

*“We need strong/powerful people to defend us. We are being oppressed in many forms. We need strong leadership that will invest in our children.”*

# AFRICAN-CENTERED COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROJECT: BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS DIFFERENCES

Community Focus Group Discussion Report  
March 2020



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This report is submitted to the African Community Organization of Windsor (ACOW) as part of the “African-Centered Partnership Project: Building Bridges Across Differences.”

## Executive Summary

This project was the first federally funded project for The African Community Organization of Windsor (ACOW) in collaboration with multiple community partners. The purpose of this project was to consider how the African community in Windsor-Essex, Ontario can develop partnerships with other organizations as well as the mainstream Canadian community, with the overall goal of building ACOW's capacity. Drawing upon the unique strengths of the African community, this project aimed to improve understandings of the African community in Windsor-Essex through steering committee meetings, community focus groups, and community forums. This is an executive summary of the community focus group portion of the project.

### Community Focus Group Information Gathering

A total of ten focus groups were conducted in five community spaces in Windsor-Essex in November and December, 2019. Participants were recruited and focus groups were organized by ACOW and the project partners. The University of Windsor research team members facilitated focus group discussions in multiple languages: English (7); French (1); Swahili (1); and, Yoruba (1). Discussed topic areas were (1) African community strengths; (2) racism and discrimination; (3) effectiveness of organizational practice in relation to inclusion and diversity in Windsor-Essex; (4) availability and accessibility of formal services: African-centered service needs and gaps; and, (5) collaboration, links, and partnerships among service providers.

### Summary of Findings

- ▽ A large number of participants shared a strong sense of pride and strengths as members of the African community (i.e., cultural assets, values, knowledge and skill sets, human and social capital).
- ▽ Racism is a normalized part of everyday life among African-Canadians in Windsor-Essex. African-Canadian youth and adults experience and respond to racism in different yet meaningful ways. Racism shapes how African-Canadians perceive, access, and experience services. The focus group discussions were rich in information about experiences of racism. However, due to the complex interconnectedness of racism, the intensity and traumatic nature of the experiences, and the lack of experience with accessing or having awareness of services, participants had difficulties focusing on specific recommendations for programming.
- ▽ The lack of African-centered culturally representative and sensitive services and the lack of awareness of existing African-centered resources and mainstream services were common themes across focus groups.

### Strategies Identified by Participants

Participants provided concrete suggestions for the overall direction of services and changing societal perceptions of the African community. Despite the challenges stemming from the lack of awareness and experience with services expressed by participants, the following comprehensive strategies were identified for how ACOW can address gaps at multiple levels, including societal, African-Canadian community, the organization of ACOW, and, service-delivery and coordination levels.

#### 1. Build ACOW's leadership and advocacy capacity.

- ▽ Increase awareness about ACOW as a representative organization of the African-Canadian community and its services and activities through a more coordinated communication strategy to the entire African-Canadian community.
- ▽ Increase advocacy work in the mainstream Canadian community by: (1) Pushing for more diversity in services (i.e. police, schools, banks, the City of Windsor) so they are more representative of the African-Canadian community; (2) Acknowledging and rewarding organizations and employers who promote multiculturalism in their workplaces; and, (3) Strengthening relationships with governments

and politicians so that they are involved in ACOW activities and can provide support and resources for ACOW efforts.

## 2. Build ACOW's capacity for service planning, development, and delivery.

- ▽ Develop services focused on racism, including a welcoming space to discuss racism and more workshops on how to respond against racism.
- ▽ Develop an African-centered “one-stop point of service” with special attention to the unique needs of the African-Canadian community. This could include immigration and settlement services, employment, housing, food bank, language, counseling, and dealing with racism. A new welcome community center could be created as a comfortable place for newcomers to gather.
- ▽ Develop resources required for “social entrepreneurship” and vocational skills training to increase the economic capacity within the African-Canadian community.

## 3. Increase ACOW's collaboration with other mainstream services to share resources and to utilize African cultural strengths and skills.

- ▽ Plan events collaboratively to recognize the strengths and skills of the African-Canadian community and to connect the mainstream community with the talents of individual African-Canadians.

## 4. Increase ACOW's collaboration with mainstream organizations and services in Windsor-Essex to address racism, the lack of culturally sensitive services, and the lack of representation.

- ▽ Challenge misconceptions about African-Canadians through education, collaboration, and creating welcoming public spaces.
- ▽ Collaborate with other organizations by working more closely with: social services tied to child apprehension and foster care; police services to create positive relationships; education institutions to Africanize curricula and address racism in school environments; and, workplaces to hire more African-Canadians.

## Challenges & Lessons Learned

- ▽ Time was a major challenge for this project. University team members had to work around the clock to complete all necessary tasks for the community focus groups within a required 3-month time frame. This level of time commitment is not sustainable for future projects.
- ▽ Focus group findings cannot be generalized as representative of the entire African-Canadian community in Windsor-Essex. Although ACOW made significant efforts to recruit diverse community members, not all sub-African communities were represented amongst participants.
- ▽ Lack of understanding amongst some participants about the purpose of the focus groups was another challenge. Research capacity building among ACOW staff members could be considered for future projects.
- ▽ As part of a newly establishing partnership project, we learned that clear and open communication through multiple channels in multiple modes is critical in building “trust” and “mutual respect” and overcoming misunderstanding amongst partners.

## Researcher Recommendations

- ▽ First, we recommend that the African-Centered Community Partnership, under the leadership of ACOW and in collaboration with partner organizations, develop an action plan to address racism and discrimination experienced by the African community in Windsor-Essex. A comprehensive action plan could focus on creating more awareness about the experiences and impacts of racism, engaging in public debates to change attitudes, providing diversity training to teachers and service providers, and participating in more advocacy work. While racism should never be normalized, recognizing racism should be a normal part of service delivery. Workforce WindsorEssex, WE LIP, CCFWEK, and WECAS,

in collaboration with ACOW, 'mainstream' organizations, concerned citizens and others impacted by racism, could take a leadership role in developing this action plan.

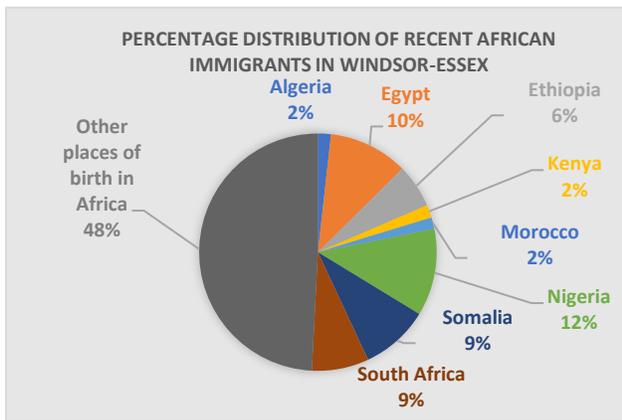
- ▽ Second, we recommend that the African-Centered Community Partnership continue to **build allyship with mainstream organizations and governments and enhance existing partnerships with organizations specifically working on racism and discrimination**. Racism should not be considered as just the African community's problem. Racism affects our whole Windsor-Essex community. Therefore, ACOW should not be left with the sole responsibility of addressing racism and discrimination. Unless 'mainstream' organizations are involved, the issue of racism and discrimination cannot be addressed.

