruit participants for the conversations, taking part in key stakeholder interviews and otherwise informing the Commission’s work. Pugh conducted 19 focus groups with 190 Black New Yorkers across the five boroughs. The Commission also conducted two additional roundtable conversations in order to seek perspectives that were not adequately reflected in the focus groups. Most conversations lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. In these conversations, participants shared their experiences not only with interpersonal racism but also with institutional and structural racism. The resulting participant insights paint a stark portrait of race-based indignities that are inescapable and emotionally taxing. Those who participated in the conversations described racism as present across major domains of life while also noting how their experiences were shaped by various other aspects of their identities, such as age, national origin, housing status, and religion.

The report also describes City initiatives that are either in place or in development that are designed to address concerns referenced by participants in the focus groups. In doing so, the report helps to highlight areas where the City can
increase awareness of available resources and opportunities or may serve as a starting point for additional research, analysis, policy development or program design.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

It is important to begin with a note on terminology. The Commission has chosen the word “Black” for the purposes of this project because of its inclusiveness, defining the term to include New Yorkers who are African American, Afro Caribbean, African, Afro-Latinx (from South America, Central America or the Spanish-speaking Caribbean) or otherwise identify as having African ancestry. It is also important to note at the outset that it was not the Commission’s intent to produce a study that was quantitative in nature or purported to be representative of the experiences of all Black people in New York. Rather, the Commission utilized a qualitative methodology that relied on focus group conversations with Black New Yorkers. The agency recognized that because anti-Black racism has deep historical roots and is pervasive across all areas of life, it has been normalized in ways that make it difficult for some to perceive or acknowledge it. As such, there was a need for research that provided insight into the lived experiences of those affected and the impact of the phenomenon on individuals, their families and their communities.

The Commission was ultimately able to reach a rich and diverse sample of Black New Yorkers. One hundred and ninety individuals participated in 19 focus groups convened in neighborhoods in all five boroughs. Over 4 in 5 participants identified as Black, African or African American. About one in six identified as Caribbean and a similar number as Latinx (from South America, Central America or the Spanish-speaking Caribbean). Among those who did not select “Black, African or African American” as a race or ethnicity, the most common other selection was Latinx (45.5%), followed by Caribbean (33.3%).

About two thirds (65.4%) of the participants in the focus groups identified as female and 33.3% identified as male. While participants were given other gender options (e.g. transgender, transmasculine, transfeminine, gender nonconforming) and an option to write in other genders, too few responded to analyze these categories.

There were similar results for questions about sexual orientation. Combined, however, 9.1% identified as LGBTQ.

About one in five participants was born outside of the United States (21.5%), with the most common region of origin being Sub-Saharan Africa (13.6%), followed by the Caribbean/Latin America (7.9%).

About one in four participants spoke a language other than English at home, with the most common languages spoken at home being Spanish (9.1%), Yoruba (5.1%) and Mandinka (4.0%).

FULLTIME

Parttime

Retired

Unemployed

Fully 27.1% of the individuals in the sample were in school, while 32.5% were working full-time, 17.8% were working part-time, 22.5% were unemployed and 27.2% were retired. Just 4.5% had ever been in the military. About one in six, 15.6%, had a physical disability, while 8.4% had a mental health or intellectual disability.
The substantive findings indicate that while much has changed in the lives of Black New Yorkers in recent decades, a great deal remains the same. Anti-Black racism continues to manifest in meaningful ways across major domains of life. And the concerns and priorities emerging from the focus group conversations are consistent with those cited in earlier reports by the Commission and other City bodies.

To a greater degree than previous reports, however, the current report reflects how multiple aspects of participants’ identities combine to impact their experiences with racism. This has, no doubt, always been the case, but is likely more obvious in this report due to the dramatic increase in visibility of LGBTQ and other communities in recent decades. Across focus groups, participants discussed how anti-Black racism was intertwined with other forms of discrimination and oppression. For example, focus group participants relayed stories of how in addition to being Black, they had experienced discrimination on the basis of their status as immigrants, housing status, age, arrest or conviction history, religion, disability or income. Unexpectedly, participants concluded that having intersecting oppressed identities compounded rather than minimized or alleviated the discrimination they confronted. As such, the role of intersecting identities in the experience of anti-Black racism is woven throughout qualitative findings across the report.

### A. Inescapable & Emotionally Taxing

Black New Yorkers in the sample described racism as something that they encountered in various forms and in nearly every aspect of their lives. Participants repeatedly spoke of encounters with explicit and implicit forms of racism and racial aggressions as they moved through their lives, describing these as normal, everyday occurrences.

* Racism is normal.

Who can walk down the street and not see it every day?

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* July 25, 2018

Participants repeatedly communicated their frustration with individuals who expressed surprise that they did not conform to negative stereotypes associated with Black people.

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I went certain places and they would say, “Wow, you speak well.” So how am I supposed to speak? They wanted me to speak slang and things. So when I would tell them certain things, they’re like, “You come from a two [parent] household family.” Such and such.

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May 24, P8

…I see expectations and what you say. Like, they don’t expect you to have a degree.

They don’t expect you to do this.

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May 29, P2

They also reported that strangers, and in some cases neighbors, directed looks of derision when they switched their purses when participants approached or otherwise signaled their suspicion or contempt.

Mostly what I gather is… the way that they look down at you.

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May 29, P2

You’re just standing next to some people… and they look at you like you’re not fit to stand next to them.

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May 22, P5

Very recently, about a month ago, I got on a train. … I sit down and this lady of herself. So now – by the time we get to this, I got on a train. … I sit down and this lady of another ethnicity, she looked at me and took her pocketbook and pulled it over to herself. So now – by the time we get to this, I’ve been from South to here with a lot. It goes way back. So just – I was like, “Wow.”

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May 24, P1

I think, a lot of times, I’ve been in situations on the subway. Typically, during rush hour, it’s a high-stress situation where I’ve been called a “nigger bitch.”

*Black bitch.*

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June 5, P6

One veteran described how their very presence in their own neighborhood, which is predominantly white, was regularly questioned as well as the frustration this has caused.

*It’s kind of tough sometimes. I might sound crazy, but I feel like I fought for this, I fought for the country, so I shouldn’t have to explain myself.*

*If I want to go do something and I’m doing it within the limits of the law and safely, I should be able to do it.*

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Aug. 15, 2018

Participants reported that expressions of bias and hostility sometimes manifested in interactions with individuals who were charged with serving members of the public. So, another point of [anti-] Black racism that takes place across different communities is when it comes to city services within our transit system. So, our transit system, if you are a person of color in a Black neighborhood, even the transit employees treat you with discontent, in many ways, other than what you would do if you were white.

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May 29, P4

Another participant described treatment on a local bus that she experienced as racist.

*So, I was looking out for a landmark because it’s wintertime, and I’m getting off of the stop. But, I don’t know when to ring the bell. So, I came forward, and the driver just didn’t stop. He just kept going. And, he went about three stops down, and continued, and was rude to me. And, he finally stopped. “Do you want this stop now?” And, I just looked at him. So, he made an attempt to move up. And, I said something to him. I reported him. I don’t know what became of it at the MTA… But, he just ignored me, and was rude.*

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May 22, P9

One participant recounted an experience in which she provided assistance to a friend in an emergency but was not believed by paramedics who responded to the situation and others at the scene:

* I had a family issue, and my daughter’s friend, she’s white. So, she calls me yesterday to go check on her house, go get her house keys. Her friend had to go into the ambulance. So, when they found out that I was coming to get the house keys, they didn’t know I was Black. The paramedics was white, the girl in the ambulance was white, and they really wanted to give me a hard time to give me my daughter’s friend’s keys… I had to call [my daughter’s friend]… Then, she [the woman in the ambulance] thought … she was going to lock the door, give me the keys… and I’m supposed to go on my way. I said, “No, I ain’t going no damn where, I’m going to sit right here in my daughter’s friend’s house and relax after I done came*
[If we’re going to talk about this, we need to address that this was by design. It wasn’t done haphazardly.

August 15, 2018

They (government) don’t want to spend the money. You spend the money and you create all of these programs and you create all of these strategies, then you have to recognize that there are poor people, poor people of color and of different backgrounds, and you never hear them speak about poor people on the media on the news. If you acknowledge it, then you have to do something about it. So, I think we have to continue to voice our opinions louder and get more media coverage in order to get that response that we want. But, the bottom line is it’s money. It’s money. The resources, the money is there, it’s just being filtered in a different direction.

June 16, AM, P5

It is important to note that whether discussing experiences at the interpersonal, institutional, or structural levels, participants consistently communicated that anti-Black racism had had negative impacts on their mental health and wellbeing. Frustration, anger, and anxiety often communicated that anti-Black racism had had...
reporting processes to the public, there is still a lack of clarity about what the process entails, how complainants can most effectively navigate it and what outcomes individuals can expect if they report discrimination. These factors, taken together, appear to discourage Black New Yorkers from reporting experiences to entities—like the Commission—that are responsible for protecting New Yorkers from discrimination and harassment and also suggest lessons for Commission and other City agencies that are attempting to better serve Black New Yorkers.

C. Participant Priorities

Focus group members completed an exercise in which they prioritized ten domains of life according to their level of concern about racism within each. About one in five chose issues related to law enforcement and the criminal legal system (21.9%) and housing and neighborhoods (19.8%) as life domains where racism was a pressing concern. More than one in ten participants chose education and youth (16.5%), social services (12.5%) and employment & economy (11.1%) and health care (10.1%). The areas least frequently chosen were civic engagement (5.9%), and media, arts, and culture (4.9%).

This report is organized according to participant prioritization, addressing major topical areas in the following order:

- Law Enforcement & the Criminal Legal System
- Housing & Neighborhoods
- Education & Youth
- Social Services
- Employment & Economy
- Health Care
- Civic Engagement
- Media, Arts & Culture

1. Law Enforcement & the Criminal Legal System

Racism within the areas of law enforcement and the criminal legal system was the number one priority across the focus groups. Concerns included law enforcement practices deployed by the police as well as practices of courts, prosecutors and other actors operating within the system. Some participants felt that, in these areas, little had improved over time.

- “I am not sure if you’ve ever heard of the book The New Jim Crow. But its basically what’s happening right now still. [I]ncluding:
  - The impact of experiencing or witnessing police violence;
  - The prevalence of street and vehicular stops and arrests for low-level offenses;
  - Policing of social activities and events attended by Black people;
  - Policing of residents’ movement in and around their apartment buildings;
  - Disparities in relative police presence and the nature of policing in different communities;
  - The application of various forms of surveillance;
  - The impact of characteristics such as housing status and national origin, in addition to race, on experiences with police;
  - The lack of accountability for police officers and Focus group participants relayed the profound impact of experiencing or witnessing police violence. In doing so, they often described feeling fear, frustration and anger, during as well as after such encounters. In addition, some noted that witnessing police violence—whether in person or through videos shared on social media—has been psychologically taxing. Some expressed the fear that repeated exposure to images of violence perpetrated against Black people might be desensitizing them to such violence. Participants noted that they had experienced or seen aggressive policing from officers of all races. Participants attributed these incidents to institutional racism, some officers’ lack of understanding of or familiarity with the communities they are expected to serve, or, in some cases, to officers being new to the force. All of this, participants noted, had contributed to deep tensions, hostility and distrust between police officers and Black New Yorkers. …[I]n fact, sometimes I think they are just trying to scare us. Sometimes they’re even worse than during the Jim Crow era. … The police are still the same and it’s wrong. … I don’t do anything wrong, it was just the police driving, say – let me just give an example. You drive a good car, you work hard, you buy a car… I was driving an Infiniti. And I went to a gas station… I forgot to turn off the lights and then I [made] a U-turn. But, I didn’t do anything wrong, it was just the headlights I forgot to turn on. So, they stopped me. And, when they stop you, their question doesn’t just end with what you did wrong. It goes into, how did you get this car? … They dig deeper. And when you get frustrated and you say something, that would lead into you getting a citation, even getting arrested. For me, it’s because of the prior experience of my fellow Black men who got shot or got killed, I feel – I had the same emotional feeling. I wanted to react. But, then I react. I may end up getting arrested or killed, even though I know I didn’t do anything … [S]o, that’s what I mean by institutionalized racism that I experienced myself as a Black man coming from Africa. …  – May 19, P10

We watched our community change as gentrification is happening in our community… I’ve lived over there all 29 years of my life, and there’s been encounters not with me, but my brother, who’s a very tall, dark-skinned Black guy, [he was] walking down the street, and he was delivering my violin to me. Cops literally just threw him against the wall. My violin flew out the case, snapped, in half, all of that to say, “Oh, wrong guy.” … [E]ven my mother, who’s a senior, walking the dog with a soda can in a brown bag was getting harassed by the cops in her own neighborhood where she lived for several years, asking to see ID, which she left in the house because, “This is my neighborhood. I’m just walking the dog, I’m not thinking of bringing these things out with me.” But, now we’re living feeling as though we’re being policed. … June 13PM, P3

There’s times when I am walking through that area by myself, or with a group of my friends and the police tend [to] walk by us. That long gaze they give us up the street. A couple of questions like “What are you doing over here?”, “When are you going home?”, things like that. It’s unsettling because there is no way you know whether or not I don’t live here. You just baste it off of you seeing me here and you assuming because I am Black that I don’t live here. And then there was another situation where one of my friends, he works down there as well. He was walking his boss’ dog up the street, and the guy was like, “Hey, whose dog are you walking?” He was like, “Ah, yeah, this is my dog from work.” He was like, “Oh, cool. So you don’t live
EXPERIENCES WITH ANTI-BLACK RACISM

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...we had a 100-day celebration... We're playing music, whatever we're doing, we're there. And they will come and harass us. (Development Redacted)

Participants also shared fears related to surveillance. They expressed concern that interactions with the NYPD—even those related to low-level offenses—could make them subject to surveillance efforts. In addition, participants were concerned about the Department’s gang database and desired greater transparency with respect to how the NYPD classifies New Yorkers as gang members and the implications of such classification.

