

2020

Activism & Leadership

At The Intersection
Being Black, Queer
Or Trans And A Youth

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About us

The Domino Project, a peer led initiative for and by Black LGBTTQ+ youth (16-29 years old) in Toronto. This 24-month pilot project funded by OTF's Youth Opportunities Fund and is a joint venture between the Black Queer Youth Collective (BQYC) and Parkdale Queen West Community Health Center (PQWCHC).

Introducing The Domino Table Talk

On May 25, 2020, the Domino project introduced the Domino Table talk, an eclectic online series consisting of five online discussions. On June 1 and June 8, we hosted our second web series discussion on Activism and Leadership with stakeholders in the Black Community and Queer Community to better understand the unique experiences of activists, educators and community members who are shaping Queer culture and promoting inclusivity through their work.

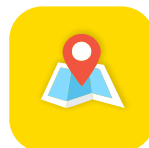


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Background

Since the Civil Rights movement and the Gay Liberation movement, Black Queer and Trans people have been fighting for equality and fair treatment in society. It's been over 50 years since Canada have decriminalized intimacy between same sex partners, but Black Queer and Trans people continue to experience hostility and violence because of their Race, Gender and/or Sexual preference. To challenge racism, homophobia and transphobia, community members have mobilized to confront systemic violence through systems change work. Systems change is a collaborative process that requires the involvement of different stakeholder it's community members, political leaders and governing bodies to address social and systemic issues.

The Domino Table talk discussion on Activism and Leadership engaged members of the Black LGBTQ community to discuss ways they are creating change in their work.

What Is Systems Change Work?

System change is a deliberate process designed to transform the system's fundamental behaviors so that a new, sustainable pattern can emerge and the wider community.

Creating Social And Systemic Change In The Black LGBTQ Community

While there are many factors that contribute to the experiences of Black LGBTQ youth in Toronto. Black LGBTQ youth may often experience social exclusion and system oppression because of their ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Community leaders expressed a growing concern as well as commitment in the following areas of Activism:

Education

*Youth Work
(community work)*

*Mental Health
Support*

*LGBTQ
Activism*

Housing

Employment

Building Hype — Motivating Youth To Be Change Makers

A panelist shared how meaningful but exhausting systems change work can be. When reflecting on what motivates her, she shared

“If this idea of systems change work is shifting policies, practices, the way money is funded to Black organizations, the relationships we build and even like mental models of thinking; trying to shift that and The power dynamics, all of these things, I think there's at least one way we can move forward. I just inherently believe in the work that we are doing so that's how I stay motivated.” Panelist

Here are five ways to get youth involved in activism to confront anti-black racism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, classism and poverty.

1. Start conversations with young people and talking to people in community about current news and think more critically
2. Create spaces for youth to engage in a range of topics that are of interest to them
3. Create opportunities for youth to participating in panels and group discussions
4. Create opportunities for networking to enable youth to making connections with progressive thinkers
5. Reflect on past movements I.e. the LGBTQ movement and/or Civil rights movement to-raise awareness about race and race relations globally.

At the Intersection: Being Black, LGBTQ+ and a Youth

Our Mission & Mandate:

- provide a dedicated, safe and welcoming space for Black queer and trans spectrum persons or those questioning their gender and/or sexuality.
- foster, develop & maintain healthy and positive relationships within and outside of our communities.
- equip youth with the respective tools, confidence and leadership opportunities needed to achieve their goals and meet their needs.

"The Domino Project works from multiple intersections. We not only work with Black folks but we do work with LGBTQ folks and youth between 16-29 years old. So when we talk about activism, we're really looking at it through the lens of those 3 different communities that embody our most youth identities" Domino Project lead

There are a few social and systemic factors that contribute to gaps in service provision for Black LGBTQ+ youth. Youth may often experience multiple forms of violence while coming out or transitioning. One of the biggest challenges Black LGBTQ youth may experience is a lack of acceptance such as neglect, abandonment and exclusion often within both the Black community and LGBTQ community.

The Domino project seeks to address the isolation youth may experience by creating a supportive and welcoming environment for Black LGBTQ youth to connect with each other and form healthy relationships.

