

SHINING A LIGHT

on the Racism Faced by
American-born Black Families
in Cambridge

The Work of the
American-Born Black Outreach Team



The Community Engagement Team ©2016

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Cambridge, MA

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*These reflections are dedicated to the late
Renee Etienne, the first leader of ABBOT.*

INTRODUCTION

Our Hopes for the Reader

As we reflect on the American-born Black Outreach Team (ABBOT)'s work in Cambridge, MA, over the last eight years, the nation continues to struggle with issues of race, racism, and the challenges facing African American families. Police violence against Black Americans makes headlines on social media sparking protest by groups such as Black Lives Matter. Mass incarceration continues to skyrocket, disproportionately affecting Black families. Obama's final term as the first African American president of the United States is winding down.

Amidst this changing national context, ABBOT has steadfastly focused on exploring the issues affecting American-born Black families living in Cambridge through self-reflection, dialogue, and action. This document is directed to anyone who shares our goal of making cities welcoming and supportive environments for all. We present our experiences as a small working group as well as our experiences holding community-wide discussions on race and racism¹ (see Diagram 1 page 12). We have learned much from our own group processes, both the struggles and the successes, and hope that others can benefit from these lessons. We have produced six large networking events which have caused ripples of change throughout the City of Cambridge, and we are pleased to also share lessons learned from these events. Most of all, we hope that these reflections will inspire you to join us in an ongoing conversation about how to best welcome and support American-born Black families in Cambridge.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is ABBOT?

The American-born Black Outreach Team (ABBOT) reflects upon the last eight years of working to make Cambridge a more welcoming place for American-born Black families. As a small working group that is part of the City's Community Engagement Team (CET), which is funded by the City through the Department of Human Service Programs, we have been able to "shine a light" on American-born Blacks living in Cambridge and their unique challenges in utilizing the City's services and resources. ABBOT has also catalyzed conversations and institutional changes throughout the City that are aimed at better serving American-born Black families. Our education and outreach is framed within the context of individual and systemic racism that continues to have profound effects on American-born Blacks living in Cambridge and in the U.S.

ABBOT has determined that American-born Blacks have not "disappeared" from Cambridge, as is sometimes believed. We have also made a point to differentiate American-born Blacks, who have endured multi-generational oppression in the U.S., from recent Black immigrants. While all People of Color share the experiences and effects of racism in present day culture, the experiences and needs of people whose ancestors were enslaved here in the U.S. have a distinctly different inheritance.

While all People of Color share the experiences and effects of racism in present day culture, the experiences and needs of people whose ancestors were enslaved here in the U.S. have a distinctly different inheritance.

American-born Blacks are dealing with the centuries-old legacy of racist policies designed to silence their voices and marginalize or exclude them from resources. Thus, despite the continued inequities facing American-born Blacks, in areas such as wages, education, and health outcomes, many American-born Blacks do not engage with the available services. Through our focus groups, we have learned the stories of many American-born Black families who have come to distrust governmental systems, have had negative experiences with providers, and have faced interpersonal and institutional racism.

In addition to recounting some of the experiences of American-born Black families, this report includes reflections on ABBOT's own group process. We describe our self-exploration of racism, including an examination of White privilege and confronting our own biases.

We also explain the methods we use to facilitate meetings and make decisions in ways that allow all voices to be heard and minimize replicating structures of White dominance within our own group. We share the struggles we have faced and the lessons we have learned in trying to engage with American-born Black families.

ABBOT's primary vehicle for engaging with providers and City leaders is our "Shine A Light On It" networking events, which draw up to 100 participants each year. At these events, we have raised awareness about individual and systemic racism and have fostered dialogue on how to confront the resulting inequities for American-born Black families in Cambridge. We describe the evolution of these events and what we have learned from them. We also identify how ABBOT's work has sparked entities within Cambridge, such as the Department of Human Service Programs, the Public Health Department, and the 0-8 Council, to have conversations within their own organizations through the lens of racial equity.



Some of the lessons we have learned are:

- When collecting data, it is critical to validate the presence of American-born Blacks by making a distinction, whenever possible, between American-born Blacks and immigrant Blacks.
- Effective outreach to American-born Black families depends upon recognizing the racism that they experience due to the color of their skin, but also their struggles resulting specifically from the legacy of U.S. slavery.
- Outreach to American-born Black families and to the community at large cannot be done by one person in isolation; a support network is necessary.
- It is important to provide platforms or venues, such as the “Shine A Light On It” events and focus groups, from which American-born Black voices can be heard and amplified.
- Those of us who are White need to become aware of how White privilege operates.
- We all must educate ourselves about modern racism, including confronting our own biases and learning the history of oppression of Blacks in the U.S.
- An understanding of institutional racism is essential to addressing the challenges faced by American-born Blacks.

We encourage organizations and programs to use our report as inspiration and support for their own efforts to recognize, listen to, and partner with American-born Black residents, and to examine individual and systemic racial biases. In order to make Cambridge a more welcoming city, we invite readers to join us in continuing to explore how the legacy of racial oppression continues to impact American-born Black families and our ability to provide services to all.

What is ABBOT?

Mission

The American-born Black Outreach Team (ABBOT) is a working group of the Community Engagement Team (CET). The Community Engagement Team, a multi-agency collaborative, reaches out to underserved Cambridge families, connects them to community events and resources, develops community leaders, and supports agencies in working with a diverse community.

Model

CET reaches underserved Cambridge families through a team of CET outreach workers who are also community members. The outreach worker team consists of people from linguistic minority groups in Cambridge and from the American-born Black community. Outreach workers provide information to families about events and services in the City and work to engage families with City resources. They also provide programs and organizations with feedback on culturally appropriate practices, and they assist programs and organizations with outreach to underserved Cambridge families. The results of these efforts have provided CET with a wealth of information about best community engagement and outreach practices.



Goals

The Goals of the American-born Black Outreach Team are to:

1. Form partnerships with African-American families that have young children in the City of Cambridge in order to help them connect to resources and services.
2. Support the efforts of the American-born Black outreach worker to form these partnerships and contribute to the success of the outreach worker by generating new outreach techniques and ideas that take into account the particular impact of racism on American-born Blacks.
3. Through community collaborations, plan events and forums that provide opportunities for discussions about the impact that race and racism have on accessing services in Cambridge.
4. Engage members in learning and exploration about racism as an integral part of the success of ABBOT.

Activities

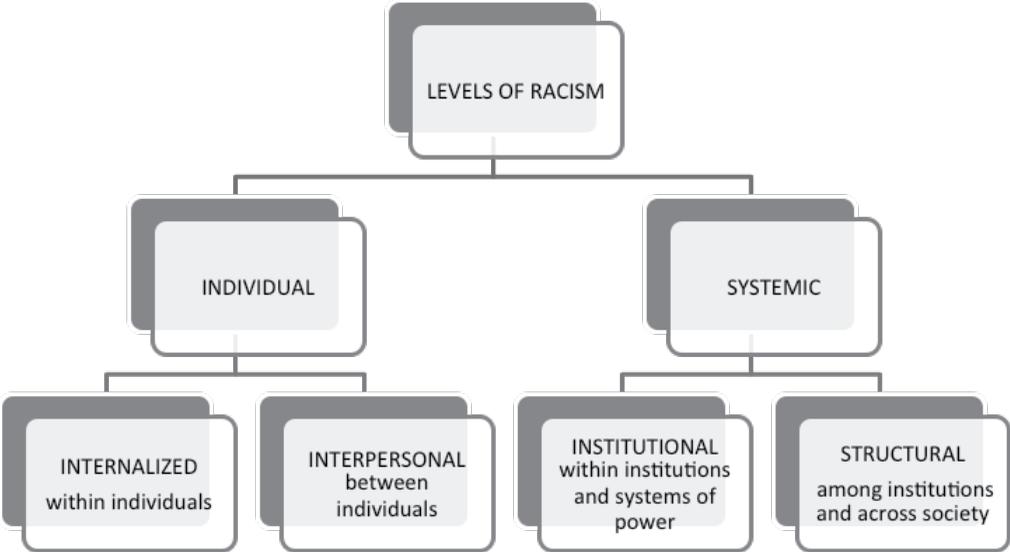
The above goals are carried out in three ways.

First, the outreach worker is charged with developing trusting relationships with African-American families in order to provide parenting information and workshops as well as to connect families to services and supports.

Second, through focus groups, surveys, and discussions with key stakeholders and families in the community, ABBOT has learned that racism continues to be a barrier for the African-American community regarding their knowledge and utilization of services. ABBOT has used this information to sponsor a series of “Shine A Light On It” networking events. These events facilitate discussions about race and racism in Cambridge and its impact on families, schools, and providers.

Third, ABBOT members educate themselves about race and racism in the United States by participating in talking circles, trainings, lectures, book groups and sharing articles.

Diagram 1 Levels of Racism



Adapted from Race Forward 2014



REFLECTIONS

How and Why CET's ABBOT Formed

The “Disappearance” of American-born Blacks from Cambridge

The formation of ABBOT was sparked in part by the changing demographics in Cambridge. According to Steve Swanger, one of ABBOT's founding members and Director of Resident Services at the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) from 1980-2013, when he arrived, the population of People of Color in the family developments was primarily comprised of African Americans and Puerto Ricans. That was still the case in 1984 with the opening of The Work Force, a youth development program, in which enrollment was well over 90% teenagers of color. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, however, Cambridge welcomed large numbers of Haitian and Central American immigrants, and many of those families found their way into public housing.

By the late-1990s and early 2000s, the Housing Authority noticed a distinct change in the demographics of The Work Force: nearly 50% were Haitian immigrants, while the percentage of U.S.-born, African Americans had declined to low single digits. These numbers seemed out of proportion to the number of Haitian families housed at the CHA. The information that was needed to research this phenomenon was obscured in the housing database by the fact that the CHA, in response to federal and state mandates, aggregated both Black residents from Haiti and American-born Black residents within the single category of African American.

To explore this phenomenon further, Steve looked at the demographics of Jefferson Park, one of their largest family developments and the one, for a variety of reasons, with the largest Haitian population. Lacking a more scientific approach, he counted the number of households listed as African American which had French-sounding last names. While the process was certainly not rigorous, the results nevertheless convinced him that something significant was happening: while nearly 50% of students in The Work Force were from Haiti, only 24% of the households in Jefferson Park were Haitian.

This change in the composition of the Black population served by The Work Force led the White providers to make a number of hypotheses: Perhaps the increasing migration of many Black families, and especially American-born Black families, from Cambridge to Medford and other suburban towns north of the City, had led to a decline in the number of Black families in Cambridge and, by extension, in public housing? Or perhaps the number of American-born Black students in the program had declined because as the number of Haitian students in the

program increased, the American-born Black students felt the program was no longer for them? There were tensions between the two groups, especially among teens, with frequent stereotyping and periodic eruptions at the high school and elsewhere.

