

Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth  
with the Minnesota Department of Health

# REIMAGINE BLACK YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

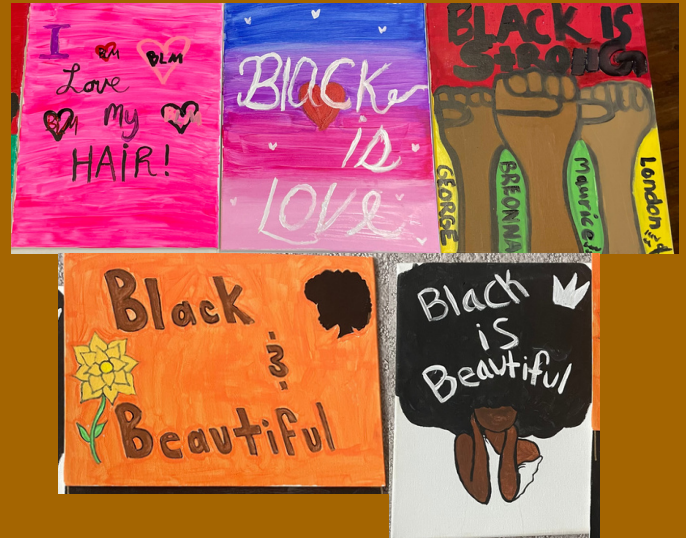


Recap Report  
*October 13, 2023*

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# THE PURPOSE.

The Reimagine Black Youth Mental Health Summit was created to be a transformative gathering for Black young people across the diaspora. It was an opportunity to come together to explore and celebrate Blackness, identify key priorities around mental health and wellbeing, and shape change needed in our communities.



Art created by youth in Black Youth Space.

# THE PROCESS.

The Summit was a part of the larger **Reimagine Black Youth Mental Health Initiative**. This is a 3-year initiative funded by the Minnesota Department of Health with the cities of Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center to

- **shift the narrative around Black youth mental health,**
- **strengthen the ecosystem of support for Black youth and their wellbeing, and**
- **change the conditions that are making Black youth unwell.**

In February of 2023, we launched an **Advisory Council** of Black community leaders with various levels of decision-making power. These individuals meet regularly to redefine collaboration and ensure the support is in place for this work to be **Black-centered, youth-led, and community-driven.**

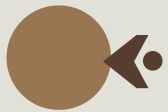
In March of 2023, we launched our **Black Youth Space**. This space created consistent and paid opportunities for Black youth to build community, share experiences conducive to their wellbeing, build power, and truly take the lead of this initiative. One highlight was a 3-day, 2-night Black Joy Retreat that the youth designed and facilitated!

**These two collectives of Black people strengthened our foundation, values, and approach to this work in ways that created fertile ground for the Summit.**



# THE PLANNING.

The Advisory Council and Black Youth Space participated in a merge meeting at the end of August 2023 to intentionally plan the Summit together. This allowed for **intergenerational connection** and the **continued implementation of power sharing**. During the meeting, the two groups intermingled to co-create the vision for the Summit.



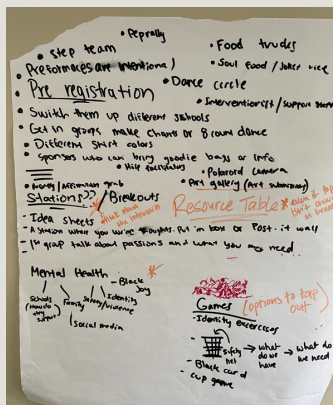
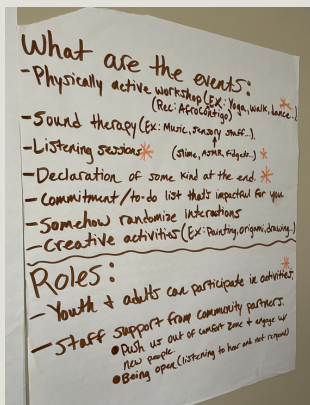
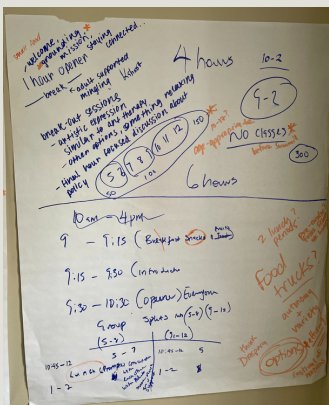
If the **goal** is to bring Black youth across the diaspora together to recognize and uplift what makes us well, to celebrate who we are; and to identify what changes are needed that are determined by Black youth;



...and our **values** are... **transparency, mutuality, healing, joy, and inherent goodness;**



...then our **Summit** will include...