Coming Out

The process of revealing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to other people. Prior to this happening, people are often presumed to be heterosexual and cisgender. Coming out can be a lifelong process, and many LGBTQ+ people are out to some people and not out to others.

What is Anti-Black Racism?

Anti-Black Racism is defined as policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions such as, education, health care, and justice that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent.

How Does Systemic Oppression Affect Black LGBTQ Community Members?

- Mentally - Racism and discrimination because of Sexual orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression causes fear and psychological distress
- Emotionally - Black LGBTQ youth may often feel isolated or not accepted in social spaces they access
- Socially - Black LGBTQ youth are often underrepresented and underserved in community programming
- Financially - Black LGBTQ youth often experience challenges finding and maintaining employment which contributes to youth homelessness.

Building Leadership among Black Queer and Trans Youth

7 Types of Leadership styles

<p>Autocratic Style</p>	<p>The phrase most illustrative of an autocratic leadership style is "Do as I say." Generally, an autocratic leader believes that he or she is the smartest person at the table and knows more than others. They make all the decisions with little input from team members</p>	
<p>Authoritative Style</p>	<p>The phrase most indicative of this style of leadership (also known as "visionary") is "Follow me." The authoritative leadership style is the mark of confident leaders who map the way and set expectations, while engaging and energizing followers along the way.</p>	<p><i>"people want to be a part of something that they know is great"</i></p>
<p>Pacesetting Style</p>	<p>"Do as I do!" is the phrase most indicative of leaders who utilize the pacesetting style. This style describes a very driven leader who sets the pace as in racing. Pacesetters set the bar high and push their team members to run hard and fast to the finish line.</p>	<p><i>"practice what you preach"</i></p>
<p>Democratic Style</p>	<p>Democratic leaders are more likely to ask "What do you think?" They share information with employees about anything that affects their work responsibilities. They also seek employees' opinions before approving a final decision.</p>	
<p>Coaching Style</p>	<p>When you having a coaching leadership style, you tend to have a "Consider this" approach. A leader who coaches views people as a reservoir of talent to be developed. The leader who uses a coach approach seeks to unlock people's potential.</p>	
<p>Affiliative Style</p>	<p>A phrase often used to describe this type of leadership is "People come first." Of all the leadership styles, the affiliative leadership approach is one where the leader gets up close and personal with people. A leader practicing this style pays attention to and supports the emotional needs of team members. The leader strives to open up a pipeline that connects him or her to the team.</p>	
<p>Laissez-Faire Style</p>	<p>The laissez-faire leadership style is at the opposite end of the autocratic style. Of all the leadership styles, this one involves the least amount of oversight. You could say that the autocratic style leader stands as firm as a rock on issues, while the laissez-faire leader lets people swim with the current.</p>	<p><i>"I feel people need to believe in themselves always"</i></p>



Scenario – Problem solving scenario

During our discussion on Activism and Leadership, we asked our panelists to tell us about a time in their lives when they solved a problem for a group of your peers/colleagues. Here's their stories.

Activism in Sports

“... I think it was when I first realised something was wrong and I needed to change it but it was really just about playing Soccer... Many years ago I went to the University of the West Indies to pursue a Master's degree in history. I'm also a passionate soccer player. So I went to the campus for, I was there for a bit.. for like a year or two and they had what they call football, they had a football schedule going on and I wanted to play and so I was comfortable hanging out with boys and girls and I was hanging out with the guys all the time practicing and it's a sport here in Toronto where many people play. Like it's just part of life that women are playing sports playing soccer; but in Barbados it's slightly different, the skill level is different but the interest was just high but they wanted the opportunity to join weekend leagues from the time they were 4, 5 and 6 like we do over here in most cases. Anyhow nonetheless, as everyone would know if you don't know if you don't know Barbados is in the Caribbean so the fixtures or the schedules was always setup that at 2 oclock in the afternoon or 3 oclock in the afternoon the women will play there soccer games or there football matches then at 4 oclock the men would play. It was just really simple.... and I said this was wrong because if you're playing in that heat. It's incredible. It tires you out, it fatigues you. It makes it more difficult for you to enjoy the sport and learn the sport and so I just went and rallied the women together that were playing and we didn't do a large protest by any stretch of the imagination but we did go and talk to the director and talk to the other guys we were hanging out with... This was like gender inequality, why was it that the womens game goes before the men and like I say this was a really small thing but for me it was a very big win for me at that time because I felt like it wasn't just about me not wanting to play in the hot sun. It was about helping to develop the sport and I feel that there are lots of advantages in sports for people more widely through the region and out these conversations we actually developed a university team that travelled, we had new captains, we had men looking, there were most male coaches, treating us a little different, like I'm not saying we shifted the game and women's sports, that's a whole other conversation, as it's the same as men's sports, it was a small moment where I saw that something was wrong and I should do more with it.