Regardless of the reasons, the informal count at Jefferson Park clarified that there was still in fact, a population of non-Haitian, African Americans residing in public housing,

but they had been largely replaced within The Work Force by Haitian students. Moreover, while the numbers were somewhat less dramatic, in other Resident Services programs for adults and youth, there was a similar increase in comparison to other resident groups.

The primarily White administrative staff of the CHA discussed this issue internally and sought ways to understand and ideally rectify the imbalance. They also began to recognize that as two distinct populations, Black Haitians and American-born Blacks needed to be counted separately in terms of the numbers of Blacks being served. CHA was deeply committed to affirmative action and its goal of seeking to level the playing field for American-born Blacks, disadvantaged by a history of slavery and discrimination. The discovery, therefore, that their reporting to funders and policy-makers masked an inadvertent but nonetheless substantial renegeing on the agency's commitment to the American-born Black community, was both alarming and worthy of further investigation. This emerging understanding was a critical step in launching conversations between Steve and Carole Sousa, who later became the first leader of the Community Engagement Team.

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At the same time, the Community Learning Center (CLC), an adult education program, was also noticing a demographic shift in its population, with an increasing number of immigrant students and a decreasing number of U.S.-born students. In addition to The Work Force and CLC's grappling with changes in their participant demographic, Cambridge 0-8 Council members and other early literacy and parenting programs were discussing another concern: Cambridge was a city with an abundance of services for residents, but large numbers of immigrant and minority families with young children were nonetheless not receiving the support and services they needed.

In 2005, through the efforts of the Cambridge 0-8 Council and funding from an Early Opportunities Act Grant (ELOA), a steering committee made up of five partnering agencies was formed to address the needs and underserved interests of residents as well as the best ways for the partnering agencies to conduct outreach.

The main objective of the ELOA Steering Committee was to enhance community engagement by establishing a Community Engagement Team (CET). The CET was to conceive new means of outreach and information-sharing toward shaping a City-wide Community Engagement Plan.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of hard-to-reach communities in Cambridge, CET conducted focus groups and surveys, and Carole Sousa, the newly hired CET Leader, met with representatives of key organizations throughout Cambridge.

As CET collected data and information, it became apparent that in order to develop a successful and comprehensive Community Engagement Plan, we needed to understand two things:

- 1) the barriers that underserved communities in Cambridge face when trying to access information and engage in City services and
- 2) the successes and failures of previous outreach efforts.

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- 2) the successes and failures of previous outreach efforts.*

In CET planning meetings, members discussed developing a new model of outreach and engagement. Working groups and teams were organized to address barriers as well as to apply and assess new outreach strategies designed to engage immigrant communities. In meetings with Steve and the CHA, the question of the apparent drastic reduction of the American-born Black community from CHA programming led to a discussion of whether a similar team might be formed to increase access to services among American-born Black families. A team needed to explore the ways in which the experiences of this population were unique: unlike immigrant families, who needed to adapt to a new language and culture, American-born Black families were facing challenges due to the legacy of U.S. slavery.

In 2007, Renee Etienne joined Carole as Co-Leader of CET, and CET formed a team to look at partnering with the African-American community. The initial purpose of the Partnering with the African-American Community Team. The team was:



“...to interact with African-American families as a form of partnering is very important, because the African-American community needs to feel that one is not coming in to tell them what it is that they need or should do, but instead, someone coming in and saying, ‘Hello, I’m here to assist you.’”

This partnering should happen through building trusting relationships not only with African-American families, but also with the agencies/businesses and churches in the community.”

~ Renee Etienne, CET Co-Leader, 2007-2008

CET and the Partnering with the African-American Community Team continued to conduct research and information gathering. This work revealed that the American-born Black community in Cambridge, while smaller than it had once been, was still a substantial portion of the Cambridge demographic. CET learned that while language and cultural differences represent the largest barriers for immigrant families to engage in services, racism — both individual and systemic — is the biggest barrier for American-born Black families living in Cambridge.

Efforts to develop sustainable relationships with underserved communities and create welcoming environments for them in Cambridge programs and organizations were failing, in part, because providers had not fully examined and addressed these barriers. For example, failed outreach strategies ignored the effects racism had on Black families' willingness to trust and engage with institutions and programs.

In 2007, the Team held the first CET event that focused on outreach to African-Americans called, "Reaching out to the African-American Community," presented by Renae Gray, the Executive Director of the Boston Women's Fund and consultant for Visions, Inc. Fifty-three providers representing 20 different Cambridge agencies attended. The high attendance was a testament to both the strong interest that providers had in the topic, as well as to their desire to improve outreach to African-American families.

Failed outreach strategies ignored the effects racism had on Black families' willingness to trust and engage with institutions and programs.

In 2009, the Partnering with the African-American Community Team changed its name to the American-born Black Outreach Team or ABBOT, and Michelle Godfrey took Renee's place as CET Co-Leader. Under the leadership of Michelle, ABBOT began to focus on two areas of work: 1) serving American-born Black families and 2) sponsoring community discussions on race and racism, which ultimately became a series of events dubbed "Shine A Light On It."

Why the Term "American-born Blacks"

In April 2009, ABBOT held its first "Shine A Light On It" event to address the myth that with the end of rent control in Cambridge, most African-American families had moved out of the City. In preparation for this event, a lot of work was done to determine if this was true. In addition to finding out this was not true, we also learned how hard it is to gather accurate data about African-American families, primarily because of the way demographics are collected.

The limited number of "Race" options that can be checked off on Public Housing, School Department, or State and Federal forms meant that a lot of immigrant Black residents from Africa and the Caribbean checked "Black" on applications and forms.

To get more accurate information on race, we conducted interviews and cross referenced race, ethnicity, and language data. We presented all the data at the event.

CET and ABBOT learned from this experience that, in order to effectively engage African-American families, it was important to be specific. However, it was not easy for us to reach a consensus on exactly who did or did not fall into the group of people to whom we intended to offer family supports.

After much discussion and debate, CET and ABBOT defined this group of people as “American-born Blacks.” This title refers to a cultural group unique to the United States — the majority of whom are descendants of African slaves.

After much discussion and debate, CET and ABBOT defined this group of people as “American-born Blacks.” This title refers to a cultural group unique to the United States - the majority of whom are descendants of African slaves freed and provided U.S. citizenship in 1863 with the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. This group also includes people who have a generational history of Black oppression in this country and would commonly identify as English speaking, multi-generational citizens of the U.S.

This term is necessary because this group’s experiences are distinct from those of other American Blacks who were not born in this country, due to the systemic influences related to the legacy of U.S. slavery. The cultural group defined as American-born Blacks have the experience of having their U.S. citizenship defined by their race. After being released from slavery, there was little or no effort put forth by the U.S. government to help these new citizens participate in the membership of this country.

There was a surge of participation by these former slaves during the Reconstruction Era, just after the Civil War. During that time Black people were elected to political offices, opened businesses, and were allowed to own property and vote. However the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and the implementation of Jim Crow Laws soon established second-class citizenship for Black people through terrorism and segregation. Later, the Civil Rights Movement banished Jim Crow and segregation and replaced it with Affirmative Action laws in an attempt to level the playing field for Black people (and other minorities) in public and private arenas of the U.S. However, the persistence of racist attitudes,

practices, and policies continue to go unchecked in the U.S., nationally and locally, and have resulted in American-born Blacks becoming highly skeptical of and reluctant to participate in U.S. institutions and community services.

Why We Continue to Need ABBOT in Cambridge American-born Blacks are Still Here

ABBOT has had to address the persistent myth that most American-born Blacks moved out of Cambridge after rent control was abolished by a statewide referendum in 1995. ABBOT discovered that was not the case. Rent control had allowed lower-income renters to remain in Cambridge by keeping rent-controlled units more than 40% cheaper than market-rate units, on average. While there were many people of moderate means who were forced to leave Cambridge with the end of rent control, this was not so for many Blacks.

Blacks had—and continue to have—significantly lower incomes on the average (see Chart 1), and as a result, many were able to stay because they lived in public or subsidized housing. Thus the Blacks with the most education and income left the City for other housing options, while the most disenfranchised Blacks were the ones who stayed. There are still approximately 6500 American-born Blacks living in Cambridge.²

*There are still approximately
6500 American-born Blacks
living in Cambridge.²*



Historical Legacy and Current Racial Disparities in Housing, Income, Education, and Health

Over the last one hundred years, the composition and needs of the Black community in Cambridge has shifted and evolved. Cambridge remembers and celebrates prominent Blacks of the past, such as Maria Baldwin and W.E.B. DuBois, as well as those of the present day, including Harvard professors Charles Ogletree, Lani Guinier, and Henry Louis Gates. At the same time, however, the bulk of Black Cantabrigians – especially American-born Blacks – have often been marginalized in a city long known for its progressive thinking.

Cambridge is not immune or separate from the rest of society. While Cambridge is known for promoting equality and for its activism, it is a complex community where some of the most privileged people in the U.S. live side-by-side with families

living in poverty, with racial and ethnic minorities, and with people who came to this country as immigrants and refugees. In the most recent demographic trends, we see an increase in both the foreign-born population and in younger professionals moving to the City to work in the burgeoning biotech industry.³

... the data shows continuing disparities in housing, income, education, and health between all Blacks in Cambridge and the Cambridge population as a whole.

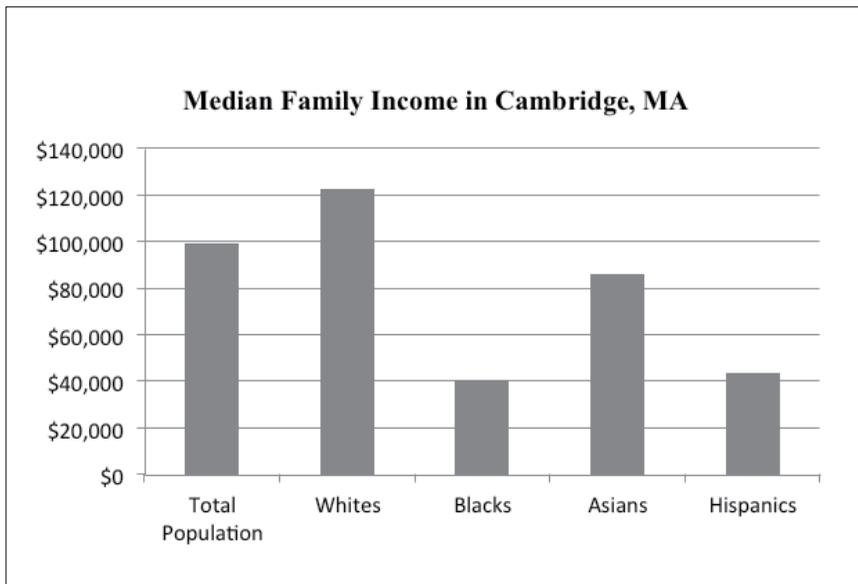
The fifth largest city in Massachusetts, Cambridge has a population of 109,694⁴, and the 2010 U.S. Census found that 66.6% of Cambridge residents are White; 11.7% Black; 15.1% Asian or Pacific Islander; and 6.6% classified themselves as some other race or a member of two or more races. The 2010-2014 American Community Survey data show that just over half (55%) of the Black population in Cambridge is American-born and 45% were born in another country including Haiti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Barbados, Jamaica, Cape Verde, and others.⁵

As we look at the current situation, the data show continuing disparities in housing, income, education, and health between all Blacks in Cambridge and the Cambridge population as a whole. While it is often difficult to pull out statistics for American-born Blacks separately from the category of “Black,” it is still instructive to look at the numbers for all Blacks in Cambridge.