There are more low-level arrests, and to me it’s just to get your name into their system. (May 22, P1)

Participants also noted disparities in relative police presence and the nature of police responses. For example, focus group participants observed that aggressive policing of drug users has given way to calls for more supportive approaches as drug misuse and overdose within white communities has surged. Participants also described other settings in which police responses to incidents involving Black suspects were more aggressive than those involving white suspects.

[You see more policing in subways, low income areas, than you do in midtown. Here’s something even bigger. There’s more policing in communities of color when it comes to that magical hour of schooling than you will see downtown. There are more people likely to get arrested for hanging out in a train in communities of color, and I see many white kids do the same type of behavior, but they don’t go to jail. – May 29, P4]

One participant summarized the impact of experiences in which they had had difficulty getting police assistance.

...The thing about police not coming... or ambulance not coming... and just a general sense of just feeling that you’re out there alone where you don’t feel safe in your own environment... (May 31, P4)

In addition, participants expressed concerns about policing of social activities and events organized or attended by Black residents. For example, participants noted that gatherings in Black communities were often targets of police attention, sometimes with little apparent justification. Participants also noted the disappointment and frustration that arose in their communities when events that had been the focus of residents’ time and effort were cancelled.

So, in order for the police officer to let me go, and it’s just like, even if I didn’t work here, I have a right to go into the bookstore. – May 26, P12

I was born and raised in [Development Redacted], and... I got stopped one day coming to my mother’s house. They’re like, “Why are you always coming at this time?” I’m like, “Are you serious?” So, I said, “I want to get your badge number and I will call the police.”... I see the colored thing, and... I got stopped one day coming to my mother’s house. – June 13PM, P9

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...it’s actually a big deal. (June 13PM, P9)
Participants also questioned the commitment of police unions to working with the City to ensure that all New Yorkers are treated with the same level of dignity and respect by police officers. I think the police union leader is very inflammatory. When he made the statement that the blood of the policemen are on the hands of city hall, he was implying Mayor de Blasio, and I think that was uncalled for. That was a very inflammatory statement to make, and it could have easily stirred up—you know, there have been wars between police and this city decades ago when you had two separate police situations. I’m thinking if people are making inflammatory statements, they’re not really trying to make peace.

— May 22, P10

2. Criminal Legal System

Beyond these observations about interactions at street level and culture and policy within the NYPD, participants also described racism in the criminal legal system as a multi-institutional problem, noting the impact of policies and practices implemented by a range of actors. Specifically, participants identified a number of factors as drivers of mass incarceration of Black people.

Some focus group participants noted that Black individuals and their families must also manage the lifetime workforce barriers that result from such involvement in the criminal legal system, including economic challenges related to housing and neighborhoods. These included rising rates of homelessness in the city, increasing housing costs and the displacement of established residents from their neighborhoods by gentrification. In addition, they recounted a variety of experiences with race-based housing discrimination.

a. Housing

Participants shared stories of encountering various forms of racism and discrimination when trying to secure or maintain housing. These included—

- Blatant denials of housing on the basis of race;
- The impact of background checks, deposits and additional costs, functioning as barriers to housing opportunities. Some noted that as a result of long-standing patterns of discrimination in housing, employment, law enforcement and other areas, such requirements—even when universally applied—can have a disproportionate negative impact on Black applicants.58 However, others expressed skepticism that such requirements were being applied consistently and were instead suspicious that they were sometimes employed to discourage or disqualify Black people who were trying to secure housing.

Landlords are discriminating with housing … asking for things that they know you don’t have. [It’s] just a different way to discriminate. So, they might ask somebody of a different color something different. But for you, they want something that’s unreasonable. So, they’re not going to say “Oh, we’re not giving you this apartment because you’re
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Black. But they’ll say “Sure you have a 750 credit score? What’s your background check? What’s this and what’s that? And do you have current payment and this and that?”

And that’s just a barrier because of who you are. Somebody else can come right behind me and “Oh,” it’s all good.

Come on in.” – May 31, P1

Another described how race discrimination combined with discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression and lawful source of income to create complex barriers to finding housing. New Yorkers who are “on a program,” they observed may not have access to cash to pay required fees immediately. Reflecting on their own experience, they noted that while brokers are often resistant to dealing with candidates who utilize vouchers, the situation is worse for those who are Black and transgender.

Another described difficulties that a family member had encountered when attempting to assert their right to succession—the right of resident of an apartment to become a tenant (or “succeed”) after a family member who is the primary tenant leaves—despite a landlord’s resistance.

Focus group members also noted how race-based discrimination functioned as a barrier to home ownership, observing that pathways to Black homeownership were few and diminishing. Some cited the ongoing impact of practices that restricted homeownership and access to loans in the latter part of the 20th century.

We need to talk about the exclusionary practices that went on…because back in the 80s, 70s…when drugs were being pumped into the community… There were people, people in my own family, who had money, who had good credit who tried to buy property and were told, no, you can’t.

– June 5, P4

Reflecting on current barriers to homeownership, one participant related the experience of a friend who had confronted considerable resistance from the board in a cooperative building when attempting to purchase an apartment.

[My friend]…was looking for an apartment, a co-op. And she went to that building. And when she initially applied, they turned her down. And she tried again. And one of the tenants said to her…[that] the owner of the co-op said, “No, you can’t sell at that price. You have to raise the price.” And she found out because the owner told her. And the owner said to the management, “No.” And that’s just a barrier because of who you are. Somebody else can come right behind me and “Oh,” it’s all good.

Come on in.” – May 31, P1

Participants also pointed to challenges that Black New Yorkers confront when trying to secure financing for home purchases. Specifically, participants recounted being targeted for loan products with predatory terms—products that they recognized might place them at risk of foreclosure in the future.

Beyond this, participants noted that Black homeowners face considerable challenges maintaining ownership. They noted challenges such as being unfairly targeted for building and sanitation-related violations that have the potential to lead to tax liens and foreclosures. Focus group members also identified malicious practices, such as deed theft—a process by which a property deed is transferred by someone who does not have a right to do so—as an threat to Black homeownership, particularly for Black seniors.

“We’re overpoliced on almost everything in the community… They are people who are in this community… There were people, people in my own family, who had money, who had good credit who tried to buy property and were told, no, you can’t.”

– June 5, P4

Despite the City’s commitment to build and preserve 300,000 units of affordable housing and a large increase in the number of affordable apartments that go through the lottery process, participants also noted long waits, with some participants observing that they had never heard of anyone securing a unit, even though they, their friends, or their family members had applied.

Participants also expressed a concern that white applicants received preferential treatment in the lottery process.

When you start seeing the people in the streets that are getting the affordable housing, it is white people.

– June 16 AM, P13

Homelessness was also a topic of concern. This is unsurprising given that Black people have consistently been denied equal access to housing, community supports and opportunities for socioeconomic mobility throughout U.S. history. In New York City, homelessness is driven by factors that have disproportionately impacted Black people: income inequality, lack of affordable and supportive housing, eviction and wage stagnation, de-institutionalization, discontinuation of rental assistance programs, housing discrimination and other factors. Accordingly, Black New Yorkers are overrepresented among the homeless, in part due to racial discrimination in the treatment of homeless New Yorkers by law enforcement. Some who participated in the focus groups expressed concern about the number of homeless shelters in their neighborhoods as compared to white neighborhoods in the city.

Participants also described their own experiences in shelters, many of which are funded or overseen by the NYC Department of Homeless Services (“DHS”), a division of the Department of Social Services. Participants recounted incidents in which frontline staff had subjected them to rude or disrespectful behavior.

The supervisors [of the homeless shelters], I went in there one day and she tried to talk to me like I’m stupid, like I didn’t know nothing. I turned around and I said I told her about it in a nice polite way and I said I want to see the big bosses or I’m going downtown to your big bosses and I made phone calls because I know people. They discriminate because you are living with HIV or you’re living with whatever and you need help from them. You don’t know what a person’s been through, what kind of education they do or what kind of work they’re doing. They’re just trying to talk to you to talk down to people. That’s just racist. …Who are you to belittle somebody and talk ….

– May 29, P4

I experienced it through being homeless, going into the shelter system. I had kids at that time. I’m gonna tell….how they were saying it. “These dumbass people, they don’t know what the hell – why they always coming up in here?” This is a place where we’re supposed to come when [we] need help. Why are we “dumbass people”? Yeah, I had to tell them a couple times, if you’re in this job for money, you need to go somewhere else. You ain’t helping nobody, not even yourself. The kids in here, how you think they feel living in a shelter saying that we
participants expressed concerns about the overall decline in the state of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments and the timeliness of repairs, with some acknowledging the impact of decades of disinvestment in public housing.

At one time you could work at NYCHA; [a] janitorial position [was a] good position. But Giuliani after Dinkins broke all of that up and cut the union…He…took away benefits from workers...The people that came in didn't have the support, the training or education or motivation to do a good job...So the quality of life in the projects went down along with the services and again lots of disinvestment.

Other participants expressed concerns about the shift toward private management of developments and the loss or contestation of established services with neighborhood change;...The people that went down along with the services and up and cut the union...He…took away gardens and I see this…[S]uddenly there's restrictions. They immediately just gentrify areas. It could be a store that you own. They don't like the look of it. Suddenly, you're getting a lot of violations because this is now how—in their mind, it's their money, they moved here, so now things need to be changed.

Black New Yorkers who participated in the research also expressed concern that while gentrification sometimes brought additional investment to the built environment and, in some cases, additional services, new establishments were not inclusive of longer-term Black residents. [T]hat's what happens with gentrification because nobody ever thought about this area before. Nobody ever thought about building that. They rent out their hall and people have parties. This in turn is associated with an increase in police presence and enforcement activity.

Participants observed that these developments were having the collective effect of erasing Black culture from neighborhoods where Black people have lived in large numbers and built communities and traditions have become more common.

Participants noted tensions among neighbors that many attributed to racism and privilege on the part of new residents. I think with the gentrification, they have tried to just a little bit. Does anybody have any clue what it is? Churches on Sunday. — June 9, P3

Participants also voiced concerns about the removal or contestation of established institutions and services that are stigmatized, such as methadone maintenance treatment facilities and homeless shelters. Participants also voiced concerns about the loss of other community institutions, such as churches, as property values increased.

Participants noted tensions among neighbors that are primarily white. Even though you have training, they discount what you have to say because it didn’t come from them. You could be more educated than them. You know of where you speak, but it doesn’t matter because it doesn’t come from them...They come here. For whatever reason they somehow end up taking over.

I don't want to say take over, but they immerse in the community garden and suddenly what is supposedly grown there—which really has been produce or whatever, our vegetables—suddenly, “No, we don't want this type of vegetable. We want this type of vegetable.” As part of the workshops that I do, I go to certain community gardens and I see this...[S]uddenly there's restrictions. They immediately just gentrify areas. It could be a store that you own. They don't like the look of it. Suddenly, you're getting a lot of violations because this is now how—in their mind, it's their money, they moved here, so now things need to be changed.

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…We are being displaced because all of a sudden this area is being seen as the most valuable thing...They don't see us as neighbors. They see us as, “Oh, what are you guys doing?” “Excuse you. We built this neighborhood. Excuse me.” Then, everything that we do is not even inclusive of what the current culture is. Now you get a fine if you play your music on Saturday. What? Uh...we have barbeques all of the time! You need to fit in! We’re not saying we need you to act like this a normal thing. We don’t want to upset anybody as far as what everybody’s culture is, but a barbeque in the park is nothing for you to call the police.

There’s a church here in Harlem and from time to time, for extra money, they rent out their hall. They rent out their hall and people have parties there. But now since the white people done moved in now, they complain about the parties. — June 13, P3

You have to get a permit, and you have to close down at a certain hour. The same thing is true of the noise level. You have to get a permit, and you have to be able to be within the guidelines for the noise level. And, those things, I mean, Saturday night in the park was fun. There would be dancing, and – but, all of these restrictions now...because people have complained that, “We don’t want to hear any drums in the park.” — Yet, at the same time they’ve created dog runs in the park. We never had that before. But, now there are dog runs in all the parks. And, there are no children runs.