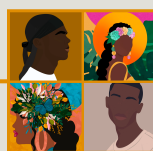
Some of the visioning notes written by young people during the Advisory Council and Black Youth Space merge meeting.



Schedule	
Time	Activity
8:20am-8:45am	Arrival and Check-in
9:00am-9:30am	Opening Session Welcome and Introduction of Youth Emcees; Purpose of the Day; Mainstage - Performance, Raffle Prizes
9:40am-10:30am	Open Space Activity Identify priorities around health and wellbeing, share experiences
10:30am-10:50am	Snack/Break, Mainstage - Performance, Raffle Prizes, Resource Tables
10:50am-11:50am	Policy Workshop Making Priorities into Policies
11:50am-12:35pm	Lunch
12:45pm-1:30pm	Choice Sound bath, Afrocontigbo, Juxtaposition Arts, Drumming, Boxing, Double Dutch, Ice Skating, Basketball
1:30pm-2:00pm	Closing Ceremony Declaration and Dismissal

**\*\*Resource Tables, PhotoBooth, and more will also be present all day!\*\***

Final schedule which was carried out on October 13th.





# THE RESULT.



For more pictures visit the link here: <https://dejahodges.editorx.io/reimagine-black-yout>

In partnership with four school districts...

200

Black youth participated in the Summit.



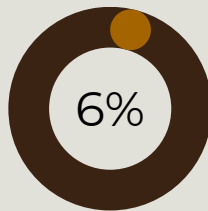
<b>Anoka Hennepin:</b> Anoka HS + Champlin HS + Jackson MS	<b>60</b>
<b>Robbinsdale:</b> Armstrong HS + Cooper HS	<b>60</b>
<b>Brooklyn Center:</b> ECA + BC HS + BC MS	<b>60</b>
<b>Osseo:</b> Park Center HS + Maple Grove HS	<b>7</b>
<b>Community Orgs</b>	<b>13</b>

# THE DIVERSITY OF THE DIASPORA.

Black youth at the Summit identified themselves as...



Six percent of youth at the Summit also identified themselves as LGBTQAI+.



# YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND BLACK-CENTERED INVESTMENT.



Mizz Mercedesz



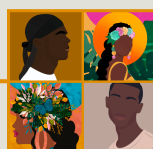
Christian Adeti

We also paid 5 Black youth to emcee and 2 Black performers!



**NICE GUYS CORPORATION**

**83% OF MONEY SPENT FOR THE SUMMIT WENT TO BLACK PEOPLE AND BLACK BUSINESSES.**





Problem: Low/No educational expectations for black students

<b>Root Causes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stereotypes</li> <li>Internalization</li> </ul>	<b>Demands:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support (black group) - More safe spaces</li> <li>Better teachers (unbiased teachers)</li> <li>Recognizing students who need support</li> <li>Teachers = be more engaging - Hold students to high expectations</li> </ul>
<b>Targets:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Superintents</li> <li>School board</li> <li>Parents</li> <li>Students</li> <li>Teachers</li> <li>State agencies</li> </ul>	<b>Supporters:</b> students supporting themselves  <b>Opposition:</b> Teachers that look down on students
<b>Tactics:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universal opal settings</li> <li>Eliminating unrealistic pressures from teachers</li> <li>Demanding teachers have more individual time w/ students</li> <li>More black/cultural staff</li> <li>Cultural response training</li> <li>Elevate more opportunities for black students</li> </ul>	

Problems: We need Black Teachers (not just Black Staff)

<b>Root Causes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of education</li> <li>Lack of representation (not seeing black teachers)</li> <li>Selective hiring (discriminatory)</li> <li>environment</li> </ul>	<b>Targets:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students / staff</li> <li>Black education majors</li> </ul>
<b>Demands:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affirmative action</li> <li>Implementing genuine diversity</li> <li>higher pay</li> </ul>	<b>Support:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>administration</li> <li>governor - colleges</li> <li>mayor - companies</li> <li>teachers</li> <li>Diversity standards that are actually evaluated &amp; checked</li> </ul>
<b>Opposition:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anti-affirmative action</li> <li>White teachers in fear of losing jobs</li> </ul>	

# POLICY CHANGE.

Youth identified, in their own words, what changes are needed, who is accountable for those changes, and the tactics or steps to make it happen. These are some of the many posters that young people created. [Click here to read each poster in detail.](#)

I want more education on more than one black figure

problem: students need snacks throughout the day because lunch is not enough.

root cause: lunch ladies not respecting students snacks are not being prioritized. when we're hungry it's hard to focus.

demands:
 

- we need a morning snack
- we need an afternoon snack
- we are happy with current lunch and breakfast options but we need larger portions.

