



A REPORT ON THE
**QUALITY OF LIFE
OF BLACK GIRLS**
IN COLUMBUS, OHIO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JULY 2020



THE COMMISSION
ON BLACK GIRLS

WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR BLACK GIRLS IN COLUMBUS AND CENTRAL OHIO?

How can our community work together to assess factors that impact the quality of life for Black girls?

How does a city embark on a quest to understand concerns about the complicated social complexities of inequality, racism, and implicit biases that may disproportionately shape the trajectory of Black girls' lives and their ability to grow uninterrupted, fully embraced in all their greatness that's yet to be discovered?

These are the types of questions that shaped the foundation on which the 25-member Commission on Black Girls seeks to build a community-wide response.

In July 2018, Columbus City Council adopted resolution 0208-2018 to create a Commission on Black Girls, the result of the vision of Councilmember Priscilla R. Tyson. The Commission was authorized to exist through December 31, 2020, unless prior to that date, Council enacts legislation to make The Commission permanent.

The Commission was chartered to initially participate in fact-finding and education to learn more about the current quality of life for Black girls ages 11-22 in Columbus and Central Ohio. As such, the role of The Commission during this first phase was to understand and reflect on information shared by subject matter experts, key community stakeholders, and Black girls themselves, while during this time not significantly adding to or statistically aggregating the data.

What has resulted from this inaugural effort are The Commission's strategies and recommendations to guide the ongoing mission of supporting Black girls. This is the first known project of its kind in which a city is focused on understanding the current quality of life for Black girls.

For the complete inaugural report of The Commission on Black Girls, visit www.thecommissiononBlackgirls.org/report.

A MESSAGE FROM COLUMBUS CITY COUNCILMEMBER PRISCILLA R. TYSON



Dear Community:

It is with great pleasure that I bring you this inaugural report of The Commission on Black Girls. This work has been my personal passion, but it has by no means been a solo endeavor. The Commission on Black Girls is a stellar group of 25 accomplished professionals whose expertise touches everyone in our community, including Black girls.

I am honored that The Commission members willingly and graciously donated their time and wisdom. They made valuable contributions to the need for the Columbus and Central Ohio community to begin to gain an appreciation of the quality of life of an extremely vulnerable, yet extraordinarily promising, segment of our society: young people who, from conception, are cloaked in the race and gender issues that continue to challenge our humanity.

The initial task embarked on by The Commission was to solicit information from throughout a society still seeking to embrace the diversity that is the essence of being a Black girl.

The culmination of this initial round of inquiry into the question of "What is the quality of life of Black girls?" is an in-depth snapshot that can perhaps be summed up by a single thought: the quality of life for a Black girl is so complicated, yet so promising. It is this stunning dichotomy that continues to drive the work of The Commission on Black Girls. We must seek to understand and address racism, sexism, and the impact of the social determinants of health (including economic stability, housing, education, safety, social connections, and food and nutrition).

The community must encourage, affirm, and support our Black girls. Moving forward, I envision that the work of The Commission on Black Girls must involve sharing their story with the entire community, along with the resultant strategies and recommendations.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Priscilla R. Tyson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Priscilla R. Tyson
Columbus City Council

COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Commission on Black Girls consisted of the following community leaders from various disciplines who came together to assess factors that impact the quality of life for Black girls in Columbus and Central Ohio:

Frederic Bertley, Ph.D., Center of Science and Industry (COSI) , Commission Co-Chair

Fran Frazier, Rise Sister Rise, Commission Co-Chair

Reverend Timothy Ahrens, First Congregational Church

Sergeant Lindsey Alli, Columbus Division of Police

Linda Brown, The Columbus Chapter of The Links, Incorporated

Crystal Causey, National Coalition of 100 Black Women Inc., Central Ohio Chapter

Clytemnestra Clarke, First Church of God

LaShanda Coleman, National Pan-Hellenic Council of Columbus

Michael Corey, J.D., Human Service Chamber of Franklin County

Lisa Courtice, Ph.D., United Way of Central Ohio

Mary Cusick, Community Leader

Kevin Dixon, Ph.D., Franklin County ADAMH Board

Honorable Elizabeth Gill, Juvenile and Domestic Relations Division, Franklin County Court of Common Pleas

