

UCLA Young Black Changemakers Study

Sharing & Discussion
with
Community Coalition
April 23, 2021

Laura Wray-Lake &
Dominique Mikell

Presentation Materials:
<https://www.uclaybc.com>





Laura Abrams, PhD, UCLA



Mariah Bonilla, UCLA



Elena Maker Castro, UCLA



Elan Hope, PhD, NC State

Who We Are



Dominique Mikell, UCLA



Victoria Millet, UCLA



Jason Plummer, UCLA



Sara Wilf, UCLA



Laura Wray-Lake, PhD, UCLA

Why We're Here

- Present findings from interviews with young Black changemakers in Los Angeles.
- Get feedback from experts (YOU) to improve our work.
- Give you insights into the strengths of this organization.



Why We're Doing the Research

- To challenge dominant narratives about Black youth in research.
- To learn from the voices and experiences of young Black civic leaders.
- To inform organizations that serve Black youth.
- To strengthen local and national investments in communities of color.



How We Will Use this Research

- Publish academic papers and present at academic conferences.
- Write summaries of findings for organizations and community groups.
- Present and report to AmeriCorps funders and national audiences.

What We Wanted to Know

How do Black youth become civically engaged?

What helps Black youth sustain their civic engagement?

Here's what we asked

- Tell me about some of your civic activities and how you are engaged.
- Walk me through your own journey of becoming civically engaged.
- What is unique about civic engagement for Black youth?
- How does being Black matter for your civic engagement?
- What other identities do you hold that connect to your civic engagement?
- Tell me what this current moment of political action means to you.