Let us first look at housing. For more than 80 years, a variety of decisions by government and major entities such as Harvard University have pushed Blacks out of their homes – and sometimes out of Cambridge. In some cases, Blacks’ homes were bulldozed to be replaced by housing for Whites. Despite the passage of fair housing laws, it still took years for housing to become integrated. Today in Cambridge, 48% of the families living in public housing or receiving Section 8 vouchers are Black.⁶ According to Coldwell Banker Real Estate, those who aspire to own their own homes face the most expensive housing market in Massachusetts and an increase in home and condominium prices of 50 percent between 2011 and 2015⁷

Next we look at income, education and health. For the 2010-2014 period, all Blacks in Cambridge had a median family income of just \$40,640 per year, less than one third of Whites families who earn \$122,750 and less than half of all Cambridge residents who earn \$99,380.⁸ (See Chart 1.)

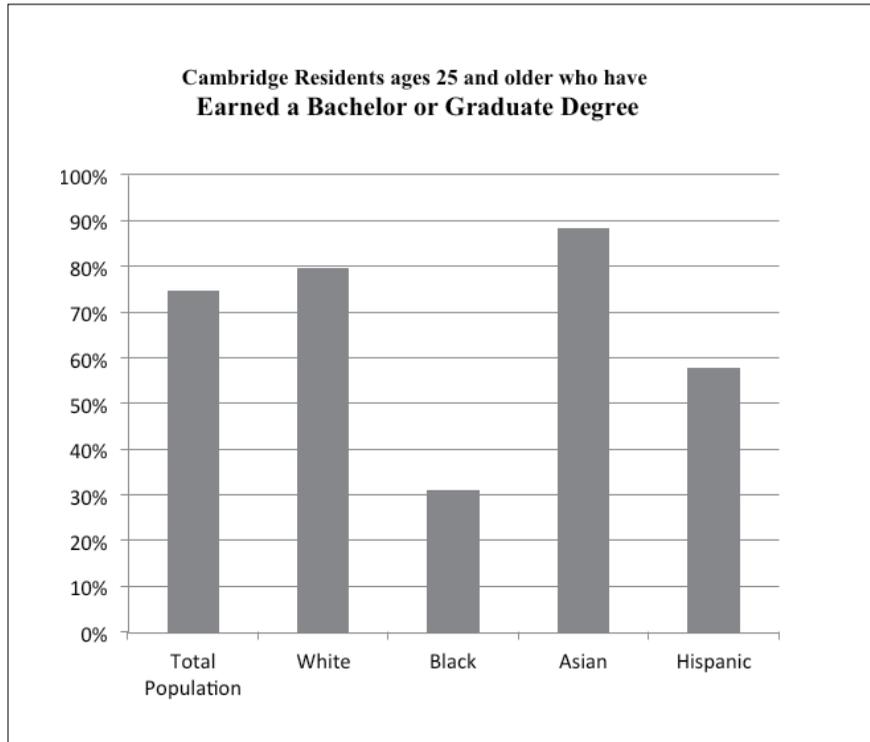
Chart 1



Source: American Community Survey 2010-2014

In terms of higher education, only 31% of all Blacks in Cambridge have a Bachelor's degree, while 80% of Whites do⁹. (See Chart 2.)

Chart 2

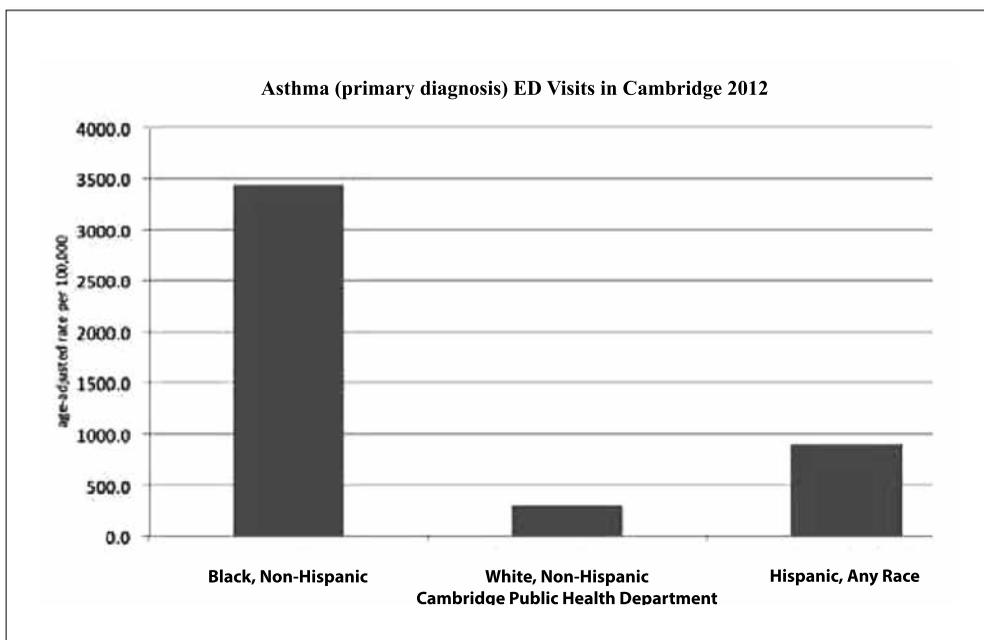


Source: American Community Survey 2010-2014

The disparities are also striking in the health of Black residents of Cambridge, who have significantly higher rates of diabetes, hypertension and asthma than do White residents.

In 2012, the number of emergency department visits for asthma for non-Hispanic Blacks was nearly three times higher than for Whites and Hispanics combined.¹⁰ (See Chart 3.)

Chart 3



Source: Cambridge Public Health Department

While immigrant Blacks as well as American-born Blacks have been affected by these disparities, we have been led to investigate the unique effects on American-born Blacks.

Individual and systemic racism combined with this nation's history has erected multiple barriers to equality and equity for American-born Blacks.

Focus Group Feedback: Ongoing Effects of Personal and Systemic Racism



The history and trends described above have led to the sense that American-born Blacks in Cambridge have not been welcomed, treated well, or had their needs met equally by all service providers and institutions. To explore how these trends impacted American-born Blacks in the City, ABBOT organized three focus groups between 2010-2012 among leaders, service providers and parents, led by some of ABBOT's American-born Black members.

In those focus groups, some key themes emerged and are summarized below:

- American-born Blacks (especially those whose families have lived here for generations) have been overlooked compared to other racial and ethnic groups in Cambridge and their particular cultural, historic needs have not been fully understood and recognized as different from Blacks from other parts of the African diaspora.
- Younger generations of American-born Blacks have not learned the history of their people's struggle yet; at the same time they see the lack of progress compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Therefore, they believe that they are less entitled to seek out and use programs designed for Cambridge families.
- There have been declines in formal and informal networks and supports within the American-born Black community, including churches, community organizations, and African-American based service providers. While social networks have broken down in the broader society, they were historically very important to the Black community because of the history of discrimination and segregation in this country going back to the nation's founding.

This decline has had a disparate impact on American-born Blacks, reinforcing the idea that others come to the U.S. and “make it,” but American-born Blacks are always “left behind.”

- American-born Blacks report being more easily discouraged when seeking help and hitting roadblocks. This seems to be based on a combination of not expecting that they can successfully overcome initial barriers due to past experience (their own or those of people they know), connected with a feeling of being judged or being ashamed, leading them to feel unwelcome in many programs.
- The most successful programs are reported to be legacy programs with a personal touch, where American-born Blacks have participated for generations, such as faith-based programs, the Mayor’s Summer Youth Employment Program (MSYEP), the Citywide Senior Center, and the Cambridge Community Center. For example, focus groups participants described MSYEP as a rite of passage in Cambridge which young people enthusiastically sign up for to work and gain experience, to make money, and because their friends participate and their older siblings, cousins, or parents did before them.

These experiences and perspectives reflect the impact of generation after generation of living with personal and systemic racism and seeing that despite the promise of equality, American-born Blacks remain disadvantaged and disenfranchised. This is the context in which we are working to make Cambridge a more welcoming place for American-born Blacks.



ABBOT's Group Process

Where are all the Black Members?

The original group of people gathered to work on issues facing American-born Blacks came together as a result of their association with CET. Little thought was given to the racial make-up of the group; however, in 2008 when Michelle Godfrey assumed leadership of ABBOT, people joined because of the intentional outreach efforts to increase American-born Black membership on the team.

As the group began to be intentionally gathered, a goal was set to have the team made up of at least 50% American-born Black people. The group had different ideas about who qualified for each 50% of the group. At one point the group was made up of 50% White and 50% “other”, with some members of ABBOT not having a clear idea of how they were being counted.

A significant barrier to reaching our goal was that the American-born Blacks who could have been potential members in the group did not have the authority, space, or time to commit to membership due to the demands from their employers and from personal responsibilities. One American-born Black participant stopped coming and stated that the work was “too painful” for her to spend time consciously thinking about. Recruitment of participants for the group were not held up to the multi-generational, U.S. born standard because the resources required, (paid time for outreach and research) to meet that standard, were not available. Though we have not yet met our goal, we still have had success in moving forward as a group, while we continue working to resolve this situation.



Self-Exploration and Our Own Racism

In addition to the composition of the group, we explored issues such as: targeting families who have had at least three generations in this country; defining the name of our target population; determining who was necessary and available to do the work of ABBOT; and understanding the entrenched racism that we had all been exposed to as lifelong residents of the U.S.

Exploring these challenging issues drove us to a realization: we needed to explore race issues inside of our group before we could responsibly provide support to the outreach worker, engage the American-born Black community in Cambridge, and raise the awareness of non-American born Black providers of services in the City.