Alesia Gillison, Columbus City Schools

Tom Grote, Grote & Turner

Mia Hairston, Nationwide

Kim Hooper, Walmart

LC Johnson, YWCA Columbus*

Caroline Woliver, YWCA Columbus

DeShauna Lee, J.D., Nationwide Children's Hospital

Mysheika Roberts, M.D., Columbus Public Health

Toshia Safford, The Center for Healthy Families

Wendy Smooth, Ph.D., The Ohio State University

Charles Spinning, Franklin County Children Services

Ben Tyson, Easton, Steiner + Associates *

Jennifer Peterson, Easton, Steiner + Associates

Paiden Williams, Rise Sister Rise, Black Girls Think Tank

**denotes former member of The Commission on Black Girls*

SUPPORT TEAM

City of Columbus: Jo Ellen Cline
Nicole Harper
Christopher Maitland
Carl Williams

Project Manager: Patricia Lyons, Ph.D., LISW-S

Project Coordinators: Jill Frost
Debora Myles
JoAnna Williamson, Ph.D., J.D.

Research Team: Lathania Butler, Ph.D., and Rebecca Zwickl, Thoughtwell
Alexis Little and Tiffany Steele, The Ohio State University

The Commission on Black Girls would like to thank the following programs and organizations for their contributions to this work:

Academy for Urban Scholars	HandsOn Central Ohio
Big Lots Behavioral Health Services - Nationwide Children's Hospital	Kaleidoscope Youth Center
Black Girls Think Tank	Malaika Mentoring Program, Franklin County Children Services
Brown Girls Mentoring	National Youth Advocate Program
Center of Science and Industry (COSI)	PrimaryOne Health
Citywide Training and Development, City of Columbus	Radio One
Columbus Area Integrated Health Services, Inc.	Rise Sister Rise
Columbus City Schools	Ruling Our eXperiences (ROX)
Columbus School for Girls	Sling Shot Media Group, LLC
Columbus State Community College	Star House
Community Mediation Services of Central Ohio	The Center for Healthy Families
Community Shelter Board	The Ohio State University, Department of Teaching and Learning
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, Columbus (OH) Alumnae Chapter	The Ohio State University, Department of Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies
Directions for Youth and Families	The Olive Tree Foundation
Eryn PINK	Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Gamma Zeta Zeta Chapter
Franklin County Children Services	
Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Division of Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branch	

A heartfelt **thank you** to the Black girls and young women who live their stories every day, and to the individuals and organizations that assisted them in sharing their stories with The Commission on Black Girls.

One of the traditions being implemented by The Commission on Black Girls is to use our events and social spaces to regularly showcase Black girls and women who embody the essence of our work. I am pleased to personally acknowledge one such individual, Columbus City Council Legislative Aide Nicole Harper, for lending her energy and intelligence to the inaugural work of The Commission.

~ **Columbus City Councilmember Priscilla R. Tyson**

KEY INSIGHTS

Black women are resilient. In the face of historical and contemporary challenges, Black women have made great strides in educational attainment and intergenerational income mobility. Black women continue to be a stabilizing, consistent force in their households and communities. Even when the challenges are great, Black women continue to strive to beat the odds.

However, the presence of the Black woman's resilience should not lead observers to ignore the long-standing systemic inequities that continue to present significant challenges in the lives of Black women vs. their non-Black peers, even from their childhoods. Racial disparities persist in nearly all socioeconomic indicators, including income, wealth, education, and health.

Policy and community action meant to improve the quality of life of Black women are important to the continued development of Columbus and Central Ohio. If policymakers and community leaders intend to shift the experience of Black families and individuals, it is critical they start with the experience of the Black woman. The prevalence of female-headed households within the Black community makes this especially true. About 60% of Black children in Columbus live in single mother households. Intervening in the experiences of Black women while they are still girls may be the most effective way of improving their future outcomes.

Before policymakers and community leaders develop intervention strategies, it is important for them to deepen their understanding of the strengths of Columbus' Black girls, as well as the challenges they face. If these issues are effectively addressed, the assets Black girls can contribute can be harnessed to generate even better socioeconomic outcomes for themselves and society.

The Commission on Black Girls (COBG) process envisioned by Columbus Councilmember Priscilla R. Tyson is meant to contribute to that deepening of understanding. Specifically, The Commission began its work by asking, "What is the quality of life of Black girls in our city?"