## The African Community in Windsor-Essex

*Note: In this report, we follow the African Community Organization of Windsor’s use of “African” to denote communities who self-identify as African. These include those who have arrived directly from African countries without the intervening forced slavery common to “black” communities. However, we do not make these distinctions as absolute, as many black Canadians may also identify as African and vice versa.*

The African-Canadian community in Windsor-Essex is diverse with unique experiences. Community members vary in nationality and linguistic background, speaking both English and French as well as many African languages. The community also includes members from the Haitian community and all black and francophone communities.

According to the Statistics Canada 2016 Census data, there is a total of 70,720 visible minorities in Windsor-Essex, comprising 18% of the total population in Windsor-Essex and 26.9% of the total population of the City of Windsor. Of the total visible minority population in Windsor-Essex, minorities of black descent are the second-largest group, comprising 18.5%, after minorities of Arab descent, who comprise 26%.



Source: Statistics Canada Census Profile, 2016 (Windsor, City [Census subdivision], Ontario and Essex, County [Census division], Ontario).

According to Statistics Canada Census data on immigrants by selected place of birth, there are 4,090 African immigrants, which equates to 5% of the total immigrant population. Of the total African immigrants, 12% are from Nigeria, 10% from Egypt, 9% from Somalia, 9% from South Africa, 6% from Ethiopia, 2% from Algeria, 2% from Kenya, 2% from Morocco and the remaining 48% are from other places in Africa.

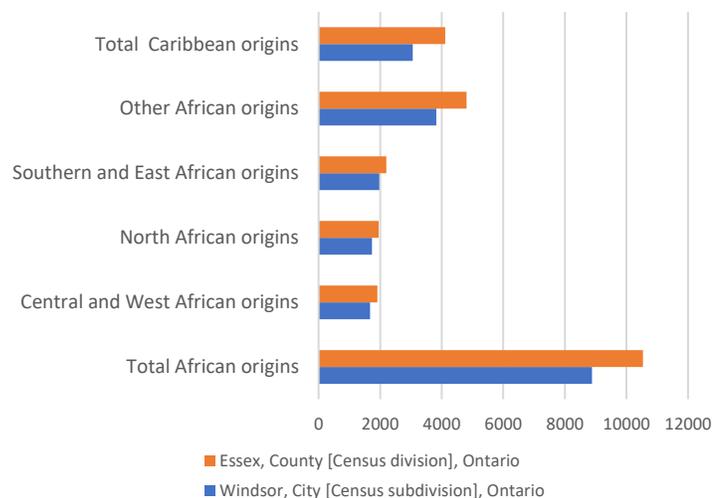
In addition, according to ethnic origins data from 2016 Census, there are 10,535 individuals of African origin and 4,115 individuals of Caribbean origin living in Windsor-Essex. Together, individuals of African origin combined with individuals of Caribbean origin comprise 3.7% of

the total population in Windsor-Essex. However, these data are only an estimate as there is no exact count of the number of people of African descent residing in Windsor-Essex.

People of African descent have lived in Canada since the 1600’s and have made significant contributions to the Windsor-Essex community, such as the establishment of two newspapers, “The Voice of the Fugitive” by Henry and Mary Bibb and “The Provincial Freeman” by Mary Ann and Isaac Shadd. Since then, the community continues to grow more robust.

It is noteworthy that people of African descent came to Windsor through various forms. Some came as enslaved laborers, and others came to explore

### African & Caribbean Origins in Windsor-Essex



the area. Another category came seeking freedom from enslavement as immigrants and, most recently, as refugees and immigrants selected abroad under Canada's Point System. Newer community members have come as refugees from war-torn countries who have had their careers and family life disrupted and consequently suffered enormous mental and physical trauma. These contributed to their financial, emotional and familial difficulties. They also experience racial discrimination that further undermines their community and individual capacities. Conversely, African communities need to develop the confidence, language, cultural fluencies and more established knowledge of coping with Canadian life.

## The African Community Organization of Windsor (ACOW)

Just as Henry and Mary Bibb's work helped newly arrived Africans start new lives once they arrived in Canada, recent immigrants of African descent have strived to build upon that legacy by bringing African people together under one leadership. It was with such vision and, in solidarity with those who were here before them, that ACOW was founded in 1989. There were few recent immigrant Africans in Windsor at that time. However, the goal was to ensure that Africans who came to Windsor had an organization to which they could refer to for support as they settled in the community. ACOW was officially incorporated two years after its creation in 1991. Since that time, the organization has been headed by different administrations and has underwent several changes.

The ACOW board has two branches. These branches have thirteen members in total: eight members of the executive and five board members. The members of the executive include the president, the vice-president, the secretary and the vice-secretary, two public relations officers (French and English), the treasurer, and the social officer. The two branches make up the board, with the former entrusted with the day-to-day administration of the affairs of the organization, reporting to the board

When ACOW executives were asked, "What does ACOW mean to you and what is its importance for the African community in Windsor-Essex?" they responded:

*ACOW "is a place where we look forward to meeting and interacting with fellow Africans despite what our different backgrounds may be. A place where we can share our different but yet rich cultures. A place where sharing our experiences of struggles and successes should inspire, provide comfort and hope to those going through the same experiences; lead and help them to overcome and most importantly allow them to achieve their potential. We see the importance of ACOW as the bridge between the various black communities; helping them to focus more on what should reunite us instead of dividing us!"*

for general consensus on major decisions to be taken. The organization is composed of African country members represented in Windsor-Essex. Each African country whose citizens are represented in Windsor has its own leadership and membership. It is difficult to state how many members ACOW has since membership is not automatic. To be a member of ACOW, one must register with the organization and pay a membership fee. Nonetheless, the organization aspires to include all Africans living in Windsor-Essex.

ACOW organizes events throughout the year to commemorate important events such as Black History Month, Christmas and New Year, and other activities such as summer picnics for youth and families, as well as fundraising events. Out of respect for its member countries, ACOW participates in different countries' Independence Day commemorations and fundraising events. Recently, ACOW organized two visits by the former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to Canada and Immigration and Legal Aid Clinics as well as participated in events organized by the Windsor West Indian Association. These events and activities play a major role in bringing together people of different backgrounds. ACOW also works in

partnership with Children’s Aid Society, Windsor-Essex on cases involving African families. This partnership has been vital in restoring trust that Black/African-Canadians have lost vis-à-vis CAS. ACOW also engages in collective action when the rights of its members are infringed. On October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, the organization called for a demonstration to protest against an act of racism, of which the children of one of its members were victims. The demonstration took place in Southfield Park (Town of Tecumseh), and many members of ACOW attended alongside the media, the Mayor and other members of City Council, schoolboard trustees and some members of political parties.

## The African-Centered Community Partnership Project

This project was made possible through funding from the Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program: Community Capacity Building Component from the Ministry of Canadian Heritage. This project was the first federally funded project for the African Community Organization of Windsor (ACOW) in collaboration with multiple community partners. The purpose of this project was to consider how the African community in Windsor-Essex can develop partnerships with other organizations as well as the mainstream Canadian community, with the overall goal of building ACOW’s capacity. Drawing upon the unique strengths and values of the African community, this project aimed to improve understandings of African communities and organizations in Windsor-Essex through steering committee meetings, community focus groups, and community forums. Because of the unique experiences and recency of many African-Canadians, the opportunities in Windsor-Essex do not necessarily meet their needs. This collaborative effort aimed to explore these unique experiences in order to ensure that African communities are able to access opportunities equally, and, where the opportunities are unavailable, we strive to develop ideas and plans to serve these needs.