I would say it’s in a subtle way, but since the gentrification here, you even have those of the white population kind of look at you like, “Why are you here?” — May 22, P1

So, I attend gardening workshops. …I’ve had some training, took classes, etc. So, you go into an environment where it’s primarily white. Even though you have training, they discount what you have to say because it didn’t come from them. You could be more educated than them. You know of where you speak, but it doesn’t matter because it doesn’t come from them...They come here. For whatever reason they somehow end up taking over.

I don’t want to say take over, but they immerse in the community garden and suddenly what is supposedly grown there—which really has been produce or whatever, our vegetables—suddenly, “No, we don't want this type of vegetable. We want this type of vegetable.” As part of the workshops that I do, I go to certain community gardens and I see this...[S]uddenly there’s restrictions. They immediately just gentrify areas. It could be a store that you own. They don’t like the look of it. Suddenly, you’re getting a lot of violations because this is now how—in their mind, it’s their money, they moved here, so now things need to be changed...

Black New Yorkers who participated in the research also expressed concern that while gentrification sometimes brought additional investment to the built environment and, in some cases, additional services, new establishments were not inclusive of longer-term Black residents. [T]hat’s what happens with gentrification because nobody ever thought about this area before. Nobody ever thought about building that. They rent out their hall and people have parties. This in turn is associated with an increase in police presence and enforcement activity.

…We are being displaced because all of a sudden this area is being seen as the most valuable thing...They don't see us as neighbors. They see us as, “Oh, what are you guys doing?” “Excuse you. We built this neighborhood. Excuse me.” Then, everything that we do is not even inclusive of what the current culture is. Now you get a fine if you play your music on Saturday. What? Uh...we have barbeques all of the time! You need to fit in! We’re not saying we need you to act like this a normal thing. We don’t want to upset anybody as far as what everybody’s culture is, but a barbeque in the park is nothing for you to call the police.

There’s a church here in Harlem and from time to time, for extra money, they rent out their hall. They rent out their hall and people have parties there. But now since the white people done moved in now, they complain about the parties. — June 13, P3

You have to get a permit, and you have to close down at a certain hour. The same thing is true of the noise level. You have to get a permit, and you have to be able to be within the guidelines for the noise level. And, those things, I mean, Saturday night in the park was fun. There would be dancing, and – but, all of these restrictions now...because people have complained that, “We don’t want to hear any drums in the park.” — Yet, at the same time they’ve created dog runs in the park. We never had that before. But, now there are dog runs in all the parks. And, there are no children runs.

I would say it’s in a subtle way, but since the gentrification here, you even have those of the white population kind of look at you like, “Why are you here?” — May 22, P1
4. Education & Youth

The next priority for the focus group participants were experiences in schools and the experiences of young people more generally.

a. Education

In the realm of education, participants shared concerns related to:

- Resource disparities that place predominantly-Black schools at a disadvantage compared to predominantly-white schools;
- Difficulties navigating options in a system characterized by varied school quality;
- Their children’s potential encounters with racism in predominantly-white schools;
- Disinvestment in traditional public schools and increased investment in charter schools;
- Lack of cultural diversity in the curriculum and lack of Black teachers and administrators;
- The frequency with which Black students were placed in remedial courses and limited access to advanced coursework;
- Disproportionate labeling of Black students as having behavior difficulties;
- Racial disparities in suspension and expulsion rates;
- Deployment of police to assist in disciplinary matters;
- Bullying and other targeting of immigrant students;
- Negative experiences in higher education settings.

Conversations surfaced structural concerns related to resources. Participants observed that predominantly-Black schools tended to have fewer resources at their disposal and lower quality academic offerings than predominantly-white schools. Focus group participants observed that predominantly-Black schools with which they were familiar lacked sufficient basic materials such as textbooks, chairs, desks, lockers and even access to drinking water where water fountains are consistently out-of-service. Many participants also identified predominantly-white schools as having advanced technology and facilities that predominantly-Black schools typically did not. Participants also expressed a concern that there were fewer extracurricular activities and after-school programs at Black schools.

Participants also noted challenges moving from schools and programs they perceived as lower-quality to programs they perceived as higher-quality, citing bureaucracy, high-stakes testing or required long-distance travel as obstacles. However, participants also identified a tension between the desire to seek better options for their children in other neighborhoods and the impact of such choices on schools in their communities.

It’s a catch-22 because what happens is because the quality of school is so low, then we try to sometimes send the children other places, but then the schools in our community begin to close because we no longer have enough students in our schools. So, it’s a catch-22 situation.

– June 9, P9

Relatedly, participants expressed fear about racism their children might encounter if assigned to predominantly-white schools as part of desegregation efforts. Noting that some white parents had recently demonstrated vigorous opposition to such efforts, one parent in the sample described their fear that Black children would confront resistance from white families and suggested increased support for equitable schools to address racism that may be directed at students in such settings.

In addition to resource disparities between schools in Black neighborhoods and schools in predominantly-white neighborhoods and the difficulty of navigating a system with significant disparities, participants cited disinvestment in traditional public schools and increasing investment in charter schools as an indicator of racism. Participants expressed concern that this shift was linked to de-unionization of teaching as a profession, the decline of successful public schools and, in the long-term, reduced access to free, high-quality education. Participants also expressed concern about discipline and culture in some charter school settings.

[They’re] using these charter schools... What they’re trying to do? They want to get rid of public schools. They want to get rid of unions. They want to get rid of the middle class.

– May 19, P10

If you notice that a lot of these charter schools... they’re in our communities, and these charter schools they concentrate on discipline. If you have any kids in a charter school, you will know that you have to walk in a straight line. You have to sit. [...] There’s all of these issues that have to do with discipline, but if you go out into the other communities, you have the open classroom, kids running around and tutus and everything else, doing whatever they want to do and that’s okay for them, but for us, it’s really teaching you how to behave and not teaching and not educating you, and actually conditioning you not to think out of the box.

– June 9 P9

In addition to noting broader structural issues related to resources, participants also shared overarching concerns about curriculum and teaching. For example, participants cited the lack of cultural diversity in curriculums—particularly the limited integration of information on the histories and cultures of the African diaspora—as problematic.

This included concerns about the distortion of history and ‘white-washing’ of curricula. Relatedly, while the NYC Men Teach program, which is designed to hire more men of color to teach in public schools, was the subject of some praise, participants noted a general lack of Black teachers and administrators in public schools, including schools with large Black student populations. Some participants described situations in which multiple Black teachers left due to pressure from administrators or unsupportive environments.

My sister is a teacher, and the principal of the school was discriminating against all of the Blacks because she was new in the school, so she wanted all of them out… Making it hostile where they want to leave.

– June 13, P6

When the teachers were getting fired, teachers of color – it was deans – but after the first year of our school, all of the teachers left. They just vanished. There was maybe one Black teacher left and she got fired in April. So, it made the community of students angry.

– June 6, P1

Another participant described how interactions between a teacher and a co-parent gave rise to concerns about how racism might be impacting their child’s day-to-day experiences at school. My daughter goes to a school that is predominately – it’s not Black, but it’s not white, but all of the teachers are white.

The children are Black, Latino, Mexican, Indian, Chinese. She has a mix of people, but when her mom – who is Black of course – goes and picks her up, it’s all of these notions … it’s racist innuendo, like, oh, my daughter’s not getting what she needs at home. Assumptions. Assuming that because she’s Black, she doesn’t have X, Y, and Z. The assumptions. So, in the classroom, what is she doing to my daughter?

– June 13PM, P9

One participant described school administrators’ resistance to incorporating focused on Black history and supporting organizations designed to provide safe spaces for Black students.

I think it’s an issue of having to make us Black people more quiet, or make white people comfortable in certain environments. My school – during the election last year, a lot of Black kids were very much not feeling so much, but we’d go to classes and they’d ban us from speaking about it, just for the simple fact that white kids would be uncomfortable.

So, I think a lot of environments are adjusted to white kids’ emotions, but forget about Black kids. [It] might be hurting their feelings or emotions, and they might be uncomfortable if we speak on race issues or political issues, and I think that’s a big problem.

– May 26, P10

We put up a slide show on the progression of African Americans throughout history [and] people were making jokes about slavery. And then, we… had our chance to get a BSU passed, [a Black Student Union, but] kinda got shelved with a white [by the] administration. And then after this year, when there was a big incident at the Black History [event], people got fed up.

– June 16, P2

Participants reported that Black students also
EXPERIENCES WITH ANTI-BLACK RACISM

And I remember, when I first came... And they look at her – they want to put her three grades backwards. I said, "No." No, no, no..."They said, well, she knows what she's doing. This is the class we have to put her in. I said, "No, you have to put her back three grades." Then, I stood my ground. I said, "I know where she should be. And if you want to test her, please, I give you every opportunity. Go and give her the test. If she fails[1], then I will agree with you. But, if she [does] not fail, then you have to do whatever is right." ... Therefore, I stood very firm. I said, "No, I have confidence. Give her the test." Then, she did very well. – May 19, P7

In addition to sharing instances in which they confronted obstacles when trying to secure grade-level appropriate or advanced assignments for their children, participants cited ways in which school environments undermined Black students’ self-esteem and ability to succeed. For example, some participants shared examples of teachers discouraging or diminishing students’ potential or intellect. Others, noted how certain teachers or mentors outside of school had encouraged them to pursue education or pointed to the powerful role that schools could play if encouraged them to pursue education or pointed to the powerful role that schools could play if they also had some issue – falling them. I mean, they could be going to school from a shelter, and mom is struggling; daddy isn’t here. Parents incarcerated. And, they have such potential, but they need somebody to help them. I see that she get lost in the system. And, all they may need is somebody to give them a chance. ... I mean, my children have gone to public schools, but if you’re not there to advocate, you know, even when you do have special needs, it’s like a whole ballgame from once you start educating your child. You have to be there to advocate. You have to be there to advocate. – May 22, P11

Relatedly, participants observed that Black students were disproportionately likely to be labeled as having special needs or behavioral problems. Parents reported that when they pushed back against such assessments by, for example, requesting additional information or explanation, others, noted how certain teachers or mentors outside of school had encouraged them to pursue education or pointed to the powerful role that schools could play if better equipped to serve students dealing with homelessness, parental incarceration or other challenges. I also think a lot of African-Americans, Black people, whatever, [to] some reason some people always have to prove themselves... We would have teachers and they would say negative things to our Black students to break down their self-esteem. It’s rampant. [We] know, as parents, we let our children know, “Hey, you are smart.” ... [They] really break a lot of children’s self-esteem. – May 29, P1, I

I notice with Black males, men, young. Black males, I notice young. Black males are being steered away from education... Roadblocks would be, “You can’t do that.” But I always had a counter actor that said[1], “Yes, you can.” So, there was always someone warning in my ear – Mama. African-American teachers are saying, “Education.” – May 24, P7

I think the education system in terms of even reaching children where they are – our children can be high achievers, but because they ... they may have had some issue – failing them. I mean, they could be going to school from a shelter, and mom is struggling; daddy isn’t here. Parents incarcerated. And, they have such potential, but they need somebody to help them. I see that they get lost in the system. And, all they may need is somebody to give them a chance. ... I mean, my children have gone to public schools, but if you’re not there to advocate, you know, even when you do have special needs, it’s like a whole ballgame from once you start educating your child. You have to be there to advocate. – May 22, P11

Discipline in schools was also a major topic of discussion within the focus groups. In addition to concerns such as those above relating to the targeting and labeling of Black students, participants noted stark racial disparities in discipline. In addition, focus group participants characterized responses to Black student behaviors as overly punitive and observed that while white students often encountered less-punitive responses when they misbehaved. One parent described how their son was penalized for responding to white students who were harassing him, after having tried and failed to get assistance from school staff. Three little white girls that are known to cause trouble in the school were bothering my son. So, my son said something inappropriate, but he was upset, to one of them. The teacher wanted to suspend my son and not do anything to those little girls that he already expressed he had an issue with, one of them specifically. So, the teacher – I go pick up my son – she says, “Oh, it’s a concern because he has Guns Down My Life Up on his hat.” I said, “Did he show any kind of violence that he had a gun, that he would carry a gun?” Why was that a concern? She was like, “I don’t know.” She said to the girl, “If I had a gun, I’d shoot you.” He tried to get some recourse, spoke to the predominately white establishment and didn’t get any recourse. I said, “Why did you say that out of all things?” He said, “I just wanted her to leave me alone.” So, I had to sit with the principal who kind of apologized for the teacher’s behavior and his explanation was she worked at a Catholic school and hasn’t been around a lot of Black students. My son is 9 now. – June 2, P2

My brother and gender, the difference... There’s this one boy, the teachers would whisper in my ear – Mama. And certain teachers are saying, “Education.” – May 29, P1. The government could increase funding to public schools, but if you’re not there to advocate, you know, even when you do have special needs, it’s like a whole ballgame from once you start educating your child. You have to be there to advocate. – May 22, P11

So, as a part of my work I do a lot with other institutions, Columbia University, Bank Street, Yale, and there was recently a study done on preschool expulsion. And, my Black boys are expelled from preschool more so than their white counterparts. It’s really disheartening, people that some research has been done, a lot of places will not outright suspend a child that is three or four years old, but, what they will do is employ exclusionary practices. Meaning that they don’t have to be in the parent, why don’t you keep him home for this week? Or, if the child is not able to stay

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home with the parents, well, we’re not gonna let him play with this toy, or we’re not gonna let him participate in these activities, which have massive impacts for young children, for any child. But, that’s the way a lot of them get around not suspending, quote on quote, these children, but they are excluding them from certain things and from things that will benefit them. – June 5, P4

One participant expressed concerns about the use of metal detectors, in particular, describing the experience of watching high school students’ pass through on their way to class.