We agreed to utilize professionals in the area of race dynamics in the U.S. as well as to use data and experts in the area of race disparities in public resource service delivery to educate ourselves on the problem. For example, we participated in the two-part racial equity training offered by the Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center and spent several meetings with the staff from VISIONS learning about “modern racism”¹¹ and applying the concepts to our own experiences.

We also read and discussed several books. (See “Resources Used by ABBOT” in Appendix.) In *The Warmth of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson, we read stories of the 20th century “Great Migration” of six million African Americans who fled the South for a better life in northern and western cities and the challenges they met along the way. In *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander, we learned how the U.S. legal system, through policies and propaganda, has created a caste system to replace the once legal segregation of Jim Crow. Alexander makes a passionate case for much needed change in our criminal justice system as part of the struggle towards racial justice.

Waking Up White by Debby Irving, broadened our ongoing conversations about White privilege by giving the entire ABBOT team a common platform on which to focus our conversations.

Our thinking and discussions on White privilege were shaped by Robin DiAngelo's concept of White fragility,¹² which (among other questions) asks why learning about the systematic disempowerment of People of Color, so often makes White people feel angry and threatened. Reading this article not only gave us a perspective on our own reactions and behaviors, but also helped us frame our networking event presentations more carefully.

We also found Derald Wing Sue's discussion of microaggressions¹³ useful, particularly as a way to build common language and understanding about everyday interactions. During this phase in our history, we came to see that each ABBOT member has aspects of their identity that are privileged and other aspects that are not. Each of us has been both the recipient and the perpetrator of microaggressions.

Throughout our work, but particularly at the outset, our meetings were often used to reflect on these presentations and readings, which helped us to build trust among this racially diverse committee as well as to prepare us to lead discussions at "Shine A Light On It" events.

The effects on members of ABBOT have been profound and ongoing. For the Black members of the group, race and racism are already a part of our daily lives whether or not we want to think about these issues. However, for the White members of ABBOT, our race is part of the dominant culture, which gives us the privilege to choose whether or not to think about race. For White members, being part of ABBOT has led us to confront race and racism in new ways.

We continue to find opportunities to learn about the insidious ways interpersonal and institutional racism work in our own lives, even when we are trying to be allies to our colleagues, friends and family members of color. We frequently remind each other that we are going to make mistakes, that the opportunity for learning is also contained in the mistakes we make, and that the possibility of making mistakes cannot keep us from doing the work.

Several White members, including those who had been involved in racial justice work before joining ABBOT, found that they became more self-conscious about what they said and did. Even though this was uncomfortable, it was a necessary part of the change process.

One White male member gives an example of when he went in for a major surgery. He was shocked to realize that he had made an unconscious assumption that his surgeon would be White, and when he discovered that the surgeon was Black, this ABBOT member hesitated briefly in questioning whether this man would be competent to perform the surgery. The ABBOT member was able to recognize this thought process and share it with other members of ABBOT.

Another member, a White woman, felt that *“being part of ABBOT rocked my confidence. I’ve always been deeply empathetic. If I know I cause someone pain, it weighs on me. Then to go through this process and realize that as much as I try to put myself in others’ shoes, that I miss things, I make mistakes. I may hurt a whole group of people’s feelings.”*

Despite these feelings, however, she believes it is necessary to have uncomfortable conversations, apologize and learn from the mistakes. She continues: *“At one point I became guarded – didn’t say much at ABBOT meetings. I quit asking questions because I was so terrified of hurting someone. But I realized that didn’t lead to progress. It’s good to think through things before saying them, but the only way to make systemic change is to keep learning, allow myself to be vulnerable, and keep putting myself out there.”*

“At one point I became guarded – didn’t say much at ABBOT meetings. I quit asking questions because I was so terrified of hurting someone. But I realized that didn’t lead to progress. It’s good to think through things before saying them, but the only way to make systemic change is to keep learning, allow myself to be vulnerable, and keep putting myself out there.”

So although those of us who identify as White can never experience being another race, the places in our own lives where we lack power and privilege can become windows into the experience of those whose identities we do not share.

Facilitation and Group Norms

Race, class, profession, gender, time living/working in the City, sexual orientation, country of origin, religion, age, culture, and ability all come into the room at every monthly ABBOT meeting. Addressing the goals of ABBOT requires expert facilitation, which we have found in our current Team Leader, Michelle Godfrey, a bi-racial (American-born Black and White) woman, a formerly long term resident of the City of Cambridge and a current employee of the City. She commanded the respect of all members from the start and continues to earn that respect with each meeting.

ABBOT was not going to follow mainstream White meeting norms or values...

From the very first meeting, it became clear that ABBOT was not going to follow main-stream White meeting norms or values - norms that often include an emphasis on holding to tight meeting agendas, lack of flexibility, hierarchical structure, individuality, and outcomes focused.

These values translate, even in groups with diverse membership, into White members dominating discussions and ultimately decisions. Instead, Michelle's facilitation style emanates from her understanding and experience of American-born Black culture. She has created a group structure that validates American-born Black decision making and group practices.

These practices place value on building interpersonal relationships, creating non-hierarchical structure where everyone's opinion is heard, a focus on process, and listening to people's experiences. By holding these values, ABBOT meetings help validate the experiences of American-born Black members and are essential for producing work that is authentic to the experiences of the American-born Black community in Cambridge.

As one ABBOT member shared, "ABBOT is the only meeting that I attend in the City of Cambridge where I can represent and articulate the needs of Black people without my expression being dismissed as personal and without being labeled as the 'angry Black woman' by my (most well-intentioned) White colleagues."

ABBOT relies upon a facilitation style that is upfront, direct, and fair. While there are many heavy issues processed that weigh differently on each member of ABBOT, the facilitator has managed to set boundaries and time limits for the necessary debates on various decisions that need to be made. Initially, the group suffered from members' poor attendance at meetings; in response to this problem, the facilitator raised the bar to expect regular attendance at meetings and 100% active participation in each "Shine A Light On It" event.

Some meetings and breakout groups at events are also facilitated by other members of the team using different techniques that help create a safe and structured environment for members to discuss difficult issues.

For example, we have used Restorative Talking Circles, which involve the use of a talking piece in order to create a non-hierarchical setting where all who wish to participate have an equal voice. Whoever is holding the talking piece (such as a stone or other small object) has the opportunity to speak or pass. When not holding the piece, members have the opportunity to listen to the voice of each other person in the room without responding directly. The piece may go around the circle several times.

Another technique we have used is racially defined affinity groups. As part of our discussion of a book called *Waking up White* by Debby Irving, we broke into these groups to provide spaces to discuss our reactions among members of our own racial backgrounds. We then came back together as a whole group for more discussion which was strengthened by our time in the separate affinity groups.

"ABBOT is the only meeting that I attend in the City of Cambridge where I can represent and articulate the needs of Black people without my expression being dismissed as personal and without being labeled as the 'angry Black woman' by my (most well-intentioned) White colleagues."

Another part of the group process has been to test out and play with different roles typically held by Blacks and Whites. For example, in deciding who should be the main representative of ABBOT at CET networking events, we asked: Is it important for a Black person to be seen in a position of power? Or is it more important that the responsibility of educating others about racism not always fall to a Person of Color?

The group has recognized the need for Whites to sometimes let go of traditional dominant roles, while at other times, to step forward to take responsibility for speaking about racism. During ABBOT meetings themselves, one member reflected that: *“I had to remind myself to raise my hand to speak. As a White male, I can tend to dominate meetings. Though I had been part of groups before with a hand-raising rule, in ABBOT, the notion of privilege became clearer to me. That maybe I felt more of a right to say what I wanted, when I wanted, because of my status. I became more respectful of the rule because I realized it allowed people with less privilege to speak out and have a voice.”*



Collective Decision Making

ABBOT meetings and activities are guided by the CET annual work plan. Using this plan as an anchor, the facilitator makes sure that all voices are heard on the issues at hand before any decisions are made. The facilitator spends time in between meetings talking with members about their opinions and concerns about decisions and building interpersonal relationships.

These efforts demonstrate to members, particularly American-born Black members, that their opinions are crucial to the decision making process. Consequently, ground work is laid for trust within the group. All members feel comfortable enough to express strong opinions and personal experiences without attacking one another personally or harming the group.

For example, the group debated how to best provide a forum at a community event for White people to address racism and White privilege. Some group members felt that a Whites-only group would be beneficial - that even if it made people uncomfortable, that was OK, or even necessary. Others in the group were not comfortable with the idea of intentionally separating people by race.

There was also concern that a Whites-only event would exclude People of Color who wanted to attend. Finally, a consensus was reached that the event would include racial affinity groups, publicized in advance of the event, in which most of the groups would consist of self-identified White people, and a couple of the groups would be for People of Color.

Even concerns that may seem trivial at first are taken seriously. For example, once the decision was made to have affinity groups, there was another discussion on where in the room to place the tables for the White groups and the People of Color groups.

Historically there are many examples of People of Color being marginalized – literally being placed in the background or off to the side. Knowing the challenges of the space where the event was to be held, we worked hard to arrive at an affinity group placement plan that would not repeat this oppressive history.

At times this process takes longer than we expect or would like, but we have agreed that sometimes it is necessary to slow things down for the sake of hearing all the voices at the table.

Part of the ethic of ABBOT is that every idea is entertained and that we work toward consensus, which is often, though not always, reached. At times this process takes longer than we expect or would like, but we have agreed that sometimes it is necessary to slow things down for the sake of hearing all the voices at the table. At other times, the facilitator needs to cut off the discussion in order to meet a particular deadline or keep to the work plan. Successful facilitation of this group requires a careful balancing act.

While everyone on the team agrees that the focus of our work is to partner with American-born Black families through the work of the outreach worker, we struggle with finding a balance between the work of self-exploration and direct service to the community. Michelle has warned us that, “We cannot be another group talking about race and racism at the expense of helping Black families.” Some of us have dedicated our personal and professional lives to social justice work and fighting for racial equity; others have come to the work through a dedication to help underserved communities receive the services they deserve.

“We cannot be another group talking about race and racism at the expense of helping Black families.”

Lively discussions of where and how ABBOT should spend its energy and time happen often at meetings. The positive result of these disagreements is not only the self-exploration work members have done, but also ABBOT’s sponsoring successful and provocative discussions about race and racism in the City, while, at the same time, supporting and

contributing to the success of the outreach worker by generating new outreach techniques and ideas that take into account the particular impact of racism on American-born Blacks.

It has taken time and patience to work through the many issues that have come up in the running of the group and to develop the group processes described above. As a result of these processes, trust within the group has been established, attendance has stabilized, and efforts to recruit American-born Black members continue. Each ABBOT event has not only been evaluated with excellent outcomes, but also in keeping with ABBOT values, has touched many individuals personally. We continue to view the group’s functioning as an ongoing learning process.