Although quality of life can feel like an all-encompassing concept, key insights focused on three fundamental elements in the life of a Black girl: her academic experience, the economic context in which she lives, and support for her mental health and emotional wellbeing. Quality of life indicators were provided by local subject matter experts who spoke to The Commission during its monthly meetings. Girls from all over the city were engaged with the COBG through listening sessions, focus groups, and a survey to provide information on their lives and their perceptions of living and thriving as Black girls in Columbus.



METHODS

The inaugural Commission on Black Girls used the following methods to begin its investigation of the quality of life for Black girls in Columbus and Central Ohio:



Review of Prior Research

Both quantitative and qualitative data from previous research were included in the formulation and exploration of the research questions.

Secondary data gathered from sources like the U.S. Census Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention allowed the research team to provide perspective reflecting the Black girl's experience.



Survey*

A survey was distributed online via social media and direct request of the research team and various community stakeholders. It was completed by 422 Black girls ages 11-22 from all over the city of Columbus. The survey was designed to assess the girls' quality of life from their perspectives.

Specifically, it asked questions about their academic experience, economic context, and support for emotional well-being.



Focus Groups

Focus groups were split by age group consisting of 11-14, 15-18, or 19-22 year old Black girls. In total, 29 girls and young women participated.

The focus groups were held at locations that were convenient for the participants, such as schools or local community centers. Participants were asked about their academic involvement, household context, and support network.



Listening Sessions

Listening sessions were held at Columbus Public Health to hear from parents, guardians, caregivers, service providers, and Black girls ages 11-22 residing in the city of Columbus. The groups were asked three questions related to experiences, resources, and strategies that The Commission can engage in to improve quality of life outcomes.



Monthly Learning Meetings

The Commission met monthly to hear from local subject matter experts (SMEs) in the field who responded to questions about the quality of life (QOL) for Black girls ages 11-22, and what The Commission can do to improve, support, or enhance the QOL for Black girls.

Specific topics included: Physical and Reproductive Health, Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being, Education, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation, Child Welfare, Homelessness, Mentoring and Leadership, Juvenile Justice, and Social Media.

* SURVEY LIMITATIONS

The following should be noted regarding the survey process:

- The survey respondents skewed toward the 15-17 year olds. Because it is difficult to easily survey young people, the team reached out to schools for assistance in facilitating survey-taking during school hours. Although this helped the research team achieve the number of survey responses needed, it means the age distribution from 11-22 is not the same as the age distribution in the general population of Black girls in Columbus.
- The survey was very long because there were many topic areas that were important to explore. As a result, there was a risk of girls dropping off and not completing the survey. That was apparent in the survey results; although 422 girls completed the survey, more than 200 others started the survey and did not complete it, so their responses were not utilized.
- Many of the topic areas were emotional and/or sensitive. This level of inquiry was necessary in order to assess important components of quality of life, such as sexual/reproductive health and trauma, that reportedly disproportionately and negatively affect Black girls. However, some girls may have felt uncomfortable and either skipped responding or chose not to complete the survey as a result of the questions asked.
- Questions related to gender identity and sexual orientation were worded based on recommended best practice literature. However, after the survey was released, some subject matter experts in the Columbus LGBTQ+ community suggested there may have been more inclusive ways to ask these questions. The research team recommended that if this survey is replicated, questions related to family structure, sexual orientation, and gender identity be developed in conjunction with members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- It is not uncommon for self-reported data to result in under-reporting or over-reporting of the status, behaviors, feelings, and experiences of the respondents.



BLACK GIRLS SPEAK



SURVEY RESPONDENTS HIGHLIGHTS

Survey respondents ages 11-15

47% live with their mothers only

22% live with both parents

66% attend public schools

40% have GPAs of 3.1 or higher

26% participate in extracurricular activities every year

57% have some form of leadership experience

57.7% struggle with feelings of depression and anxiety

71.3% would like leadership roles in extracurricular activities or community groups

59.5% live with families who reside in rental homes or apartments

45.9% report being bullied at school

56.9% attend church

47.9% report discussing their mental health with a physician, nurse, counselor, or other mental health provider

49.7% have parents who have not been arrested

The top three responses to the question “*What makes you happy?*” were:

85.3% Music

79.7% Family

78% Friends

Survey respondents ages 16-22

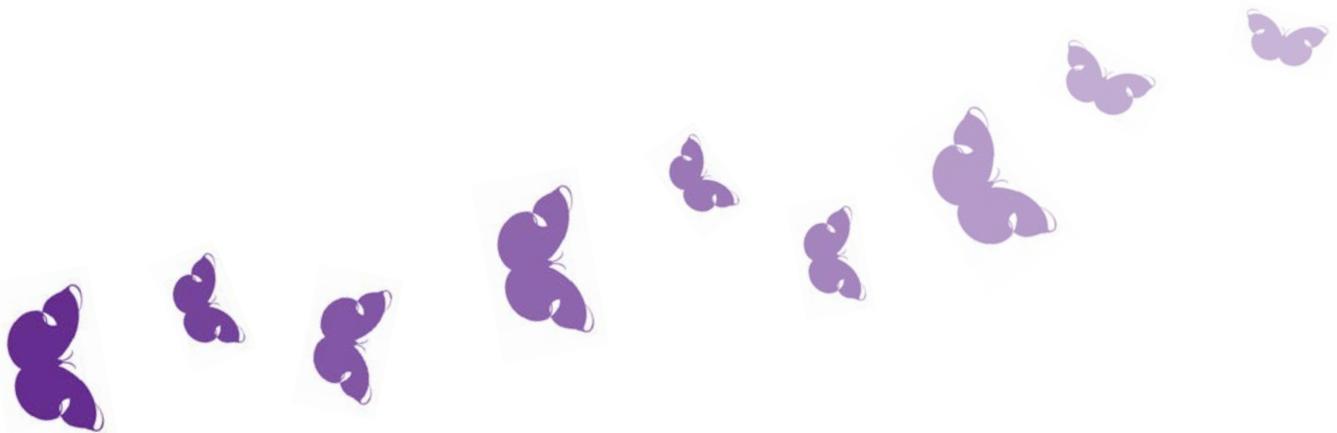
- 34% live at home with parents
- 18% have children
- 23% have experienced homelessness
- 56% have a job
- 26% have had a job in the past
- 87% are in school
- 11% are pursuing a college degree
- 71.9% struggle with feelings of depression and anxiety
- 62.4% would like leadership roles in extracurricular activities or community groups
- 73.1% live with families that reside in rental homes or apartments

All survey respondents

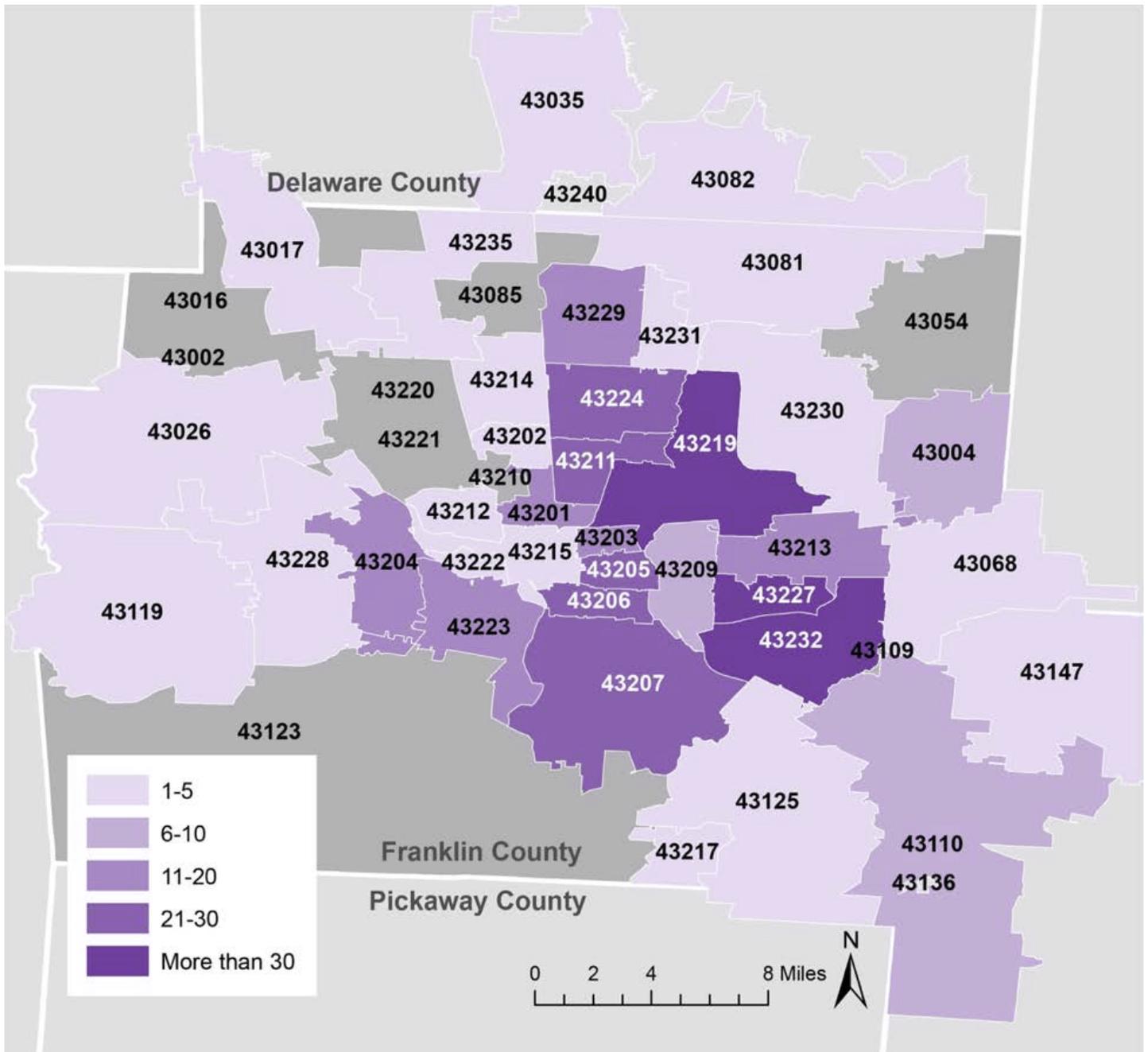
- 70% have received detention, suspension, or expulsion from school