And when you walk into these schools in the morning, I was in a high school to attend the mock trial, and I had to wait for my other colleagues. And I’m standing there, and I see these kids. It actually brought tears to my eyes. They walk in and there’s ten different metal detectors that they have to walk through. Now, if they buzz, if it beeps, now, you have to see this. They automatically knew to put their hands up in the air. These were 15-year-olds. They put their hands up in the air, they had to take their shoes off, and to look at them, this was what they did every single day. It was absolutely the saddest thing.

– June 5, P2

Participants also expressed concerns about the deployment of policing in predominantly-Black schools. Participants shared multiple observations about the impact of these policies and practices on young people.

[We had a classmate. He wasn’t bad, he wasn’t on the streets, but he was one of those that you didn’t know who he really belonged to...[We used to bring in a cop at that time... I don’t know how the argument happened, but all we know is we were working on a project. He was in our group, and... we were trying... [to] embrace him like, “[Let’s get this done],” and then all of a sudden the cop just starts wresting him and then he starts resisting. So, him and the cop were going back and forth, and it’s like we’re middle school students, witnessing things like this, and it’s scary when you’ve never seen something like that, so it was just a bad experience for everyone.

– May 26, P4

Black immigrants in the sample were especially concerned about bullying and targeting of immigrant students.

Finally, some participants spoke to current experiences in higher education settings. These included being made to feel uncomfortable voicing their opinions and being subjected to forms of censorship in addition to encountering overt racial insults.

A lot of colleges also have a way of institutionally oppressing black students. I go to [university name redacted], which is in Queens. Recently... Black students have been protesting a lot, because they’ve felt a lot of injustice towards them. A lot of white students would go on Twitter, create fake pages of students, and just shame them on there. And so, students are going out protesting, writing, and the university decided to e-mail those students that are protesting and say, “Hey, your diplomas will be retracted...” so, those kind of things that colleges are doing to Black students, like trying to keep them quiet and not voicing what’s happening.

– May 26, P9

b. Youth

Separate and apart from issues related to education, participants expressed concerns about a range of challenges confronting Black youth. Specifically, participants raised concerns about—

• Criminalization and aggressive policing of young, Black people
• The challenge of preparing young people for the reality of racism
• Adoption or internalization of racist notions by young people
• The pervasiveness of negative characterizations of Black youth and the need for more empowering messages and images
• The need for additional support services for young, Black people
• The particular impacts of homelessness, involvement in the child welfare system and family experience with incarceration on Black youth.

Consistent with respondents’ overall prioritization of issues related to law enforcement and the criminal legal system, conversations surfaced a number of concerns about the criminalization and aggressive policing of young Black New Yorkers. Group members discussed the impact of involvement with the criminal legal system on young people. In addition, focus group participants cited the negative impact of witnessing persistent anti-Black violence for which there is little accountability.

Djur young boys are going in jail for no reason... – May 29, P3

It’s the law that’s doing this. In these situations, these issues where our children are being killed because they have hoodies on. These issues that our children are being killed because they are Black by white people. The white people are not going to jail. It puts it in a Black person’s head, they don’t have any way out. They’re automatically set up for failure.

– May 24, P4

Parents in the focus groups shared strategies they or other Black families utilized in order to prepare their children to deal with racism. Participants described how they attempted to shield their children from racism, while also remaining vigilant about how their children move in the world. One participant’s comment illustrates how aggressive monitoring of Black children’s behavior in stores and other public spaces denies such children the opportunity to engage in age-appropriate behavior and communicates that their presence is a problem and generates anxiety for Black parents, who know that such monitoring is a consistent reality of Black life.

Like when you go shopping, it’s like you go to an area, there is that theft prevention specialist now. And if you go, you’re Black, your kids are just playing around... Then you see white children just get loud as much as possible. And nothing is being said. You see that all the time. You see the white kids, they just are allowed free rein to just pull on stuff, do whatever. But if it’s another race kid, it’s just, “Don’t touch that. Move from there. Where’s your parents?” And you’re like – Not allowing kids to be kids but then white kids are able to do all of that and they’re allowed that.

– May 29, P4

Participants also shared examples of the ways in which they saw young people adopting or internalizing racist notions.

I had an experience with my neighbor. Her son was at my house, [They are a] Hispanic family. And the little boy says to me, “What color is God?” So I said, “Well, God is not a color. He’s a spirit.”

He says, “I want God to be white.” “Why?” He said, “I just do.” “I said, “Okay.” I left it alone because it created a feeling for me. But then I shared it with his mom and she kind of made light of it. And then she went into mocking Black people. – May 24

Relatedly, participants observed the pervasiveness of negative stereotypes and messages about Black youth.

The negative images, it carries over and young folks look at it as being bleak. The only way I’m getting out is I’m playing basketball or killing. So those images that keep, over and over, being looped over, that’s what they see.

– May 29, P4

I remember one particular instance where [my employer] said to me, if she sees a set of Black boys on a street on one side, she walks to the other side. So that tells me that you identify Black as being not good, violent, whatever. But, anyway, I was not going to tell her personally.

– May 29, P3

Finally, in discussing the need for additional support services for Black youth, participants noted—as they had in other areas—that race often combined with other characteristics to create unique challenges for some young Black people in the city. Specifically, they noted the negative impacts of homelessness, involvement with the child welfare system and family members’ incarceration on young people.

5. Social Services

Across focus groups, participants expressed concerns about the high cost of living—referring especially to housing, food, childcare and transportation—as well as the difficulty of achieving the quality of life they desired for themselves and their families. Participants identified the inadequacy of the minimum wage as well as low payments from benefits programs.
as obstacles to economic security. Overall, there was a sense that the needs of low-income New Yorkers were not being met or even sufficiently discussed. Specifically, participants shared concerns about public assistance programs and child welfare practices.

a. Public Assistance Programs

In discussions concerning interactions with the Human Resources Administration (“HRA”), which administers multiple, federally-funded public benefits programs, participants noted a range of concerns. These included issues—such as the narrow eligibility requirements for programs and the low level of benefits paid to those who do manage to qualify—that are dictated by state and federal law and policy and, thus, beyond HRA control. Concerns included—

- Difficulty navigating public benefits programs and offices; and
- Incidents in which frontline staff at public benefits offices treated individuals with antagonism, hostility, and disrespect;

Some participants reported some difficulty navigating services, which they observed were insufficiently advertised or explained at local benefits offices.

A couple of – maybe three or four years ago, I had food stamps. And then when it was time to re-certify, they asked me to return... and I returned three times and I was denied. And I just stopped going. So me and my kids, we just ate noodles... and we’re still alive... [When] I went to reaply, the lady at the front tell me, “You still have time to submit the documents.” I said, “We sent the documents.” And then I didn’t get anything. So when I went back again, I tell her I submitted – I have the original thing that said what I was missing. I had three stamps saying – they stamp it when you bring in the documents and I was denied. And I was like, “Okay.” – May 26, P1

In addition, some participants described the stigma they or loved ones felt when seeking public benefits, which was compounded by the hostile treatment on the part of some front-line staff.

I remember when I had lost my job... I went to public assistance. And the way they look at you, the city agencies. Meanwhile, I have all these degrees and they were talking down to me just because I’m there. Not because I lost my job but because I’m in there and I have a certain stigma. And the majority of the people that – who are there are Black. So they think that, because they are there, they must not have any type of anything and they can talk down to us. So that’s No. 1. – May 24, P4

b. Child Services

Some participants also identified child services as an area in which they had experienced racism, specifically noting—

- Prolonged pendency of some child welfare cases in family court;
- Trauma resulting from government intervention;
- Confusing conditions imposed on families without explanation;
- Incidents in which frontline staff treated families with antagonism and disrespect;
- Incidents in which requests for assistance with intimate partner violence resulted in possibility of removal of children from the individual requesting support.

Some participants shared stories of their own lives. One participant recounted an experience with ACS relating to her son.

I went when my daughter was 8 months old... I couldn’t work, and I stopped working. So we were there for this One-Shot deal. Okay? ... So we heard about this One-Shot deal and we went and it was horrific... I’ll say it was like a madhouse and people were cursing. I walked out of there. We didn’t get the assistance. And I said to my husband, I said, “We never was in no system in our country.” I said, “We’ll never come back here.” And to God the glory, to this day, we never had to go back. – June 2, P3

Participants also noted that cases in family court continued for years with very slow follow-up or progress towards resolution, functioning as a source of stress for their families. Participants also described how, upon separation, they or their children were subjected to confusing conditions and sanctions.

So they think that, because they are there, they must not have any type of anything and they can talk down to us. So that’s No. 1. – June 2, P3

5. Employment & Economy

Individuals who participated in the focus groups reported a wide range of experiences with race-based discrimination on the job, in retail establishments, restaurants and other places of public accommodation and in other settings in which they engaged in the local economy.

a. Employment

Focus group members described encountering racism in hiring processes, including discrimination on the basis of criminal history; being subjected to greater scrutiny, more frequent reprimands and more serious sanctions than similarly-situated white colleagues; tensions created by requests to handle “Black issues” in the workplace; interpersonal racism and other aggressions in interactions with colleagues; differences in compensation and opportunities for advancement when compared with white counterparts; and racial patterns in the assignment of supervisory and subordinate roles.

or anything on him, but just that the fact that they said that. They came to my house. They looked all over. He was so embarrassed. He was like, “I’ll never say it again.” They went through the whole thing, and it was nothing. The teacher was like, “Well, when a kid says something –” But you didn’t ask the kid why he said that. They went through the whole thing... They had to take his clothes off. He had his underwear on. They had to look all over his body, through his room. He was like, “Mom, I can’t believe they did this to me.” It was traumatic for him. He was little. He was maybe 9 or 10, less than that. It was an invasion for us, I understand that we have to protect the children. I get it. But there’s a way in which we do things.

participants described encountering racism more broadly at nearly every stage of the employment process, including—

- Discrimination in hiring processes, including on the basis of criminal history;
- Being subjected to greater scrutiny, more frequent reprimands and more serious sanctions than similarly-situated white colleagues;
- Tensions created by requests to handle “Black issues” in the workplace;
- Interpersonal racism and other aggressions in interactions with colleagues;
- Differences in compensation and opportunities for advancement when compared with white counterparts;
- Racial patterns in the assignment of supervisory and subordinate roles;
Participants described encountering discrimination in hiring processes that hampered their efforts to compete for job opportunities. Some noted that despite the passage of the City’s ‘Ban-the-Box’ legislation—generally regarded as one of the strongest in the nation—there remains discrimination against Black New Yorkers with histories of involvement with the criminal legal system that prevents too many New Yorkers from securing employment.

Beyond this, participants described encountering multiple forms of racism once employed. These often surfaced in discriminatory treatment by supervisors and colleagues. Participants also reported facing greater scrutiny and being reprimanded more often and issued more serious sanctions than white colleagues who had engaged in the same behavior or produced work of the same quality while on the job. Black New Yorkers also reported having to work harder and do more than their white counterparts.

I discovered that the white folks are—they are always favored above the black folks. Like, at times, the white folks, they might do stuff and they will not get into trouble. But, you as a black person, the moment you do that, you’re in trouble. So, at times you discover that in job places there is favoritism for white folks compared to the blacks.

Additionally, focus group participants reported that when there were few employees of color in a setting, they were often asked for input on “Black issues” or to address problems with other Black employees. Participants viewed this as additional, unpaid labor. Some participants commented on the lack of Black people in leadership positions within organizations or spoke to their own experiences of often being the only Black person in high-status positions and the particular forms of disrespect—such as questioning of credentials and speculation concerning merit—that they encountered in such situations.