Through Workforce WindsorEssex’s role as Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP) community connector, ACOW’s President, Vice-President, and Secretary met with Children’s Aid Society, Windsor-Essex (WE CAS) and Le Centre Communautaire Francophone Windsor Essex Kent (CCFWEK) representatives and three faculty members from University of Windsor in January 2019 to discuss the possibility of creating a project to develop the African community’s capacity in Windsor-Essex. Through these talks, the partners applied for and obtained funding from the Ministry of Canadian Heritage’s Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program: Community Capacity Building Component. The partners transformed their role into steering committee members of the project and continued to support ACOW in implementing the seven-month long project through regular meetings (13 at the time of this report’s publication). In these meetings, they discussed how to plan and implement the project by: organizing and planning the focus groups and community consultation forums; developing a website; creating a service map; developing a partnership plan and Terms of Reference; and, sharing general expertise and resources. The partners also made a conscious effort to include African staff in the project in addition to hiring three African graduate students as research assistants and research coordinator for the community focus groups. These graduate students not only understood African cultures but also spoke French and various African languages. The majority of ACOW’s staff are also African-identified.

The university team was tasked with collecting information through focus groups with the African-Canadian community about the experience of using African-centered services, or lack thereof, with the explicit aim of developing a partnership plan. The purpose of this report is to share with service providers and community members about how participants view service-provision and Windsor-Essex in general so that an African-centered partnership plan can be developed. The service map of existing services geared

towards African-Canadian communities will be made available on ACOW's website once it is launched. A partnership plan and a list of priorities for ACOW will be developed upon consultation with other service providers and the community partners.

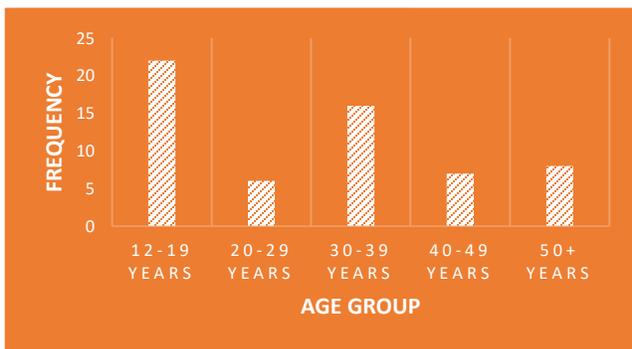
### Focus Group Information Gathering

This report is based on the findings from ten focus group discussions conducted in November and December, 2019. They took place in five different community spaces in Windsor-Essex. Participants were recruited and focus groups were organized by ACOW and the project partners. The focus groups were co-facilitated by a team of six university team members, including three professors and three graduate students, from the University of Windsor, specifically the School of Social Work and the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminology. The focus groups took place in English (7), French (1), Swahili (1), and Yoruba (1). Even during the focus groups conducted in English, participants would occasionally speak in French and one of the facilitators would translate for the group. Each focus group had a facilitator and a co-facilitator, and discussions ranged from one-two hours.

The focus group interview guide consisted of five themes (see Appendix A): (1) African community strengths; (2) racism and discrimination; (3) effectiveness of organizational practice as relate to the promotion of inclusion & diversity in Windsor-Essex; (4) availability & accessibility of formal services: African-centered service needs & gaps; and, (5) collaboration, links & partnerships among service providers. Each focus group ended with a priority-setting activity, in which participants were asked to list and rank the three most important actions they would like to see ACOW undertake. Participants were also asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B), asking for information such as age, gender, country of origin, number of years in Canada, status upon arrival, number of family members, occupation, and languages spoken at home. The interview guide and demographic questionnaire were provided in both English and French. Prior to the start of the discussion, participants were verbally informed about confidentiality and voluntary withdrawal, and agreed to the facilitators using the information from the discussions for future publications.

Focus groups were audio-recorded and then transcribed and translated into English by the research assistants. After training from the faculty members, the university team collectively summarized the focus group discussions into themes over five meetings.

### Focus Group Participants

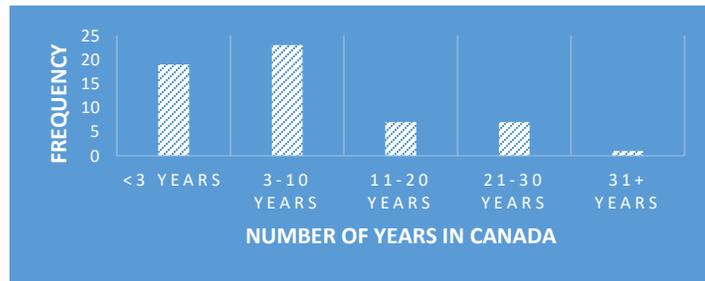


There was a total of 61 participants in the ten focus group discussions (see Appendix C for Focus Groups Composition). An overview of all the participants showed that 62.71% were female and 37.29% were male. Participants were grouped into five age groups, and statistics show that the largest group was between the ages of 12-19 years (37.29%) followed by those between 30-39 years (27.12%). Other age groups are 50+ years (13.56%), 40-49 years (11.86%) and 20-29 years

(10.17%).

When asked about their country of origin, 31.1% of participants stated that they are from the Democratic Republic of Congo, 14.8% from Nigeria, 8.2% each from Burundi, Cote d'ivoire and Rwanda while the other participants are from Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinee Conakry, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda. Approximately 40% of participants have been in

Canada between 3-10 years, 33% for less than 3 years, 12% for 11-20 years, 12% for 21-30 years and 2% for 31 years and over. A larger percentage (60.34%) of respondents arrived in Canada as permanent residents, while 24.12% arrived as conventional refugees, 3.45% arrived on temporary visa, and 12.07% arrived on other status unspecified. Additionally, 87% of participants came to Canada with their family while 13% did not. The majority of participants have a household size of five members, although the largest household size reported is twelve persons.



A higher percentage of participants (96%) can function in one of the official languages. Forty-five percent (45%) of participants are proficient in both English and French, 30% are proficient in English only and 25% are proficient in French only. 62% of participants stated that they could speak one other language, 19% can speak 2 other languages, while 17% and 2% can speak 3 and 4 other languages.

## Community Focus Group Findings

### African Community Strengths & Values

Community members responded proudly with strengths such as the size of the community, its historical presence in Canada, its high level of education and skills, and its diversity, including the different nationalities, religions, and linguistic backgrounds. Five primary themes emerged: togetherness & solidarity; *Mubangane*; pride in African culture; not being acknowledged or valued; and, a separation of cultures.

#### ⊕ Togetherness & Solidarity

Participants spoke about a sense of “family love,” which translates to “being together and helping each other.” They share how “everyone comes together” during times of happiness (weddings, new births,

“Back at home, people help each other. They live in togetherness. If they hear the neighbor is sick, they will come and see you. Or if they hear someone is in the hospital, they will all go as a community to come and see you.”

sporting events) and also during times of sadness (funerals, sickness). This sense of togetherness is very important as it provides a feeling that “you are at home.” Even if you do not know someone personally, there is still a feeling of solidarity and “a bond felt when you see that a person is from Africa.” As one participant says, “when you are black, it doesn’t matter what language you speak, we are all the same thing. We enjoy ourselves, we enjoy our company.” The African community prides itself on being “able to communicate and stay connected

to help each other.” Participants also expressed pride in ACOW, stating that “we feel that we are as a family with ACOW.”

