

Racism, Violence and Health Project

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MAKING THE CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE

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**Report on the Making the Connections Conference
Racism, Violence, and Health Project
Held June 6-7, 2003
Dartmouth Sportsplex
110 Wyse Road, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Halifax, Nova Scotia**

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A. INTRODUCTION

"Health means balance. Health is linked directly with family. We think health is us in control. Not so in reality. Police harassment, being profiled, questioned – I almost did not make it out of high school and now I have two degrees."

"When a person is an authority figure, the voice of Black youth may be devalued."

"We went to parents, but faced with reality, Black children are forced to suffer in silence. Labeled hostile but have no outlet, no place to turn. Friends have turned to drugs to cope. Racism and violence at home, racism and violence at school, so where do you go"

The statements above are examples of the issues, concerns, questions and anguish voiced by some of the participants at the Racism, Violence and Health conference held in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia on June 6 and 7, 2003. Under the conference theme of "Making The Connections: Racism, Violence and Health," this historic and successful conference brought together over 200 participants primarily from three major Canadian cities and the three Project sites: Calgary, Toronto and Halifax. These participants went beyond expressions of issues, concerns, and questions. They exchanged information and shared their resistive and successful approaches and strategies in addressing racism and violence.

This report summarizes the issues addressed, and it captures the essence of the exchanges and interactions among and between participants. The report is structured as follows – an Introduction, followed by the Proceedings and then the results of the Evaluation.

I. Background to the conference

This conference was the culmination of the first year's work, and the end of the first phase of a research project entitled "Caught at the Intersection: Working with the impact of witnessing and surviving individual and systemic violence on the health and well being of Black men, their families and communities." (The project's short name is "Racism, Violence and Health.")

The project is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research – Institute of Gender and Health – under the New Emerging Teams initiative and has a budget of \$1.25 million over a five-year term. The goal of the project is to gather data on the ways in which racism-related stress, combined with other stressors, affect the health and well-being of African Canadians. Over the course of the five year period, different research activities will capture the designated data in the communities of Halifax, Calgary and Toronto. These activities include annual community forums, conferences, a 900-participant questionnaire, 120 in-depth interviews, an ethnographic study which will track the activities of nine families over a two-year period, and four action projects based on the findings of the research.

The overall project is guided by a Management Team of four African Canadian academics and community activists with the support of Co-Investigators and Collaborators coming from a variety of backgrounds. It works in three sites: Halifax (with the Team Leader and Project Office), Toronto, and Calgary.

Before carrying forward with the first year's activities, the researchers began their work with outreach to African Canadians in the respective communities. During this outreach, standard approaches were used to announce the project to the communities and to put in place community Reference Groups in each of the three cities. From the perspective of the research team, this project had to be situated within the geographic and ethnic domains of African Canadian communities to ensure that the critical issues of racism, violence and health are voiced by African Canadians who are often unheard by and rendered invisible within dominant society. Thus, the research activities are influenced and guided by community input, recommendations and wisdom. In this way, the engagement of communities and their diverse members are central to the research project through the activities and input of Reference Groups in Halifax, Calgary and Toronto. The outcome from these activities forms a key component of the research strategy and method of data collection, as well as the overall success of the project.

Twelve community members, each with considerable knowledge of their respective communities and/or openness to research were selected to form a community Reference Group at each research site. Care was exercised in ensuring that these individuals were equitably selected and that they were fairly representative of the diverse ethnicities and backgrounds of the three African Canadian communities.

Each Reference Group was apprised of the overall scope and process of the project, the different work phases, the research activities, and needs. The Reference Groups held regular meetings with the research teams and offered their full support to the project. Consequently, they provided feedback and advice to the research teams on the proposed activities. To date, the work of these Reference Group members has been invaluable and instrumental in contributing to the planning, organizing, and delivery of the research undertaking.

Through the leadership of the Reference Groups, Black Community Forums were held in Calgary, Halifax and Toronto. The goal of these Community Forums was to record the experiences and issues of individuals, families, groups and communities with respect to racism and other forms of systemic violence as well as to explore ways in which these issues could be effectively addressed. It was felt that, while similarities and differences in the collected data could be compared and contrasted, bringing together African Canadians drawn from three different sites would be important in identifying issues and trends related to racism-related stress, as well as building and strengthening supportive community networks at a national level. The outcome of these Community Forums played an important role in identifying the objectives and structure of this conference.

II. Conference objectives

Based on data gathered from the Community Forums and in keeping with the general goal of the research project the conference had two objectives:

1. To provide a forum at which African Canadians and other conference participants could address the question: "What do we know about the intersection of race, gender, violence and health across the life span?" and
2. To provide an opportunity for networking and capacity-building among African Canadians and other conference participants with the goal of contributing to individual agency at the personal level and social transformation, at systemic levels.

The conference, therefore, drew together participants who were supportive of these objectives.

III. Conference participants

Of the approximately 200 participants who attended this conference, the majority were from Halifax. Also, there was strong representation from Calgary and Toronto. Key to the conference was the attendance of members of the community Reference Groups. Participants were also drawn from different and varying social locations such as: age groups, ethnicities, citizenship status, and gender. Hence, significant numbers of Black youth, Black seniors, indigenous African Canadians, new immigrants, parents, human service professionals, community leaders, researchers, and others were in attendance. The conference was structured with an opening session on the Friday evening, and a variety of sessions all day on Saturday. These various sessions are discussed below.

B. PROCEEDINGS

I. Friday evening Opening Session

Moderator: Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard

Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, Team Leader for this research project, opened the conference by welcoming all participants. She introduced the Co-Investigators and other members of the research team, outlined the goals of the research project and the objectives of the conference. This was followed by the singing of the Black National Anthem led by Kim Bernard. Fittingly, a libation ceremony was performed by Rev. Elias Mutale.

The highlight of the conference's opening was a session entitled, "Talking across generations: Racism, violence and health." The focus of this session was an intergenerational dialogue among elders and young adults on their experiences related to the topic of racism and its impact on the health and well being of themselves and their communities. Three pairs of panelists – each with a young adult matched with an elder adult representing Halifax, Calgary and Toronto – exchanged personal stories and experiences. The questions and responses focused on the historical and contemporary issues of African Canadians and their fight-back movements. This session was well received, and, from all accounts, created a burgeoning climate of cohesiveness among all the participants.

The panelists were: Michael Embaie and Hayat Yousuf (Calgary); Margaret Gittens and Kai James (Toronto); and Doreen Crick and Jennifer Peach (Halifax).

II. Saturday morning Panel Presentation – Community Forums

Opened with the Black National Anthem led by Kim Bernard and a libation ceremony performed by Wayn Hamilton.

Moderator: Dr. Carl James

1. Halifax

Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, Team Leader; Samantha Thomas, Forum Participant

Dr. Thomas Bernard reported that the Community Forum in Halifax, held in November, 2002, could best be described as a profound experience. This, she said, was exemplified by the multiple voices of youth, elders, men, women, and White family members of Black Nova Scotians. They all shared their stories of systemic racism, including living with the violence that is rooted in racism. She also reported that there were stories which showed the strength and tremendous will to survive everyday assaults of racism experienced by Black Nova Scotians. This Community Forum, she noted, was well attended by professionals, social workers, and university graduates as well as by many community activists. She said that participants spoke about the support of family and their spirituality as ways of coping with everyday racism.

Samantha Thomas elaborated on the significance of the stories shared by participants at the Community Forum. She also noted that concern was expressed at the Halifax Community Forum about the poor attendance of low income earners. She said that it was felt that the involvement of this segment of the community would best have been able to address questions such as: what do low income earners use to survive racism; what do they use for support; what are their social networks; and whether, and to what extent, they are involved in substance abuse.

Suggestions were, therefore, made at this panel presentation on the need to work towards getting low income Black Nova Scotians involved in this project as their issues and concerns constitute an important component of this research project.

2. Calgary

Dr. Dave Este, Co-investigator; Francis Boakye, Reference Group Member

Dr. Este began by honoring the researchers and assistants involved in both the research and the conference. He spoke about the growth of the Black population in Calgary, and the vibrancy of the Black community which is comprised of continental Africans, people from the Caribbean, as well as descendants of 19th century African American immigrants living in the Amber Valley, Calgary and Edmonton.

He, too, noted that the forum in Calgary was a profound experience. He stated that a great deal of pain and anguish related to a range of experiences of racism were expressed by a wide variety of people, from youth to elders. Especially disturbing, he noted, were the comments of young children between ages 8 to 10 who do not want to return to school due to the treatment they receive from classmates and teachers. Their parents are left to deal with the psychological impact of these difficult and often traumatic experiences.

Dr. Este noted that one of the major problems in Calgary is underemployment and the experiences of this phenomenon were discussed at the forum. He said that many African newcomers noted that they have education levels above the average levels of Canadians and that they came to Canada under false pretences as they were made to believe that their education would be valued here. But, when this education is undervalued and they become underemployed, there is a ripple effect of this dynamic on their children. Children can then justify their wish to leave school: "Why should we stay in school? Look at you." Dr. Este ended by noting that the school drop-out rate in African Canadian communities in Calgary is higher than the city average.

Francis Boakye summarized some of the main themes from participants in the feedback session at the Calgary forum. He noted that when participants were asked what is the most important thing affecting health, Black Calgarians named racism, employment, violence, health care, housing and exploitation. Further, when asked about the impact of racism on health, participants at the forum talked about the emotional stress and the development of low self worth by many Calgarians of African ancestry.

During the reporting on this discussion, Mr. Boakye was overcome with emotions as he talked about the impact of racism on a Grade 2 student who recognized that she has to go through this school system until grade 12 or even university, and the fact that she will be subject to racism all the way through. He explained that the discussion on underemployment was linked to the ways in which it can lead to high rates of hypertension, stress and depression. A hot topic at this Community Forum, he noted, was police brutality and the unnecessary stopping of people of African heritage by police. In ending, Mr. Boakye noted that the Community Forum was an important event in bringing together Calgarians of African ancestry to become involved in this research project.

3. Toronto

Dr. Akua Benjamin, Co-Investigator; Arnold Minors, Reference Group Member

Dr. Benjamin began by acknowledging Nova Scotia as the province where the first indigenous Blacks landed in Canada. She went on to describe the start-up of the research project in Toronto, which began with an announcement and outline of the project by Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard at the annual general meeting of Tropicana, a human service agency serving primarily the Caribbean community in Scarborough, Ontario.