Another issue I had was with my former employer. I used to work for [name redacted] bank and it was in a corporate setting, Park Avenue. And this man, he was my supervisor and he had a way of talking to you down. But not directly. He’ll just—you know he’s talking to you down because you just feel it. So I went somewhere and I forgot exactly where I went. It was like some upscale place. A political event. I’ve done a lot of networking over the past ten years. Oh, wow. And then he started looking at me differently. Then he started talking to me differently. So when he realized that I did have certain connections that he didn’t have, you know? He had his own connections but people started looking at you you know? He would be more receptive if it came from you? And so, yeah, I do. It was kind of a double-edged sword. I still don’t even know to feel about it, and I think that’s why I never keep talking to people about it today because I don’t even know where my feelings settle in it. Yes, I do. I feel protective in a way that I should talk to her because she might not be receptive, or it might hurt her feelings more if it’s coming from someone who doesn’t look like her. She’s young, she doesn’t know how to be professional. She’s an intern. So, it’s like, yeah, no problem, I’ll do that, but then it’s like, well, why are you asking me?—June 5, P4

…[M]y boss who’s the CMVP of operations called me on the phone after we had all went to lunch, and she’s white. And she was just like, so, do you think it would be beneficial to have a conversation with… the [Black] intern, about her cell phone usage? And I was like, yes, I do think that would be beneficial. And she was like, yeah, I mean, I can do it, but do you think [she] would be more receptive if it came from you? And so, yeah, I do. It was kind of a double-edged sword. I still don’t even know to feel about it, and I think that’s why I never keep talking to people about it today because I don’t even know where my feelings settle in it. Yes, I do. I feel protective in a way that I should talk to her because she might not be receptive, or it might hurt her feelings more if it’s coming from someone who doesn’t look like her. She’s young, she doesn’t know how to be professional. She’s an intern. So, it’s like, yeah, no problem, I’ll do that, but then it’s like, well, why are you asking me?—June 5, P4

… I’m retired now, but throughout my life, I worked a lot where I was the only person of color in the company and I just kind of got used to it because I was the person that, if there was a Black issue, they would seek me out. We want your input. What do you think we should do? In some ways, I used it to gain power because they needed that, and they knew they needed that, so in an environment, you wanna create value for yourself that no one else has. So, I looked at it as this is something I have that’s giving me a voice that no one else here has that same voice. But, in what does it? You’re doing more work, no one walks over and says, can I give you a bonus, for the extra work that you did, but they expect that you can have these conversations. And then, I think the other side of it is that it’s taxing to play that role because now you don’t have your sisters here. Emotionally, it’s emotionally taxing. You don’t have Black sisters that you could go in the ladies’ room and say, blah-blah-blah. No, you’re just internalizing this eight-hour or twelve-hour-a-day environment with all of this stuff that now these white people are giving to you because they don’t know what to do with it.—May 24, P4

In addition, participants cited multiple examples of interpersonal racism within the workplace, from colleagues, supervisors and clients. Participants recounted instances in which they or other Black workers were talked down to, dismissed, made to feel inadequate or treated with outright hostility at the workplace.

I’ve dealt with racism...[There was] another situation where I was working at a bakery. We had a white manager, a female white manager and this woman was allowed to be able to come and disrespect us on the floor, say whatever she wanted to us. I was judged by how I was coming inside the workplace. They wanted me to wear a tight-fitting shirt as opposed to an extra-large shirt I feel more comfortable in. I was being judged on how I was coming dressing. I wasn’t wearing my pants off my butt, but my shirt might be a little larger and they were telling me I couldn’t wear large shirts like that. —May 19, P2

… We used to have staff meetings...We’d sit and she [my boss] would go, “We need to hire another supervisor.” And she goes, “It can’t be Black.” I’m sitting there going —“It can’t under the age of 26 because she might get pregnant.” And this is a woman talking now. Yeah, And so I’m sitting there, going, “Damn,” I’m looking at my skin color. But, see, I’m at the table. It’s almost like I’m not there. And I’m saying to – the other supervisor, he’s Spanish. “No Spanish people. They don’t work hard enough.” And I looked at Jose, I go, “And you’re out too.” —May 24, P7

And, as in other areas, focus group members noted how racism combined with other forms of oppression to marginalize Black women in the workplace. For example, several participants noted that older adults were often made to feel inferior. Participants who were union members cited differential treatment by their labor organizations, which they linked to historical, racist resistance to Black union membership. Black women spoke of being undervalued and undermined in the workplace. Black immigrants, in particular, spoke about the intersecting forms of discrimination they faced on the job that were grounded in both their race and their status as immigrants. They recalled facing scrutiny, insults and aggressions relating to their accents and cultures of origin as well as comments urging them to return to their countries of origin.

For me, it’s the same way, especially in the corporate world. I’m fighting for myself being the only person of color, but also the only woman of color, oftentimes, at the table with mostly white men. And so, to me, that just adds a whole other layer, the fact that I’m Black, I’m a woman, and I’m young. That has always kind of came with me as I’ve grown my career in different jobs that I’ve had. I always noticed, like, okay, not only is it evident that I’m Black, they also make it clear that, oh, you’re young, you know? I don’t respect you, and you’re a woman, so I also don’t have to respect you. And, for me, I don’t wanna say it’s altered my character a bit, but I feel like my work performance, I have to be more aggressive, which that adds to this character of Black women. —June 5, P6

[They would say], “Where did you come from? You come from Africa. We are taking you back. To the boat that brought you. It is still waiting. We are going to throw you back. And go back to your own country. Because you don’t belong to this place. And we are going to make sure that you are removed from your job.” They were saying a lot of things. I’ve faced it many times at my job. Yes. Then talked to – telling us where we came from, telling us we don’t have roots here. The boat is waiting for us to leave. —May 19, P7

NYC.gov/HumanRights | @NYCCHR

NYC.gov/HumanRights | @NYCCHR
Like my colleagues, some of them think, oh, you live on top of a tree. Oh, my colleague, you live on top of a – I say, “Yeah, I live on top of a tree.” — May 19, p10

Participants also observed differences in compensation and opportunities for advancement. Participants discussed income disparities relative to similarly situated colleagues who were not Black and being passed over for promotions when they were as qualified, or more so, than the person seeking advancement.

Domestic workers, home health aides and others in similar professions often do not have traditional offices and instead work in intimate and often casual settings with their employers and clients. In such casual settings, there were reports of interpersonal forms of racism although they are sometimes more implicitly or tacitly expressed. Participants in these sectors also reported confronting wage discrimination, requests to perform tasks beyond what was previously agreed to, demeaning in these sectors also reported confronting wage discrimination, requests to perform tasks beyond what was previously agreed to, demeaning.

While experiences with various forms of racism in the workplace are not uncommon, participants rarely reported such discrimination through human resources or other formal channels. Fear of retaliation was the most common barrier to reporting—particularly fear of losing one’s job, or being ostracized by other employees. Participants also attributed their reluctance to report to a lack of confidentiality in the workplace, especially in small organizations. In addition to these concerns, participants also saw no benefits in reporting to human resources professionals as there was little confidence that such reports would result in remedial action.

Notably, participants also suspected that they would likely be dismissed for being ‘too sensitive’ or ‘playing the race card,’ in these situations especially if human relations staff were not Black. They expressed concern that non-Black human relations staff were likely to have their own biases and would be unable to recognize or understand anti-Black racism. These concerns were especially pronounced among Black employees who worked in settings with few colleagues of color.

It’s like you’re sensitive about being Black. I mean, I sued the company and I worked there while I was suing them, so I got over that a long time ago, but the reality is that the other Black people that could’ve been a part of the case that we had, there were people that were absolutely in fear. But I felt stronger because I felt that they wouldn’t go after me because I had that lawsuit against them, but I see that all the time. People are simply afraid, and rightly so. — June 5, P2

Across focus groups, participants were quick to recount negative experiences in retail establishments. One participant, for example, described being subjected to racist and transphobic slurs and witnessing similar treatment of others in local convenience stores. Others described experiences having their currency checked by staff at stores they patronized or seeing products targeted at Black consumers locked away, while similar products intended for white consumers were placed within reach of the white customers. The participant described the humiliation and distress the episode caused.

One participant detailed an experience in which, while visiting a popular family attraction in the City, she negatively observed a merchant treating her differently than white customers. The participant described the humiliation and distress the episode caused.

If you notice like when you’re in there, they look at you differently. They will follow you. They’re not expecting you to buy. They’re not expecting you to have money. They’re expecting you to steal automatically. As like if you see a group of white girls walk in, they’re not bothering them. They’ve got big bags. They can have the stuff on their shoulder, and they’re not following them. Us, if we have something on like we go in the dressing room, oh, you have two items. I’ve noticed that. They’ll give you a thing like two, and then, you see a girl with a bunch of jeans and shirts and dresses, they won’t count how many pieces she has. — May 31, P4

I was going to Kenya, and I was going to [store name redacted] to pack for things. And mind you, my cart was full of things that I wanted to buy, but this one lady, I kept noticing she kept following me. And so, I was messing with her, going into this aisle to make sure she was doing it, right? And then once I found out I was following me, I was like, “Okay, you know what? I’m going to be petty.” I started putting random stuff and random things, and I was just like, “If you want to work, you’re gonna work today!” And then, after that, I called [store name redacted]. And they gave me a $25.00 gift card, and I was just like, you know, as much as I was happy getting the money, it’s just like, the experience was like, “Wow.” — May 26, P12

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BLACK NEW YORKERS ON THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH ANTI-BLACK RACISM

What is this telling me? … Two people. A man, and a woman, but you’re not stopping white people to withhold medication based on assumptions that they would’ve given him a full value of everything and he would’ve found "You're not going to amputate her," and then went and got a second opinion and found out they didn’t need to amputate her leg. So, she would’ve been like, "Go along with whatever the doctor says." My daughter was walking around with one leg now. She was going to stay with her godmother. So, they wanted to amputate her leg from a mosquito bite. They wanted to amputate her leg. Because her godmother was in the healthcare profession – she was a nurse, she’s the professional – she said, "Oh, hell no. You’re not going to amputate her," and then went and got a second opinion and found out they didn’t need to amputate her leg. So, if she was not educated and did not know, they would’ve given her the ice cream. So, I was like, "Okay, what if I don’t have cash?" “Yeah, I’ll just take it back.” That was his response… I gave him the cash. I was inconvenienced. It is that park. Like, your ice cream is so expensive, so how can you tell me only take [cash]?

So, what I did, I went behind him, I had my phone. I wasn’t convinced. I knew something was wrong somewhere. So, I went behind – he didn’t know what I was doing. And people were coming, other races were coming, giving him credit card, and he was taking it. Oh my god. I was shivering. My kids didn’t know what was happening. They just saw mom holding a phone looking for like an evidence or something. Then, I made sure I had it on camera and I walked – that was the first time – I see the videos on YouTube, help people. I felt – I was shaking, like, this has never happened to me. Like work, I work in a corporate environment, it never happened to me. … So, I’m like okay, now I’m like – so, I went to the lady, a white lady with a son. And I say, “Hi, honey.” she didn’t know what I was doing. “Did you just use a credit card here?” And she said, “Yes, I just used my credit card.” I just went crazy. Not really crazy, like, in a nice way. I’m like, “Oh, I have you on camera. So, you told me you don’t take a credit card. You just took a credit card from this lady?”

Oh my god. They shut down the whole thing, and the boss came. … [He said] “[T]hat’s not what I mean.” What do you mean? You told me you don’t take a credit card, only cash. And I just saw someone using a credit card. What is this telling me? … Two people. A man, a white man and a white lady with son. “No, that’s not what I meant. I meant I don’t have change.” I’m not what you said. “I’m not dumb. If you don’t have change, credit card or debit card would have been the best way. You don’t have to give me change back. And the boss came, they shut down the whole thing and telling people, "You can use the other stand. We have a situation." He said “Please, I’ll do anything. That’s not what I mean. I’m so sorry.” – May 19, P5

Another participant discussed an experience in a public space, whereby a security guard required Black people to show identification in order to access the public restrooms, but did not ask the same of white visitors.

I was eating lunch with my friend and we were in this public space. We’re eating lunch, everybody comes here and eats… I didn’t realize that you needed to show your ID to use the bathroom. So, my friend was telling me this and was like, the security guard gave me a hard time, I’m like, why do you need to show your ID for the bathroom? I’ve never heard of that before, so I was like, let me go test a theory… because we noticed he’s just stopping Black people, and you see white people passing by, going to the bathroom. Let me go check and let me go see, test it out.

I’m ready to go to the bathroom, see if he’s gonna do it to a Black woman, too. The guy does it to Black women, as well, and this is a Black security guard, so I take offense. … I go to the bathroom, the guy asks me, can you show me you ID? I said why do you need to see my ID? He points to the sign on the door saying there’s a policy, yada-yada-yada. I give him – takes my name down, which I think doesn’t make any sense. So, the person who comes after me does not show their ID. It’s like, okay, so you’re just stopping people at random, Black people, literally Black people, Black females, Black men, but you’re not stopping white people who are going to the bathroom. So, we go up to the manager. I speak to the manager. The manager is giving excuses saying it’s policy; we’re not gonna stop everybody back to back to back. The situation wasn’t that, though, He was stopping people who were Black. – June 5, P5

Participants also reported receiving poor service at restaurants, where they observed white customers receiving better treatment. Specifically, Black customers reported experiences in which they had been ignored, dismissed or generally treated poorly or spoken to in a disrespectful manner. Some respondents noted that bars and nightclubs often deny entry to Black patrons. Others observed that small, Black-owned businesses in their communities were closing due to gentrification, only to be replaced by businesses that sell similar goods at higher prices or fail to cater to needs of Black residents of the area, by, for example, refusing to accept EBT as payment.

