

# Advancing Anti-Racism in Public Libraries for Black Youth in Canada

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## ABSTRACT

A critical community-based study exploring Black youth experiences in Canadian public libraries and community-based youth programs. Participants were youth, aged 13 to 24, in London that do not often use public libraries and parents of Black youth. Data were drawn from semi-structured interviews with youth and caregivers. An arts-based qualitative tool was also used with youth as an age-appropriate method of expression and verification. The study sought to: understand why some youth use community-based programs instead of libraries and if this relates to experiences or perceptions of anti-Black racism; identify programs that help youth navigate structural challenges and opportunities for libraries to support them; and understand what motivates youth and caregivers to seek library and/or community-based programs. Public libraries were identified as a safe community space and youth feel comfortable visiting and using library services. However, they identify structural concerns (e.g., lack of belonging, performative inclusion, etc.) as barriers to participation. Black representation, identity-affirming programs, and motivational staff are key recommendations for public libraries that arise from this study.

## ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Public libraries; Young adult services; Community engagement; Social justice; Critical librarianship.

## AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Anti-racism; Black youth; Public libraries; Canada

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