She noted that at a subsequent community meeting the Toronto project team, led by Dr Carl James and Dr. Akua Benjamin, informed the larger Toronto community of the project. Over 70 individuals representing a diversity of backgrounds, agencies, churches and other Black community organizations attended this meeting.

She reported that, key among the critical issues raised were racial profiling and intra-black violence which were saturating media reports at that time. She noted that questions were also raised about the lack of inclusion of francophones of African ancestry in this project. It was felt, she added, that significant populations of francophones of African ancestry resided in Quebec, Ontario and other part of the country, and that they needed to be included in this project.

Other questions, she noted, were raised about the meaning of family, the challenges to see the community in terms of its diversity (not just ethnicity, but in terms of its differences linguistically, socio-economically, sexual identities, and other differences). She reported that questions were also raised about the adequacy of funding which this project received, the allocation of these financial resources, and accountability measures associated with these resources.

Dr. Benjamin noted that, at this information meeting, members of the Toronto community questioned the politics of engagement with the RVH (Racism, Violence and Health) project. They asked of the researchers: "Are you simply carrying out an exercise in data collection?"; "How is this project going to make a meaningful contribution to people's lives at the intersections of diversity?"; "How will it address intra-black violence?"; and "How will it be accountable?" Dr. Benjamin ended her report by noting that the tenor of these questions moved the research project in Toronto to frame its work within the Black radical tradition of resistance and transformation.

In his report, Arnold Minors noted that what had occurred in the Community Forums in Halifax and Calgary had also occurred in Toronto. He indicated that the difference between the two other cities and Toronto was that Toronto is bigger, has wider and larger African heritage populations from countries such as Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Bermuda, St. Kitts, Britain, Nova Scotia, the United States, Quebec and other countries. Arnold Minors explained that at the Community Forum women talked about being lesbian and feeling isolated; their isolation compounded by Blackness; not always able to come out to the community; and being invisible in our community.

He noted that they heard from the young, elderly, educated, not educated, employed, underemployed, a range of people of different class backgrounds and income levels.

Arnold Minors shared the discussion of a session with men who disavowed the notion that Black men have no feelings or are unable to express their feelings. He noted that there were individual accounts of experiences of racism in bi-racial relations and incidences involving police. At the end of the session, he reported, one man said this was a tremendously powerful and moving session, that the men in that group needed to have this type of session more often, and that something should be done with the issues and dynamics which emanated from the session.

4. Summary

Dr. Carl James, Co-Investigator

In summarizing this panel presentation, Dr. Carl James, the session's moderator, noted that the theme of multiple voices was common among all three Community Forums. He also commented on the diversity in our communities and the diverse ways in which people react to what appears to be similar situations and problems. He emphasized that capturing this diversity is critical to the RVH project. He pointed out that, while it is important, it is not enough to only capture individual experiences of racism, which can be analogized as the arms of an octopus. Systemic and structural racism, he said, which are like the head of an octopus, must also be captured. Dr. James noted that one of the exciting aspects of this research has been community involvement. In closing this panel presentation, Dr. James noted that, as we reached out to the community, people have been asking: "Are we here just to give information or to participate in a meaningful way?" Dr. James ended this session by encouraging conference attendees to participate fully by enjoying the discussions in the sessions and to have a productive day.

III. Talking Circles

1. Black men's health

Facilitator: Steve Benton

Recorder: James Byers

At this session, participants shared experiences relating to Black men's health. Individual participants spoke about their experiences growing up in particular racialized communities. For instance, a young participant spoke of growing up in a proud Black community with its own institutions and being able to make progress in life based upon this positive environment.

Participants also spoke about the issues and myths related to Black masculinity held by many Black males. These issues include the silent pressure directed towards Black males to be successful, and to present an image of masculinity based on clothes, music and sexuality. Police harassment, drug use and drug dealing also add considerable pressure to the lives of Black men.

Information related to Black men's health was shared. There were particular concerns expressed about the alarming rate of the

incidences of prostate cancer among Black men, and the need for Health Canada to examine the entire problem of prostate cancer in the country. Concerns were raised about the lack of speaking out by Black males on issues that affect them directly. Recognition was given to the role of Black women, the support of community, and the use of spirituality in the positive development of Black males. Finally, in this session, Black males expressed appreciation for this research study, and saw their involvement in the data gathering as a positive step in beginning to address their issues and concerns.

2. Youth and education

Facilitators: Jennifer Clarke and Maxine Wood

Recorder: Nana Boateng

Participants at this session focused on experiences of racism in the educational system and the impact of these experiences on Black students. They spoke of the zero tolerance policy and the Safe Schools Act in Ontario, disciplinary measures applied to students who have been identified as having delinquent behaviours and tendencies to violence in schools. When applied, these disciplinary measures often lead to suspension or expulsion of students. Participants noted that the application of these disciplinary measures in schools is often a manifestation of systemic racism in education and often targets Black youth. For Black students these unfair measures negatively impact their future education, their employability, their health and overall quality of life.

Concerns about the quality of educational experiences, including poor literacy skills, were shared by participants from Halifax and Calgary. Strategies for addressing racism and injustices in education were identified by participants. These include encouraging and supporting youth to take a stand against racism and other forms of oppression; engaging in advocacy; joining with community organizations to address issues with school officials; and by Black youth becoming involved in political activism to change racism and injustices in the educational system.

3. What does well being look like from the perspective of a Black young adult?

Facilitator: James Byers

Recorder: Tacita Lewars

In this Talking Circle, youth participants gave individual accounts of health-related issues and spent considerable time identifying and defining the meaning of good or positive health. Positive health was seen as being physically fit, engaged in sports, weight training, eating well, and having good sleeping habits. It was felt that engaging in these positive health practices was a means for individuals to physically and mentally cope with racism. Issues identified as negative behaviours impacting health included engaging in violence, involvement with drugs, unsafe sex practices, and gambling. It was expressed that these behaviours can be, and are, used by some youth to self-medicate against the different manifestations of racism and other forms of oppression.

Participants also noted that risks to good health were related to poor housing, homelessness, child raising in environments that created fear, police harassment, and being profiled. Participants concluded that good health must also include compassion for others, involvement in community activities to help youth, contributing to the development of strong supportive family systems, and having pride in oneself.

4. Black single parent families

Facilitators: Denise Allen and Akua Benjamin

Recorder: Doreen Crick

Participants in this Talking Circle identified that they wished to give voice to their experiences of being single parents, and to share their learnings from these experiences. A participant spoke of making the choice to leave an abusive husband and raising four children on her own. In this experience, she noted how she moved to Canada and felt a sense of displacement. She also noted that she was seen as just a single mother without strong values. One mother spoke about the difficulty of raising her teenage daughter who was strongly influenced by media images of rap music and dress.

Other women spoke about having to cope with the stereotyping of Black single parents by White social workers in their attempts to find adequate housing. On this topic of housing, a participant who was a frontline housing worker exposed the many barriers and discriminatory treatment that are effected by some White workers and landlords

towards Black women on social assistance. She noted the considerable length of time which Black women often have to wait to gain social housing; the poor quality of the neighbourhood or region where Black women are placed; the raising of rent by some landlords to keep out Black tenants; the lack of access to habitat housing for Black single women, while White single families appear to have greater access to co-op housing neighbourhood where there is a greater sense of security, care and respect.

To these issues, there were a number of solutions suggested. To the issue of displacement, it was suggested that finding a support group of women would be one way of beginning to find a sense of place and to tackle other issues. On the issue of child raising, it was suggested that parents should continue to reach out and to bond with their child/children. This involves being open to the child's way of dress, music and other behaviours. It also involves listening, communicating and expressing love towards the child. With respect to the housing issue, it was felt that Black single parents need to be encouraged and supported to be pro-active in bringing forward their need for quality housing to government and policy makers. It was also expressed that, as a Black community, we need to build our own housing co-ops such as those built by the Congress of Black Women in Toronto and Mississauga, Ontario.

IV. Workshops

1. How does the violence of racism affect African Canadian eating patterns?

Facilitator: Brenda Beagan

Recorder: Samantha Thomas

The facilitator began this workshop by introducing the meaning of food at individual and social levels and its link to emotions for African Canadians. In small groups, participants were asked to discuss two questions:

1. What does a typical day of food look like for you as African Canadians?; and
2. What affects what you eat?

In addressing these questions, participants linked foods and eating patterns to culture and tradition. Many of these participants noted that, typically, many foods were smoked, dried or pressure cooked.

Salt and pepper were often used by older generations; certain cuts and types of meats and cooking with lots of fats and spices were also associated with Black traditional foods. Many of these traditional foods were often seen as being more nutritious than "Canadian" foods. It was also expressed that African Canadian (Black) ways of eating were often shared occasions which generated a sense of well being among family and community members.

Participants also examined some of the negative aspects associated with "Black traditional ways of eating." For many Black women, the fact that, traditionally, women do the cooking was seen as a double-edged sword as Black women are held to be good cooks. However, it was noted that some types of foods and the size of portions consumed can create huge health risks. Many Black women lack information on food and health concerns. It was recognized that today more and more men are cooking.

There was also discussion of food advertisements that reflect dominant eating patterns and food and which challenge traditional African Canadian foods and eating patterns. Participants spoke of the ways in which racist statements about African Canadian (Black) traditional foods can also impact on the selection of certain foods by children. One such example was that of a child whose food was denigrated by a fellow student. Following this incident, the child refused to eat this particular food. Participants also drew attention to the eating patterns of children today and the fact that dominant cultural or Canadian foods affect the consumption of traditional African Canadian Black foods. It was also expressed that vegetarian foods are generally regarded negatively and avoided by many African Canadian (Black) cultures.

2. Leave Out Violence (LOVE) from the kids who have been there. Remembering and responding to racism-related violence in schools

Presenters: Andrew Abraham, Dennis Adams, Sarah MacLaren and Anne Severinus
Recorder: Jennifer Clarke

In this session, a participant gave a personal account of what it means to be bi-racial within the educational system and within the family. This participant related his experience of racism at the hands of peers and teachers in school. He recounted that the school did not really deal with issues of racism. School only focused on Black issues during African Heritage month. This individual shared that his support to deal with these issues came from his mother, who is White.

Questions about racial profiling were addressed to a police officer present at this session. The officer noted that the race of a suspect is used by the police when that is the information received by them.

The workshop then focused on sharing information and explaining the work of LOVE. LOVE is a youth organization that works with victims and perpetrators of racism, other forms of violence, and experiences of difficulties such as depression. LOVE gives youth opportunity to voice opinions through photo journalism, music, poetry and other artistic media. LOVE offers its program to youth in schools and youth involved with the justice system. Participants who are young and student-based were invited to join or emulate the work of this organization.