6. Health Care

Black New Yorkers who participated in the focus groups expressed a range of concerns related to threats to their health and access to quality health services. At the highest levels, participants expressed concern about the prevalence of asthma in their communities, which they noted negatively impacted young people and adults alike. In addition, participants noted the elevated cost of healthcare, particularly for medication, specialist services and co-payments. Older adults in the focus groups noted the particular impact of rising costs of maintenance medications, such as insulin, which are critically important for older individuals but challenging to pay for on fixed incomes.

Turning to specific manifestations of racism in the area of health in New York City, participants noted a range of issues including:

- Resource disparities between hospitals in predominantly-Black neighborhoods and those in predominantly-white areas;
- Experiences in which they loved ones had received low-quality treatment, including insufficient screening or diagnostic services, care that appeared to decline in quality after patients advocated for themselves and efforts to withhold medication based on assumptions about patients’ motivations for requesting it; and
- Rude and dismissive treatment from some health care providers.

Participants observed that hospitals in predominantly-Black neighborhoods tended to be less well-resourced than those in predominantly-white neighborhoods, often citing long wait times at emergency rooms in the former as an indicator of resource disparities. Hospitals [in] Black and brown communities are definitely more run down. They may not have adequate facilities or departments, where as other hospitals in more affluent areas absolutely do. Their doctors are not worked to the point of exhaustion as much. Patient care is focused on more so in those communities. And, just having conversations with the patients to where they understand their options and things like that, I feel like those conversations are had more in white communities, and definitely not in Black or brown communities. Some options are definitely not encouraged, it’s what we say and that’s it, although, the patient does have an option to do something else. Often times they don’t know that these options.

- June 5, P4

Reflecting on experiences with health care providers, participants described receiving low-quality treatment. For example, participants shared incidents in which they or their family members were given inadequate diagnostic testing or screening services.

My dad just passed away in December, and let me tell you… There was a big difference in his doctor, who was African American. [We] had to fight. We took him to the hospital. He was not diagnosed with a stroke. He had a stroke. We had to take him to another hospital, and his doctor had to advocate for him to get all of the testing and everything he needed. She said, “This is the reason I became a doctor.” She said because she knows – she said, “A man, if he was white with that A-1 health insurance that he had, the same stature, they would’ve given him a full value of everything and he would’ve found everything … That could’ve led to a whole different outcome.” – June 13PM, P9

When my daughter was younger, when she was about 9 years old... [Her leg] got infected, and she went into the hospital. She was going to stay with her godmother. So, they wanted to amputate her leg from a mosquito bite. They wanted to amputate her leg. Because her godmother was in the healthcare profession – she was a nurse, she’s the professional – she said, “Oh, hell no. You’re not going to amputate her,” and then went and got a second opinion and found out they didn’t need to amputate her leg. So, if she was not educated and did not know, it would’ve been like, “Go along with whatever the doctor says.” My daughter would be walking around with one leg now. – June 13 PM, P1

I had a car accident. So, I went to the emergency… [The doctor came. It was]
EXPERIENCES WITH ANTI-BLACK RACISM

In addition, focus group members described incidents in which they were subjected to rude or dismissive treatment by health care providers, including providers of mental health and drug-treatment services.

I had been in a drug program. There's racism in there too. I have been in one of them. What they do is like they belittle you and you place stigma on you to the point where you punish your own self... they take away your self-esteem. If you're in a depressed stage or anything, you have to fight your way out because there's nobody there to talk to. The counselors, they come out their face differently. These are people that are hired from the government that does that. So, you're sitting in a drug program trying to get away and they're trying to make money saying things about you, like, 'That's why that dumbass is in here. She doesn't know how to stop shooting drugs,' and they use that other words. I stopped using other words because it doesn't match me. Women were being belittled out there. If you didn't agree with them, you say, 'I don't want to be on [medication/methodone],' you're called a whole bunch of names. I have heard 'monkey.' I have heard "dumb bitch." I have heard "junkie bitch." — May 29, P5

7. Civic Engagement

Participants shared a diverse set of concerns related to civic engagement. Issues related to community boards were raised in a few focus groups. One participant expressed concern that residents of Black communities were not getting sufficient information about funding opportunities, and as such, were unable to secure benefits enjoyed by white communities.

<table>
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<th>Who knows about capital budget, and all of those things? It's like the Black communities not being aware of these things, so the people who these fund[s] are being advertised [to] are really well-off white people who are already now taking advantage of all the resources that the community has.</th>
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|May 26, P11

Another participant shared her experience joining a predominantly-white community board and the hostility she encountered on the part of her fellow board members, who were white.

So where I reside, although I live in public housing, there's one development and on the outskirts of my development lies private homes. So I'm surrounded by Italians, Irishmen, Greeks. I do a lot of community work and I sit on a board and when I first got to this board, nobody would talk to me. They wouldn't even say hello to me. And I remember going to my [Borough redacted] Borough President, who appointed me to be on that board, I said, "I'm leaving." And he asked me why and I told him, I said, "I'm so afraid that I'm going to lose it, I'd just rather leave." And he said, "No, you're not. You're gonna stay there." He said, "And I'm gonna help you." And I stayed there. And it's gotten a little bit better but I still am faced with discrimination. — May 24, P5

Participants were also concerned about the lack of messaging and awareness with respect to particular civic engagement opportunities. For instance, participants praised the recent voting restoration policy for people on parole but noted that it is not well known or well advertised. Another participant cited a lack of awareness about judicial elections. Some participants also felt that the lack of education about civic engagement opportunities had been intentional, with the goal of discouraging such engagement.

A lot of times that we don't see a lot just that there's not enough knowledge that's going on about civic engagement when it comes to the voting. Even though it's there, we tell people, you need to vote, not just every four years, but you need to vote every single year. And a lot of times, especially in schools, like high schools, they don't educate them a lot about voting. — June 5, P1

I'm doing a voter registration drive. And I'm targeting... the young brown... boys in my neighborhood... And I was speaking to one of the politicians and they kind of like dismissed it... So they don't want to empower the young brown... boys. We want them to stay on the streets. We don't want to educate them. And I'm just going – I'm like, "No, because it's that educational piece and they need to understand the importance of voting, how
Black New Yorkers on their Experiences with Anti-Black Racism

ideas are still being put out by politicians, people…who we had elected [to] office because we don’t even know better. So…it’s definition about education, but it also doesn’t necessarily trickle up or down. It goes from the bottom, going around and into a circle. Because, again, if you have a policy suggesting that Black-on-Black crime is a real thing, then we’re going to think Black-on-Black crime is a real thing and it’s not. – June 13PM, P8

VII. Current City Efforts

In New York City, a number of developments—starting with the Commission’s early history and continuing to the current day—demonstrate local government’s evolving commitment to combating racism. To share the concerns raised in conversations with Black New Yorkers discussed in Section VI and to learn more about work designed to advance racial equity currently underway, the Commission met with agency staff throughout the fall and winter of 2018. Specifically, the Commission met with the following agencies and offices:

• Office of the Mayor (“Mayor’s Office”)
• New York City Police Department (“NYPD”)
• Civilian Complaint Review Board (“CCRB”)
• Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice (“MOCJ”)
• Department of Probation (“DOP”)
• Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”)
• New York City Housing Authority (“NYCHA”)
• Department of Education (“DOE”)
• Department of Youth and Community Development (“DYCD”)
• Department of Social Services (“DSS”)
• Administration for Children Services (“ACS”)
• Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”)
• NYC Health and Hospitals (“Health + Hospitals”)
• Chief Democracy Officer (“CDO”)

Unsurprisingly, many of the specific issues that surfaced in the research—which are themselves rooted in the nation’s centuries-long history of anti-Black racism—are not new to the agencies. In some cases, agency officials were alarmed by experiences shared by participants, which described treatment that was inconsistent with agency policy. The Commission found that, generally, agency staff recognized the importance of the project, were eager to hear what the Commission had learned, expressed a commitment to addressing issues raised and acknowledged ongoing challenges not yet addressed.

In addition to insights specific to particular agencies, the Commission surfaced a series of cross-cutting themes. Specifically, the Commission identified a need for City agencies to increase efforts to support navigation of key programs as well as to improve transparency about processes and outcomes so that New Yorkers can better understand how they work and how to utilize them. It also identified a need for agencies to ensure meaningful community engagement, so that City departments and offices can better understand the challenges that Black New Yorkers and others in the city encounter when engaging with policies they implement or programs they administer. Finally, the Commission offered to partner with other agencies to review policies and programs in order to better understand and address the factors driving the experiences and outcomes described by Black New Yorkers who participated in the project.

This process of consultation also furnished a valuable opportunity to learn about current initiatives based at the respective agencies and offices. In many respects, these efforts have been consistent with best practices identified by experts, such as the Government Alliance for Racial Equity (“GARE”). A cohort of almost 100 municipalities that are actively working to advance racial equity, GARE has grouped a range of strategies into three interconnected approaches to orienting the apparatus of government toward such outcomes.104 While models vary according to the specific needs of jurisdictions, there are lessons to be gleaned from looking across case studies. For example, jurisdictions that have committed to racial equity have worked to “normalize” a focus on race, prioritizing conversations on the topic to develop a shared sense of language and analysis among government employees. In addition, these jurisdictions have “organized” for racial equity, building supportive infrastructure and partnerships. Finally, these jurisdictions have “operationalized” their commitment to racial equity, developing and deploying analytical tools and utilizing data to drive progress toward equity goals.105 These best practices establish a helpful framework for understanding current City efforts and charting future steps.

A. Normalizing Racial Equity

Normalizing racial equity is the important, foundational work of fostering ongoing conversation on what racism is and how to combat it within government. While this may seem like a simple step, widespread discomfort with discussing racism and the diversity of opinions about what constitutes racism in 21st century America make this a challenging task. Institutions that have taken this work on, often start with trainings and workshops designed to assist staff members’ understanding of the issues, prompt reflection on the unique role of government as it relates to racism and generate strategies for ensuring that the institution in question is driving as opposed to impedes racial equity. If done well, this work counters the notion that the nation’s long-history of racism is separate from and irrelevant to the role of government and instead helps government officials to acknowledge that a racial equity lens should be central to the work they do each day. This process is an essential part of creating the shared understandings and buy-in necessary to support deeper institutional change.106

New York City has been moving toward a clearer articulation of a commitment to fighting racism and advancing equity. In August 2017, for example, Mayor de Blasio was one of over 300 local executives to sign the “Mayor’s Compact to Combat Hate, Extremism and Bigotry,” a U.S. Conference of Mayors initiative launched in the wake of the racist violence in Charlottesville earlier that summer.107 Signatories pledged to speak out against all acts of hate, punish bias-motivated violence to the fullest extent of the law, encourage more anti-bias and anti-hate education in schools and police forces, and ensure aggressive enforcement of civil rights and hate crime statutes, among other commitments. The following year, the City became a member of GARE, creating new opportunities for New York City officials to learn from colleagues in other jurisdictions who are taking on the challenge of combating racism in all of its forms. And in spring of 2019, the Mayor signed Executive Order 45 requiring agency-level equity reviews. Beginning in 2020, the annual Social Indicators Report will include city-wide equity metrics and data for each City agency relating to who programs are serving, service locations, diversity in employment and hiring, contracting and a description of internal agency practices that are designed to promote equitable service delivery. Data for each agency will be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender identity/expression and income where available and/or applicable. Agencies will also be required to develop and pursue plans to address key areas of disparity and advance equity.

At the agency level, these efforts to normalize racial equity are most visible in growing commitments around training. In 2018, for example, the Department of Education (“DOE” or “Department”) announced an investment of millions in anti-bias training for teachers.108 Similarly, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”) has made its commitment to analyzing public health through a racial justice lens explicit. The agency’s “Race to Justice” initiative is an internal reform process designed to support agency staff in approach their work in a manner consistent with racial equity processes and goals. The initiative does so by building staff understanding of racism and other systems of oppression, examining how racism impacts their understanding of racism and other systems of oppression, examining how racism impacts their agency’s policies and practices and creating new policies to address these impacts and partnering with other institutions and communities to challenge systemic racism.109

B. Organizing for Racial Equity

Efforts to reinforce government institutions to better support dismantling racism fall within the next category, organizing for racial equity. This might involve creating new roles that are focused on addressing inequities or adjusting existing positions so that this becomes a primary focus of an agency’s work. As GARE notes, governments that are eager to take on this work must foster a commitment to racial justice across departments and at various levels of these institutions.110 Alternatively, organizing for racial equity may mean establishing linkages across agencies or with external actors—such as foundations, non-profit organizations or academic institutions. Regardless of the form this work takes, its focus is on marshaling and arranging human or other resources in order to focus time and energy on dismantling racial inequities.