The respondents also varied in age, gender identity, and sexual orientation – 29% of the respondents were 11-14 years old; 57% were 15-17 years old, and 14% were 18-22 years old. Ten respondents identified as transgender. About 15% of respondents reported being bisexual and 3.3% of respondents identified as gay.

- 52.8% report being bullied at school
- 51.1% attend church
- 52.3% report discussing their mental health with a physician, nurse, counselor, or other mental health provider
- 37.9% have parents who have not been arrested
- The top three responses to the question “*What makes you happy?*” were:
 - 73.8% Music
 - 73.3% Family
 - 72.1% Friends



Survey responses were submitted by Black girls from all over the city of Columbus, with a higher representation from the urban core. Figure 1 maps the self-reported residential zip codes of respondents. Their household compositions varied – 49% lived only with their mothers; 21% lived with both their parents; 8% went between their mother’s house and their father’s house; 6% lived with their grandparents; and 4% lived only with their fathers. Other household arrangements included living in foster care, with another family member, or in a group home or shelter. A few of the older respondents headed their own households.



QUOTES FROM BLACK GIRLS

“School has many programs, yet most programs have nothing to do with self-care, acceptance, or facing everyday problems and challenges”

“Create programs for girls who don’t have the confidence to be successful”

“Be there for me when I need someone to talk to”

“If I would’ve known there were Black Girl Scouts, perhaps I could’ve made better choices”

“There aren’t many options out there for single moms”

“Sometimes I want to play sports because it keeps me entertained”

“The lack of support and advocacy, options for care”

“We need some grocery stores instead of corner stores that are more in reach”

“My biggest challenge I face is childcare, because I have no way to go to school”

“Focus on graduation so I can have my own place”

“Like studying the Underground Railroad, kids (usually white), would turn and look at me, but I was never picked on for it”

“I have never done anything like this; I haven’t been introduced to any programs or support systems for Black women in particular”

“Sexism and the color of my skin”

“We live up to everyone’s opinions, we always live for others and not ourselves”

“I don’t need a counselor because I tell my mom everything”

“Finding pride in being Black; we are always learning about white people in school”

“I have had a lot of experiences that I’ve gone through that I would not like to write on paper”

“I try to have self confidence and not let people get to me”

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Black girls in Columbus are not monolithic in their personalities or experiences. They vary in their economic experience, their academic context, and their mental health and emotional well-being. Still, the research conducted allows for a general sense of the assets Black girls possess and challenges they face. These assets and challenges come together to form the foundation of their quality of life.

The girls involved in The Commission on Black Girls research had many assets related to their academic life. Most girls are rarely absent from school and 60% have a GPA higher than 2.6, including 41% with a GPA in the A range (3.1 or higher). A third of the girls participate in extracurricular activities every year. These Black girls fill leadership positions and engage in leadership development programs. Many older girls also gain work experience while they are in school.