V. Roundtable discussions

1. Exploring resistance to racism through the lens of Black Canadians: Personal, political and human rights examples

Presenters: Elias Cheboud, Abebe Teklu, David Turner
Recorder: Alfred Saunders

Elias Cheboud began this session with a slide tape presentation which showed the African immigrant experiences. These experiences showed the marginalization of new immigrants, limited access to services, and issues of adaptation and settlement of new immigrants. This presentation linked African immigrants to a proud history and civilization. Elias Cheboud outlined that this proud history of African civilization was destroyed by the European view which saw Africans and their civilization as inferior or non-existent and by the African experiences of racism and prejudice by Europeans over the centuries. This presenter noted that these historical experiences of racism have generated mental distress and depression among Africans. Case examples that illustrate racial violence, workers' stress due to racism, and racism experienced in higher education were also shared by the presenter

David Turner's presentation addressed human rights violations and oppressions experienced by African immigrants. Comments were expressed about privilege, internalization of racism and violence, and the need for strategies to resolve these violations and oppressions.

Abebe Teklu elaborated on resistive processes and dynamics that had been applied to unify and strengthen the Ethiopian community in Victoria, BC. He explained that, previous to the application of these

processes, the immigrant Ethiopian community had its culture but it was not united. However, in building strategies to address many issues, community members put in place certain specific processes which involved community members expressing their emotional feelings, building a sense of reconciliation, and working to become one.

At the end of these presentations, participants were invited to share their perspectives on the case illustrations, the issues raised, and ways of addressing them. One participant spoke of her awareness and feelings of shame of her White privilege. She felt encouraged, however, by the positive messages of the three presentations. Some of the other comments expressed include:

- Immigrant communities need to become united, and that the process of reconciliation and healing was already beginning in some communities;
- We need one common voice;
- Changes are needed in the criminal justice system;
- White privilege needs to be identified;
- There are lots of things that can be done by retired people to fight racism;
- We have to fight for a better education system.

2. Capacity-building across diverse differences: The benefits of mutual mentoring

Presenters: Health Association of African Canadians (HAAC) Josephine Etowa (Chair), Bethan Lloyd, Sharon Davis Murdoch, Sue Edmonds, Barbara Keddy (members) and Donna Smith of Cancer Care Nova Scotia Recorder: Brenda Beagan

Josephine Etowa introduced the session and noted that HAAC came together to develop a research agenda out of health related needs identified by African Nova Scotians. Each speaker outlined her beginning and subsequent involvement in HAAC, the process of putting together a diverse group of health-care practitioners and researchers for one particular project, and the use of mutual mentoring to build a cohesive group and a relevant research agenda.

Bethan Lloyd, a White researcher, spoke of her previous work with Black community members, her work on issues of Whiteness, anti-racism, anti-poverty, and activism. Working over a period of time with HAAC and community members, a proposal was developed to investigate the midlife health concerns and needs of Black women; it

was called Menopause and the Myth of the Strong Black Woman. An important perspective and theme to her engagement in this process was the application of mutual mentoring and sharing of research and community development skills. Bethan Lloyd noted that, for her, it was important to simultaneously work on issues of Whiteness and privilege and to share her research skills with Black women who had expertise and knowledge on the issues that affect the health and well being of African Nova Scotians.

Sharon Davis Murdoch's presentation was contextualized from her perspective and knowledge as a health policy analyst, as a Black woman, and as a member of the African Nova Scotian community. She noted that while there are few research statistics on the health of African Nova Scotians, there is general knowledge of the health concerns of members of this community. These include diabetes, hypertension, and other health-related conditions. Her quest to bring to the attention of policy makers the health concerns of African Nova Scotians began with the awareness that she had to make changes herself. Working with a group of like-minded individuals was one way of bringing about such changes. She indicated that public pressure does make a difference. Also, in working with this group on this research project she was able to share her knowledge while being mentored at the same time. Sharon Davis Murdoch ended by offering that this research project will make a difference to the health of African Nova Scotians.

Sue Edmonds, a mental health nurse, began her presentation by explaining that she found that clients with whom she worked received inequitable services. Her concern led her to initiate a plan for gaining financial support from the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation (NSHRF) in order to develop a proposal to investigate the health concerns of Black women in Nova Scotia. As part of this research team, Sue Edmonds noted that there is a need to educate Black community members on the advantages of research. She also noted that there are specific cultural ways of conducting research among African Nova Scotians. These cultural ways include "our own questions and own ways of asking." Consequently, these ways have been included in this research project, and the results of this research will be brought back to the community.

Barbara Keddy explained that she was parachuted into this research project after the committee had identified a question they wished to study. She outlined that, as part of the research project, Josephine Etowa was assigned to her as a faculty member for mentoring.

Barbara Keddy felt that being asked to participate in this research was a gift. She also indicated that she had learnt a great deal. The learnings from her engagement with this project have positively impacted her teaching. It has also impacted her self-reflexive process of White privilege.

Donna Smith shared information on her work with Cancer Care Nova Scotia, a program which is offered under the auspices of the Department of Health. The specific program for which she is responsible is called Patient Navigator. Patients who are newly diagnosed with cancer are referred to a Navigator. She explained that there have been focus groups and roundtable discussion on this program but members of the Black and First Nations communities have made little use of it. Blacks, she noted, have indicated that racism and the association of cancer with death are two of the reasons for such little use of these services by Blacks. She noted that, often, Black people are the last to hear about health services that are available to them. Donna Smith explained that her job was to make sure that Black communities are connected to the patient navigating system.

Based on these presentations, participants raised questions and engaged in discussions on some of the issues put forward by the presenters.

VI. Presentations

1. The process of becoming aware of racism and strategies of dealing with racism

Facilitator: Ekuia Walcott and Jana Vinsky
Recorder: Elizabeth Inebode

The facilitators outlined the ways in which racism, as violence, impacts the emotional and mental health of individuals. These impacts include anger, confusion, shock, disbelief, disgust, disappointment, sadness, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Speaking as a social work professional, the facilitator drew on her knowledge of this topic from material authored and/or propounded by the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASSW), and her work in a Ryerson University student-based group – the Social Work Anti-Oppression Coalition (SWAOC).

In her discussion, the facilitator outlined that the processes of violence often lead to a damage of one's ego or ego defenses such as loss of self-image, uncertainty and/or a desire to be liked. The facilitator showed ways in which an individual can take control over one's life through spirituality. Individuals, she concluded, can choose to face the damage or the harsh reality of the impact of racism on their ego defense, or they can choose to become involved by resisting racist violence. Choice is open to individuals.

2. Media hysteria and Black life: Fearing you, fearing me

Presenter: Kirk Moss

White blame, Black guilt: Confronting a Canadian system of Whiteness

Presenter: Remi Warner

Recorder: Selom Chapman-Nyaho

Kirk Moss's presentation examined representation of Black crime in Toronto media. Examples included articles on racial profiling by the Toronto Star and implied violence in the characterization and tone of media when describing Black youth in sports and Black athletes as beasts, vicious, aggressive and angry. Kirk Moss noted that the depictions of criminalization of Black males by the media have devastating effects on Black youth and the way they see themselves. He urged that these representations be scrutinized and questioned, and that alternative and more positive images of Black youth be put forward by the media.

Remi Warner's presentation addressed racial profiling as reported in the Toronto Star's Race and Crime Series which substantiated charges of racial profiling and over-charging by Toronto police – issues long reported by Black community members, agencies and institutions in Toronto. The presenter noted that the ensuing coverage of the Toronto Star's report on racial profiling was reduced to the issue to Black-on-Black crime and to exposing a culture of poverty among Blacks. He indicated that this kind of reduction engenders White blame and Black guilt. The presenter, however, noted that racial profiling must be understood within systems of Whiteness. The presenter explicated the systemic processes and structures of Whiteness.

In this presentation, Blackness was also seen as a system of marginality and exploitation influenced by neo-liberal political and economic policies which erode social services and have a disproportionate effect on African Canadians.

In the question and answer period that followed the presenter gave an example of how Blacks can be implicated in systems of Whiteness by exposing Black Entertainment Television (BET)'s negative portrayal of Blackness. Remi Warner noted that BET plays into the stereotypes that form the ideological basis of Whiteness and that these images of Blackness are appropriated by Black youth.

It was felt, in this discussion that BET programs depict life in American cities and should not be shown in Canada. Alternative media sources (e.g. community radio and television) can provide a space for alternative positive representations. Also, organizing discussion groups, etc., are healthy ways to counter dominant misconceptions of Blacks. The session ended with a call for youth to build a critical mass movement, and to work towards more inclusive, positive programs and images of Black youth.

3. The impact of racism on the health and well being of Black individuals in Calgary

Presenter: Wek Kuol

Conceptions of health: Views of Calgary's Somalian community

Presenter: Dr. David Este

Recorder: Margaret Bruhier

The first presenter, Wek Kuol, spoke about the newcomer Black population of Calgary, newcomers who had experienced hardships and oppression in their homeland, and arrived in Canada with high expectations of freedom. In Calgary, many of them experience racism in employment. He noted that although they may be well educated, they are forced into underemployment. Some newcomers, therefore, return to school to better their economic and social conditions. He said that they also face family problems, including role changes towards elders, and they experience a lack of cultural role models. They experience discrimination by the media; and oppression by police is a daily occurrence. Wek Kuol concluded these issues impact the health and well-being of Black Calgarians.

The second presenter, Dr. Dave Este, shared information from his study and work with three different ethno-cultural communities. (This is a work in progress.) In Calgary, he noted, there has been a significant increase in the visible minority population, and it is predicted that within five years, visible minorities will constitute 25% of the overall population of this city. He indicated that Blacks form the

3rd largest visible minority group after Chinese and South Asians. With respect to health and well being, the presenter noted that the lens through which health is viewed by Black community members is cloudy. He also noted that racism is not well articulated by this Black community. Thus, he indicated these issues of health and racism will be further examined in his study.

4. Exploring the role of District Health Authorities and Community Health Boards: Attending to health needs of African Nova Scotians

Presenter: Victor Maddalena

Moving beyond illusions: A socially inclusive approach to promote well being across diversity

Presenter: Anthony Hutchinson

Recorder: Francis Boakye

Victor Maddalena shared information on his research which focuses mainly on the following: that the health needs of minority groups have not been addressed in the health care sector; that health boards have a moral obligation to give good health care to all; that mainstream communities are targeted for health care, while minority groups' concerns are considered social justice issues; that it is widely recognized that certain people, including people with disabilities and minorities, have disproportionately higher rates of illness when compared to the general population; that barriers to participation on health care boards need to be removed.