### ⊕ *Mubangane*

An important aspect of African culture was “*Mubangane*,” a Swahili term which translates to, “take care of each other wherever you are.” This sense of care and sympathy is especially apparent in the experiences of African-Canadians in Windsor-Essex. One participant describes how, when she went back to Africa after her mother passed away, members of the community visited her house in Windsor every day to take care of her children, even buying Christmas gifts for them. She says, “I was so happy ... people are ready to help even if they don’t know the person who has the problem.”

The ability to rely on one’s own community members when navigating a new social terrain in Canada was crucial. People rely on other members of the African-Canadian community for informal help with moving, learning where to shop, looking for housing, obtaining warm clothes, finding where the mosque or church is, donating computers for youth to complete their homework, and applying for educational opportunities. There is a sense of comfort with members of the same community, which one participant describes as, “when I found my African community, I was like yeah, I was feeling good. I was feeling free now. I can talk whatever I want. I can ask whatever I want.” Another participant explains, “the good thing about the African community is that they help without asking questions.” One mother, who felt supported while her child was in the hospital, views it as a “debt” that she owes to other members of the community. Participants also report visiting places of worship such as churches or mosques, and from there, “they always develop relationships there that go beyond church activities.” This reflects a social understanding that as “Africans, we do need one another and such a belief, to say I can’t sustain myself without a colleague, without a friend or without a neighbour or without a relative, is a strength in itself.”

“I was still new. I don’t know what, how to behave. I don’t know. That’s how the African community came to my aid.”

### ⊕ *Pride in African Culture*

Participants reflected a strong sense of pride in their African culture, including dress, music, and food, which reflects a sense of being unique and having a distinct identity as an African. As one participant says, “we did not neglect our ways of life simply because we are in the western world. What we are taught from

“Our strength which has gotten us to this point is our culture, heritage, what we eat, togetherness, behavior and love. With all this, we are usually recognized and unique.”

home, we try as much as possible to teach our children.” There is a keen desire to teach younger generations about the culture to ensure that it is not lost. There is a lot of pride expressed in how children are raised, in that our “strength is how we educate our children. The way we bring up our children.” Participants also describe how they are proud of their community’s resilience, which is reflected in examples such as educated Africans who are, for example, doctors in their home country

and experiencing “the pride of being someone respected in the country with authority and coming here and been treated like almost nothing, they will start a new career. They re-convert themselves and are successful. ... That’s how using the resilience is being valued by ourselves.” Participants also talk about the resiliency demonstrated by refugees, which comes from living a life of perpetual hardship.

### ⊕ *Not Being Acknowledged or Valued*

Although the strengths of the African-Canadian community are recognized within the community, participants felt strongly that they were not valued by mainstream Canadian society. They were not sure why this is, whether because Canadians “don’t know about it, or don’t try.” This reflected not only a “lack of knowledge” but also a sense of negativity in which participants felt like their community was looked down upon. For example, when discussing the topic of Africa in schools, participants felt that students were taught that “all kids are starving” and involved in “child trafficking.” For this reason, “as the person

who comes from Africa in your class, you have to explain to the class that it's not all that bad." Some participants describe this as an extension of historical colonization in which "you still feel/have that colonization where the white people say you're worth nothing, but we know we are worth something." Some also discussed how the African community needs to make more effort to "display what we have in order for you to be recognized."

Participants strongly felt that their education and experiences, which they considered assets, were not valued. One participant says, "it frustrates me quite a bit, a lot, when you have people coming in with 10 years' experience as doctors, pharmacists, and engineers and they come here and all that means nothing. And not only they have to start from scratch, but they are also kind of seen and considered as worth nothing. I think that's a big problem." This is such an important issue, especially for professional immigrants who have a choice of whether or not to immigrate; as one participant says, "I have some friends who really complain that if they knew, they would have stayed in Africa."

"I think it's only acknowledged in our community, not in whole Canada. I don't see things that acknowledges our cultures and things like that."

There is also a general misperception that immigrants from Africa are unable to speak English. As one participant says, "sometimes they think if you don't speak the language, you are stupid. Even when you speak five languages, it is never okay." These language gaps create an additional sense of isolation from the rest of Canadian society as well as significantly impacting their opportunities in Canada. Participants discuss many instances where their ideas or opinions were not acknowledged or respected in school or work settings because of "broken English." Parents also discuss how their children do not speak up about the discrimination they face in schools because "the kids here are smart, they know the English," and if their child does not speak English, they are unable to stand up for themselves or articulate what happened to their teachers or principal. In this way, "your ideas are not put into consideration because your accent."

### ⊕ *A Separation of Cultures*

Participants expressed a cultural gap or a separation between their cultures and the broader Canadian culture, which is apparent in differences in dress, gender roles, celebrations like Halloween, and parenting styles. This gap was experienced by youth in terms of parental expectations and rules, and how these differed from their non-African friends. For the youth, it's a challenge to "have to learn how to manage and still fit in your own world and culture, but at the same time you still have to understand that people that you meet on a daily basis, like 80% of them, do not agree with [or] like [how] you were raised." For this reason, there is a concern amongst parents that "we are losing a lot of our kids."

Although there is pride in being a distinct community, there is a sense of being separate and segregated from mainstream Canadian society. One participant describes this as a sort of invisibility: "Especially when you are black, they just look at you as, 'are you there?'" This reflects not only a lack of togetherness outside of the African community but a gap between their community and the broader, mainstream Canadian society, which one participant describes as, "it's like you are here and the people are over here." Especially in the Windsor community, there is a lot of segregation in that "we do parties all the time but we find it's only African who usually comes." There was also expressed a sense that the mainstream Canadian community is "always abandoning these people," meaning members of the African community when they first arrive in Canada.

"The feeling of segregation and separation between black and white cultures. Lack of understanding of each other. African culture not valued by mainstream because they don't understand."

## Racism & Discrimination

### ⊕ *Racism is a normalized part of everyday life.*

Participants were in agreement “that there is real discrimination here, especially in Windsor” with some even saying that “it has been escalating” in recent years. For many, racism is “prevalent,” “normal,” and “inevitable.” There are mixed feelings as to whether or not change can come about due to its prevalence. Some feel that, “at this point, it’s just how society is. We shouldn’t just accept it; we should continue to fight it. But, if we are going to be completely honest, it’s not going to change. We cannot change how people think that easily.” There is also a gendered dynamic to the racism, a “double jeopardy,” in which “when you’re a woman and you’re black, you’re stigmatized twice.”

“It’s in our society. It’s not something that we can ignore. It’s prevalent. It’s, whether we like to admit it or not, it’s something that we have to encounter every day of our lives.”