The Black girls studied also have high aspirations and are very ambitious. When asked whether they believed they could go to college, 85% said yes. Their future plans often included college (55%), a master's degree (35%), or a law (13%) or medical (24%) degree. More than one out of every 10 survey respondents (13%) want to get a Ph.D. in their cho-

sen field. The desires expressed by these girls should not only be encouraged, but also directed through clear, goal-oriented, career-specific mentorship.

The emotional support girls receive from their families and friends is also an asset, as is their high level of participation and engagement with religious institutions since Black girls tend not to engage as much with formal mental health institutions. These relationships cannot replace mental health care, but they can provide support for Black girls in the absence of formal arrangements.

Challenges were also observed in addition to assets. Although the girls tended to have good grades and leadership experience, they also had a high rate of punishment. At least 40% had experienced some type of suspension and 9% had been expelled. This is concerning because of the psychological impact that harsh disciplinary measures can have on a girl's sense of self and place in the world. It is also concerning because suspensions and expulsions have negative impacts on their higher education options. Many girls who participated in focus groups also complained about the lack of representation that they perceived to be the root of a lot of misunderstandings that later lead to



punishment. It is important that both the approach to punishment and the lack of representation are addressed.

Current economic experiences also came with challenges. Many girls lived only with their mothers. Often, mothers would not have earned the level of education that can lead to higher wages. Additionally, many girls reported a concerning level of housing instability. When asked about their experience with homelessness and housing instability, 21% of all respondents said they had not been completely homeless before but have had to stay with family and friends for a while. One in five (20%) respondents over the age of 16 and 17% of all respondents said they had been homeless in the past, and 3% were homeless at the time they were completing the survey. Homelessness poses not only economic risk but also risks to a girl's mental and physical health.

The prevalence of incarcerated parents is also a challenge that was confirmed through research. Well over half (58%) of the survey respondents said that they had at least one parent who had been arrested at some point in the past. Most often, the respondent's father was the only parent who had

experienced arrest (28%) but 21% of the girls knew of the arrest of both parents. Almost 40% of respondents said their parents had spent more than a month in jail. If a respondent said both parents had been arrested, she was more likely to have been arrested herself.

Finally, Black girls are challenged by an unwillingness to engage in formal mental health systems. This is especially important because many of Columbus' Black girls have had high levels of adverse childhood experiences. Although 40% of girls surveyed reported feeling depressed or anxious some or most of the time, only about half of survey respondents said they would talk to a professional about mental health problems or feelings. Of the girls who said they were not very likely to seek professional help, many said some variation of not being able to trust an outsider, being concerned about sharing private details, or not feeling represented or understood by the professionals they had encountered in the past. The underutilization of this resource may mean slower paths of emotional and mental healing; this is another challenge that ought to be addressed if society hopes to improve the quality of life for Black girls.



THE COMMISSION ON BLACK GIRLS

STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The action-oriented focus of The Commission on Black Girls (COBG) requires moving beyond merely learning or just understanding the information received and reviewed during the first phase of the COBG's work. The Commission will begin prioritizing and implementing strategies and recommendations, under the purview of its overarching recommendation:

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATION

The Commission on Black Girls will evolve from its current two-year temporary status into a permanent entity. The Commission will focus on engaging the community in implementing the strategies and recommendations proposed in this report. The input collected and presented in this report will serve as the basis for launching the establishment of the permanent Commission as a data-driven center of excellence to positively transform quality of life outcomes for Black girls in Columbus and Central Ohio.

The Commission's preliminary synthesis of the information summarized throughout this report resulted in the identification of 3 strategies and 18 recommendations, encompassing key quality of life indicators reflected in the data collected by the COBG during its inaugural year. It should be noted that the information shared, data collected, and recommendations strategized are reflective of the current circumstances and tailored needs of Black girls ages 11-22.

This report of the COBG's work thus far is intended to be a "living document" that serves as the initial foundation for strategies that are responsive to existing and new opportunities, resulting in COBG action steps that:

- ▶ **Mobilize** the stakeholders needed to begin or enhance best practices targeted toward minimizing disparities in comparable statistics between Black girls and their similarly situated non-Black peers.
- ▶ **Leverage** Commission members' abilities to individually and collectively influence the pace, dispersion, and funding of equitable remedies throughout the relevant systems.
- ▶ **Engage** thought leaders with decision-makers and collaborators in developing a process to encourage individuals and organizations to come forward with breakthrough innovative ideas that result in short-term and long-term programmatic successes.
- ▶ **Expand** the public understanding of the intersectionality of racism, sexism, social determinants of health, and the quality of life aspirations of Black girls.