This research project is a case study of Capital District Health Authority and the method used is a demographic survey. Specifically, the research questions were: What is the demographic profile of District Health Authorities and Community Health Boards in Nova Scotia? What procedural options or programs are available to increase participation of members of the African Nova Scotian community in the decision making processes of Health Boards? The presenter indicated that the outcome of the research will be used to design educational program for trustees, senior management and staff regarding opportunities for inclusion of Black community members in the health planning process.

Following this presentation, questions were raised by participants as to the process of gaining adequate representation of Blacks and Mi'kmaq individuals on the Health Boards.

Anthony Hutchinson, the second presenter, made connections between racism, violence, and health. He noted that oppression was a breeding ground for racism, violence, and poor health. He also noted that there is a false sense of security around the notion of living in Canada where there is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and pointed out that, despite the Canadian Multicultural Act, there is a First Nations reservation system which resembles apartheid. Racism he saw as a pervasive plague that is a key variable in defining health. He also noted that racism is a structural issue, and that little is done to mitigate the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Anthony Hutchinson noted that we live in a society that breeds and sustains violence. He ended by pointing out the need to take a stand and fight in a non-violent way against oppression. He also noted that progressive change is possible and requires only a small segment of society, about 4%.

5. Racism and social exclusion as social determinants of health in African Canadian communities

Presenter: Grace-Edward Galabuzzi

Racism in health research: Are we part of the problem or part of the solution?

Presenter: Charmaine Williams

Recorder: Brenda Beagan

Grace-Edward Galabuzzi addressed the question: "How does marginalization (in health care, housing, education and other institutions) affect the health status of African Canadians?" As a result of this marginalization, he noted, exclusion becomes a key factor in the physical, mental and emotional health and well being of African Canadians. The presenter noted that due to the lack of research overall on racialized Canadians there is a need for studies such as this to examine this link between marginalization, exclusion and the health status of African Canadians.

The presenter also focused on the concept of "social determinants of health" and indicated that a framework that embodies this concept augurs well for determining the health status of African Canadians. He explained that, although health is a personal matter, health and illness are residual results of social processes. These processes include social and economic conditions, access to resources, poverty, social status, race and racialization (although not well understood). Marginalization plus everyday racism combine to affect health status and health services utilization, he noted.

The presenter outlined the concept of social exclusion, and indicated that it is another framework that can help us make sense of the complex experiences of African Canadians. The experiences cited include:

- the inability of some ethnic and racialized groups to access resources that would enable their full participation in society;
- Eurocentric culture as marginalizing to other cultures;
- White supremacy as devaluing and disregarding other cultures;
- gender and racially segregated structures.

Grace-Edward Galabuzzi ended by indicating that these and other social exclusionary experiences increase the health risks of African Canadians.

The second presenter, Charmaine Williams, focused on ethical considerations in carrying out research on African Canadians. To avoid some of the pitfalls in research that are or become unethical, she noted, one has to be equipped to evaluate research and, in so doing, to examine the expertise of those involved in carrying out research; to understand the objectives of the research question; and to understand the theoretical orientations and epistemologies that frame the research. Finally, one needs to question the anti-racist perspective utilized in the research. The presenter further outlined features of Racist and Anti-Racist research.

Racist research, she noted, co-opts capable insiders and asks community members to become informants on their people; it excludes subjects, attributes individuals, establishes hierarchies, creates epicentres, builds careers, and, through these type of research, it furthers White hegemony.

Antiracist research, she points out, promotes capable research by including subjects, attributes structures, establishes differences, creates networks, builds capacity and, through these actions, furthers social justice.

6. Violence as a determinant of health for Black women

Presenter: Eunadie Johnson

Recorder: Nola Barton

Eunadie Johnson, the presenter at this session, contextualized her remarks within her work as the Executive Director of a health serving agency serving Black women and other women of colour in Toronto.

This center frames its work within an anti-sexist, anti-racist approach. It also engages in advocacy work with women and offers health care and support to women and their children. The presenter noted that, in serving women of colour, it is found that 70% of these women were victims of some form of violence (i.e. sexual abuse, sexual harassment, rape, etc.). She noted that there is an underestimation of the violence that women suffer, and that Black women are often excluded from this statistic. Black women, she said, face many challenges that make them vulnerable to violence. The presenter emphasized how important addressing this issue is for our community and expressed the need for our community to protect women from violence. She also noted that there is an urgent need for unity in the community to address the reality of violence. Further, the speaker noted that networking within the community is a step toward building relationships within our own communities to address violence against women and to ensure that effective government action is taken to address this issue.

7. Building our community's hopes: Confronting social exclusion and violence in Toronto's Black Community, 2001

Presenter: Grace-Edward Galabuzzi

Recorder: Robinah Kakembo

This presentation by Grace-Edward Galabuzzi outlined the series of fatal shootings of six Black youth in Toronto over a four-month period as well as the attempts by Black community organizations to address these shootings. These attempts were undertaken by a Coalition of Hope, which developed a plan of action based on an analysis of the social conditions of the youth who had been killed. The Coalition of Hope advocated for involvement of the government at a high level; the need for a poster campaign to educate and inform the community on ways to stop the violence; effective strategies for cooperation between Black community organizations and the police. This presentation exposed the lack of involvement by governments to take action that would stop the killings among youths (over 125 in the recent past). The presenter noted that the Walkerton crisis, in which eight people died, received high profile media attention and strong action by government. He pointed out that similar response by government to stop the violence among Blacks has not been forthcoming.

Questions were raised and comments made about police involvement and actions that do not help in solving the violence; about the mobilization of resources within the Black community to address this issue; and about the positive role that successful Black businesses can

play in such an effort. Other audience comments highlighted the media's portrayal of Blacks and the image and impact of "Black-on-Black" violence as transmitted and transformed through the media. In its transformation, violence is not seen as a wider social problem, but mainly a Black one. It was commented that "we don't hear about 'White-on-White' violence." This transformation of violence-as-a-societal-problem to violence-as-a-Black-problem is a form of racism which diverts from the contributing realities of unemployment, marginalization, school drop out, poor quality of education and educational experiences to violence among Black youth.

A question was raised as to whether criminal youth should be defended. The response pointed out that there is a need to recognize the structural context and issues that lead youth to participate in violence or crime. Also, youth need appropriate resources in their communities to counter violent behaviour. These resources should include facilities for anger management, counseling and problem solving initiatives.

8. Transforming our families: How Black health can be supported rather than diminished in our family relations.

Presenter: Dianne Prevatt-Hyles

Taking care of yourself and or families in a context of racism

Presenter: Francis Omoruyi

Recorder: Jemelle Moriah

Dianne Prevatt-Hyles' presentation on the family had five main constructs centred on the theme of "Taking time first to understand, love, nurture and celebrate you." In outlining each of these constructs, the presenter outlined that applying these constructs contributes to shifts in knowing as well as to processes of transformation that lead to self and/or family affirmation and connections that support health. In the session, participants were encouraged to explore ways of transforming family beliefs, family communication, family collective consciousness, critical thinking and leadership, and using concrete tools. The presenter explained that the application of these constructs in their daily lives helped individuals to shift in knowing and in liberating themselves from stories and scripts of oppression to creating new visions and concrete ways of realizing liberation.

The second presentation by Francis Omoruyi focused on examining the ways in which African Canadians can facilitate their individual and family well-being in environments where racism and violence are pervasive. Developing an analysis of his own experience with the Scarborough School Board in Toronto, he talked about what it was like for him when as a Nigerian immigrant qualified as a teacher, to have his family deal with the consequences of filing a complaint about individual and systemic racism. Finally, Omoruyi led participants in a good discussion about strategies to use to help take care of ourselves and our families when dealing with racism.

9. How do you give up being Black? Racial and occupational identities of Black RCMP officers in Nova Scotia

Presenter: Selom Chapman-Nyaho

Recorder: Sobaz Benjamin

In beginning his presentation, Selom Chapman-Nyaho made reference to two articles. These were (1) Jaccoud, Mylene, & Felices, Maritza. (1999). Ethnicization of the police in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 14(1), 83-100 and (2) Gilroy, Paul. (1998). Race ends here. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 21(5), 838-847. These articles discuss reasons for the recruitment of Black Officers, including eliminating systemic barriers in the police force; addressing inequalities in policing; ensuring that the police force reflects the communities it serves; and involving Black officers in the education of White officers as a means of reducing racial tension in policing.

The presenter also shared some of his findings based on interviews conducted with Black RCMP officers. He said that these Black officers noted that they suffered White abuse, Black challenges, and marginalization, and they also spoke about their relationships with peers and supervisors.

In the discussion, the question was asked: How does the Black community feel about Black officers who are subject to racism? The response to this question indicated that, on the one hand, there were common feelings of dislike for Black officers, and little or no sympathy for their plight since Black officers had chosen to join an oppressive institution. On the other hand, it was expressed that any one who puts his life on the line is worthy of respect.

Selom Chapman-Nyaho reported that, from his interviews, Black police officers had indicated that the abuse received from the Black community is worse than that received from the White community. He said that Black officers also spoke of their dual and problematic role in the Black community, i.e., of being a role model and also of having to arrest one's own people.

There was an animated discussion on the Black community's view of Black police officers. This discussion included the fear of the police, and looking for favours from Black police officers. The discussion also focused on clarifying the hierarchy of police officer's value systems in which the community does not come first. Instead, this hierarchy indicates that there is a ranking to the value system of police officers: personal safety, family and community.

The discussion was split as to the Black community's expectations and the police's expectations. In conclusion, it was felt that the police organization needs to be accountable to the community rather than to individual officers.

10. From Perception to reality: Blackness, mental illness and the construction of the outsider in Canadian society

Presenter: Cecil A. Foster

The lived experiences of post-traumatic stress disorder: A policy study of immigrant refugee, and racialized women of Saskatchewan

Presenter: Francisca Omorodion

Recorder: Gerry Taylor

This session began with a presentation from Cecil A. Foster who critically examined the socio-philosophical links between Blackness and mental illness in Canadian society and how the construction of Black men as mad has been used over time to exclude them from mainstream society. This led to a lively discussion about how the perception of madness became the lived experience for Black males. Foster concluded with a theoretical analysis of the effects on the Black body and mind from the long-held perception that Blackness is tantamount to madness.