### ⊕ *Racism is Institutionalized.*

#### Schools.

What became apparent upon discussions with the students and parents was that their school environments are dominated by a climate of racism, in that racist actions and speech are perpetrated by

“I remember a teacher asked what I wanted to be and I said a doctor. He turned around and laughed. Then he looked at me and said, “You go and do that.” Because for them its like, ‘Oh it’s one more black kid. He’s going to through high school until grade eleven and then drop out. ... Why teach them? It is going to be a waste anyway.’”

both teachers and peers. Students provided many examples of teachers being racist, with the students concluding that, “the teachers need to be more respectful in the way they teach.” For example, to teach students about segregation, one teacher designated separate water fountains and entrances for “coloured” and “white-only” students. This participant, being the only black student, was extremely uncomfortable as the center of unwanted attention and she was “constantly reminded that you are the only person who looks like you right now.” Other incidents include having their intellectual and academic capabilities undermined or generally assigned with low expectations, such as a teacher suspecting that an African “A student” with a 98% average had submitted someone else’s work, or laughing when a black student said he wanted to be a

doctor. The lower academic expectations have significant impacts on how the students think about their future aspirations. Yet another type of racism was through being ridiculed for their appearance, such as being sent out of class because one’s hair was too distracting for other students who wanted to touch her Afro hair. Peers also made jokes about “talking like African people and dancing like African people,” accusing African students of smelling bad, calling them “stupid black man” or “dark or black,” and even calling them the N-word (both as a “joke” and as an insult). Young Africans also noticed how their cultures were appropriated when many of their peers “come up to you and correct you on your own culture.” Such incidents together create a climate where African students feel like a “walking zoo.” They are “put in a position where they feel really different from everybody else” and “they make it known that you are [a] minority.”

### Police.

Many of the young participants spoke about negative interactions with the police. They shared how they prepare for these interactions by “making sure that [the police] can see your hands” and being very polite. One student shares how he was stopped by a police officer who asked him to empty his pockets and his bag. Finding nail clippers in his pocket, the officer said to him, “I will give you a warning and if I ever see you again, I will arrest you.” Another incident involved a traffic altercation which led to the other driver calling the African woman’s seven-year-old daughter (who was a passenger) names and yelling at them both. The child was traumatized and missed several days of school. The mother tried to report the incident and was told that there is not much the law can do but was offered a visit (commendably) by a police officer to her house to help dispel the child’s fears; however, no one showed up.

A nursing student recalls being told at a nursing home by an elderly patient, “I have never seen any black person. I don’t want you to touch me or anything.” She was reminded by her professor that she will have to face racism if she is planning to work in healthcare. She says, “I went home and cried,” but ultimately decided that she cannot quit her program because of racism: “it was hard, but I cannot stop school because of somebody like that.”

### Workplaces.

Participants talked about “subtle” racism in hiring practices, such as when “you go for a job interview, your name is perfect, but then you get there and when they see you, they react a certain way and you just know that it’s not because you’re under-qualified. It’s because you’re a woman and because you are black.” Participants also discussed the wage gap, in that “I know for fact that people of colour, immigrants, get lower salaries compared to white people who were born here.” Other examples include racist jokes about junior-level employees, including “we have our slaves to do the hard work.” When the employee who said this was told to apologize, her response was, “hey, I am not a white person either. So, I can’t really be racist.” At a restaurant, one participant describes how other waiters “forget that I’m black, and they told me things like ‘hey, don’t let a black person sit in my table.’ ... It’s because ... they don’t tip.” Participants report feeling unprepared to handle these racist incidents.

### Housing.

Participants describe vivid experiences with racist landlords, some of whom are as blunt as saying, “when I told my wife that you were black guy, she said we shouldn’t rent our house to you.” Participants describe encounters with their neighbours who “call me black people, black people. Every time he saw me, black people, black people,” or by a roommate, “shut up, you f\*\*\*\*\* black man.” These explicit encounters demonstrate that the participants’ race is at the forefront. They share how their landlords took advantage of their newcomer status and lack of knowledge about tenant rights and harassed them into buying construction supplies and doing property repairs, threatening, “you will leave my house and before leaving my house, you must fix everything or I will call the police.” Another participant describes the challenges in renting an apartment, saying “when you finally get a place and you are about to pay and they hear ‘refugee claimant,’ they just say ‘no, we don’t want to give it to a refugee claimant.’”

## ⊕ Racism in Public Places

“We come from different countries. We have different skin colours. As she said, it doesn’t mean that every time you see a black person in the street or on the bus, you always have to say, ‘She is just African. She does not come from Canada. Her skin is like that.’ You cannot describe us like that because you are hurting us also. We are all human beings.”

Many participants shared stories of racism in public places such as stores and buses. They report being watched and followed around the store by suspicious owners and employees, or being singled out to leave their bag at the front, or asked to show what’s in their backpack at the mall. One store even put up a sign, saying they “will not allow more than three *black* kids in the store at once.” On the bus, one participant describes, “I see someone who, the bus was full and only near me has only one place, he didn’t want to come sit near me.” They question, is this “because I am black?” Another shared how a passenger asked loudly, “why did the blacks come to Canada? What did they come here to look for?” The youth says, “I felt bad because I didn’t say anything because my English is not good enough ... I moved because I didn’t want it to go on because it hurt.” Another youth recounted how a man who was sitting behind her and her siblings shouted, “‘Why are you here, you black?’ He said a bad word and he kept insulting us, and we just smile.” For these youth, these experiences of being discriminated against in public places are so traumatic, yet they are unable to articulate an appropriate response because they do not want to cause further trouble or because they fear they do not have the necessary language skills.

## ⊕ Responses to Racism

### To Speak or Not to Speak Up about Racism.

Participants felt conflicted about whether or not to share these experiences of racism with others. One participant explains, “sometimes what I discovered about we newcomers or black skin is we try to take all the shit because we don’t want problems. So, we kind of keep quiet, but it’s affecting us.” Students expressed that they sometimes shared their experiences of racism with other students but did not feel comfortable approaching their teachers “because the majority of my teachers are white.” The lack of representation and subsequent lack of cultural understanding inhibits the students from approaching their teachers. Subsequently, there is a feeling that “there is nothing you can actually do about it.” Even during discussions about slavery during Black History Month, some students don’t feel comfortable speaking out about racism because others become “defensive” and “there is no way to approach it and not sound like you’re attacking the other group.”

“It’s good to share it with someone. At least they know how you are feeling. Maybe they might give you some kind of advice and then you feel better after you let go, like you talk to someone. You keep it inside, one day you’ll beat up someone.”

Participants were also conflicted about sharing their experiences with family members. Some shared with their family members “because I trust them.” There is also a feeling of needing to unload “just to get it out of my body, not having that on my head. I just want to feel better.” Some people also reported turning to places of worship to discuss racism, saying “the only place we talked about racism openly was at church because the people are mostly blacks. ... When you tell them, they will be, ‘Bro, I understand you. It’s going to be fine, it’s going to be okay.’” Alternatively, some participants described not wanting to share these experiences with family members because, “I don’t want to make them cry.” They also fear that

matters will become worse if their family members get involved, saying, “when parents get to know and they go to their schools to complain, they become stigmatized and the thing gets worse.”

### “You Can Call Me Black”

Participants report being comfortable in their skin and not letting the racism get to them. As one participant so eloquently says, “You can call me black. It is not a problem. I am aware of that. I am black. That is my identity.” They resigned themselves to the fact that, “I have to walk around every day knowing I am black. I have to walk around knowing that eight out of ten people are going to hate me today. ... you

“I am black, and nothing will ever change that.”

take it. There is nothing you can really do about it.” Instead of fixating on racism, one participant says, “I focus on why I came here in the first place. I did not come here so that people can like me. I am black and nothing will ever change that. So, I just train my mind that way. I don’t focus on the hate, I focus on the love.”