At the agency level, there are a number of efforts
EXPERIENCES WITH ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Black New Yorkers on Their Experiences

To establish partnerships and infrastructure to enable this work. One notable example is the Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness at DOHMH. The agency’s commitment to acknowledging and challenging the role that racism has played in determining health outcomes is notable for its clarity and its connection to programmatic and policy. In summer 2018, for example, DOHMH launched a five-year plan for eliminating the sharp disparities in maternal mortality between Black women and white women. Starting with an investment of $12.8 million, the City pledged to tackle these issues by providing implicit bias training for relevant private and public health care providers, expanding private and public hospitals to enhance data tracking and analysis of severe maternal mortality and maternal morbidity events, enhancing maternal care at NYC Health + Hospitals (“Health + Hospitals”) facilities expanding public education in partnership with community-based organizations and residents.118

The agency has also established the East Harlem Asthma Center + Exposition, which provides asthma education and counseling as well as other supports to families in Central and East Harlem that are affected by asthma. In addition, the Harlem Health Network, a network of more than 100 clinical and community-based providers representing over 30 organizations providing asthma care, stretches from Harlem, through Washington Heights and to the Bronx.119

In summer 2019, DOHMH launched Asthma-Free Bronx, a program operated by DOHMH, Health + Hospitals and the Department of Education, will provide a suite of personalized services to every child seen in the emergency department or hospitalized at any of the City’s three Bronx public hospitals due to an asthma attack.120

In addition, DOHMH has expanded its citywide public awareness and informational campaigns addressing health equity and stigma. The messages—which center on drug use and treatment, including syringe disposal practices, sexually transmitted infections, smoking and other topics—incorporate language, images and testimonials from real New Yorkers of color. The featured individuals share their experiences and, in doing so, promote inclusivity and de-stigmatize health care participation. The agency’s work serves as a powerful model of what is possible across city agencies.

Where the City’s public hospitals are concerned, NYC Health + Hospitals instituted a number of key initiatives to expand access to care. Under the Caring Neighborhoods initiative announced in 2015, NYC Health + Hospitals expanded primary care access to new patients in underserved areas across the City. To date, Health + Hospitals has expanded to sixteen high-need neighborhoods that include Tremont in the Bronx, Bushwick and Brown Streets in Brooklyn, NYC Health + Hospitals also launched NYC Care to connect uninsured or underinsured New Yorkers to primary and specialty care. In addition, NYC Health + Hospitals has improved insurance enrollment efforts to make it easier for underserved communities to connect to Medicaid, Medicare, the essential plan, or qualified health plan.

Importantly, NYC Health + Hospitals is also committed to improving maternal and infant health by enhancing maternal care at facilities in order to reduce the rate of maternal mortality and morbidity among Black women. This comprehensive plan includes simulation training on interventions to prevent the three leading causes of death in pregnancy, increased maternal care coordination, and new intervention measures to support new mothers and their babies. In addition, NYC Health + Hospitals operates several centers of excellence centered around providing culturally competent care to distinct communities. One of these is the Medina Health Center at Harlem Hospital, which offers quality, culturally competent, medical services to the African American community, many of whom are immigrants, as well as members of the Muslim community. NYC Health and Hospitals also offers trainings on cultural competency and implicit bias to build knowledge and skills for front line and care providers in the delivery of equitable care.

Recently, the Department of Education, (“DOE”) has also been explicit in its acknowledgment of both the reality of existing disparities in disciplinary outcomes, access to gifted and talented programming and other aspects of the City’s public school system. The DOE has also articulated its commitment to dismantling such inequities.121 Recent investments have increased the resources available to support such work. In addition, the Department of Education has also made investments that are geared toward increasing the number of teacher of color and offering Black students access to college. DOE’s Office of Diversity and Equity (“DOE”), the agency has also invested $23M in culturally responsive education that will strengthen relationships between students and staff.114 DOE is also taking steps to expand access to new academic opportunities. The Mayor and Chancellor have developed an “Equity and Excellence for All” agenda that is designed to build a pathway to college for all young people in New York City public schools. This includes free, full-day, high-quality education for three-year-olds and four-year-olds through 3-K for All and Pre-K for All. The agency has also developed a Universal Literacy program designed to support all students to read on grade level by the end of second-grade and Algebra for All to improve elementary- and middle-school math instruction and ensure that all eighth graders have access to algebra. These initiatives continue through middle and high school with more challenging, college and career-aligned coursework. This includes Computer Science for All, which brings 21st-century computer science instruction to every school, and AP for All, which will give all high school students access to at least five Advanced Placement courses. In its first year, AP for All supported a record number of students taking and passing AP exams. Specifically, 8.9 percent more Black students and 13.2 percent more Hispanic students took at least one AP exam in 2019, in comparison to the previous year. The City has also made investments to support students as the move through this pipeline. Since 2014-15, the total number of guidance counselors and DOE-employed social workers in schools has increased by 7.3 percent, including 176 social workers and guidance counselors hired during the 2018-19 school year. DOE’s Office of Community Schools supports community-based organizations in 245 schools serving 121,000 students. Through partnerships with community-based organizations, families in community schools receive targeted support in academics, health, youth development, and family engagement. And all Community Schools offer physical and mental health services.

The City has also made investments that are geared toward increasing the number of teacher of color and offering Black students access to college. DOE recently launched the Mayor’s Office of NYC Men Teach has, to date, brought 1,000 men of color into the teacher pipeline. Diversity in New York City Public Schools, the City’s recently-released school diversity plan includes recommendations for making the city’s public school classrooms more inclusive and diverse. While curriculum requirements are ultimately set at the state level, the Department provides teachers with training opportunities focused on Black history and also makes a collection of annually curated classroom resources available for educators to incorporate into their lessons throughout February and the remainder of the year.

Similarly, the Department of Youth and Community Development (“DYCD”), which administers after school, summer and other out-of-school programs for young people across the five boroughs, has increased its focus on equity, including racial equity, in order to better meet the needs of young New Yorkers. The agency has established an Equity Workgroup including staff from across twelve units and created new professional development opportunities for staff in partnership with community-based organizations. In 2019, the agency intends to develop a more robust approach to assessing equity as it relates to staffing, program and budget.

Increasingly, agencies are investing in the creation of high-level staff positions to focus on racial equity and other equity issues. For example, the Department of Social Services (“DSS”), which encompasses the Human Resources Administration (“HRA”) and the Department of Homeless Services (“DHS”) recently appointed a Chief Diversity and Equity Officer (“CDEO”). The CDEO is responsible for developing agency initiatives that address staff engagement, recruitment and advancement and build capacity of staff at all levels to work effectively both in the independent and dual individual bias. In addition, the CDEO is responsible for promoting cultural competency programs and informing policies, training, hiring practices and service delivery to ensure equitable outcomes for clients and staff. The agency is developing implicit bias training for all 17,000 staff members and is already providing new hire training for frontline staff on internalized and structural racism and the impact of staff bias on client experiences and outcomes. Training on trauma-informed care is also in development. Notably, DSS has also expanded its mandated trainings for security guards, including those at shelters and HRA job centers, on topics including customer service, conflict resolution and cultural sensitivity, de-escalation and alternatives to force, disability access, history of policing, partner violence, Mental Health First Aid, LGBTQI+ competency, language access and sexual harassment prevention.
Beyond creating new leadership roles focused on equity and enhancing training offerings, DSS continues to make systematic reforms to social services and practices, aimed at improving the experience of clients (more than 80% of whom identify as people of color) as well as reforms that directly address the concerns raised by victims, survivors, and family members. In 2018, the agency established an Office of Equity Strategies with director-level positions focused on Race Equity Strategies and LGBTQ and Gender Equity Strategies. The agency has also begun to incorporate awareness of implicit bias, best practices in customer service and respect into all trainings. Direct service employees and supervisors at ACS are now required to take a new full-day, instructor-led program on implicit bias, and the agency recently launched a new e-learning course, “Understanding and Undoing Implicit Bias,” which every employee must complete by June 2019. These formal trainings are supplemented by an ongoing series of events and discussions on race and racism that are developed and led by a cross section of ACS staff and are available to all staff at the agency.

In addition, ACS recognizes the importance of expeditious resolution of cases for families. To that end, the agency has taken a number of steps to address the extended pendency of some cases, which may be due to insufficient preparation and coordination on the part of attorneys, adjudications that stem from limited court resources, limited availability of mandated services or other circumstances under which additional time is required to demonstrate compliance with court-orders. For example, the agency participates in a number of working groups and processes with Family Court administrators, attorneys and advocates for parents and children in order to identify possible solutions to increase efficiency. In addition, ACS recently invested $19 million in new prevention slots aimed at diverting families from court-ordered supervision—which accounts for much of the recent increase in court filings—in an effort to reduce periods of court oversight.

C. Operationalizing the Commitment to Racial Equity

Finally, governments that are committed to advancing racial equity have developed and deployed analytical tools in service of this goal and shifted programs and policies to address identified inequities. This work allows jurisdictions to utilize data to help set goals, monitor progress toward these goals and adjust departmental practice in the service of these goals. Recent years have also seen increased efforts to examine agency policy and practices through an equity lens and create strategies to drive more equitable outcomes. Implementation of Local Law 174, signed by the Mayor in September of 2017, represents New York City’s most robust effort to date in this area. The measure requires DOHMH, ACS, DSS and any additional agencies designated by the Mayor to conduct equity assessments, reviewing services, programs, employment, contracting and budgets for disparities based on race, gender, income and sexual orientation.

In addition, the local law requires designated agencies to develop and implement action plans to address such disparities and establish an Equity Committee to review these plans. Other legislation passed as part of the same package mandates provision of implicit bias training for staff at each designated agency; as outlined above, new staffing structures, training opportunities and policy reviews designed to fulfill the requirements of Local Law 174 and to take additional steps in the service of equity are already underway at each of the extended pendencies.

Beyond this, other agencies have taken steps to assess and adjust policies that have disproportionate negative impacts on Black people and other people of color or to limit instances of excessive enforcement. For example, has created a “Plan to Enhance Equitable Care” which is an organizational roadmap with five key areas of focus to improve delivery of care: “NYC Health + Hospitals” plan represents an approach that stresses assessing its organizational strengths, standardizing policies and practices, workforce strategies for capacity building, improved stewardship of data, and increased staff, patient and community engagement to enhance individual and community health.

Since 2014, the New York City Police Department ("NYPD" or "Department") has also made reforms in a number of areas. The Department has also committed to training all uniformed members of the service, currently more than 36,000 officers, in Fair and Impartial Policing ("FIP"), which includes awareness training in implicit bias. Since April 2018, all new recruit classes have received this training, which will be provided to NYPD officers two over a two-year period. To date, 20,177 uniform members of the service have completed the FIP training course. The Department expects to complete training by the end of March 2020. To better equip officers and focus on quality, the department has also made improvements to the training program, including overhauling content and employment alternatives to force, the NYPD has also established annually recurring training for veteran police officers on de-escalation of street confrontations and for situations involving emotionally disturbed individuals.

The NYPD has also made a number of changes to policy and practice. Among the first of these was a dramatic reduction in the number of stop and frisk encounters, though the racial distribution of such stops has remained largely unchanged. The NYPD has also abolished “Operation Impact,” a program that once placed new officers who had recently graduated from the Police Academy, in areas with higher crime, largely to conduct stop-and-frisk operations and other heavy enforcement. Today, in contrast, new officers receive six months of field training with experienced mentors and community partners. This is designed to provide exposure to the full range of police functions and interactions and foster greater understanding of the communities they will serve. Department leadership has also encouraged the use of discretion by officers to resolve issues in the field without arrests or summonses when possible.

Following enactment of the Criminal Justice Reform Act of 2016 ("CJRA"), NYPD officers now also have the option of issuing summonses for non-criminal offenses, for smoking in public, for smoking in public, opting instead to issue criminal summonses for a group of common low-level offenses. This policy has led to dramatic decreases in summons and warrants for low-level offenses. The NYPD has also shifted its approach to other low-level offenses. In September 2014, the Department abolished the policy of issuing fines for fare evasion arrests have led to a nearly 50 percent decrease in fare evasion summonses in many cases.