THE COMMISSION ON BLACK GIRLS

STRATEGY #1

Create an environment that is free of racism that impairs the ability of Black girls to see themselves and be seen in a manner that fosters their ability to develop and maintain positive quality of life perspectives to the same extent as their non-Black peers.

“I can see all that I can be.”

“We see all that she can be.”

Recommendations

1.1 Address historical practices of institutional and systemic racism

- ▶ Provide education on the historical, systematic racial disenfranchisement that has subjected Black girls to increased hardships.
- ▶ Advocate for anti-racist policies across the lifespan of Black girls.

1.2 Training

- ▶ Seek information to understand the root causes of issues and address vulnerabilities that Black girls have endured due to implicit biases.
- ▶ Advocate for implicit and explicit bias training opportunities focused on a broad range of key stakeholders impacting all aspects of the quality of life of Black girls.

STRATEGY #2

Create and strengthen holistic, systemic approaches to address and disrupt pervasive cycles of education, health, and economic societal inequities that adversely impact the progress of Black girls toward their individual quality of life goals.

Recommendations

2.1 Education

- ▶ Create breakthrough conversations that entice more innovative educational paradigms to surface among educators and school districts. Foster similar innovation among key external stakeholders such as parents, families, faith communities, policymakers, and service providers.
- ▶ Promote models that move away from exclusionary discipline to strategies that create restorative justice environments in schools. Support school personnel in understanding how to provide behavioral modification support and transform schools into centers of safety and healing.
- ▶ Support girls in obtaining their high school diplomas and promote education beyond high school, including college, skilled trades, and certification programs that are pathways to livable wage jobs.

- ▶ Address overwhelming restrictions and eligibility requirements that create barriers to access services.
- ▶ Increase mentoring programs as self-empowering clubs and activities.
- ▶ Encourage recruitment of Black staff and faculty.
- ▶ Expand curriculum to include self-regulating courses and classwork to engage the “whole brain.”
- ▶ Support reproductive health education curriculum in schools and other settings.
- ▶ Strengthen Black history curriculum within school systems.
- ▶ Support science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) education for Black girls.

2.2 Primary Health and Mental and Emotional Well-being

- ▶ Advocate for age-appropriate, gender-neutral, trauma-informed medical, dental, reproductive, and behavioral health services in all schools.
- ▶ Advocate for trauma-informed, culturally competent practices and practitioners within the healthcare systems.
- ▶ Provide resources that address bullying, self-harming behaviors, suicide, child maltreatment, and prevention services.
- ▶ Advocate for more comprehensive health education that is inclusive of healthy food, exercise, and reproductive health, as well as training on behavioral health and identifying personal triggers.
- ▶ Ensure that collaborative efforts to provide tailored broad-ranging behavioral health services focused on ‘what the girls believe’ will aid, enrich, and develop their lives.
- ▶ Facilitate conversations with colleges and universities for the need to recruit and retain more Black students in behavioral health and medical programs.
- ▶ Encourage the recruitment and retention of African American healthcare professionals.
- ▶ Increase mental health literacy as a means of eliminating the stigma of seeking mental health services.
- ▶ Create and promote safe, accessible spaces with walk-in hours.
- ▶ Advocate for funding for community based clinicians and community health workers.
- ▶ Create and fund a marketing campaign that will encourage, affirm, and support our Black girls.
- ▶ Promote social-emotional integration
 - Create opportunities for Black girls to engage in Fashion, Literary, and Performing Arts
 - Support opportunities for Black girls in the Culinary Arts
 - Expose Black girls to Mechanical Arts
 - Provide funding for Black girls to participate in sport activities

2.3 Economics

- ▶ Promote models that are transitioning strategies to survive into strategies to thrive:
 - Minimum wage to living wage
 - Homelessness to home ownership
 - Underinsured/uninsured to insured
 - Joblessness/underemployed to career skill development
 - Food insecurity/obesity to nutritional healthy food security
 - High school graduation to college, skilled trades, and certification programs
- ▶ Advocate for summer employment and/or internship opportunities for girls.
- ▶ Encourage and support entrepreneurship for Black girls.
- ▶ Advocate for trauma-informed workforce development programs.