Another participant says, “you just have to deal with it so you can start to move on with good stuff and start your life.” For some people, it is the experience of racism that consequently leads to a stronger sense of self. As one participant describes, racism “makes you strong. If you know who you are, it doesn’t matter what anyone else thinks. It’s not going to stop you.”

### Challenging Racism.

Some participants expressed a desire to stand up for themselves and challenge the racism they experience because we “can’t keep on hiding from it because if we hide from it, it’s going to get worse.” Participants report two different means of challenging the racism they encounter on a daily basis: individual responses and collective organizing amongst the African-Canadian community. For example, facilitated by ACOW, the community organized around four young girls who were told to go back to their country at a community park. This kind of collective action is important for bringing awareness to these incidents. The mentality is that, “we don’t want our children to experience the same thing. That’s why we are fighting for them peacefully, not angrily.” Parents try to be protective by cautioning their children to avoid confrontation and de-escalate altercations with police by being polite and showing their hands. Others believe that it is important to talk to children openly about racism and follow up with authorities if there is an incident at school.

“If something like this happens to me, if it’s something that’s not acceptable, I have the right of Canadians. I have the right to react at the same time, too.”

### Education & Preparation of Selves & Community.

The prevalence of racism results in the assumption that the African community should be educated on “how to defend themselves.” It is necessary to “organize, show, and empower our children.” Young people are “taught that ‘you *will* face these issues.’ Not, ‘you *may* face these issues.’” Interestingly, one way that parents prepare their children is by telling “our kids to stay out of trouble because you’re going to be discriminated.” Another parent says, “we tell our kids, be positive. Don’t be afraid. Don’t stop. Nothing can stop you. There will be obstacles, though we are facing racism, it’s not like everyone is racist. Let’s be positive, not everyone is racist.” Overall, there is a sense that the African-Canadian community needs to organize “a platform where we can explain to ours how they will behave in such situations.”

“So, we prepare.”

## African-Centered Services: Needs & Gaps

### ⊕ *Limited Experience Using African-Centered Services*

Youth participants describe positive experiences with a community organization in Windsor which provides a free place for youth to come, eat, and get help with homework. One youth says, “you have the freedom to play with people who are here. They do not forbid you. If you have problems, you can talk about them. They always have solutions to help you.” Apart from the services, there is a climate of welcoming; as one participant says, “this center help people to come out of their isolation. They find people you can connect with. It like a second family.”

Apart from this organization, there was expressed an overall lack of awareness of African-centered services in Windsor-Essex. For example, one participant says, “I never knew about ACOW.” Another participant says, “there was not much information on how to join the community and it was very difficult to join.” There is a lack of awareness of existing services,

“There are workshops in the community that exist and do that in French and English. We just need to be able to take those workshops to the community.”

such as educational workshops; as one participant says, “there is quite a bit of those workshops that actually happen, but the black community is usually not aware of it.” Another one participant explains that if African-centered services do not exist or if

community members are unaware, people “will end up getting those services from people who are not speaking the same language,” which may result in miscommunication.

Further, there was expressed a lack of African-centered services. It is important to have services that address the specific needs and requirements of the African community because “it will be easier to find solution[s] to those problems” if they are tailored to their specific needs. There is a specific need to further educate newcomers and design “workshops on educating them on what they need to know and what they need to do.” Related to this is the need for more multi-lingual services, which includes not only francophone services but also in the many languages and dialects that are the strength of the vast continent of Africa. One participant says that when an “orientation is done in English, ... sometime[s] people do not understand fully what they are being told. When something is explained to me in my language by someone I can relate to, I will take the issue very seriously.”

“There are many problems in Canada that, if we had been fully informed when we arrived, many of us would have been better prepared.”

### ⊕ *Existing Services & Organizations Do Not Recognize Racism*

Participants expressed a need for changes in “the mentality of people, especially in Windsor” to recognize how racism is experienced by African-Canadians. If there is no awareness, there is no way to create services that can challenge this racism. What is needed is “to put the law of anti-racism in action, not only in paper, to put it in action. When someone claims being victim of racism, especially in Windsor, let us be considered and people hear them positively instead of judging.” Just as there are discussions about gender-based discrimination, there needs to be the same respect given to establishing discussions about anti-racism.

### Lack of Representation.

There is a need for government organizations and public services to be representative of the communities they are serving by hiring more diverse staff and employees. One participant says, “if you have somebody who looks like you, who knows the same struggles as you ... it will really be easier for them to understand the issues they are trying to convey because most likely they have also experienced something similar.” Another participant says, “if they have no black person, they won’t know what goes on in that community.” This is also true for schools where students report that guidance counsellors and teachers at their schools are predominately white. Therefore, “a student won’t feel comfortable talking to a white teacher about someone being racist who is white.” Better representation also includes addressing language barriers and being able to communicate properly when providing services because current organizations are “assuming that when you come to Canada, you have to know English.” This also includes doctors of African backgrounds who speak English, so, for example, “having a doctor who is Nigerian can understand your English.”

“It’s an opportunity to educate them, as well as put them in their place. If you do not say anything, they will continue on.”

### Lack of Cultural Sensitivity in Service Organizations.

Participants also expressed a lack of cultural sensitivity and even racial profiling in services. They express that anti-racism policies are difficult to find in many organizations or there is a gap between policy and practice, as “the problem is, it is a subject that is hidden, nobody talks about it.” When talking about children being taken away from their parents, one parent says, “many Africans are losing their children right now. Our children are being apprehended. ... you will try to defend yourself, but no one will care. Especially for us whose English is not even a second language.” Another parent expresses similar concerns, saying, “You think about a child you have travelled with thousands of miles and multiple frontiers. You survived wars. You went through a lot so that the child can grow safely. But when you get here, somebody tells you that you are maltreating your child; you don’t love your child. No one knows your origins or understands your struggles. No one has any idea what it took you to get the child even to the level he/she is now.” So what is needed is “to fill that cultural sensitivity gap” where “most of the white Canadian workers don’t know much about the black culture so when they have newcomers, new immigrants, black people come in, they have to understand how to provide the information sometimes to that specific group of people more efficiently. ... Those types of trainings should also be given to other people about African people as well to those types of agencies on how to work and interact with African communities when they come to get your services.” Another participant also says that child protection services require “our intervention as advocates to do community integration.” Working closely with the African community will enable such organizations to better understand the context and background of the families they are working with.

“In most of the offices, you will see there are anti-racism policies on the wall, but when do you go around of these organizations in Windsor, you realize that none of them has the anti-racism policies.”

### ⊕ *Mistrust & Skepticism of Services*

Participants express a lack of trust in existing services. Some of the youth also express a sense of shame and fear of using services in their school. For example, one young woman who was constantly bullied by a boy in her school about her weight and race was “afraid to talk with someone. I only keep to myself but I know that deep down it hurts me.” For discrimination that is so sensitive, school administrators and

counsellors need to be very sensitive to the needs of students and create an environment where they feel safe and comfortable sharing their experiences. Unfortunately, youth also describe a sense of mistrust of people who are in positions to help them with discrimination in schools. Another participant shares how she was “intimidated” and “insulted” by a boy in her class in her first year in Canada but the teacher never took it up, even though she talked to her about it; so, “the boy continued to do it until I changed classes the following year.” What stands out, then, is the disillusionment felt by community members in terms of seeking support for racism.