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For example, in June 2018, the Department announced a similar set of changes to its enforcement of fare evasion. There is evidence that such initiatives are having an impact. For example, the Department notes that misdemeanor and violation arrests for marijuana have declined by 71 percent over the previous five years. Changes in the protocols for fare evasion arrests have led to a nearly 50 percent decrease in fare evasion summonses in many cases.
decline in fare evasion arrests in 2018 alone, and a 74 percent decline in five years.\textsuperscript{123} The Mayor’s Office for Criminal Justice (“MOCJ” or “Office”) plays a critically-important role by examining data on implementation of the CJFA and changes related to marijuana arrests and fare evasion with an eye to impacts on communities of color and other populations. The Office conducts internal quarterly disparities data tracking for low-level crimes, including CJFA-eligible offenses, smoking marijuana in public and fare evasion, examining race, gender, and age, and where possible, precinct-level neighborhood inequities to analyze impacts of reducing enforcement for low-level offenses on marginalized groups. Importantly, MOCJ also works closely with partner agencies to examine the impact of the exceptions built into each three of these policies.\textsuperscript{124} The Office also coordinated the Mayor’s Task Force on Cannabis Legalization (“Task Force”). Redress of past disparities and extension of economic opportunities to communities that had previously borne the brunt of marijuana enforcement efforts were guiding principles for the inter-agency group. The Task Force’s December 2018 report included both detailed information regarding disparities in the enforcement of laws regarding public consumption of marijuana as well as suggestions for avoiding future disparities should marijuana use be legalized across the state.\textsuperscript{125}

D. Increasing Navigability, Transparency and Meaningful Public Engagement

There are also steps that government offices and agencies can take which, while not specific to Black New Yorkers utilize easier to navigate, increasing public access to information about agency services to navigate such services and other government actors on education and outreach efforts in recent years, regularly presenting on how to take part in housing lotteries and the rules governing the lottery.\textsuperscript{132} Similarly, acknowledging that New Yorkers who struggle to rent and put food on the table, who are on the brink of homelessness, or who urgently need healthcare and housing benefits and to keep the public informed about resource availability and changes. It has established an annual Use of Force Reports, providing data on firearms discharge, use of electrical conducted weapons, such as TASEs, general use of force, as well as information about police-involved deaths investigated by the Force Investigation Division.\textsuperscript{135} The NYPD is now tracking all uses of force and requiring internal investigations in each case to ensure that each use of force was justified. Use-of-force data is reported quarterly and categorized by firearms, conducted electric weapons, like batons or clubs, canine, O.C. spray, restraining mesh blankets, and other physical force. In addition, the Department publishes crime complaint and enforcement data and has opened the Patrol Guide to greater public review, with some exceptions. NYPD also equips approximately 20,000 patrol officers with body worn cameras, with more planned for deployment. NYPD believes that by establishing visual records of police encounters, the cameras will also aid in determining whether officers acted properly in particular cases.

3. Increased Community Engagement in Policymaking

Similarly, the creation or expansion of opportunities for meaningful community engagement in policy design and review is another strategy that is consistent with efforts to orient government toward racial equity. The New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA"), for example, has expanded its outreach of local public housing and representatives of community-based organizations that are deeply invested in public housing issues to develop a set of principles for ensuring the protection of tenants’ rights with implementation of the Rental Assistance Demonstration (“RAD”) program. The RAD program, operated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, will allow for conversion of some 62,000 apartments into Section 8 units with ongoing operations and maintenance provided by private managers.\textsuperscript{138} The five principles the agency is to the social change process, the data-driven dialogue, constructed by the Department. The roughly 40 participating organizations support New Yorkers to apply for affordable housing lottery programs has expanded its outreach and education efforts in recent years, regularly presenting on how to take part in housing and when needed, also to support New Yorkers to apply for the Community and Education Liaisons Program ("CEL") for participants—many of whom are Black New Yorkers—to agency programs to get the support that they need.

2. Transparency Improvements

In addition, improving transparency of operations can support more racially equitable outcomes. Such efforts can improve understanding of how functions office, the benefits they can provide and how, if at all, they are addressing the specific concerns of communities of color. The Civilian Complaint Review Board ("CCRB" or "Board"), for example, has established a transparency initiative that provides information about agency complaints, allegations, alleged victims and NYPD officers. The agency also has partnered with community-based and faith organizations and other government actors on education and outreach efforts directed specifically in communities. Similarly, in 2016 the NYPD began publishing its annual Use of Force Reports, providing data on firearms discharge, use of electrical conducted weapons, such as TASEs, general use of force, as well as information about police-involved deaths investigated by the Force Investigation Division. The NYPD is now tracking all uses of force and requiring internal investigations in each case to ensure that each use of force was justified. Use-of-force data is reported quarterly and categorized by firearms, conducted electric weapons, like batons or clubs, canine, O.C. spray, restraining mesh blankets, and other physical force. In addition, the Department publishes crime complaint and enforcement data and has opened the Patrol Guide to greater public review, with some exceptions. NYPD also equips approximately 20,000 patrol officers with body worn cameras, with more planned for deployment. NYPD believes that by establishing visual records of police encounters, the cameras will also aid in determining whether officers acted properly in particular cases.

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facilitate positive change in the relationship between communities of color and the police through the development of ethical policing practices and recommendations for further action. Finally, in October 2018, the Mayor appointed the City’s first-ever Chief Democracy Officer, bringing additional focus and resources to support broad civic engagement. The office of the Chief Democracy Officer’s mandate will be to develop voter registration drives, expanding civics instruction in schools and developing ways to engage New Yorkers at all levels of government.

VIII. Recommendations

While much work is already underway by various agencies in the City, this report underscores the opportunities to deepen and expand the City’s commitment to racial justice and address the concerns shared by Black New Yorkers. Anti-Black racism is unacceptable in New York City, and it is clear from the findings in the report that there is a need for more coherent and robust structures across agencies to support cultural changes, including structures for meaningful and respectful consultation with impacted communities. There is also a need for structures that will ensure accountability for people and entities that engage in race-based discrimination, harassment or violence.

The Commission has already taken a number of steps consistent with the concerns raised in the report. In 2018, for example, we began a partnership with artist and activist Tatyana 
Fazlalizadeh to focus on gender-based street harassment and anti-Black racism. The Commission developed the project with the assistance of the Department of Cultural Affairs Public Artists in Residence ("PAIR") program, a municipal residency program that embeds artists in City government to propose and implement creative solutions to pressing civic challenges. The project featured interactive elements allowing Black New Yorkers to express their experiences in their own voices and a series of murals installed across the city. And it has helped to amplify the voices of Black New Yorkers and to promote a conversation on anti-Black racism in New York.

In January 2019, the Commission released a report on race discrimination specifically addressing policies that ban, limit, or otherwise restrict natural hair or hairstyles associated with Black people. Though Black people have experienced these policies as a form of race discrimination, many federal and state civil and human rights laws have historically failed to address this form of discrimination. The Commission’s guidance made clear that such policies violate the anti-discrimination provisions of the New York City Human Rights Law, in effect distinguishing the city’s law from less protective federal and state law. The first-of-its-kind guidance was covered broadly in local, national, and international press outlets and has already inspired other jurisdictions to explore establishing or clarifying similar protections.

In March 2019, the Commission launched “While We Live,” a public education campaign affirming Black racism and the fight for human rights, and was designed to put those who would seek to discriminate, harass or intimidate Black New Yorkers on notice that such bigotry and bias will not be tolerated in New York City. The campaign included five scenarios—walking while Black, renting while Black, driving while Black, working while Black and shopping while Black—each of which was referenced by focus group participants.

Moving forward, the Commission will take the following additional steps in order to address anti-Black racism in New York City:

• Dedicate additional resources for law enforcement, community relations and policy work focused on race- and color-based discrimination and, specifically, manifestations of anti-Black racism. These additional resources will help to ensure accountability for violations of the prohibitions on race- and color-based discrimination, promote racial justice through policy, and address behaviors that perpetuate anti-Black racism.

• Develop and advance legislation and other policy measures that will protect Black New Yorkers and other groups targeted from discrimination, drawing upon insights shared by participants. The research reflected in this report indicates that anti-Black racism is a complex phenomenon that is experienced at multiple levels and across multiple areas of life. And as the forms of discrimination confronting Black New Yorkers evolve, it is essential that anti-discrimination law evolve with it. While the federal government is actively retreating from civil rights protections, localities like New York City and other progressive jurisdictions have positioned to expand protections for those within their boundaries. The Commission has and will continue to develop and advance policy proposals that will serve this goal in partnership with community, faith-based, and other organizations that work closely with Black New Yorkers.

• Host public hearings on race-based discrimination in predominantly Black neighborhoods in the city. Such hearings would allow the Commission to gather additional information from New Yorkers about what they are experiencing and educate New Yorkers about the agency’s reporting, investigation, and litigation processes and available remedies.

• Deepen and expand relationships with organizations serving Black New Yorkers and develop hyper-local programming in Black communities across the City in order to build awareness of the Commission, City Human Rights Law protections related to race and color discrimination and available remedies. Meetings could also generate tips about
IX. Conclusion

Anti-Black racism has been a part of life in New York City for centuries. Its effects, which have developed and been compounded over centuries, will not be eliminated quickly or easily. But the history of the United States and of New York City in particular also counsels that bold action—on the part of individuals, communities and institutions—has always been required to shift the political, economic, cultural forces that combine to limit opportunities for Black people in the city. Current leaders—whether in communities, government, the private sector or civic or cultural institutions—must take the important initial step of acknowledging both the history of anti-Black racism and its ongoing impacts. In addition, now is the time to demonstrate through both words and action a commitment to re-orienting public and private institutions that for decades have tolerated, endorsed or advanced racism so that they can promote racial justice. These are the sorts of bold steps that will need to be taken if New York City is to model an approach to government that is inclusive, responsive and deeply committed to the ability of all residents to thrive—a model that is desperately needed in the current context.

X. Acknowledgments

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ENDNOTES
3 Hannah-Jones, Nikole, “The Idea of America,” NY Times
6 See Pritchard at 134.
8 As noted above, the Commission subsequently hosted a round table with Black New Yorkers of transgender and gender variance. See id.
10 Nine individuals participated in the Commission’s round table with Black New Yorkers of transgender and gender variance. See id.
12 Priority across the focus groups was calculated by dividing the total number of votes for each domain by the total number of stickers used. A total of 425 stickers were used for this exercise across focus groups (note that some participants chose to not use all their stickers).
13 Arrests for public consumption of marijuana illustrate such disparities. As the Mayor's Task Force on Marijuana Legalization put it so well, “. . . the 16,825 people in New York City who were arrested on the charge of Criminal Possession of Marijuana in the Fifth Degree, 48% were Black; 38% were Hispanic; and 9% were white. Between 2013-2017, arrests of Black and Hispanic people accounted for between 86% and 89% of cannabis possession arrests each year. See http://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/A-Fair-Approach-to-Marijuana.pdf.
14 One 2018 study based on data from judges who assigned bail in Philadelphia and Miami found that judges were racially biased against Black defendants. See, e.g., D. Wolf, et al., Racial Bias in Bail Decisions 3, 26 (2018), available at https://www.princeton.edu/~webdoll/files/filestaboa.pdf. Other studies confirm that when bail officers make decisions concerning whether to grant pretrial release and the bond amount that must be posted, the race of the arrestee plays a role in a way that “disproportionately and adversely” subjects Black Americans to pretrial detention and harsher bail conditions. The trend is pervasive, having been documented in localities across the country. See Jones, Cynthia E., “Give Us Free”: Addressing Racial Disparities
81 A 2017 study by the U.S. Sentencing Commission found that provides information to landlords and tenants on housing units that are headed by a Black New Yorker; 38.8% of units were available, but the odds were significantly more favorable for applicants without a criminal record. Satow, Julie. Better than the Powerball, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 11, 2018.

82 HPD data shows that, among recent housing lottery applications, approximately 35.7% of families that move into affordable housing units are headed by a Black New Yorker, 38.8% by a Hispanic New Yorker, 11.8% by a white New Yorker, 7.1% by an Asian New Yorker, and 6.5% by a New Yorker who identifies as multi-racial or other. See Report of Bernard R. Risik, Ph.D., Appendix G, available at: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdf/riskin-report-final-redacted.pdf.

83 Confidential case details could not be confirmed. DIS policy, in adherence with local, state and federal law, strictly prohibits discrimination based on the basis of an individual's HIV status.


87 Studies have documented the complex ways in which bias produce health care disparities, particularly where common race-based assumptions about patients’ concerns are reported (e.g. management of chronic pain or chest pain). This may extend to how much information a physician provides about anti-anxiety and coloring the degree to which care and communication are provided. See, e.g., Kevin Pascual and Michelle Sanders, Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Quality of Health Care, ANN. REV. PUB. HEALTH, 364-389 (2015) available at https://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-052114-010827.

88 SJS has also made other improvements to make it easier for educators calling it a cornerstone to school-improvement. Carranza aims to speed-up anti-bias training for educators-calling it a cornerstone-to-school-improvement.

89 See supra note 10 at 3.


91 See supra. For example, in 2014, only 90 clients per year received reasonable accommodations. As of September 2019, over 55,000 reasonable accommodations had been granted to help clients with disabilities access and participate in HRA programs. In addition, New Yorkers living with HIV no longer need to be symptomatic in order to qualify for Medicaid. See supra note 84. August 2016, all New Yorkers diagnosed with HIV can apply for services offered by HRA including intensive case management, enhanced shelter allowance, supportive housing and emergency housing. As a result, over 7000 type of chronic障碍have been admitted into the HRA program since August 2016.