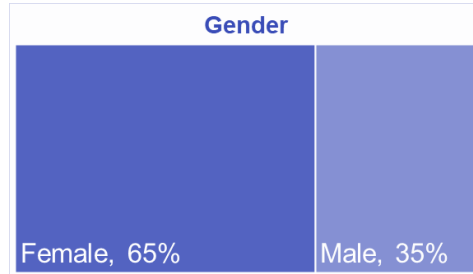
Who We Interviewed

43 Black Youth in LA

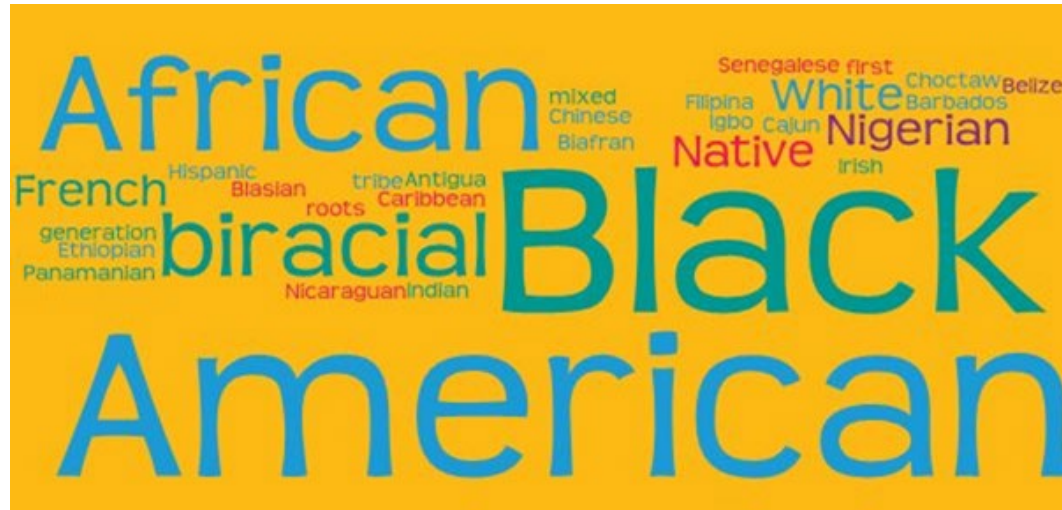
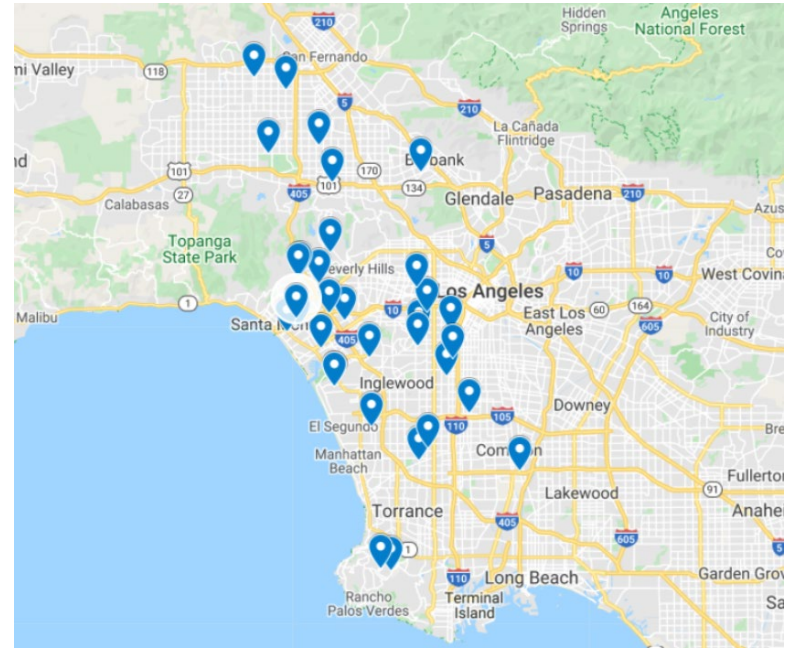
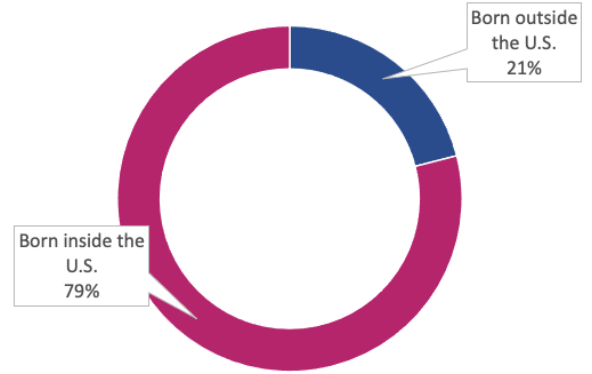
..from 13 different orgs

..37 high schools

..interviewed remotely



Immigrant Background



Focus for Today:

- 1 Youth's Journey to Civic Engagement
- 2 Black Identity and Civic Engagement
- 3 Making Lasting Change for the Black Community



What youth say

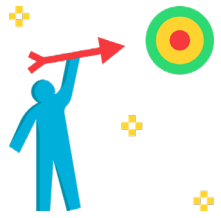


What orgs can do



Youth's Journey to Civic Engagement:
What Youth Say

Youth develop their deeper purpose and passion through experiences of civic engagement.



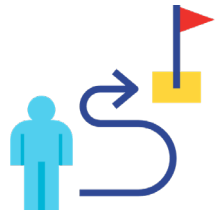
“

So when people ask like, ‘Why did you get involved?’ I’m like, “To be honest, I really just got involved because it was food, they take us home, you know, it was just the whole good little packet.’ But then I’m like, No, like, that’s not really it...It’s really important to kind of invest in where you come from because literally what’s happening, like, if you don’t invest in your own community, it’s kind of like having somebody else tell your own story.

- Unique

Youth’s Journey to Civic Engagement:
What Youth Say

Some youth seek out opportunities that align with their passions.



“

So in the ninth grade, I was struggling to find...a passion...something at my school that I was really passionate about getting involved in. I had a few extracurriculars here and there...but neither of those causes were active enough for me at that time. So when I found [School Club], I was really interested in the mission about empowering women and other menstruators and making sure that people have access to what they needed to stay clean and healthy. I'm actually a person who has had my menstrual cycle for a very long time and have faced struggles with access at school. So the whole objective and the mission of the club is something that I was actually pretty passionate about. So when I went to my first meeting, and I saw how passionate that the President was about what she was advocating for. It really drew me in... Through my...two and a half years in the club, I have become the Vice President and the advertising coordinator, so I been really involved with the like, hands on stuff that we do, and just the initial mission and how valid and how pressing that it was, really got me involved.