“My children are scared of police because they know the story of police with African children.”

## Strategies Identified by Participants

At the end of each focus group, participants were asked to rank the top actions they would like to see ACOW undertake. Due to the comprehensive and overlapping nature of racism experienced by focus group participants in their everyday lives, it was challenging to determine specific program needs. Nevertheless, they provided concrete suggestions regarding the overall direction of services and the fabric of society. The following comprehensive strategies were identified for how ACOW can address gaps at multiple levels, including societal, African-Canadian community, the organization of ACOW, and, service-delivery and coordination levels. The following strategies are also mindful of the under-resourcing faced by ACOW, its representing African communities, and the broader Windsor-Essex community.

### 1. Build ACOW’s leadership and advocacy capacity.

- ▽ There needs to be **more awareness about ACOW**, including who they are and what they offer. This reflects a need for a more coordinated communication strategy to the entire African community. Some ways to do this include:
  - » Increased information dissemination through social media e.g. the use of sponsored Facebook ads.
  - » Early notification of events to the African community and to service providers to share with their networks.
  - » Sharing flyers with all settlement services to make ACOW known to newcomers.
  - » Links to the ACOW website on other service providing organizations’ websites.
- ▽ The African-Canadian community should be **run by strong leadership** and by people “who are willed and determined to help the community” and “who are knowledgeable about what is happening in the community and know what to do in case such issues occur.”
- ▽ Participants expressed a genuine desire for ACOW to grow, expand, and do more **advocacy work in the mainstream Canadian community** by:
  - » Pushing for more diversity in services (i.e. police, schools, banks, the City of Windsor) to be more representative of the African community.
  - » Acknowledging and rewarding organizations and employers who promote multiculturalism in their workforce.
  - » Strengthening relationships with government and politicians so that they are involved in ACOW activities and can provide support and resources for ACOW efforts.

### 2. Increase ACOW’s capacity for service planning, development, and delivery.

- ▽ An **African-centered “one-stop point of service”** could be developed with special attention to the unique needs of the African community. Suggested services include:

- » **Settlement services** for newcomers (i.e. receiving refugees at the airport, showing around the city (including places to shop and eat), introducing to other community members, educating on daily life in Canada and how to protect from the cold).
  - » **Immigration services** (i.e. education on the immigration process, work permit application help, refugee services, legal counsel)
  - » **Language services** (i.e. English and French classes, interpretation services, help with English assessments)
    - ✦ ACOW could provide services in different African languages so that translators are available for “every service that Africans are connected with.”
  - » **Employment services** (i.e. job search help, resume support, connecting with employers)
  - » **Specialized children service orientation** (i.e. rights and responsibilities as a parent, basics about criminal and family law)
  - » **Housing services** (i.e. basics on tenant rights, looking for housing)
  - » **Counseling services** (i.e. for families, mental health support)
  - » **Food bank services**
  - » **A welcome community center** could be created as a safe place for newcomers to gather.
  - ▽ Services need to include a **specific focus on addressing racism** faced by members of the community, including a welcoming space to discuss racism and more workshops on how to respond against racism.
  - ▽ There could be additional resources for **social entrepreneurship and vocational skills training** to increase the economic capacity of African-Canadians.
    - » Award and/or recognize Africans who have made contributions to the community.
    - » Provide support for African businesses.
- 3. Increase ACOW’s collaboration with mainstream services to share resources and to utilize African cultural strengths and skills.**
- ▽ Given the lack of resources for African-centered services, participants recognized the need to build “a strong partnership between ACOW and service providers and other stakeholders in the community.” This includes **information-sharing and increased partnerships**.
  - ▽ Stronger collaborations are required between the African community and the larger Canadian community. This will help not only to **recognize the strengths and skills of members of the African community** but to connect the mainstream community with the talents of individual African members. According to participants, it is the responsibility of “the people who lead the African communities” to help get involved with the larger Canadian community.
  - ▽ Events and programs could be planned collaboratively.
- 4. Increase ACOW’s collaboration with other mainstream organizations and services in Windsor-Essex to address racism, lack of culturally sensitive services, and lack of representation.**
- ▽ ACOW must work collaboratively with other mainstream organizations in Windsor-Essex to address racism. **Increased collaborative advocacy work** will help to change attitudes towards African-Canadians.
  - ▽ **Collaborative education programming** will help to challenge misconceptions about African-Canadians. Some suggestions include:
    - » Collaboratively organizing more **demonstrations to bring attention to racism**. It is important that other communities and organizations demonstrate solidarity and allyship with the African-Canadian community against racism.

- » Hold **public discussion events** with mainstream Canadians about the racism faced by the African-Canadian community. As one participant says, what is needed is “a platform where we sit as Africans with Canadian[s] ... so many people are suffering, but they can’t talk about it. ... there is no platform ... where they can express themselves.”
- » ACOW could invite other organizations to their events to increase understanding of African culture.
- ▽ **Work more closely with social services tied to child apprehension and foster care.**
  - » ACOW could collaborate with such organizations on child protection cases involving African children so that services are culturally sensitive.
  - » Child protection organizations could use expertise from ACOW in the family group conferencing involving African children.
  - » ACOW could organize workshops to educate on African culture and African ways of raising children to promote cultural understanding.
  - » ACOW can work with such organizations to recruit and train African-Canadian staff.
- ▽ **Work more closely with police services.**
  - » Participants expressed a strong desire to see more active police presence and positive involvement in the African community. One example is given by a participant who works with youth, who explains how they worked with the police service to create a stronger, more positive relationship: “We went to the police station and we told them to start bringing cops to our community, to get to know our kids. Now they send a couple of police officers without their uniforms and they even volunteer with us and now they even give them rides home.”
  - » A stronger connection with police will lend the community power and support in combatting racism. This can only happen if police services are actively involved in African community events and their presence is felt positively.
  - » Police can also offer workshops on how to deal with racism, especially how to collect proof of racism and how to file human rights claims.
- ▽ **Work more closely with education institutions.**
  - » School administrations and ACOW could collaborate to address language gaps and provide free or accessible language learning and translation services, especially professional language services. That is one of the main barriers faced by the African community.
  - » School administrations could consult with ACOW on how to develop and implement anti-racism programming and practices which does not single out African students.
  - » ACOW could collaborate with the school board to Africanize curricula.
  - » Higher education institutions can also undertake research projects in collaboration with the African community in order to gather more knowledge about African-Canadian experiences and develop more useful anti-racism educational tools.
- ▽ **Work more closely with workplaces around Windsor-Essex.**
  - » ACOW can collaborate with managers and employers to hire more Africans.
  - » Especially important is for employers to consider African work experience and credentials as legitimate.

## Challenges & Lessons Learned

- ▽ First, time was a major challenge in successfully completing this community focus group portion. By the time we received the grant, the overall project timeline was shortened from one year down to six months, which posed a lot of challenges to the University team in implementing the research portion

of this project in a timely and efficient manner. For example, we had to create focus group interview guides, conduct all ten focus groups in multiple languages, complete transcriptions and translations, summarize the focus group discussions, and write up a comprehensive final discussion report, all within three months. University team members had to work around the clock to complete all necessary tasks. **This level of time commitment is not sustainable for future projects.** ACOW needs to consider the timeline for all future project planning and funding applications.