STRATEGY #3

Advocate for resources and initiatives that will enhance successful quality of life pathways for Black girls.

Recommendations

3.1 Teen Pregnancy

- ▶ Advocate for funding of support services for teen mothers and fathers.
- ▶ Support affordable, quality childcare programs that are welcoming to teen mothers and understand the needs/barriers young mothers face.

3.2 Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

- ▶ Increase and strengthen LGBTQ+ programs and services.
- ▶ Encourage safe, affirming, and inclusive spaces, policies, language, and services for those serving LGBTQ+ youth and families.
- ▶ Increase visibility and representation in leadership spaces.
- ▶ Increase education and training in LGBTQ+ language, intersectionality, and cultural competency.

3.3 Child Welfare

- ▶ Advocate for service models that support the family as a unit and kinship care versus isolating children receiving services.
- ▶ Encourage Black families and individuals to volunteer as mentors. Increase community engagement that facilitates the fostering and adoption of Black children.
- ▶ Support volunteers who work with youth who are transitioning to independent living.

3.4 Homeless Youth

- ▶ Address housing insecurities using a prevention framework.
- ▶ Support funding for emergency, transitional, and permanent housing.

3.5 Mentoring, Leadership, and Creating Connections

- ▶ Increase mentorship opportunities and models centered in identity-based cultural affirmations of young womanhood that are unapologetically pro-Black.
- ▶ Create a funded signature event that serves as a celebratory and learning summit linking providers of mentoring services, Black girls, prospective mentors, key community stakeholders, and nationally known role models and subject matter experts.
- ▶ Help Black girls develop life goals and facilitate the execution of objectives related to those goals.
- ▶ Advocate for roundtables, listening circles, and other forums that provide a platform for Black girls to talk about issues, create connections, get advice, and receive support.
- ▶ Support culturally relevant leadership programming that focuses on Black girls.
- ▶ Increase awareness of the need for Black professionals and pathways for entry into occupations with low and disparate representation.
- ▶ Support educational opportunities and funding to train culturally competent professionals with an emphasis on increasing the number of Black professionals in occupations that will likely work with Black girls.

3.6 Safety, Community Engagement, and Juvenile Justice

- ▶ Address the differential response rates to Black girls' victimization from early education systems, child welfare systems, healthcare systems, and justice systems.
- ▶ Create frequent facilitated, equity-based dialogues of understanding intended to minimize Black girls' contacts with law enforcement and juvenile justice systems.
- ▶ Support the work of the Behavioral Health Juvenile Justice (BHJJ) initiative.
- ▶ Advocate for alternative response models that support restorative justice practices.
- ▶ Create partnerships and encourage Black girls to learn more about careers in law enforcement.

3.7 Spirituality

- ▶ Convene faith communities to advocate for identification of contemporary means of establishing proactive, ongoing outreach and engagement among Black girls and their families.

3.8 Collective Self-Development Virtual Communities

- ▶ Convene collaborative partnerships to create and sustain positive multimedia networking platforms for and by Black girls.

3.9 Self-Governance

- ▶ Encourage self-awareness and self-affirming behaviors among Black girls and their parents based on historical cultural values.

3.10 Intimate Relationships

- ▶ Promote and support organizations that provide education and resources on healthy relationships to Black girls.

3.11 Parenting Gaps

- ▶ Establish a task force of parents of Black girls to recommend and implement community-level approaches to promoting parental engagement.
- ▶ Increase information sessions to all communities so that Black girls, parents, guardians, and caregivers are aware of resources.
- ▶ Develop a repository of resources for all Black girls.

3.12 Transportation

- ▶ Explore transportation support to widen accessibility to available services and programming.

3.13 Data disaggregation

- ▶ Advocate for data to be disaggregated whenever possible to facilitate analyses of relative impacts on Black girls and comparable groups.

The Commission on Black Girls invites the community's continued participation and input into its ongoing work to maximize the quality of life of Black girls in Columbus, OH.

Website: www.thecommissiononBlackgirls.org

Facebook: The Commission on Black Girls

Instagram: [the_commission_on_black_girls](https://www.instagram.com/the_commission_on_black_girls)

Columbus City Councilmember Priscilla R. Tyson
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