- Mia

Families and peers often encourage youth to get engaged and connect youth to opportunities.



“

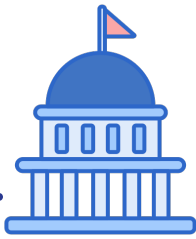
Both my parents are teachers. And both of them worked with primarily Black and minority communities with minority students. And so, a lot of their job, aside from like normal teacher duties, is to kind of help these students like realize their worth. And realize that they can achieve like really great things. And so...[I] kind of want to follow in their footsteps a bit and help people like realize their worth, realize their potential.

- Camille



Youth's Journey to Civic Engagement: What Orgs Can Do

Organizations play a role in creating opportunities for empowering moments that sustain engagement.



“

It was going to Capitol Hill and sitting with the senators and talking to him about how he felt about where we lived, or how he felt about education or basically just in seeing how he felt about young Black people. How we can make a difference.

- Jen

They [My civic actions] lead to change because I get educated in things that are affecting my community, I find out ways I can change it. And I can take the information and I can teach it to somebody else, and then they can teach it to somebody else. And that way, it just spreads. And then I feel like if everyone knows about something, it could change like that.

- Cory

Youth's Journey to Civic Engagement:
What Orgs Can Do

Organizations can create opportunities for youth to get involved early and stay engaged into adulthood.



Getting involved early with parents: *I'd say it probably started...when I was very, very young, because I'm originally from [another state] and my mom is part of Delta Sigma Theta. And so, in their chapter..., they always, always, volunteer. I would go with her to some of, like, the volunteer opportunities.*

Keeping youth as they go through college and beyond: *They [the org] are so giving, like, even after you've graduated or whatever, you could come back and get a job, they'll hook up. I feel like I'll be one of those people that I can come back to [org] and be like...I'm a [program] alumni. Boom, like, I'm back, I'm back...If they know that people even after college gon still come back because they just know...that these people is really dedicated to the work even after they program was over. And I felt like I should be able to go back.*

Youth's Journey to Civic Engagement:
What Orgs Can Do



Black Identity and Civic Engagement:
What Youth Say

Youth have strong feelings of pride and love for the Black community that drives their engagement and desire to do things for the culture.

“*I feel like I'm representing a whole entire race, and I'm representing a whole culture and all of these people who feel like they don't have a voice or can't make a change in their community. When I am civically engaged, I feel like I'm representing them, and I try to make them, make us proud, so I think that really makes me be more determined and persistent to try and make a change.*

-Na



Youth wanted to be heard and recognized as Black _____ youth.

“

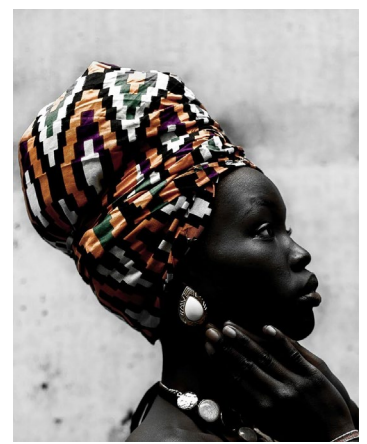
I feel like I have to work twice as hard not only because of my race but because I am a female and because, um, we're not recognized or, um, thought of first.

- Bree

“

I can see the change, or be the change...I have yet to see a Black person or a young Black person or a young, Black female to make a change in this community.

-Jen





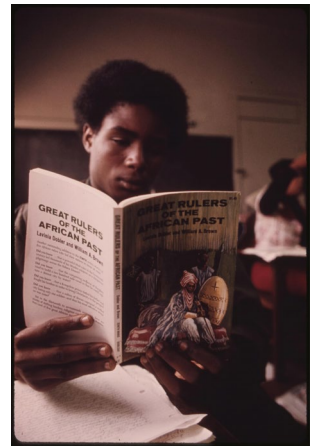
Black Identity and Civic Engagement: What Orgs Can Do

Create opportunities to celebrate and learn about Black identity.