The second presenter, Francisca Omorodion explained how immigrant, refugee and racialized women face enormous barriers to receiving quality mental health care. These barriers include poor interpersonal relationships with health providers, lack of respect, language barriers and stigmatization and labeling. Much of the discussion focused on a study that proposes government agencies and organizations work together in partnership to foster a holistic approach to providing quality of care and empowering clients with a good understanding of their mental health status.

Both presentations led to an animated discussion among participants about the impact of racism on mental health of African Canadians and the lack of appropriate health care services to deal with these issues.

11. The intersection between the lived reality of racism and the law's capacity to respond

Presenter: Joanne St. Lewis

Recorder: Fathia Are

Joanne St. Lewis' presentation focused on the intersection between the lived reality of racism and the law's capacity to respond. It was noted that tort law provides a number of unique remedies to discrimination. Victims of sex discrimination have been able to avail themselves of tort remedies through the tort of intentional infliction of nervous shock. Using critical race theory and analysis of existing tort laws remedies, St. Lewis identified areas where equality issues have been successfully raised. The presentation concluded with discussion of other conceptual opportunities with tort law and what evidentiary foundations need to be considered in order to succeed in such actions.

VII. Closing of the conference

Moderators: Dr. Dave Este, Co-Investigator; Dr. Akua Benjamin, Co-Investigator

The conference was closed with a plenary session at which Dr. Akua Benjamin and Dr. Dave Este summarized and highlighted particular aspects of the conference. In her summary, Dr. Akua Benjamin noted that the conference took place in a historic location where African Canadians have lived since the 1600's, namely, Nova Scotia. From this physical location, she continued, conference participants from Halifax, Calgary and Toronto articulated their experiences of individual and systemic racisms perpetrated against them. Dr. Benjamin noted that

some of these experiences were not new. Experiences such as racism in education, policing and employment were common and long standing among participants from the different communities. What was new and different, she noted, were the voices, the identities and new twists to old issues or stories. For instance, the voices of new African immigrants residing in Calgary and talking about racist exclusion or lack of access in employment, despite the fact that many are highly qualified individuals, was a relatively new phenomenon. This was different from the voices of African Canadians living in Halifax who have historically systemic barriers in employment due to systemic racism experienced in education. Also new, according to Dr. Benjamin, were concepts such as racialization and criminalization, and the banishment that occurs as a result of these systemic processes.

Dr. Benjamin also noted that, in the sessions, many of the stories showed the resistive actions in which individuals had engaged. She indicated that participants talked about coming to an awareness of racism; the personal and often empowering actions which individuals undertook; the coping networks of family, group, community and church which assisted them to resist racism. Many participants, she said, indicated that there was a need to go beyond individual actions and, as a group, undertake resistive action. This action required community mobilization. In particular, she noted that in one session, there was a call for the community to be mobilized to address the need for high quality affordable housing in Halifax. She noted, as well, that the conference theme of resistance called for community mobilization and for developing networks and strategies in order that racism in its myriad forms could be resisted effectively.

Dr. Benjamin spoke about the next steps in this project. She indicated that those steps include: the questionnaire which will collect data on the impact of racism on individual's health and well-being during the summer of 2003; and Community Forums which will continue in Halifax, Toronto, and Calgary. She noted that many participants had expressed the need to ensure that all sectors within the different communities be made aware of and participate in this research project. The success of this project depends on the involvement of African Canadians, Dr. Benjamin concluded.

Dr. Dave Este thanked all participants for their contribution to a successful conference. He noted that the participants had fulfilled the theme of "Making Connections" as he felt that connections on the issues had been made by all. Dr. Este acknowledged all the funders and supporters of the Conference.

Finally, Dr. Este thanked the research team and paid particular tribute to the Team Leader, Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, for her vision and work in bringing this research into being.

VIII. Summary and conclusions

In summarizing this conference, an assessment indicating that the conference objectives were met is included. This assessment draws some conclusions based on the issues discussed by conference participants. Importantly, it also includes important learning's gained from the interactive processes among many participants in many sessions. The conclusions, therefore, provide lessons that are important to the research project and ought to be considered in similar research projects in the future.

As indicated above, the objectives of the conference were:

1. To provide a forum at which African Canadians and other conference participants could address the question: "What do we know about the intersection of race, gender, violence and health across the life span?" and
2. To provide an opportunity for networking and capacity-building among African Canadians and other conference participants with the goal of contributing to individual agency at the personal level and social transformation, at systemic levels.

In assessing this conference it can be said that the conference met and went beyond these two objectives.

1. Meeting and going beyond the conference objectives

First, the conference produced knowledge about the intersection of race, gender, violence and health of African Canadian women and men. This was brought to the fore through the discussions and information shared on topics such as: Black Youth and Education (Facilitators Jennifer Clarke and Maxine Wood); What does well-being look like from the perspective of Black young adult (Facilitator: James Byers); Leave Out Violence; Media hysteria and Black Life: Fearing you, fearing me (Kirk Moss); White Blame, Black Guilt: Confronting a Canadian system of Whiteness (Facilitator: Remi Warner). These and other sessions opened up critical discussions on issues of racism which are seriously impacting African Canadian youth of different ethnic and

socio-economic levels in different communities in Toronto, Halifax and Calgary.

In particular, youth, parents, and elders from these different communities spoke about the criminalization of black youth by the media, discriminatory treatment, and criminalization of young Black children and other Black students in schooling, which often leads to their low school performance, low self esteem, drop out, marginalization or banishment from school. These discussions on criminalization and racial profiling were linked to the emotional and mental health and well being of young black students, Black youth, Black men, women and their families and the various Black communities. Thus, the knowledge produced from these sessions indicated that this social problem of criminalization of Black youth is a crisis situation for African Canadian youth, their families and communities in the cities cited. This knowledge indicates that there is a great deal of urgency around the need to address this problem.

The conference also produced knowledge about the intersection of race and violence with Black women and men. In sessions such as Violence as a determinant of health of Black women (Facilitator: Eunadie Johnson) and Black men's health (Facilitator: Steve Benton), these facilitators shared knowledge on the experiences of abuse and violence suffered by Black women and men from societal institutions and within the family, and the need for strong community support and involvement in ending this violence. Knowledge was gained of the considerable pressures on Black men as they attempted to live up to a masculine image of certain clothes, music and sexuality. Attempting to live up to this myth affects their health and well-being negatively, and these negative conditions and processes impact Black women, children, and communities in detrimental ways. Thus, the conference produced knowledge that showed that, for African Canadians, racism and violence cross the social locations realized through ones life span and gender differences. This means that experiences of race and racism impact African Canadians from an early age as children and youth, to adulthood as parents and older men and women.

As well, for African Canadians, racism intersects with ethnic identities, citizenship status, and geographic locations. In these sessions, information shared by participants showed that, as African Canadian newcomers from Africa or the Caribbean, or indigenous African Nova Scotians, race, racism and violence are factors that plague their daily life and have deleterious effects on their health and well-being.

Going beyond intersections of race, gender and violence, knowledge was also produced concerning systemic racism perpetrated by institutions such as education, policing, housing, and employment. From these institutions, African Canadians residing in Toronto, Halifax and Calgary often experience poor treatment, discrimination, lack of access, lack of representation and other forms of exclusion and banishment based on racism and other forms of oppression. For instance, sessions such as Exploring resistance to racism through the lens of Black Canadians: Personal, political and human rights examples (Facilitators: Elias Cheboud, Abebe Teklu and David Turner); The impact of racism on the health and well being of Black individuals in Calgary; Racism and Social exclusion as social determinants of health in African Canadian Communities (Facilitator: Grace Edward Galabuzzi); Black Single Parent Families (Facilitators: Akua Benjamin and Denise Allen) reveal commonality of systemic and everyday experiences of racism in education, employment, immigration, policing and the criminal justice system, and social exclusion in housing by African Canadians living in Halifax, Toronto and Calgary, although there were differences in their different geographical and social locations. This knowledge, while not new, showed the extent of systemic racism and violence as an anti-Black Canadian phenomenon, and as a serious national problem for African Canadians.

Many participants noted that these systemic experiences negatively affected the physical health, emotional and psychological state and the well-being of themselves and their family members. There was also mention of the psychological ways in which racism affected their eating patterns. Concerns about the onset of diabetes, hypertension and higher rates of illnesses when compared to the general populace were also expressed. However, while these physiological and psychological manifestations of racism were mentioned, these were less focused upon and therefore less discussed by participants. This seeming lack of connection between physiological and psychological states and racism can be interpreted in varying ways. Two interrelated interpretations can be that (1) to many African Canadians, racism and violence as they intersect with different social locations such as gender and race are primarily a social issue rather than a health-related concern and (2) that health is related to physiological and psychological factors rather than social issues such as racism and violence. In making such interpretation, it appears that there is a need for greater attention to health issues which take into account the varying ways in which African Canadians think of health and well-being. This means putting their understandings of health and determinants of health at the center of the discussion on racism and violence.

The conference also captured the resistive strategies and approaches, supportive networks of family and friends, and reliance on spirituality which individuals were able to apply in building personal empowerment and agency in addressing systemic issues. While emphasis was given to addressing systemic racism in institutions, there was a theme of building agency and reliance on self, spirituality, family and community. For instance, these themes were reflected in sessions such as Black Youth and Education (Facilitators: Jennifer Clarke and Maxine Wood); What does well being look like from the perspective of Black Young Adult (Facilitator: James Byers); Exploring resistance to racism through the lens of Black Canadians: Personal, political and Human rights examples; Building our community's hopes: Confronting social exclusion and violence in Toronto's Black Community, 2001. However, little emphasis was given to the limited and/or already-used (and subsequent lack of) resources of individuals, families, and communities to effectively take on powerful systems that promulgate racism and violence systemically. Moreover, there appeared to be little discussion on the lack of community resources or the health of the community to sustain often long-term actions, which are required to bring about significant changes to systemic racism and systemic violence. Hence, the conference produced knowledge which shows the need for focused discussions on the health status of many African Canadian communities and realistic ways of building adequate resources that would strengthen individuals and families, sufficiently to mobilize and organize to address systemic problems.

2. Learnings gained from the interactive processes among many participants

As they articulated issues at the conference, the voices of participants from three different African Canadian communities in Canada were also captured. These voices were passionate, painful and hopeful. They also went beyond the normative exchanges and dialogues that often characterize conferences, to a process that can be attributed to healing the impacts of racism that is so necessary to health and well-being. They brought, therefore, an important, expressive and qualitative dynamism to the success of the conference. These voices and their outcomes are important to the overall project. This qualitative dynamism was spontaneously created by the use of "the talking stick" which was originally used in the Community Forums that preceded the conference.