- ▽ Second, focus group discussions allowed the University team to collect relevant themes in the quickest way, and the findings overwhelmingly highlight collective issues around racism and discrimination as experienced by African-Canadians. However, **the findings cannot be generalized as representative of all of the African communities in Windsor-Essex.** Although ACOW engaged in significant recruitment efforts, not all sub-African communities were represented amongst participants. For example, Africans from South Africa were not represented at all. ACOW tried to recruit participants based on specific characteristics, such as language, age, gender, parental status, and immigration status, but the final make-up of the focus groups required creative compromising on the day of the event depending on who was present. Language is also an important factor to mention. For example, we noticed that some participants stayed quiet during the focus groups, even though they indicated that they could speak the language of the focus group. In order to encourage their participation, some focus groups were conducted in both English and French. For the future, focus groups need to be organized in the language that the participants feel most comfortable, not in the language they can speak.
- ▽ Third, lack of understanding among participants about the purpose of the focus groups was another challenge. Thus, **participants have to be given clearer instructions about the purpose of these focus groups** so that their interest in participating is more aligned with the purpose of the focus groups. It is important to recognize that people might have participated for various reasons. While some volunteered to participate out of interest, others were motivated because the focus group was included with other training programs conducted by ACOW. For the future project, as part of the organizational capacity building activity, it is highly recommended that ACOW members consider research trainings in collaboration with the University of Windsor to increase awareness of the importance of research protocol, community-based research methods, etc.
- ▽ Fourth, as part of a newly establishing partnership project, we learned that **clear and open communication was critical in building trust and mutual respect amongst partners.** Given that information sharing occurred through various media and modes of communication amongst many partners—online (email) and offline (in-person, over the phone) communication outside of steering committee meetings, which occurred at both one-on-one and group levels—miscommunications easily occurred. For example, as the last group to join the partnership, it took some time for the University team to navigate the dynamics amongst the partners, but through regular checking with other members and positioning ourselves in respect of each partner’s expertise, we were able to build robust relationships with the community partners. We also had to treat conflicts and miscommunication as temporary, meaning that they could be overcome with additional communication that is transparent and respectful.

## Researchers’ Recommendations

- ▽ First, we would like to recommend that the African Centered Community Partnership, under the leadership of the African Community Organization of Windsor (ACOW) and in collaboration with

partner organizations, **develop an action plan to address racism and discrimination experienced by the African community in Windsor-Essex.** A comprehensive action plan could focus on creating more awareness about the issues and impacts of racism, engaging in public debates to change attitudes in society, advocacy work, and providing diversity training to teachers and service providers. While racism should never be normalized, acknowledging racism should be a normal part of service delivery. Workforce WindsorEssex, Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership, CCFWEK, and WE CAS, in collaboration with ACOW, 'mainstream' organizations, concerned citizens and others impacted by racism, could take a leadership role in developing this action plan.

- ▽ Second, we would like to recommend that the African Community Partnership **build allyship with mainstream organizations and governments and enhance existing partnerships with organizations specifically working on racism and discrimination.** Racism should not be considered as just the African community's problem. Racism affects our whole Windsor-Essex community. Therefore, ACOW should not be left with the sole responsibility of addressing racism and discrimination. Unless 'mainstream' organizations are involved, the issue of racism and discrimination cannot be addressed.

## Appendices

### Appendix A – Focus Group Discussion Interview Guide

#### ACOW CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT - “BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS DIFFERENCES”

#### Focus Group Interview Guide

#### Opening Question (Round Robin)

I know some of you know each other but I don't. Can you introduce yourself by stating your name, school you attend (or where you work and your job title), and one thing you really like doing when you have time?

#### Transition Questions

##### Theme 1: African Community Strengths

1. What are the some of the strengths in your African Community?  
Probing: Values, beliefs, knowledge, cultural practices, resources (i.e., friends, cooking & eating food together)
2. How do you think these strengths (practices, values, and beliefs) are valued in Windsor and in Canada?
3. What kinds of supports you have received from African communities (i.e., families, friends, churches, and African community associations)?

#### Key Questions: Main Focus Group Questions

##### Theme 2: Racism & Discrimination

1. Have you observed someone treated differently (not being promoted or served) due to their racial or ethnic background?
  - a. Tell us more.
2. Have you been treated differently due to your race or ethnicity or your immigration background?
  - a. To whom did/do you go first to talk about your experience?
  - b. How did they help you?
  - c. Tell us some of your experiences.
3. What steps have you taken in coping with those experiences?
  - a. Addressing racism in your community?
4. Is racism and discrimination a significant issue in general?

##### Theme 3: Effectiveness of Organizational Practice links to Racism and discriminations, promotion of inclusion & diversity in Windsor Essex

1. How do we address the racism and discrimination or social inclusion and diversity in our community?
2. What services do you think would be helpful in addressing this issue?
3. From your experiences, what are some of the programs, services in the community that have been successful in addressing racism?
  - a. Have you received any services in relation to this issue?
  - b. How much are you satisfied with these services, if you have received them? What do you think about the effectiveness of these services in addressing this issue?

##### Theme 4: Availability & Accessibility of Formal Services: African Centered Service Needs and Gaps

1. What kind of support did you (do you) receive from your school (high school, college, and university) or other service organizations (i.e., churches, community associations)?
  - Education, children school enrollment, adjustment to school?
  - Other services (housing rent, transportation, groceries, etc.)?
2. How can support services help African students/immigrants succeed in their education and/or integration to Canadian society?

##### Theme 5: Collaboration, Links and Partnerships among Service Providers

1. Do you think agencies can serve your needs better if they work with each other? How would their collaboration help or not help you?
  - a. Give us some examples to explain this.

#### Ending Question (Setting the Priority) (Round Robin)- We can use Flip Chart.

1. Based on today's discussion, what are the three most important services you think ACOW should undertake?
2. What would you like to see the most from the mainstream Canadian community? What would you suggest the rest of the Canadian community can do?

## Appendix B – Demographic Questionnaire for Participants

### ACOW CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT - “BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS DIFFERENCES” Focus Group Demographic Questions for Immigrants (English Version)

1. ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
4. For students: Your School & Grade, if relevant: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Country of Origin: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Number of Years you’ve been living in Canada: \_\_\_\_\_ years
7. Your status upon arrival? Permanent resident \_\_\_\_\_ Conventional Refugee \_\_\_\_\_  
Temporary visa \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Did you come with your family? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many people in your family?  
Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ Children # \_\_\_\_\_ Parent(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
10. If you worked in your home country, what was your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Are you working here? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ What kind of job? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Are you able to function in one of the official languages?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ English or French or Both \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
13. Any other language you can speak? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C – Focus Groups Composition

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Focus Group 1: High School Students (English)

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Focus Group 2: College & University Students (English)

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Focus Group 3: Francophone Parents Group (English/French)

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Focus Group 4 : African Community Leaders (English/French)

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Focus Group 5: Men’s Group (English)

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Focus Group 6: Francophone Youth Group (French)

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Focus Group 7: Women’s Group (English)

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Focus Group 8: African Language Group (Swahili)

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Focus Group 9: African Language Group (Yoruba)

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Focus Group 10: Newcomers Group (English)