The Challenge of Engaging with American-born Black Families

Before ABBOT even formed, CET saw the need for an outreach worker to work with American-born Blacks living in Cambridge. The goal was similar to that of the other CET outreach workers who focused on specific immigrant families: to engage with families and connect them to services and resources in the community. However, we began to see that the role was unique in many ways.

Whereas recent immigrants to the U.S. came here for a better life, better education, or were fleeing a dangerous situation in their homelands, American-born Blacks had been in this country for generations. Whereas immigrant groups needed to learn a new language and culture and might not understand the systems of healthcare, government, and employment in this country, American-born Blacks spoke English and were already a part of American culture and systems.

The barriers that American-born Blacks *did* face were distrust of governmental systems based on hundreds of years of policies created specifically to marginalize and exclude them from full participation in the systems and resources that benefit other members of the community.

Despite their ability to speak the language, American-born Blacks have often experienced not having their voices heard. The outreach worker needed to build a very different bridge from that of her immigrant peers if she was to help her target group cross the divide that stood between them and the community resources she sought to make more available. Furthermore, she needed to provide convincing evidence that attempting to cross the divide this time would yield positive results.

The issues facing American-born Blacks are a result of generations of oppression. American-born Blacks have lived in a society where they have been systematically excluded from positions of power and have grown up without seeing leaders who look like them or who have had similar life experiences.

American-born Blacks have often experienced not having their voices heard.

Members of this community have a history of service providers not welcoming them and, in some cases, taking advantage of them. As a result of this history of systemic racism as well as the thoughts and fears among American-born Blacks passed down generationally, many American-born Blacks distrust service providers.

One of the first outreach workers we hired at CET left the position having had very little success in reaching out to the American-born Black community. Although she self-identified as African American, she had cultural ties outside of the U.S. and didn't share

or understand many of the experiences of American-born Blacks. This led us to look more carefully at the way Black people identify themselves and how data is collected on race. As mentioned previously, people who identify as Black are often all clumped together as "Black" or African Americans, a practice which hides the distinct ethnic, cultural, and economic differences among Black people.

American-born Blacks have lived in a society where they have been systematically excluded from positions of power...

Another challenge was that, unlike specific immigrant groups, there were not geographic clusters of African Americans in Cambridge. The outreach worker had to look for people in the community and was up against the myth that "there are no more African Americans in this city." Providers in the City did not readily provide information to the outreach worker about where to find African Americans the way they did about immigrant groups. And when the outreach worker approached African-American families themselves, they were cautious about sharing information to help identify others in their own community.

Furthermore, our outreach workers who were not parents did not have a direct connection to the programs and services that were being offered to families with young children; these outreach workers also did not have regular face-to-face contact with parents. We realized that in order to overcome these barriers, we needed an outreach worker who was a Cambridge parent and who more closely connected with the American-born Black community as we were defining it.

Another obstacle we faced in the beginning (and in the years since) has been the retention of outreach workers. Initially, we could only afford to offer seven to nine hours per week of work, which did not meet the financial and scheduling needs of many American-born Blacks. The high turnover of outreach workers meant that they did not have a chance to build solid relationships with community members which, in turn, had a negative impact on how effective the outreach worker could be.

The job of all CET outreach workers is two-fold: 1) to inform families about events and services offered in the City such as early childhood activities, food pantries, housing information, school events and 2) to help providers be more welcoming to communities we strive to serve. For the American-born Black outreach worker, that meant supporting providers in welcoming American-born Black families.

Some of the particular experiences that American-born Blacks have faced when interacting with Cambridge providers include:

- not being greeted by the provider
- experiencing a provider talking to the child and not the parent
- a provider's lack of respect for culturally different parenting styles

For example, an African-American parent wanted her child to get up from playing on the floor, but a provider said, "That's OK, she can play on the floor." Though the provider was well-intentioned in wanting to give the children some freedom, she was expressing middle class, White values which were not shared by the parent. By not being aware of this difference, the provider unknowingly undermined the parenting style of the Black parent.

Finally, some families have had a negative history with service providers and/or systems and don't want to go to an event or to an agency where this experience might be repeated. The bad experience might have happened to them as a child or have been something they heard about from their parents. That history has a lingering effect. For example, John, an African-American grandfather who was very involved with his three small grandchildren was excited to be invited to a Reading Party by the outreach worker.

However, John cancelled at the last minute because of his feelings related to the suffering he experienced in his own childhood from facing challenges in reading development. He felt racism had prevented him from receiving the help he needed, and he faced stigma attached to his learning obstacles. He overcame his problem, but being invited to a Reading Party brought up those painful memories.

In summary, we have learned these lessons about community engagement with American-born Blacks in Cambridge:

- We need to clearly specify exactly whom we are serving by defining American-born Blacks.
- Anyone hired to do outreach to American-born Blacks must have an understanding about the deeper issues of oppression facing American-born Black families.
- Outreach must include the understanding that racism is ongoing and that the work is not just about cleaning up the past.
- Anyone doing outreach needs to live within the community that they are focusing on and start reaching out through their own networks.
- We need to be vocal with service providers about the barriers facing American-born Black families, even as these direct discussions about race may seem unusual or awkward.
- Community outreach cannot be done by one person in isolation; a support network is necessary. For the CET outreach worker, ABBOT must play a prominent role in providing a broader support network.
- We need to educate providers through individual feedback and through our networking events.

Accomplishments and Impacts

Evolution of “Shine A Light On It” Events

The Community Engagement Team’s commitment to help service providers be more welcoming to underserved communities in Cambridge is primarily carried out through networking events held three times a year. These gatherings are attended by 70-100 providers. Since 2009, one event each year has been organized by ABBOT. These annual events take the form of facilitated discussions on race and racism and are titled “Shine A Light On It.”

CET Networking Events are planned based on feedback from several sources: CET outreach workers who report on the barriers their communities face when trying to access services, providers who have attended previous events, and focus groups of American-born Black community residents and leaders.

“If American-born Black families most in need of our services still live in Cambridge, then why aren’t we seeing them in some of our programs? What stands in the way of American-born Black residents utilizing services?”

The first “Shine A Light On It” event was held in April 2009. That event addressed the persistent perception that most American-born Blacks moved out of Cambridge after rent control was abolished by a statewide referendum in 1995. ABBOT dispelled that myth by presenting and explaining the demographic data.

While it is true that many people, including American-born Blacks of moderate means, were forced to leave Cambridge with the end of rent control, many Blacks of lower means were able to stay.

The April 2009 event raised some compelling questions for providers and ABBOT. “If American-born Black families most in need of our services still live in Cambridge, then why aren’t we seeing them in some of our programs? What stands in the way of American-born Black residents utilizing services?”



The next event was held in December 2011 and attempted to help providers examine those questions. ABBOT brought in Donna Bivens and Paul Marcus, an interracial team from Community Change, Inc. to facilitate the event. The video “Race, the Power of an Illusion” provided a strong example of the functioning of institutionalized racism through regulations and practices that privileged Whites and excluded American-born Blacks from access to home ownership.

Between that December 2011 event and a May 2012 event, ABBOT conducted a focus group of community residents and leaders to further understand why some services were not being utilized by the American-born Black community.

Paul and Donna were invited back to help facilitate the May 2012 event where focus group results were presented. (see pages 24-25 “Focus Group Feedback”) for a full description of focus group results.)

A key message from the May 2012 event was that some American-born Black City workers felt racism existed within their workplaces. Specifically, a number of Black City employees who attended the event reported that they had been overlooked for career advancement opportunities and that racism played a role in their relationship with White supervisors.

Discussions from the December 2011 and May 2012 events and information gathered from the focus groups made it clear to ABBOT that racism was at the core of the issue of underrepresentation by American-born Blacks among the clientele of some local service providers.

As this realization gained momentum, service providers requested that ABBOT provide more forums where racism could be discussed and examined on multiple levels including internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural.



In June 2013, ABBOT brought in VISIONS, Inc.— a diversity and anti-racism training organization— to help us look at what we could do as individual service providers in the context of modern racism. Next, in February 2014, ABBOT asked members of the Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center to talk with us about how they made systemic changes to address racial equity through the lens of public health.

The ways in which White privilege plays a role in generating racist attitudes, judgments and decisions emerged in the February event, and participant feedback overwhelmingly requested that the next step involve a more in-depth exploration of this difficult issue.

Cambridge is known as a progressive and forward thinking city. Every City employee is required to attend a training on “Valuing Diversity.” Many White service providers consider themselves champions of equality, while others would even describe themselves as social activists. However, because racism is so objectionable to well-meaning White providers, they often divert the racial focus by maintaining that other injustices are just as important.

For example, when racism is brought up as a problem in our organizations and programs, the discourse often turns to a focus on “classism” as an equally serious challenge. It is easy to make class differences a focal point given the income disparities in Cambridge; it is not uncommon for community programs in Cambridge to have children from low income families participating alongside children from very wealthy families. While this disparity is important, a focus on it can diminish the importance of the impact of racism, in and of itself.

In some ways, the environment in which most Cambridge service providers work is well described by Robin DiAngelo in her article “White Fragility.” She explains that for White people,

We have organized society to reproduce and reinforce our racial interests and perspectives. Further, we are centered in all matters deemed normal, universal, benign, neutral and good. Thus, we move through a wholly racialized world with an unracialized identity (e.g. white people can represent all of humanity; people of color can only represent their racial selves).

Challenges to this identity become highly stressful and even intolerable.... Not often encountering these challenges, we withdraw, defend, cry, argue, minimize, ignore, and in other ways push back to regain our racial position and equilibrium. I term that push back white fragility.¹⁴

In our meetings, ABBOT members discussed the challenges of bringing up the issue of White Privilege to an audience of primarily White liberals in a deep and meaningful way. We asked ourselves, how would White providers respond to an event that asks them to consider the possibility that their pride in being anti-racist White people has led to a blindness and avoidance of the racism experienced by Black co-workers? Or that “White fragility” not only hinders their ability to promote racial equity, but also contributes to a culture of racism in their workplaces?

Furthermore, how do we help White providers make the connection between their unconscious racism and the perception by many American-born Black residents that local programs and institutions are White–dominant and unwelcoming?

In June 2015, ABBOT held a “Shine A Light On It” event with the goal of having a conversation about White privilege. It was decided that White members of ABBOT should take the lead on this event. The White Co-Leader of CET co-moderated the event with a White member of ABBOT who has expertise facilitating trainings on cultural and racial awareness.