Drawing from the First Nation's "Circle", the conference sessions used a sculpted and well-polished stick at the Talking Circles and in other sessions. Led by the facilitator or moderator at the session, participants sat in a circle formation and each participant was given the opportunity to share his/her story without interruption, if he/she so desired. This method allowed space for each voice to be listened to with care and integrity. As the speaker opened up or told his/her story, anguish, poignancy, and other emotions, accompanying often long-held painful experiences or concerns about issues, were shared. Overcoming such experiences or being victorious in addressing a concern or issue was also shared with relief, laughter and a sense of satisfaction. Listeners within the circle listened with intensity, compassion and respect, and often the listener's emotion silently matched those of the speaker. A listener receiving the stick could then engage the earlier speaker. This engagement showed empathy towards the earlier speakers. Responses to the speaker were follow-up questions which often searched for effective means of addressing an issue. Thus, it is in this interaction and with the use of the talking stick that empowerment strategies, community capacity building approaches, and networks are communicated and germinated. Hence, in Talking Circles such as Black men's health; How do Black Service providers promote their own health and well-being; and What does well being look like from the perspective of a Black Young Adult, participants left voicing statements which reflected a beginning sense of healing.

For many participants at the forum, this type of sharing was cathartic, uplifting and motivational. Thus, they expressed the need to continue this type of sharing and dialogue beyond the local level and at the national level.

Finally, the conference provided a space in which African Canadians articulated issues and concerns that impact their lives in similar and in different ways. Importantly, the conference also allowed these participants to engage in an interactive process that was useful to the health and well-being of themselves, their families, and their communities.

C. EVALUATION

I. Registration

This section of the report presents the results of the participants' evaluation of the conference. Two types of questions were developed for the evaluation. The first type focused on the conference itself. The second series of questions were designed to obtain from conference participants their views on the Black community as a collective entity. The views provided by the conference participants will add to the information base for the Racism, Violence, and Health Project.

The tables that follow provide basic statistical information related to the conference. Table 1 presents both the conference registration data and the number of individuals who attended. Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of the conference participants who completed the evaluation form.

Table 1 - Conference Registration Data

Conference Registration			Conference Attendance		
	No.	%		No.	%
Calgary	13	5	Calgary	13	6
Toronto	38	15	Toronto	38	19
Halifax	189	75	Halifax	139	70
Other	10	5	Other	10	5
Total	250	100	Total	200	100

Table 2 - Evaluation Completion Results (F: Female M: Male)

	No	%	M	F	No Sex	18-29	30-44	45-64	65+	No Age	Black	Non Black	No Race
Calgary	7	10	3	4	0	0	5	2	0	0	5	0	2
Toronto	12	16	17	4	1	1	7	3	1	0	10	1	1
Halifax	43	59	30	13	0	7	20	15	1	0	31	9	3
Other	7	10	3	4	0	2	1	4	0	0	5	1	1
No City	4	5	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	2	3	0	1
Total	73	100	44	26	3	10	35	24	2	2	54	10	9
Percent	100	100	60	36	4	14	48	33	3	3	74	14	12

II. Qualitative comments

1. Strengths of the Black community

Participants were asked to identify what they perceived to be the strengths of the Black community. In reviewing the range of comments provided, some of the strengths cited clearly demonstrate that the “community” of people of African descent is determined to deal with the barriers and exclusionary practices resulting from racism.

Common experience

One of the most frequently cited assets of the Black community stressed the common experience of African Canadians regardless of their place of residency in Canada. A male from Toronto made following statement:

We have a strong and definitive identify of which we should be proud...We have a history and a current context that validates our mobilization to make the world a more inclusionary place for all.

On a similar vein, a female African Nova Scotian stated, “We are unique with regard to our ancestry.”

Willingness to take action

Several participants maintained their desire to take action and deal with the issues confronting the community. The words of an African male from Calgary are illustrative of this sentiment:

The fact that we are arising to the challenges and empowering Black people. Having the conference itself is part of the movement in trying to chart our own destiny.

The following comments from three African Nova Scotian women reinforce the belief that African Canadians clearly want to tackle the salient issues:

The willingness to take action to organize to discuss these issues.

Motivation to find solutions to deal with racism...strength in who we are as Black individuals.

Our desire to fight back against our common enemy.

Resilient nature of the community

The belief in the resiliency of the Black community also emerged as a positive attribute. The remarks provided are reflective of commentary regarding this specific strength:

The Black community is resilient, strong, intelligent, determined, and genuinely wanting to change the conditions Black people are living and dealing with on a daily basis. (African Canadian female from Calgary)

Perseverance, survival skills, and inner strength. (African Nova Scotian female)

I think we must acknowledge the fact that we all have resiliency in us and this survival is still the ultimate strength. (African Canadian male). Perseverance, optimism that we can change the system. (Participant from Toronto)

Knowledge and skills possessed by African Canadians

The knowledge, skills, and various expertise possessed by members of the community emerged as another strength. Participants frequently cited words such as "knowledge," "education," "professional," and "experienced." The following comment captures the strong sense of this particular strength, "There is a wide range of skills, knowledge, education, and experiences in the communities" (female African Nova Scotian participant).

Spirituality

At least two African Nova Scotian attendees maintained that spirituality and faith represented strength of the community. A male participant remarked, "The Black community is historically a community of faith. We cannot forget our roots concerning the struggles and victories and how we overcame [the challenges]."

Diversity in the community

Several different types of diversity in the community were identified. For example, one African Canadian woman from Calgary conveyed the following, "Diversity of origins: mixed, indigenous Black Canadians, African and Caribbean. Diversity of Lived Experiences: immigrants, refugees, gays and lesbians, disabled, young, and elderly." A non-Black female participant from Halifax stated, "...the diversity of voices and experiences within the Black community."

2. Challenges facing the community

The existence and manifestation of institutional and systemic racism, lack of resources, and lack of unity with the community were identified by conference attendees as the three major challenges of the Black community.

Existence and manifestation of institutional and systemic racism

Quite convincingly, this represented a significant challenge in the view of conference participants:

Systemic (institutions and structural) oppression. The pervasive nature of racism, stereotypes, and discrimination. (African Canadian male participants from Toronto)

Racism in Nova Scotia and Canada is highly institutionalized therefore making it very difficult to pinpoint at such an early age before they even realize it. (African Nova Scotian female)

Dealing with the existence of systemic racism and politicians who are happy with the status quo. (African Nova Scotian female). There is a great deal of energy spent in coping with the consequences of racism.

Divisions within the community

The existence of different types of divisions within the community was a prevailing theme. For example, an African Canadian female from Calgary contended that "...differences are as much divisive as they are uniting...Conflicts amongst groups of Blacks." This was echoed in the statement by a Black female participant from Toronto, "Divisions continue to exist between groups in the community" and also by another individual:

There is not enough cooperation, coordination, networking within the Black communities to jointly come together to speak with one voice (talking of classes, low and high income, immigrants from Africa and other parts of the world).

Another strong message that emerged was the need for the community to unite and work together to address the issues confronting people of African descent. Examples of this type of commentary included, "I feel that the Black community...must come together as a whole" (African Nova Scotian female); "Need to stick

together more and stop being so envious" (African Nova Scotian male).

Lack of resources

The need for resources to improve the status of the Black community garnered considerable attention by conference participants, but the types of resources required varied. It must be noted that African Nova Scotians made the majority of comments, which is a reflection of the long historical pattern of racism and oppression experienced by this community.

No support from government agencies re funding .Funding, resources, and connecting with other organizations across Canada.

Listen to what our Black colleagues have to tell us. We have to move aside, not try to lead, respectively educate ourselves, and celebrate our Black comrade's rights and gains.

Create self-awareness. Become advocates...attend workshops.

These are the voices of four non-Black female participants from Halifax.

3. Support needed from non-Black community

In reference to the types of support needed from the non-Black community, the results are provided in two parts. The first presents the themes from the African Canadian conference participants and is followed by quotes from non-Black attendees.

Alliances

Establishing alliances or working in a collaborative manner was the most frequently cited response by African Canadians:

I believe we have to forge alliances with all those who believe in our cause and are willing to support us in our journey against racism. (African Canadian male from Calgary)

Be an ally and work with the community without being the expert on racism. (African Canadian woman from Toronto)

Understanding and acknowledging privilege

Several participants maintained that it is critical for non-Blacks and, in particular, Caucasians to understand and acknowledge their privileged status. Comments such as "Understand and admit to their place of privilege" (African Nova Scotian woman), "Recognize their privilege (African Canadian male from Calgary), and "Examine and process White supremacy, White privilege, Whiteness as a social construct" (African Nova Scotian male) are indicative of the commentary reflecting this particular type of support.

Identifying, understanding, and acknowledging racism and oppression

The need for the non-Black community to identify, understand, and acknowledge the existence of racism emerged as a salient theme. Closely related, some participants also stressed that it was important for this particular community to intervene when acts of racism were being manifested:

Explore and own their own racism. Develop anti-racist policies in their own organizations. (African Nova Scotian woman)

Admit that both overt and systemic racism does exist.

Challenge the system and when they witness racism, address it, call it, name it, and own it.

Provision of support

Participants identified a number of ways in which the non-Black community could support African Canadians. The quotes below capture the breath of these suggestions:

Volunteering their skills to help us. (African Nova Scotian woman)

These communities can provide support in areas where their expertise is applicable. (African Canadian Male Calgary)

Come out to meetings. Offer babysitting. Make cash donations. (African Canadian Female Toronto)

Non-Black conference participants felt they could support African Canadians as illustrated in the following three quotes:

Accept the Black people as the experts in their own oppression – there are no White equity experts...White people should be allies, not leaders and defer to Black communities and Black researchers. Dominant communities should not become hysterical and retaliate against Black researchers/colleagues for criticism and name problems of racism that implicate the particular white person or White dominated institutions/systems. (Non-Black female from Halifax)

Listen to what our Black colleagues have to tell us. We have to move aside, follow, not try to lead, respectively educate ourselves, and celebrate our Black comrade's rights and gains. (Non-Black female from Halifax).

Be more open. Listen more, be willing to change. (Non-Black female from Halifax)

4. Advice to the research team concerning the conference

The conference participants provided two primary types of advice to the research team. While the first comments focus on the conference itself, the second set is directed at the actual work of the research team. Virtually all of the feedback was suggestions to improve the conference. The major themes for improvement included (1) greater diversity of particulars, especially youth and individuals from lower socio-economic status; (2) a better facility in which to hold the conference; and (3) the need for more time.