**POLICY WORKSHOP**

**PROBLEM:** Lack of professional mental health for black/African Parents.

<b>ROOT CAUSES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dehumanization of mental health</li> <li>lack of resources &amp; support</li> <li>generational trauma</li> </ul>	<b>DEMANDS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>therapy for families (affordable)</li> <li>OPEN-MINDEDNESS</li> <li>Safe place without judgement</li> </ul>
<b>TARGETS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PARENTS - ethnic parents!</li> <li>Guardians</li> </ul>	<b>SUPPORTERS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>counselor</li> <li>students</li> </ul> <b>OPPOSITIONS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>parents</li> <li>culture</li> </ul>
<b>TACTICS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work-place provided therapy</li> <li>encouragement</li> <li>open talks!</li> <li>Normalize mental health</li> <li>encouraged by schools</li> </ul>	

*Therapy for family!!!*

**PROBLEM:** Having a black ~~principal~~ 9.5% Principal/Vice Principal

**ROOT CAUSES:** They don't trust them. Systematic racism.

**DEMANDS:** Black principal/vice principal in more schools.

**Problem:** People not being held accountable for their actions.

<b>Root Causes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media</li> <li>Personal accountability</li> </ul>	<b>Demands:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stricter social media guidelines</li> <li>A social media campaign that teaches people how to treat one another, also sharing media that shows respect.</li> </ul>
<b>Targets:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media ceo's</li> <li>Influencers</li> <li>young people (10-25)</li> </ul>	<b>Supporters:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anti-racist org</li> <li>Anti-bullying org</li> <li>Admins / Ceo's</li> </ul> <b>Opposition:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Admins / Ceo's</li> <li>people who are doing the act</li> </ul>
<b>Tactics:</b>	

**Problem: Gun Violence**

<b>Root Causes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gangs</li> <li>Retaliation</li> <li>Revenge</li> </ul>	<b>Demands:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We want change!</li> <li>STAND ON BUSINESS</li> <li>more restrictions</li> <li>taxes</li> </ul>
<b>Targets:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minorities</li> <li>Schools</li> <li>Teens</li> <li>Sacred spaces</li> </ul>	<b>Supporters:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gangs - politicians</li> <li>Pro Gun</li> <li>Manufacturers/Sellers</li> </ul> <b>Opposition:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Politicians - people impacted by gun violence</li> <li>Families</li> <li>Churches - Schools</li> </ul>
<b>Tactics:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>restricting access</li> <li>make manufacturers pay taxes</li> <li>make guns traceable</li> </ul>	



# YOUTH SAID THEY WILL REMEMBER...

"The different fun activities we got to do, and how everything was an open space. I was able to say whatever I wanted without feeling judged."

"How engaging everything was."

"How to show love to your community."

"How the vibe felt. I felt like we were all connected. The energy was amazing. The music was amazing. The food was sooo good. And the whole event gave me an opportunity to get into boxing!"

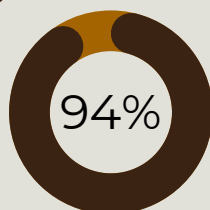
"The dancing!"

"I'll remember not feeling like I need to fit in a box."

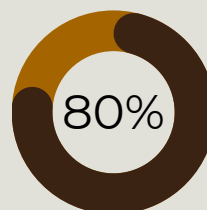
"I felt safe here."

"Being able to ice skate for the first time."

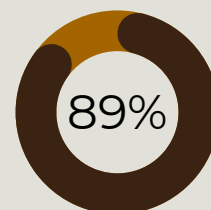
"I loved my group during open space, they made me feel comfortable with my own experiences."



% of students that Strongly Agreed or Agreed that they felt connected to and supported by others at the Summit.



% of students that Strongly Agreed or Agreed that they felt more confident after the Summit.



% of students that Strongly Agreed or Agreed that they understand more about what policy change is and how to take action.

## ADULTS ADDED...

"This summit was amazing. We need more like this 2-4 times a year for students to refocus and make it through the year."

"Seeing our youth play, learn, and have fun without being told to be quiet was a blessing to experience."

# WHAT'S NEXT?

Our Advisory Council and our young people will continue to work as a collective to authentically **identify themes for all that was uplifted at the Summit**. We will use the direction of Black youth to then **demonstrate change** in 3 settings.



**Thank you to our Advisory Council, school districts and city partners, Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park Mayors, vendors, resource tables, volunteers, MDH, and Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth staff and board for being a part of the ecosystem and support that makes this happen. Thank you, especially, to our youth leaders and participants. You will always be the center.**

**Black youth, families, and community are the continued drivers of this work. Black youth are sacred, worthy, deserving, and inherently good. Together, WE WILL DO WHAT IT TAKES TO BE WELL.**