1. Were you ever in a similar situation having to advocate for yourself when playing sports or another recreational activity?
2. Do you agree with the method that the panelist went about solving the problem?
3. Is there another way that you would go about to solve the problem?

Activism During PRIDE

“... I think it was when I first realised something was wrong and I needed to change it but it was really just about playing Soccer... Many years ago I went to the University of the West Indies to pursue a Master's degree in history. I'm also a passionate soccer player. So I went to the campus for, I was there for a bit.. for like a year or two and they had what they call football, they had a football schedule going on and I wanted to play and so I was comfortable hanging out with boys and girls and I was hanging out with the guys all the time practicing and it's a sport here in Toronto where many people play. Like it's just part of life that women are playing sports playing soccer; but in Barbados it's slightly different, the skill level is different but the interest was just high but they wanted the opportunity to join weekend leagues from the time they were 4, 5 and 6 like we do over here in most cases. Anyhow nonetheless, as everyone would know if you don't know if you don't know Barbados is in the Caribbean so the fixtures or the schedules was always setup that at 2 oclock in the afternoon or 3 oclock in the afternoon the women will play there soccer games or there football matches then at 4 oclock the men would play. It was just really simple.... and I said this was wrong because if you're playing in that heat. It's incredible. It tires you out, it fatigues you. It makes it more difficult for you to enjoy the sport and learn the sport and so I just went and rallied the women together that were playing and we didn't do a large protest by any stretch of the imagination but we did go and talk to the director and talk to the other guys we were hanging out with... This was like gender inequality, why was it that the womens game goes before the men and like I say this was a really small thing but for me it was a very big win for me at that time because I felt like it wasn't just about me not wanting to play in the hot sun. It was about helping to develop the sport and I feel that there are lots of advantages in sports for people more widely through the region and out these conversations we actually developed a university team that travelled, we had new captains, we had men looking, there were most male coaches, treating us a little different, like I'm not saying we shifted the game and women's sports, that's a whole other conversation, as it's the same as men's sports, it was a small moment where I saw that something was wrong and I should do more with it.

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Activism in Health

“This was back when I worked at the harm reduction agency and it was based around substance use and harm reduction, from when I started working there, maybe because I was well versed in workshops and trainings and equity and anti oppression and lgbtq stuff I did that from the beginning

of when I started working there even though I was an outreach worker as well so I was reframing the climate and the culture of the workplace and then my supervisor who was actually a black trans man he ended up transitioning while I was working there so when he took off a few months to transition and heal , and do his gender affirmation surgery and heal and that, he actually entrusted me to come out to my colleagues that I worked with. So he wanted me to tell them that he is a trans man and he was transitioning, this is his name, this is how to use a new pronoun in a sentence, and I was the person because I'm a non trans person that they could practice on me and mess up with, so that I could correct them and then ultimately create a more welcoming and well versed environment for when he came back and the structures that had been placed during that time, policies and the , even the tangible changes how you structure gender like in an intake form. those kinds of policies rolled into the organization and their policies to this day. So even though I no longer work with them I actually went back for a training last year to do an in-depth anti racism anti oppression training with my own company journeys in equity and then from those training they actually created two different support groups, one for people of colour to be able to report incidents of micro aggressions or full blown racism and also another support group or talking group for all the white members of the organization to be able to hold themselves accountable and talk about ingrained racism and how to unlearn that and challenge that . so I feel like I had I was able to build a better culture over time from when I worked there and also from the time I came back as a consultant”