Providers were organized into racial affinity groups, which were facilitated by ABBOT members. The film *Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible* was used to spark small group discussions among participants. Sixty-three providers attended the event. About one third identified as People of Color. Participants reported positive feedback and wanted ABBOT to sponsor more similar events. One participant wrote: *“Continue the conversations. Host the same event or a similar one again, and again, and again so that others can become part of the conversation. I went back to my agency, and I think there are many others who would take part if it were offered again.”*

In 2016, CET created and distributed a survey to over 600 providers to find out if CET Networking Events, including “Shine A Light On It” are relevant and useful to them. Data collected show that providers value and want Networking Events to continue, and participant feedback will be used to plan future Networking Events. A number of respondents commented specifically on the value of “Shine A Light On It” events.

Below are a few quotations from the survey on how providers felt that the events gave them information that supported their work.

“I approach each day, action I take, speech that I speak, with a more conscious lens around race and white privilege. I still make mistakes, and I am more able to recognize those mistakes and have the uncomfortable conversation around correcting those mistakes.”

“[I am] much more conscious of implicit assumptions; more likely to ask questions rather than assume; more committed to serving diverse needs.”

*“**Shine A Light On It** events helped me to be more aware of the language I use and helped me think of the other person’s past history.”*



Timeline

“Shine A Light On It” Events

▶ April 2009

Identifying Demographic Differences within the Black Community and Thinking about Intentional, Successful Engagement

Presenters: Michelle Godfrey, Lauren Leikin, Sarcia Adkins, Henry Lewis, Yvonne Gittens, Steve Swanger

▶ December 2011

Learning from the American-born Black Experience of Systemic Racism, Part 1

Presenters: Michelle Godfrey, Allyson Allen, and Community Change, Inc. Consultants Donna Bivens and Paul Markus.

▶ May 2012

Learning from the American-born Black Experience of Systemic Racism, Part 2

Presenters: Michelle Godfrey, Allyson Allen, and Community Change, Inc. Consultants Donna Bivens and Paul Markus.

▶ June 2013

Examining Modern Racism and the Impact on American-born Black Residents’ Utilization of Services in Cambridge

Presenters: Emily Schatzow & Richard Pinderhughes, Visions, Inc.

▶ February 2014

Presentation by the Jamaica Plain Equity Collaborative

Presenters: Tom Kieffer & Abigail Ortiz

▶ June 2015

Dismantling Racism: A Conversation about White Privilege

Presenters: Melody Brazo & Carole Sousa

Conversations on Racism Throughout the City

In addition to the impact that “Shine A Light On It” events have had on providers who attend the events, they have helped to spark conversations about race throughout the City. Some indication of the effect of ABBOT’s work can be seen in the number of formalized conversations about racial barriers and institutional racism that have taken place across the City in recent years. Participants in ABBOT events have begun to ask for more nuanced conversations about race in their own workplaces and professional groups.

“Forty percent of professionals and forty percent of supervisors are People of Color, but the history of racism still impacts our institution and we have to look at that. We have work to do – individually, interpersonally, and as a department.”

*Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager
for Human Service Programs*

Over the last four years, the Healthy Children’s Task Force (HCTF) and the 0-8 Council, both comprised of members from municipal and private agencies across the City, have devoted significant meeting time to looking at the constructs of race, privilege, and the institutional impact of racism on their work and in their workplaces. The City’s Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) raised the question of why, as they were serving more immigrants, were they not seeing more American-born Blacks in their programs?

The Cambridge Health Alliance, through the work of the Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) has focused on how their own attitudes and assumptions about race impact their work. In addition, for the last two years the Cambridge Public School Department (CPSD) has been exploring how to support an increased level of racial and cultural competence among all of its educators, school and district leaders, and staff.

DHSP first became involved with ABBOT when concerns were raised about the perception that there were many People of Color employed in the department but few in leadership roles. CET and ABBOT Co-Leaders were invited to the DHSP Leadership Team to present and discuss the actual data. As a result, the Leadership Team realized that although they had previously done some work around race, more was needed.

“We are reasonably diverse at the leadership level,” says Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager for Human Service Programs. *“Forty percent of professionals and forty percent of supervisors are People of Color, but the history of racism still impacts our institution and we have to look at that. We have work to do – individually, interpersonally, and as a department.”*

In 2014 with prompting from ABBOT, DHSP and CPHD invited the Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center Collaborative (SJPHC) to a joint Leadership Team meeting in order to discuss how the SJPHC is addressing racial health disparities by shifting beyond a focus on individual health interventions to a focus on the social determinants of health. This shift requires systemic interventions that address the causes of disparities as well as the effects on individuals.

In discussing the impact of the presentation, Claude-Alix Jacob, Cambridge’s Chief Public Health Officer, notes: *“We’re becoming more intentional [in our approach], recognizing the resources and preparing for conversations on health equity and social injustice by developing a “health equity lens” to support our work on the ground.”*

ABBOT subsequently invited the presenters back to present at a “Shine A Light On It” event, this time to make the same presentation to a wider audience, including representatives from both public and private agencies. Sparked by that presentation, conversations about how institutional policies and visions uphold the legacy of racism continue throughout the City.



These trainings and conversations about racism led DHSP to make some specific changes in their programs to be more welcoming to American-born Blacks. For example, in their employment program which serves 18-35 year olds, they made efforts to target their outreach by connecting with organizations, such as the Cambridge Black Pastor’s Alliance and the Men of Color Task Force, which were already linked to American-born Blacks.

They also asked their own outreach worker to go to the physical locations where American-born Blacks tended to spend time, such as the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House.

Another example is related to the DHSP Baby University (Baby U) parenting program which offers educational programs for parents and their young children. In the first year of the program, Baby U received an influx of immigrant families. The staff did not want to repeat the pattern they had seen with other agencies in the City in which services that had historically been serving American-born Blacks were being primarily used by immigrants.

“...we’ve not systemically looked at everything we do through the lens of racial equity. The work of ABBOT has supported the push for the Department to use this lens.”

*Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager
for Human Service Programs*

In addition, the staff were concerned that some American-born Black families perceived Baby U as an immigrant-serving program that was not welcoming to American-born Blacks. Baby U responded to this concern by deciding to limit the number of immigrant families accepted into the program and committing to a 50-50 enrollment balance that would make it clear that the program was welcoming to both immigrant and U.S.-born families.

Though they had to turn away some families under this new policy, they felt it was important to change both the perception and the reality of bias. They also decided to run the program out of the Fletcher Maynard Academy elementary school, located in the Port community of the City, because the school was identified as being welcoming to the American-born Black community.

As Semonoff explains, *“Over the years, at DHSP we have designed and delivered our own diversity training which addressed both individual and institutional racism, but we’ve not systemically looked at everything we do through the lens of racial equity. The work of ABBOT has supported the push for the Department to use this lens.”*

Another City entity that has been heavily influenced by ABBOT's work is the 0-8 Council. The Council meets five times a year and brings together childcare providers, parents and others who work with young children to promote the healthy development of families and children throughout the City. In 2013, based on the information presented by the SJPHC, the Council began to investigate how to use the social determinants of health as a model for understanding the social determinants of educational success.

For the next three years, all meetings were devoted to developing "a racial equity lens," which, once developed, could be used to understand and evaluate early childhood practices and policies. Presentations at meetings included getting beyond the fear of talking about race, looking at the effects of White privilege, understanding microaggressions, and hearing about how some agencies were implementing a racial equity lens.



The work of developing this lens was complicated. Because the group meets infrequently and is open to anyone who feels included in the mission, participation in meetings varies.

Some participants were worried that a continued focus on content that was not directly related to early childhood and that required uncomfortable cross-race conversations might dissuade attendance, but instead attendance has remained steady since the beginning of this endeavor.

This fall the Council began using its racial equity lens to examine the meaning and role of play in early childhood education. Noting that families from some cultures see play as an activity which is separate from learning, and thus do not want to send their children to school so they can play, this lens has led members to deeper conversations about privilege and the culture of power.

For instance, there are many ways to describe the type of learning that allows children to develop an understanding of the world through exploration and experimentation. Terms such as exploratory learning, project based learning, and expeditionary learning all describe settings where students are encouraged to cultivate their curiosity and understanding by exploring the world around them and could easily be used in place of play in this context. So who decides that “play” is the best term to describe this type of education? Whose culture and values does this language support?

To answer these questions the Council has relied on the writing of Lisa Delpit¹⁵ and Cheryl Greer Jarman¹⁶, using the work of both authors to inform our discussions and to develop scenarios that reflect real-life situations encountered by early childhood educators. Using scenarios has allowed members of the Council to practice implementing the language and concepts discussed in our meetings.

Feedback from participants indicates that these conversations have changed their thinking and have brought about changes in their work.



Listening to Black Voices to Effect Change

American-born Black voices are not always heard in the City's events and planning processes. Our own "Shine A Light On It" events are attended by mostly White providers. Service providers who plan programs for their communities often leave out American-born Blacks in their focus groups, or if they do include them, may not be attuned to hearing the messages Blacks have to share.

CET, including ABBOT, provides education and technical assistance to providers to help them develop skills and capacities to be more inclusive of these voices. For example, when the Community Development Department began work on a City-wide planning process, CET offered to help bring voices of underserved communities to the table by organizing focus groups. CET worked with the Department to prepare the facilitators to listen to American-born Black voices.

Because of the painful history of development and Black communities in Cambridge, some Blacks carry a lot of emotions about this topic. In one instance a facilitator was fazed by the emotions of a person speaking, and thus forgot to write down the content of what they said. An ABBOT member was in attendance and was able to make sure the information got recorded.

In Phase Two of the City-wide planning process, ABBOT met with staff from the Community Development Department and their consultants to impress upon them the importance of acknowledging that as a City department that supports development, they share responsibility for some of the painful history of development and Black communities in Cambridge.

In other examples, CET has organized focus groups for the Cambridge Public Health Department to help them gather input for the Cambridge Community Health Improvement Plan. That Plan now includes a section on Health Equity and Social Justice. CET has also helped Hubway, the bicycle sharing program, to reach out to the American-born Black community to find out what barriers existed to their riding bicycles and fully utilizing the program.

“Initially, I was part of CET, and I was concerned about the difficulties the outreach worker was having reaching American-born Blacks. I felt strongly that we needed to do something about it. In 2008, I became Co-Leader of CET (as part of my new job at Center for Families.)

As an African-American woman, this work felt very personal to me - it was my own community - but if it hadn't been part of my job, I might have quit ABBOT.

It was frustrating that people weren't coming to meetings, and I was worried about promising things that weren't going to happen.

But now, seeing the hard work and commitment that folks have put in, I wouldn't give it up for anything because I feel like we are staying the course and making progress in the City.”

Michelle Godfrey
Co-Leader of CET and ABBOT



Lessons Learned

As ABBOT continues to address the needs of American-born Blacks in Cambridge and educate the community about individual and systemic racism, we are learning and growing in our own understanding and awareness.

Our annual “Shine A Light On It” events have become a cultural institution in Cambridge. For some providers it is the only place in their professional lives they have to talk about race and racism.