More inclusive range of participants

Conference participants expressed the need to be more inclusive as to who should attend such an event:

Needed more people from low-income families, i.e., single parents (especially young).

Black men and women (youth and elder) involved in the prison system. (African Nova Scotian woman)

Still more experiences of grassroots, especially youth, need to be included. (African Canadian woman from Toronto)

We need to hear more from the people at risk, not just presenters. There are many stories out there. (African Nova Scotian woman)

A better facility

The need to have a better facility for the conference emerged as a dominant recommendation to the research team. This was also a major concern participants identified in response to the question, what did they find least useful about the conference? The following are reflective of the commentary provided:

The facility in particular. The Common Room was not conducive to privacy for the different groups who had to hold their discussions.

Very difficult to hear which was very disheartening (Conference Participant)

Select a venue where one can hear the presentations.

Limited time for discussion

The need for additional time for dialogue surfaced as another major recommendation. Examples of advisory comments included:

I think this conference should run over 3 or 2 days as the allotted time for workshops and discussions did not leave enough time to deal with issues – we touched and opened topics that could not find closure. (African Canadian female from Toronto)

More time could have been allotted for some sessions. (African Nova Scotian male)

5. Recommendations to the research team concerning the RVH Project

The remarks put forth by conference participants in relation to the project were extremely positive and supportive. Not surprisingly, some attendees provided suggestions with regard to the future of the research process and the project. The following capture the essence of the voices of conference participants:

Keep the journey and legacy alive. This is truly history in the making. (African Canadian woman from Calgary)

Persevere; it is very timely and much needed dialogue. Keep up the good work. (Nova Scotian male)

I think the team is on the right track... (African Canadian male from Toronto)

The next set of comments provides specific recommendations to the research team about the future course of research:

Think of ways to start engaging issues of mental health that may be more subtle but just as threatening to individuals and the community. (African Canadian woman from Toronto)

Talk to more people who are indigenous to this country. (African Nova Scotian woman)

Take the research upon completion and use it to make changes in the legal system in order to effect change in the practice of racism in Canada. (African Nova Scotian woman)

This is one of the neediest projects that have touched our lifestyle. Therefore, please continue the good job. Thanks to the team.

III. Evaluation of the conference

This section presents the assessment of the conference by participants. Table 3 captures their numerical rating of the event. This is followed by comments relating to the most useful and least useful aspects of the experience.

Table 3 - Conference Ratings

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Response
Calgary	4	2	1	0	0	0
Toronto	3	8	1	0	0	0
Halifax	9	21	7	2	0	4
Other	4	2	1	0	0	0
No City	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	22	33	10	2	0	6
Percent	30	45	14	3	0	6

1. Most useful aspects

As reflected in their comments, several respondents maintained that the RVH Conference was one of the most important conferences in which they participated:

This is one the most important conferences that I ever attended. The connections, the sharing of personal experiences, and future plans and actions were inspiring. Thank you. (Male participant)

The conference again validated the reality of racism, violence, and health issues in the Black community globally. (African Nova Scotian male)

Conference sessions

Considerable feedback was received with regard to the value and quality of the conferences sessions. The following are indicative of those provided:

I was happy to see the inclusion of a session on health and housing. (African Nova Scotian woman)

The workshop with Eunadie Johnson on Women and Violence. The effects of violence on women's health, especially Black women. This session could have been a plenary. (African Nova Scotian woman)

The LOVE workshop – listening to youth discuss their experiences.

Excellent presenters, especially the presentation by Elias Chehoud, Abebe Teklu, and David Turner. (Non-Black female from Halifax)

Meeting other African Canadians and sharing experiences

Another dimension positively cited by conference attendees was their appreciation for the opportunity to meet African Canadians from other parts of Canada and to share the experiences of the diverse group of attendees:

Bringing people together to discuss issues that are and have been very important to them. (African Canadian male from Calgary)

Range of people from across the country who have a common interest in research in the links between RVH.

Meeting with others of African descent and sharing the same experiences/ information. (African Nova Scotian woman)

Being around conscientious Black people who are extremely proactive and have made a serious commitment to better the lives of Black people in Canada. (African Canadian woman from Calgary)

Hearing the experiences from participants from the other cities that confirm our collective and historic experiences of racism. (African Canadian male from Toronto)

Appreciation for variety

The variety of delivery formats received positive recognition from participants. An individual from Calgary said, "Workshops, community connections, Community Forum presentation, and panel discussion." This sentiment was also expressed by an African Nova Scotian woman,

The variety of workshops that were available. It was nice to see Talking Circles, workshops, round tables, and papers presented. There was something for everybody.

2. Least useful aspects

Participants were also asked to identify those aspects of the conference that they found least useful. Four salient themes emerged in response to the question: (1) having a better facility, (2) the quality of some of the sessions, (3) the lack of a concrete action plan designed to deal with the array of issues discussed at the conference, and (4) a more diverse range of participants.

Having a better facility

The need for the conference to be held in a better facility provided to be the most frequent response. The following statements capture the essence of the commentary on this aspect:

I found the space to be confusing both physically and in terms of where the discussion was held (Participant from Toronto)

It is important to have better rooms for presentations; too noisy and distracting in common room (Female participant from Halifax)

The session rooms B and C were a little distracting because of outside noise, which decreased the quality of the presentations.

Space for presentations not very good – especially four groups in main room (African Canadian female from Calgary)

In order to deal with the limitations of the physical facility, suggestions were put forth to address the concerns presented in the words of the participants. An African Nova Scotian female remarked, "I would suggest that all workshops be held in a closed room with microphones for the presenters." Another participant commented, "I think it is important to bring important tools for visual presentations (overheads, PowerPoint, and/or slides).

Quality of the sessions

A series of comments were directed at some of the sessions presented at the conference. It is important to note that the comments covered different formats employed throughout the conference:

The elder/youth panel – talking across generations. It was not organized or focused. (African Nova Scotian female)

The panel. Not a very dynamic beginning for such a wonderful event. If panel is chosen, it would be a lot better to give members questions so [that they] can be better prepared. (African Canadian from Calgary)

The next series of remarks were directed at the paper presentations:

Some presenters read their papers and I think this does not engage an audience. It makes it very difficult to absorb the information in a way that promotes reflection and learning. (African Canadian female from Toronto)

Some of the researchers are very academic and the practicality of it (research) is not very feasible in the real world. (Conference participant)

Some participants voiced concern about not having enough time to thoroughly discuss issues/ concerns generated in the sessions. The following are reflective of this particular feeling:

The sessions were not long enough. (African Nova Scotian female)

Not enough time for questions and dialogue. (African Nova Scotian female)

There were too many workshops and not enough time for more in-depth discussions and solution. (African Canadian participant from Toronto)

Greater range of conference participants

At least three participants maintained that there was a need for greater diversity among the individuals who attended the conference. An African Canadian male from Toronto stated, "...not enough inclusion of diverse voices: gay, disabled, and mixed." The need for greater "grassroots participation" was cited by an African Nova Scotian male. Finally, the need to actively involve and facilitate the participation of African Canadian youth both male and female was noted.

Lack of a concrete action plan

The lack of a concrete action plan to deal with the issues discussed at the conference captured the attention of a number of participants:

There is a need for a concrete plan of action/follow-up. (African Canadian male from Toronto)

Talking about the same problems. We need to be more solution focused. (African Nova Scotian female)

Lack of an action plan to confront racism (African Canadian male from Toronto)

D. APPENDICES

I. Conference Program

Friday, June 6, 2003

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 6:00 | Registration |
| 6:30 | African Anthem: Kim Bernard
Libation: Rev. Elias Mutale
Opening: Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard |

7:00 Talking across generations: Racism, violence, and health

A panel of elders and young adults discuss their experiences and concerns.

Calgary: Michael Embaie and Hayat Yousuf

Toronto: Margaret Gittens and Kai James

Halifax: Doreen Crick and Jennifer Peach

9:00 Reception with the Adrian Gough Trio

Saturday, June 7, 2003

9:00 Registration

9:30 Anthem: Kim Bernard
Libation: Wayn Hamilton
Opening: Dr. Carl James

9:45 Community Forums: Halifax, Toronto, Calgary

Calgary: Dave Este and Wek Kuol

Toronto: Akua Benjamin and Arnold Minors

Halifax: Wanda Thomas Bernard and Samantha Thomas

10:45 Session I: Talking Circles, Workshops, Roundtables, Papers

12:15 Lunch by Starlite Cuisine

1:00 Presentation by the Mi'kmaq Health Research Group

Chair: Dr. Carol Amaratunga

Speakers: Dr. Fred Wien and Germaine Martin

1:30 Session II: Talking Circles, Workshops, Roundtables, Papers

3:00 Break by Victoria Road United Baptist Church Ladies' Auxiliary

3:15 Session III: Talking Circles, Workshops, Roundtables, Papers

4:30 Closing: Dr. David Este and Dr. Akua Benjamin

Saturday Session I: 10:45-12:15

Steve Benton

Regional Educator,
Black Educators
Association
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Black men's health

Using a Talking Stick, participants will share experiences relating to Black men's health and will discuss research that is being done in Black men's health.

Brenda Beagan

Faculty of Health
Professions
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia

How does the violence of racism affect African Canadian eating patterns?