Activism in Education

“In 2000 I written a curriculum and in 2000 the UWI asked me to write a course in diversity for there bachelors of leadership program. So you have to remember there are thousands of people who are gonna take a course like this and I was asked to write that course. The course is called responding to diverse and inclusion in the Caribbean. And these are all school principals young principals are gonna take the course and so I create the course and it was amazing I'm excited and one chapter of the course has to do with sexual orientation ten units and one unit has to do, so I had to deal with learning disabilities, I dealt with gender, race, I dealt with sexual orientation and when they sent it for review I was asked by the reviewers to remove the chapter. So they said I'm asking you to remove the chapter on lgbt and sexual orientation and also 2 persons asked to remove the next person said take it make it small and put it into gender, you know hide it under gender so to speak and I could have just said what I need to do , do what I asked to do, get my cheque and go. And that's what I want people to understand its more than that. So I wrote an email a very important email, lots of paragraphs lots of explaining lots of self disclosure send it to them and tell them the reason I think it needs to remain and it remain until today. And I still teach that course 20 years after. I still teach the course for them every now and then. I haven't taught it in the last year but I taught it for the last 8 years and I have so many students that have sent me back responses. They were surprised when they opened the course guide and realize there was a unit on sexual orientation. I have had students that have said to me that have told me you have helped me about my child, people have come out to me , students have done that so that's why im so empowered when it comes to education and activism because I see I know what happens when you are not in that public space, in the private space so that was an example that I wanted to share”

Activism in Community Spaces

"I'm a ballroom mom so I have an array of different issues that I gotta deal with. A boo boo cut to like a boo boo like you man girlfriend whoever is pissing you off, your relationship. I gotta deal with all of that from all spectrums. So for me its just learning how to deal with these problems. I mean to be quite frank, a big problem that we have is where can we practice. We always get pushed out of a lot of spaces that are community based and for the community we understand that you cant afford it but were still gonna charge you a community rate and even if we get these community spaces we have to fight for these community spaces because there are a lot of other disenfranchised groups in these communities that need these spaces and when we get to these we have to deal with the other side of the people that don't want us to be there so the hetero people don't understand our way of living anything like that. So I've been through a couple of different spaces and the last place I was able get a space was the 519 and because of corona we are not there no longer when corona come back in I'm pretty sure we will still be welcome. It just a major, I've been through shit with health centres, I've been to a couple of churches just to name a few that say they're gonna help and they don't, so that's one of the major things, finding space and holding space. That is a problem finding space and holding space. With the help of another community member I was able to get and hold a space at the 519 but we also have to understand that the 519 isn't always there for black people and thank god we have people who are in place who now can make changes to these things but before it was very very not for us. So I feel more comfortable there now than I did before...well you have to honestly reach out to people who know people who have a space. Its always about, honestly I like to tell people it always about who you know. Education is totally awesome, you need it you need to learn you need to know words, like Dr ABC says these people cannot say that you do not know what you're talking about, but its also about who you know to be honest what help me navigate getting these spaces was the fact that the facilitator at the time was black and was able to speak on my behalf because sometimes even though they say they're there for the youth they don't like to listen to the youth, they rather you have a liaison to speak to the person who makes the decisions and its almost like. I can talk for myself, you need to hear how I feel but its always better if you know somebody who's in a higher position than you that can go on your behalf IF they chose not to listen to you. The people in the position of power with the 519 the difference with that was I was able to sit down with someone who is in charge of booking the spaces. Even though I was introduced through a liaison, I was still able to still sit down with the person who was booking the spaces, rather than me speaking through the liaison to the person who is booking the spaces because that was another issue with the 519. Too many middle people, and its like I know what I need this space for and at the end of the day, you're gonna ask me to come and fill out a form asking me exactly what im telling you now. So I need for you to listen to me NOW, 'cause I can tell you what I need NOW. And you can come back in a month 3 months 6 months and ask me what I need again but for right now this is what's needed, because people don't understand is these spaces are a collective unit to somebody who may not have all week. You know sometimes we may have food, people need to eat, sometime we may get a donation of tokens, people need to travel, these spaces are needed and if its one time a week in a space where they feel comfortable, that's what I want, and if you have this space, you don't need to give it to somebody whosome spaces are not needed for everything. They can meet in their homes or whatever the case may be. We need the space because if we decide to do it in the streets, were gonna get attacked were gonna get questioned, there's a whole bunch of things that surrounding just giving us the space, just giving us the space and helping us with the space because a lot of times what ends up happening they'll give us the space and then they'll come back with oh you didn't do this so we have to take away the space from you or you didn't follow this rule, comply with this, or the music is too loud or they're are so many horror stories across the board with certain community organizations that say they're helping but , ya so just give us the space. We wanted to dance that's what we wanna do we wanna dance. We wanna rejoice we wanna fellowship. We wanna yell we wanna scream In a space where we feel safe."

