



B.L.A.C.K Mount Druitt Youth Forum- Round Table Discussions

At the close of the second conference day of the Mount Druitt B.L.A.C.K youth forum, round table conversations were conducted with all participants. Conversations were predicated around trending topics addressed throughout the 2-day forum and summarized in the following 3 themes:

- Justice and Community Development
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Education and Curriculum

At the close of the round table sessions, conversation summaries were produced along the 3 topic lines summarizing the groups' interpretation, sentiment and recommendations pertaining to each topic.

Structure

Session was held over a total of 60 minutes. Before session start, topics were announced and detailed to the wider group. The group was then encouraged to organize around 3 round tables depending on the topic conversation they most desired to participate in.

Dedicated scribes and facilitators were positioned at each topic table to guide and record table conversation as follows:

Table 1: Sustainability and Climate Change

- Facilitator/Scribe – Nathan Brennan

Table 2: Education and Curriculum

- Facilitator- Omid Tofighian
- Scribe- Diana Robinson

Table 3: Justice

- Facilitator/Scribe- Zachary Wone

Outcomes and Recommendations

Justice and Community Development

The topic of justice was formed on the basis of the groups understanding of the current Australian justice system as it applies to black youth and the subsequent impact on wider communities. Discussion points were addressed as follows:

- Incarceration
- Criminal Behaviour
- Truth and Fairness
- Freedom from oppression
- Privatization of current prison system
- Equal Opportunity





The group addressed the issues of unsupported youth within the NSW prison system with outstanding areas in:

- Cultural appropriate training for youth within the prison system in the ways of rehabilitation.
- Correctional staff and officers aren't invested or supportive of the rehabilitation of imprisoned black youth.
- The need for a more robust education system available to youth in prison including courses providing practical work skills.
- The need for a more robust mentorship programs including prominent figures from youth's respective communities.
- The need for more robust health programs that address holistic health rather than just treatment.
- Mobilization of youth to community development initiatives

Recommendations

- ✓ Address the privatization around the prison system and the use of minority youth as a commodity within the industry.
- ✓ Address the prison culture among black youth where living conditions within prison are favourable to conditions on the street.
- ✓ The need for community forum with the families of at risk youth. Figuring out a way of MOBILIZING and EMPOWERING families.
- ✓ Forming community relationships with local law enforcement.
- ✓ B.L.A.C.K mentorship program independent of government funding by where leaders of the community are frequently engaging in programs within prison.
- ✓ Actively conducting awareness programs within schools such as police awareness and legal literacy/basics.
- ✓ Working actively within schools and other youth organizations (e.g Street University) to promote youth events and initiatives. Look at forming a 10-minute promotional video (10 second social media clip).

Educating

The topic of education was broadly guided and introduced by the presentation "Why is my Curriculum White" presented on day 1 of the forum by Professor Omid Tofighian from Sydney University. Round table discussion was focused around the participants understanding of the current Australian education system and its disconnection from black youth as well as its perpetuation of colonial ideals as follows:

- School Compositions (from faculty to staff)
- Educations role in forming perceptions
- Cultural Misrepresentation
- Cultural Tokenism
- Objective Histories
- Globalization
- Advancing School Curriculums (technologically)





The group addressed the issues of an Australian education system (at all levels) deeply rooted in colonial ideology and actively perpetuating negative social and racial norms. Issues addressed included:

- Structure and composition of the current curriculum (i.e history, science, literature, social science etc).
- Looking at who administers the education system. Disparity between white and non-white education staff (both faculty and non-faculty).
- Looking at educational material used within the curriculum. There are currently no alternatives (e.g history text books, English literature etc).
- The changing educational environment in a modern age due to both technology and globalization.
- The mis/underrepresentation of non-white cultures and the use of tokenism as a means of pacifying dissatisfaction (e.g multicultural day).
- Alternative learning. Creating separate classes/programmes versus making significant changes to current subjects and courses.

Recommendations

- ✓ Conducting survey within NSW schools focused on the student's perception of how well they think their culture is represented in their school/curriculum. Will be effective in presenting any changes to the education system.
- ✓ Objective history to be taught to incorporate lesser known versions of history, particularly in Australian colonization and First Nations People.
- ✓ Avoid relying on tokenism for cultural diversity and rather making permanent structural changes within schools.
- ✓ The development of a pilot program within a participating school. Could be looked at per subject (e.g history, social studies etc), a new topic (e.g colonization, black history or slavery) or over all subjects.
- ✓ Look at making recommendations to the NSW board of education on alternative methods to diversify the curriculum. E.g alternative required readings and/or textbooks.
- ✓ Engage like-minded educators and active members within the current education system on how to implement tangible change.
- ✓ Work collaboratively within community to incorporate alternative knowledge within the current education system.

Climate Change and Sustainability

The topic of climate change was introduced to the forum by climate change activist Nathan Brennan. Round table discussion was centred on the lack of sustainable practices throughout the country and the subsequent dangers to black communities (particularly in the Pacific) due to climate change and other environmental factors. Discussion points were addressed as follows:

- Human Rights
- Renewable Energies
- Reinstalling Values
- Developing Networks
- Forms of Expression





Discussion on the topic of sustainability focused on varied cases noted throughout the country and abroad as well as the potential for developing effective networks.

- Development of alternative energy, particularly within the pacific (e.c levies on solar energy in Samoa).
- Acknowledgement and understanding of traditional sustainability practices of First Nations People.
- Mobilizing youth toward climate change and sustainability issues
- Having a space to continue discussion.

Recommendations

- Look at developing networks with established organisations currently engaged in climate change and sustainability awareness. Possible option is PYNC (Pacific Youth Network for Change).
- Look at connecting youth with relevant organisations.
- Main focus will be to find a space and platform where the discussion can be continued.

Conclusion

Whilst the B.L.A.C.K round table discussions provided a productive means of addressing the shared issues affecting black youth and communities in this country, it was unanimously agreed that the continuation of discussion and more so TANGIBLE ACTION beyond the two day conference was imperative. As a result, the creating of an organised Think Tank/Working group comprised of forum attendees and other like-minded community people was proposed. The newly formed group would share in a pool of knowledge, resources and energy in further discussing, planning and enacting imperative change in both black and the broader communities. At the concluding of day 2 of the B.L.A.C.K forum, ASSI.PJ president, Emelda Davis, requested a show of hands from attendees in indication of willing participants moving forward. All attendees present raised their hands in a commitment to ongoing change.