In this workshop I will briefly summarize what we know about racism, culture, health, and food choices. Then I will facilitate a discussion among workshop participants as we explore together how food decisions may (or may not) be affected by culture, by racism, by resistance to racism, by income, and by health concerns.

a) **Kirk Moss**

School of Journalism
Ryerson University
Toronto, Ontario

a) Media hysteria and Black life: Fearing you, fearing me

This paper will explore the effects that negative "Black on Black crime" media reporting has on the self-identity, concentration, aspirations, organization, and trust of black youth. Through a series of interviews, I have examined the impact of the media on how black youth both are seen and see themselves in Canadian society. I will also analyze how a media story is phrased, framed, and angled in terms of the reporting on black life.

b) **Remi Warner**

Department of
Sociology,
York University

b) White blame, Black guilt: Confronting a Canadian system of Whiteness

Toronto, Ontario

a) **Wek Kuol**

Faculty of Social
Work
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

a) The impact of racism on the health and well being of black individuals in Calgary

This workshop will explore and examine the challenges facing black African immigrants in Calgary. It is based on a series of interviews conducted with members of Calgary's Sudanese community. While many were unjustly oppressed in Sudan, they assumed that moving to Canada would provide them with opportunities and equality. This has not been the case; the Sudanese have experienced many difficulties in Canada relating to racism and discrimination at both the individual and institutional levels.

b) **David Este**

Faculty of Social
Work
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

b) Conceptions of health: Views of Calgary's Somalian community

In recent years, Calgary has witnessed the emergence of new immigrant and refugee communities. This changing composition has placed health care organizations under increasing pressure to ensure that their programs and services are culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of the city's ethno-cultural communities. This paper explores both the understanding and importance of "health" among members of Calgary's Somalian community, and their experiences in accessing and utilizing health care services.

a) **Anthony Hutchinson**

Institute for Studies
in Social Inclusion
Toronto, Ontario

a) Moving beyond illusions: A socially inclusive approach to promote well-being across diversity

Social determinants of health theory has demonstrated that factors such as wealth disparities, income inequalities, unemployment, poverty, racism, and sexism all adversely impact health from individual to population levels. This paper uses a social inclusion

framework to argue that the use of community-based indicators can provide a valuable and powerful resource that can facilitate community involvement that can in turn facilitate community well-being through substantive participation.

b) **Victor Maddalena**
Department of
Sociology
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia

b) Exploring the role of District Health Authorities and Community Health Boards: Attending to health needs of African Nova Scotians

Capital District Health Authority is home to 60% of Nova Scotia's Black population and this group has been identified as having differential access to health and preventive health services, and poorer health status when compared to the general population. This paper will describe my research which will focus on how CDHA is assessing and addressing the health needs and concerns of the African Nova Scotian population.

Ekua Walcott
Jana Vinsky
School of Social
Work
Ryerson University
Toronto, Ontario

Taking care of ourselves: Black service providers

This presentation seeks to uncover the strategies and steps to developing awareness of the impacts of the violence of racism on our wellbeing. The strategies best used to develop an Anti-Black racism analysis and coping skills for social workers and educators will be reviewed. The processes involved in developing this 'awareness' will be examined and noted by presenters from varying intersections of oppression.

Saturday Session II: 1:30-3:00

Dave Este
Faculty of Education

What is the relationship between housing, racism, and violence?

York University

Using a Talking Stick, participants will discuss the role of housing in experiences of racism, and violence.

**Andrew Abraham,
Anne Severinus,
Dennis Adams,
Sarah MacLaren**

Leave Out Violence
(LOVE)
Halifax, Nova Scotia

From the kids who have been there:
Remembering and responding to racism-related
violence in schools

Speaking their unique, and often overlooked, perspectives, LOVE youth will explore the impact of racism-related school violence on their lives, and the impact of school responses to violence. LOVE youth and staff will then present strategies schools can use that more effectively address, respond to, and prevent racism-related violence. Using an interactive approach this presentation will provide an opportunity for professionals to learn from the very youth who experience these issues on a day-to-day basis

a) **Dianne Prevatt-Hyles**

Liberation Practice
Toronto, Ontario

a) Transforming our families: How Black health can be supported rather than diminished in our family relations

In this presentation, participants will learn concrete approaches to building family relations that sustain Black health. The workshop will investigate various systemic influences that impact on the Black family, both historically and today, with the goal of discovering practices and processes that counter systematic racism.

b) **Francis Omoruyi**

Educator
Toronto, Ontario

b) Taking care of ourselves and our families in a context of racism

This paper examines the ways in which African Canadians can facilitate their individual and family well-being in environments where racism and violence are pervasive. It is based on the presenter's direct experience with the Scarborough School Board in Toronto when, as

a Nigerian immigrant qualified as a teacher, he and his family faced the consequences of filing a complaint about individual and systemic racism.

a) **Cecil A. Foster**
University of Guelph
Guelph, Ontario

a) From perception to reality: Blackness, mental illness and the construction of the outsider in Canadian society

This paper examines critically the socio-philosophical links between Blackness and mental illness in Canadian society and how the construction of Black men as mad has been used over time to exclude them from mainstream society. It will show how perception of madness became the lived experience for Black males and provide a theoretical analyse of the effects on the Black body and mind from the long-held perception that Blackness is tantamount to madness.

b) **Francisca Omorodion**
Immigrant, Refugee
and Visible Minority
Women of
Saskatchewan
Saskatoon,
Saskatchewan

b) The lived experiences of post-traumatic stress disorder: A policy study of immigrant, refugee, and racialized women of Saskatchewan

Immigrant, refugee, and racialized women face enormous barriers to receiving quality mental health care. These barriers include poor interpersonal relationships with health providers, lack of respect, language barriers, and stigmatization/labelling. This paper will focus on a study that proposes government agencies and organizations work together in partnership to foster a holistic approach to providing quality of care and empowering clients with a good understanding of their mental health status.

Moderator: Steve Benton; Recorder: Gerry Taylor

a) **Elias Cheboud**

Exploring resistance to racism through the lens

b) **Abebe Teklu**
c) **David Turner**
University of Victoria
Victoria, British
Columbia

of Black Canadians: Personal, political, human rights examples

This paper explores the experience of African Canadians, particularly immigrants, in integrating into the community and the impact this has upon their identity, health and utilization of social and professional resources. It will approach this topic from the theory that experience from a personal, political and human rights perspective colours this process of existence in Canada. These three perspectives are described through a literature review and case examples, which illustrate the impacts of racism, exclusion and identify confusion on Black experience in Canada, and the process of resistance. The paper will conclude by identifying, through the eyes of African Canadian experience, key social work strategies that promote resistance and wellbeing.

a) **Grace-Edward Galabuzi**
Department of
Sociology,
York University
Toronto, Ontario

a) Racism and social exclusion as social determinants of health in the African Canadian communities

This paper employs a social exclusion framework and the social determinants of health approach to discuss the multiple dimensions of inequality that impact the health status of African Canadians. Of particular interest here is how such processes of social marginalization as racial and gender discrimination, and xenophobia, mediate the experiences of poverty, income inequality, unemployment, neighbourhood selection and health service utilization to produce differential health outcomes for African Canadians.

b) **Charmaine Williams**
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario

b) Racism in health research: Are we part of the problem or part of the solution?

After a long history of being ignored (or

abused) by health researchers, we finally find ourselves at a point where racial minorities are active participants and leaders in health research. As we move forward with our research agendas, we need to reflect on how our research can avoid past practices that have undermined racial minority researchers and service recipients. Research is typically presented as an objective enterprise, free of ideological bias. This paper argues that our current challenge is to conduct health studies that avoid conventional, racist practices and develop criteria for rigorous, anti-racist health research.

Saturday Session III: 3:15 - 4:15

James Byers
Social Worker
Halifax, Nova Scotia

What does health and well being look like from the perspective of a young Black adult?

Using a Talking Stick, participants will explore their experiences of health and well being as young Black adults.

Maxine Wood
Faculty of Education
York University

What is the impact of racism and violence on youth in the education system

Using a Talking Stick, participants will discuss how experiences of racism, and violence affect youth in the education system.

Akua Benjamin
School of Social
Work
Ryerson University

How do single parents experience the relationship between racism, violence, and health?

Using a Talking Stick, participants will discuss the experiences of single parents in the context of racism, violence, and health.

Eunadie Johnson
Women's Health in
Women's Hands

Violence as a determinant of health for Black women

Toronto, Ontario

The violence Black women experience is shaped by the multiple dimensions of their identities as women. Racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of Black women. It is not possible to address the issue of violence against women without acknowledging the truth that violence against women is supported and upheld in a system of racism, discrimination and subordination. In this presentation participants will learn about the work that this community health centre has done to help improve the health status of women by addressing violence as a broad determinant of health.

Grace-Edward Galabuzzi

Political Science,
York University
Toronto, Ontario

Building on the community's hopes:
Confronting social exclusion and gun violence in
Toronto's Black community, 2001

In the summer of 2001, an explosion of gun violence left 16 black youth dead over a four month period. This paper documents the efforts of members of the black community to respond to the despair, alienation, hopelessness, and frustration forcing black youth into nihilistic violence. It presents an account of the series of high profile community meetings organized by the Building Hope Coalition, and an analysis of the subsequent attempts to articulate a multi-agency vision for community transformation in response to the crisis

a) **Josephine B. Etowa and other members**

Health Association of
African Canadians
(HAAC)
Halifax, Nova Scotia

a) Capacity-building across diverse differences:
The benefits of mutual mentoring

A diverse research team developed by the Health Association of African Canadians (HAAC) during a proposal development process has facilitated mutual mentoring among academics and community members, people of different ages, cultural backgrounds, professions, and disciplines. With the goal of capacity building across difference, members of the research team will discuss some of the benefits and challenges of this work.

b) **Donna Smith**
Cancer Care Nova
Scotia
Halifax, Nova Scotia

b) Patient navigation community liaison:
Responding to the African Nova Scotian
experience with the cancer care system

This session will review the development of the Community Liaison position within Cancer Care Nova Scotia's Patient Navigation project. The presentation will include a summary of the Patient Navigation project, an overview of initiatives communities are using to increase awareness of cancer prevention and treatment, and a discussion of how African Nova Scotians can lessen the burden of cancer in the presence of systemic racism

**Selom Chapman-
Nyaho**
Department of
Sociology
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia

"How do you give up being Black?": Racial and
occupational identities of black RCMP officers in
Nova Scotia

Black RCMP officers in Nova Scotia have a strong investment in both a racial and occupational identity. They are, however, often subject to a degree of marginalization both within the RCMP and the Black communities that they serve. This workshop will consist of a panel of black RCMP officers, a moderator, and a graduate student researching the experiences of black RCMP officers in Nova Scotia. We will explore the significance of 'blackness' in the day-to-day experiences of a black RCMP officer, and the question of what black police officers "owe" to the communities that they serve.

Joanne St. Lewis
Faculty of Law
University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Ontario

The intersection between the lived reality of
racism and the law's capacity to respond

This presentation will focus on the intersection between the lived reality of racism and the law's capacity to respond. Tort law provides a number of unique remedies to discrimination. Victims of sex discrimination have been able to avail themselves of tort remedies through the

tort of intentional infliction of nervous shock. I will undertake a critical race analysis of existing tort law remedies to identify areas where equality issues have been successfully raised, evaluate what other conceptual opportunities lie with in tort law, and suggest what evidentiary foundations would be need to succeed in such actions.

II. List of Sponsors, Funders, and Supporters

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