“

*I have people at my school and people at [org], who are like, 'No, it's you know, it's not a bad thing to be Black. It's like, **it's beautiful to be Black**. Like, you know, all these problems, these things happening right now. It doesn't mean, you know it's bad to be Black.' That's basically what I'm learning. That's what I'm getting from these people.*

- Quinn



Create opportunities to connect with other Black people.

“

*Seeing like all these other Black kids from different grades talking about the shared experience that we have that, you know, like no one can really relate to except them. **It's like super empowering and it's nice to have a safe space.** So, I want to like strengthen that community.*

-Tsehai





Making Lasting Change for the Black Community: What Youth Say

Improving conditions for the Black community and achieving racial and economic equity drive youth to be engaged in:

- Correcting misconceptions
- Educating non-Black people about racial injustice
- Challenging systemic inequities
- Creating lasting change for future generations
- Lifting up the Black community



Making Lasting Change for the Black Community:
What Youth Say

Correcting misconceptions

“

We're just tryn' to make sure we're seen as equal instead of how the rest of history paints us as aggressive or overly dramatic as we've been said to be.

- Soleil

Educating non-Black people about racial injustice

[There] was literally a whole movement that was about to happen and versus people being engaged by the movement. What happened versus even saying anything to me. Saying, like, "Okay. Well, I don't understand it," and whatnot. I was like, "Are you serious?" And then they're saying, "Oh, I'm speaking out," and then maybe they'll change their profile picture to a black screen, but then if you click their profile page and you view their story, it's stuff of them out having fun with their friends—hint—while we're in the middle of a pandemic. So, ugh. It just kinda made me mad, but I'm not saying that's for all of my friends who I had.

- KJ

Making Lasting Change in the Black Community:
What Youth Say

Challenging systemic inequities



(on equity in schools):

I want to be able to have the same opportunities as everybody else. And I want people in my younger generation status [to have the] same opportunities too. I don't want us to go through all these budget cuts and we not have books and all this stuff. I want to have the same opportunity. So we have a better chance at doing what we want to do in the future. - Quinn

Creating lasting change for future generations

Everybody else that's protesting outside, they're fighting for the younger generation or my generation or whatever, to be in a world where things are equal. So I feel like it's our duty to carry the torch and pass it on to future generations. And in the midst of carrying the torch making more differences.

- Layla

Making Lasting Change in the Black Community:
What Youth Say

Lifting Up the Black Community


“

I think we also have more of a duty to our own communities. Because like in America, usually we're not going to get the help that we need. We're not going to get the assistance we need from like, the government and city officials. **They don't see us. So we have to see ourselves. We have to help our own people. Because no else is gonna help us.** And I mean, of course, there will always be some non-Black people who help in Black communities, but a lot of times they have their own agendas. **And so I think as a Black person, it's kind of my duty and like our duty to lift up our own community .**

- Camille



Making Lasting Change in the Black Community:
What Youth Say



Making Lasting Change in the Black Community: What Orgs Can Do

Support Critical Dialogues on Coalition Building



“ I’ve been thinking a lot about the struggles that my grandparents fought [and] have carried over into now. and how you know, we’ve been talking a lot about, like, allyship and how all the sudden we’re seeing a lot of, um, nonBlack people show up in different ways, um, and how that was so pivotal to the Civil Rights Movement... I’ve just been thinking a lot about how this is going to differ from our history going forward.

- Sarah Vaughn

Making Lasting Change in the Black Community:
What Orgs Can Do

Guard against Cooptation



“ *It's finally our turn to get what we need and you guys are just coming in and trying to step over us, as Black people... So it was just like, I was just like I just give up. Its' not that I give up it's more, I'm gonna wait and find something that I can actually fight for, and actually have a voice and that's not really trampled by anybody else that doesn't need to have a voice.*

- Quinn

Be a Space for Shelter and Joy

“

I think that's part of the reason why we did join was because it's for... Black families specifically. So I think that definitely had a big factor... Seeing all these Black families come together [with the same goal] makes me feel happy. -Mea



Making Lasting Change in the Black Community:
What Orgs Can Do



Email: wraylake@ucla.edu
Website: www.uclaybc.com