Resources

Network for the Advancement of Black Communities - <https://networkabc.ca/>

Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit - <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/confronting-anti-black-racism/>

Journeys in Equity - <https://www.journeysinequity.com/>

Ontario Anti-Black racism strategy - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-anti-black-racism-strategy>

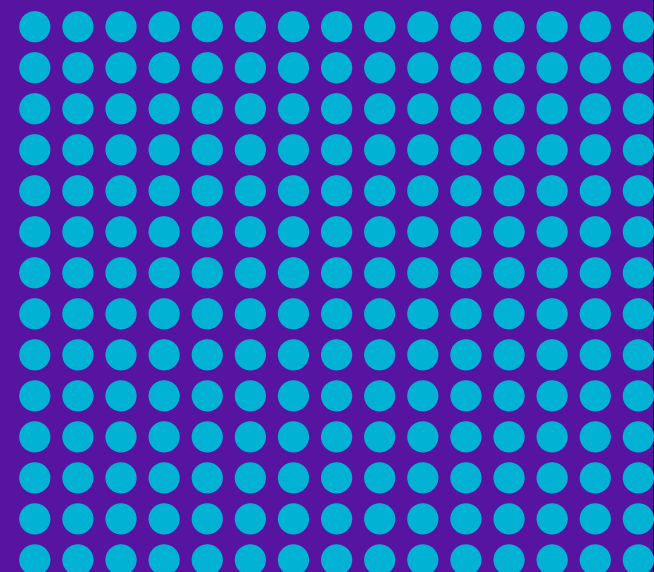
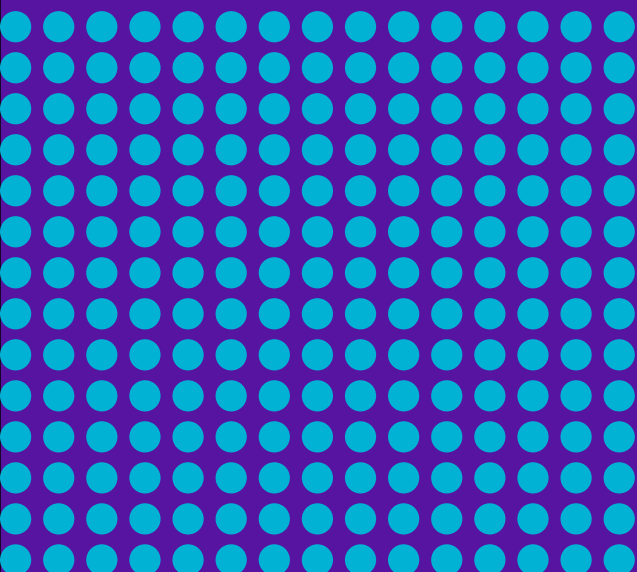
LGBTQ Youth Homelessness - <https://www.the519.org/education-training/lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness-in-canada/in-canada>

ⁱ <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/blog/leading-systems-change-nine-strategies-to-transform-the-way-the-world-works>

ⁱⁱ I don't want to leave part of myself at the door <https://ocasi.org/sites/default/files/psi-starter-kit-english.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Black Health Alliance: Anti-black racism <https://blackhealthalliance.ca/home/antiblack-racism/>

^{iv} <https://www.americanexpress.com/en-us/business/trends-and-insights/articles/the-7-most-common-leadership-styles-and-how-to-find-your-own/>



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