We are always learning from the results of these events. After each event, our own experiences at the event as well the feedback we get from participants, via online surveys, provide valuable information, which we use to inform the planning of future events.

Both ABBOT and CET members make sure to leave time in our meetings to discuss this feedback and allow it to shape our next steps; thus planning becomes an organic process. In this way, there is a back and forth dialogue between ABBOT, the wider provider community, and City leaders that keeps us connected to the needs and growth of those we are trying to serve.

Having made continual learning an integral component of our work, we would like to share some of the overall lessons we have learned thus far to help others in their own efforts to do similar work.



Validating the Presence of American-born Blacks

The presence and needs of the American-born Black community is often obscured by demographic information which does not separate out American-born Blacks from Black immigrants. This has policy implications, particularly for any community in which there has been substantial recent immigration from the Caribbean and/or Africa. Conflating American-born Blacks with Black immigrants can lead providers to be complacent about meeting their affirmative action efforts, when in fact social justice is not being served to the American-born-Blacks.

It is important to dig deeper in order to validate the very existence of American-born Blacks within our communities and to discover the issues that are relevant and in some cases, unique, to this population. We have done this by specifically defining “American-born Blacks” as distinct from the more general term “African Americans” and by gathering information through surveys of providers, focus groups with community members and providers, and verbal feedback from outreach workers.

In order to accurately interpret this information, we have found it important to educate ourselves in several areas including:

- the historical context of American-born Blacks living in Cambridge
- the legacy of slavery and racial oppression of Blacks
- current analyses of racism and White privilege.

There are many resources available for this type of education such as books, videos, speakers, and discussion groups (see Resources).



Amplifying the Voices of American-born Blacks

It is critical to include the voices of American-born Blacks in this work, yet we have struggled to attract and retain American-born Blacks into our own team. This difficulty is due to a variety of factors such as the painfulness of discussing racism and the disproportionately smaller number of American-born Black professionals who have the freedom and authority in their jobs to take time off to attend meetings or designate the meetings as part of their work. However, with persistence, we have made some progress in this regard and continue to reach out to American-born Black professionals in the community.

Our efforts to attract and support an American-born Black outreach worker are also ongoing. We have learned that this position requires someone who is personally connected with American-born Black families in Cambridge and who has the broader understanding of the historical and racial issues affecting these families. At the same time, we have realized that ABBOT must support this worker more fully than we have in the past and help local providers to become more aware of the needs and barriers facing American-born Blacks.

Specifically, we can:

- 1) introduce the outreach worker to local service providers so that they may connect with one another
- 2) invite the outreach worker to share with the team the barriers that are preventing American-born Blacks from fully utilizing local services and work on ways to reduce or eliminate these barriers and
- 3) celebrate the successes that the outreach worker has in the community.

By specifying that one of the CET networking events every year will be a “Shine A Light On It” event, we have developed a platform on which to present Black voices and to focus specifically on race, racism, and the issues facing American-born Blacks. In addition, by maintaining strong relationships with providers and agencies throughout the City, we have been able to encourage and influence the outreach to and conversations with American-born Blacks.



Confronting Our Own Biases

As members of ABBOT, we recognize that we too are subject to the same individual and institutional biases as the rest of the community. We acknowledge that we have made mistakes and have our own learning curve to doing this work; yet we have persevered in the face of our own imperfections. We hope to continue learning from others doing this work and to also serve as a model to those who want to take on these challenges; we don't want fear to immobilize people from taking action on these important issues.

"[The ABBOT focus group] was a lively and informative discussion, where many of us walked away with the understanding that there is a "gap" in communication of what services are available to our families. I was glad to be able to participate in that focus group and have since been involved in other meetings. And I have encouraged other fellow Cantabrigians to participate in "community" meetings."

– Cambridge Resident

For these reasons, it is essential to take responsibility for our own learning so that we can be as effective as possible. In addition to seeking out specific resources such as books and speakers, we have had to be open to experiencing our own personal growth, which at times, can be painful. We have also acknowledged within our group that conflict is part of the process, and the process cannot be rushed.

Understanding Systemic Change and White Privilege

We initially recognized the problem of American-born Blacks feeling unwelcomed as a problem for the American-born Black community. While this is a necessary initial response, it is insufficient; we have learned that we must also reach out to White allies in the community.

Many agencies are interested in taking on the challenge of addressing racism and barriers within their programs, but need help with the process. In order to affect the structures and policies that underlie and perpetuate racial barriers, it is imperative that we include White providers and people in positions of power as part of our work.

We have tried to convey the necessity of dismantling both individual and systemic racism. It is important to provide multiple entry points into the conversations about how racism functions and how individual and systemic racism differ and yet perpetuate each other. We see that it is often easier to focus on interpersonal bias rather than institutional policies, perhaps because an individual's behavior seems easier to identify and change than that of an entire institution.

However, institutional systems perpetuate the structures that work against change and can lead individuals to believe that they are powerless. Thus it is important to address both systemic and individual change. For those of us who identify as White allies and continue to benefit from a system of privilege, we must continually build our understanding of how racism works, recognizing this as a long term ongoing process.



Conclusion

In our efforts to make Cambridge a welcoming community to all, it is essential that we address the issues facing American-born-Blacks. There is no cookie-cutter formula for doing this, and ABBOT's approach is not the only way. We do want to stress, though, the importance of thoughtfully creating space and time within organizations for service providers to: listen to the voices of American-born Blacks; talk about issues affecting American born-Blacks; and explore how these issues impact the providers themselves, both individually and institutionally.

Attempts to address the topic of racism, which is fraught with a long and complicated history of injustice, are never easy. However, this process of exploration is a critical piece in reaching out to and partnering with American-born Black families.

As ABBOT continues to do this important work, we hope that the reflections we have shared here will inspire and support others to take their own steps forward to address racism and to make Cambridge a more welcoming City to all.



End Notes

¹ ABBOT uses a model of racism developed by the organization Race Forward and introduced to us by Abigail Ortiz.

It identifies four levels of racism:

Level 1) internalized Level 2) interpersonal

Level 3) institutional Level 4) structural

The first two levels constitute “individual racism,” and the second two levels constitute “systemic racism.” See <https://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/moving-race-conversation-forward>

² 2010-14 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Micro Sample (PUMS) as analyzed by IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota, <http://www.ipums.org>

³ Rachel Kaufman, “Cambridge is Working on an Inclusive City Road Map” March 17, 2016. Next City. <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/cambridge-inclusive-planning-new-city-master-plan>

⁴ 2014 U.S. Census estimate, <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/2511000>

⁵ 2010-14 American Community Survey.

⁶ Cambridge Housing Authority 2016.

⁷ Kaufman

⁸ 2010-14 American Community Survey

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Cambridge Public Health Department’s Division of Epidemiology & Data Services from information found in the Massachusetts Community Health Information Profile (MassCHIP) April 13, 2016

¹¹ For more on “modern racism” see Valerie Batts.

“Is Reconciliation Possible? Lessons from Combating Modern Racism” <http://visions-inc.ipower.com/Is%20Reconciliation%20Possible.pdf>

¹² Robin DiAngelo. “White Fragility.” *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3.3 (2011): 54-70. Web. 2 Mar. 2016.

¹³ Derald Wing Sue. “The Manifestation of Racial, Gender, and Sexual-orientation Microaggressions.” *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010. 3-20.

¹⁴ Robin DiAngelo. “White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard to Talk to White People about Racism.” *The Good Men Project*. April 9, 2015. <http://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/white-fragility-why-its-so-hard-to-talk-to-white-people-about-racism-twlm/>

¹⁵ Lisa D. Delpit. “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People’s Children.” *Harvard Educational Review* 58.3 (August, 1988): 280-98.

¹⁶ Cheryl Greer Jarman. “The Culture of Play: A personal perspective,” in *Play: A Beginnings Workshop Book*, ed. Bonnie Neugebauer (Redmond, WA: Exchange, 2007).

Appendix

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Resources Used by ABBOT

General

- Alexander, M. (2010). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.
- Banaji, M. and Greenwald, A. (2013). *Blind spot: Hidden biases of good people*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Batts, V. (2005, January 31). Is reconciliation possible? Lessons from combating modern racism. <http://visions-inc.ipower.com/Is%20Reconciliation%20Possible.pdf>
- Coates, T. (2015). *Between the world and me*. Melbourne, Victoria: The Text Publishing Company.
- Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280-299. doi:10.17763/haer.58.3.c43481778r528qw4
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- Irving, D. (2014). *Waking up white: And finding myself in the story of race*. Cambridge, MA: Elephant Room Press. National Center for Cultural Competence.
- Jarman, C.G. The culture of play: A personal perspective. *Play: A Beginnings Workshop Book*, ed. Bonnie Neugebauer (Redmond, WA: Exchange, 2007).
- McIntosh, P. (1989). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. <http://nationalseedproject.org/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>. [Article first appeared in *Peace and Freedom Magazine*, July/August, 1989, pp. 10-12, a publication of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Philadelphia, PA.]
- Pranis, K. (2005). *The little book of circle processes: A new/old approach to peacemaking*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.
- Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation. (2014, January 22). Moving the race conversation forward. <https://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/moving-race-conversation-forward>
- Wilkerson, I. (2010). *The warmth of other suns: The epic story of America's great migration*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Wing Sue, D. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Films and Ted Talks

Adelman, Larry, series prod. (2003). *Race, the power of illusion*. San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel. <http://newsreel.org/video/RACE-THE-POWER-OF-AN-ILLUSION>

Ted Talks: Bryan Stevenson

Stevenson, Bryan. (2012), March). Byran Stevenson: We need to talk about injustice [Video file https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice

Training Materials

Harvard Family Research Project. (2015). Create your own Case Toolkit: Building your family engagement skills and knowledge. <http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/professional-development/create-your-own-case-toolkit-building-your-family-engagement-skills-and-knowledge>

Project Implicit .(2011) [An online research test that helps people identify their “blind spots” around culture and race.] See <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

Abbot Timeline of Key Events

2005

Community Engagement Team (CET) is established.

2007

CET event, “Reaching Out to the African-American Community” presented by Renae Gray.

- CET hires its first outreach worker focused on American-born Black families.

2008

CET members participate in a “Cultural Competence Inventory Check List” survey and organize the Welcoming Network Pilot to examine systemic changes needed in order to reach target communities.

- CET forms Partnering with the African-American Community Team.

2009

Partnering with the African-American Community Team changes its name to American-born Black Outreach Team (ABBOT).

- Michelle Godfrey assumes leadership.
- ABBOT dispels the myth that most American-born Blacks moved out of Cambridge after rent control was abolished.
- ABBOT event, “*Shine A Light On It: Identifying Demographic Differences within the Black Community & Thinking About Intentional, Successful Engagement*” presented by: Michelle Godfrey, Lauren Leikin, Sarcia Adkins, Henry Lewis, Yvonne Gittens, Steve Swanger

2010-2012

ABBOT conducts focus groups of community residents, services providers, and community leaders to ask: “*What Stands in the way of American-born Black residents utilizing services and programs in Cambridge?*”

2011

ABBOT Event, “*Shine A Light On It: Learning from the American-born Black Experience of Systemic Racism, Part 1*” presented by Michelle Godfrey, Allyson Allen, and Community Change, Inc. consultants Donna Bivens and Paul Marcus.

2012

ABBOT event, “*Shine A Light On It: Learning From the American-born Black Experience of Systemic Racism, Part 2*” presented by Michelle Godfrey, Allyson Allen, and Community Change, Inc. consultants Donna Bivens and Paul Marcus.

- Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) invites ABBOT to DHSP Leadership Team to present and discuss feedback and data from “Shine A Light On It” events.
- Healthy Children’s Task Force (HCTF) and the 0-8 Council, both comprised of members of municipal and private agencies across the City, devote meeting time to look at the constructs of race, privilege, and the institutional impact of racism on their work and their workplaces. Continues through 2016.

2013

CET members cite the work of ABBOT as one of two top priority areas for CET.

- ABBOT works with Visions Inc. to explore what individual service providers can do in the context of modern racism.
- ABBOT event, “*Shine A Light On It: Examining Modern Racism and the Impact on American-born Black Residents Utilization of Services in Cambridge*” presented by Emily Schatzow & Richard Pinderhughes of Visions, Inc.

2014

ABBOT event, “*Shine A Light On It: “Presentation by the Jamaica Plain Equity Collaborative*” presented by Tom Kieffer & Abigail Ortiz.

- With prompting from ABBOT and other CET members, DHSP and Cambridge Public Health Department invite the Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center Collaborative to a joint leadership team meeting.
- ABBOT participates in restorative talking circles lead by two ABBOT members who are trained facilitators. ABBOT reads *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving and uses racial affinity groups internally.

2015

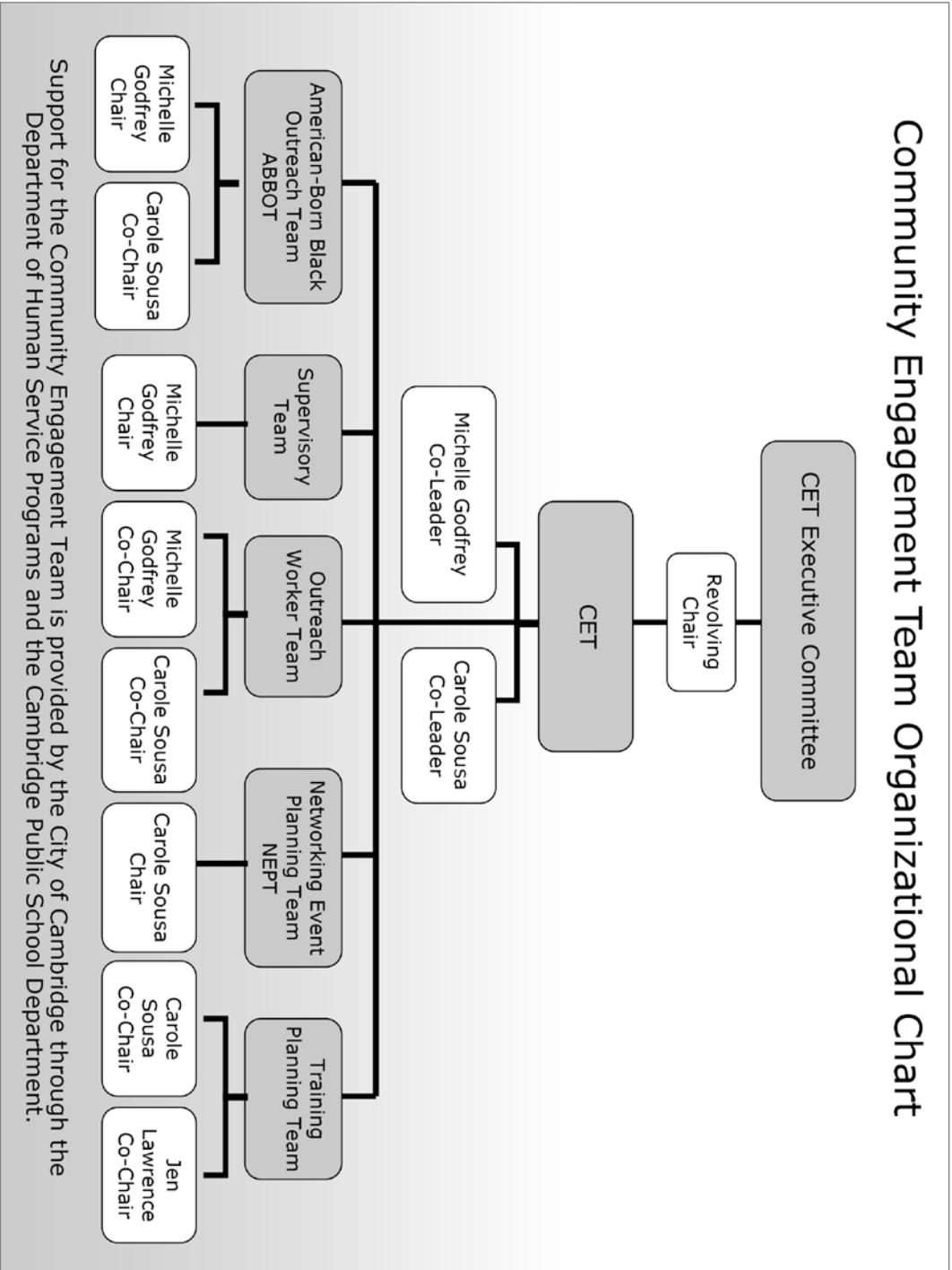
ABBOT event, “*Shine A Light On It: Dismantling Racism: A Conversation about White Privilege*” presented by Melody Brazo & Carole Sousa

2016

ABBOT helps the Cambridge Community Development Department to convene a focus group of American-born Black residents to inform Envision Cambridge, a City-wide planning process.

- ABBOT holds its own focus groups with American-born Black community residents and stakeholders to assess the efficacy of ABBOT’s work.

CET Organizational Chart





CULTURAL COMPETENCE INVENTORY

Organizations and programs that strive toward cultural competence are welcoming to a broad range of diverse communities and engage in culturally competent activities on every level of the organization's structure.

According to the National Center on Cultural Competence, culturally competent organizations/ programs:

- *have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.*
- *have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities they serve.*
- *incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, service delivery and involve systematically consumers, key stakeholders and communities.*

Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period. Both individuals and organizations are at various levels of awareness, knowledge, and skills along the cultural competence continuum.

Where on the cultural competence continuum is your organization/program? How welcoming is your organization/program to a broad range of diverse communities? What work do you still have to do? Complete this inventory checklist to help you find out.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE CHECKLIST:

This checklist is divided into three areas concerning cultural competence:

1. Organization/Program Management,
2. Hiring, Staffing, and Training, and
3. Service Delivery

There are a total of 25 statements. Please read each of these statements and circle the answer for how much you agree or disagree, on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1=Strongly Disagree and 4=Strongly Agree. If you are not sure, or the statement does not apply to your organization, please circle either Not Sure or Not Applicable. Then do the average score for each section of the inventory, which will help you choose what to work on.

ORGANIZATION/PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

1. The organization/program has a mission statement that proclaims its commitment to culturally competent and anti-bias practices.

1
Strongly
Disagree

2
Disagree

3
Agree

4
Strongly
Agree

0
Not Sure or Not Applicable

2. Cultural competence is embraced at the Director and Board level which allows supervisors to implement and support specific cultural competence initiatives and activities.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

3. The Board of Directors or Advisory Board reflects the diversity of the community the organization/program strives to serve.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

4. Managers reflect the diversity of the community the organization/program strives to serve.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

5. The organization/program regularly conducts multicultural professional development activities so that staff can fully participate in creating a welcoming environment at the organization.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

6. Funds are earmarked in the organization's budget to support the development of a welcoming environment.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

7. If groups, teams, and/or employees are assigned to review and monitor multicultural policies and initiatives they have clearly measurable goals that are tied to the organization's objectives in recruitment, retention, promotion, leadership development, and community involvement.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

HIRING, STAFFING AND TRAINING

8. The organization/program actively recruits employees that reflect the diversity of the community it strives to serve.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

9. The organization/program actively recruits outreach workers from the diverse communities it strives to serve.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

10. Those responsible for hiring and human resources in the organization/program are aware of how culture can influence communication styles.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

11. The organization/program regularly examines whether it is retaining a diverse workforce.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

12. The organization/program retains a diverse workforce.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

13. New employee orientation includes a discussion about the benefits of cultural competence and creating a welcoming environment at the organization/program.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

14. Volunteer orientation includes a discussion about the benefits of cultural competence and creating a welcoming environment at the organization/program.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

15. Coaching and mentoring on both cultural competence and anti-bias practices are available to all employees.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

16. Workers feel comfortable openly discussing with each other differences such as dress, language, and cultural practices.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

17. The organization/program regularly networks with other organizations regarding cultural competence.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

SERVICE DELIVERY

18. The organization/program provides a welcoming first impression so that the communities the agency strives to serve feel comfortable coming to the organization for services.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

19. Receptionists, intake workers, and other staff are trained to treat clients with sensitivity to their culture.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

20. Receptionists, intake workers, and other staff are given the time to treat clients with sensitivity to their culture.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

21. Receptionists, intake workers, and other staff are aware of how culture can influence communication styles.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

22. The organization/program's intake procedures provide for building trusting relationships with clients from the communities the organization/program strives to serve.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

23. Service delivery practices are designed to meet the needs of clients from the communities the organization/program strives to serve.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

24. The organization/program solicits client feed-back from the communities the organization/program strives to serve.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

25. The organization/program uses client feed-back, from the communities the organization/program strives to serve, to inform practices.

1	2	3	4	0
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	<i>Not Sure or Not Applicable</i>

THANK YOU!

Community Engagement Team

Community Engagement Team Products

ORDER FORM

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I would like _____ copies of *Shining a Light on the Racism Faced by American-born Black Families in Cambridge: The Work of the American-born Black Outreach Team*

These products were produced by the Community Engagement Team which is funded through the City of Cambridge Department of Human Service Programs and the Cambridge Public School Department.



The American-Born Black Outreach Team



Back row: L to R

Brian Corr, Carole Sousa, Melody Brazo, Albert W. Pless Jr., Michelle Godfrey

Front row: L to R

Ellen Wolpert, Chandra Banks, Nicole Meehan, Steve Swanger, Priscila deCalvache



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