

The Importance of Community

The communities and neighborhoods where adolescents spend time also offer promising avenues to support positive growth and resilience in the face of racism, offering places of belonging and safe exploration for youth.

Community involvement (such as volunteering, advocacy, club membership) is one key context in which adolescents come to feel purpose and believe that they matter. Establishing a sense of purpose in adolescence promotes resiliency and increases well-being by facilitating identity formation. Having a sense of purpose acts as a buffer against daily stressors and protects against the negative effects of poverty. Black adolescents who feel that their lives have purpose and meaning may be less negatively impacted by daily experiences with racism.

For Black youth and their peers, communities are also places where adolescents can get involved in anti-racism campaigns and other types of activism and advocacy to work against racism in a way that promotes their healthy development. Moreover, while this type of community involvement can promote resilience among Black youth facing racism, it can also encourage anti-racism and action among other peers, adults, and policymakers in the broader community. Supporting youth involvement in anti-racism advocacy would yield positive effects for all of us—not just adolescents.



The following research-based recommendations can help support positive development for Black youth in communities:

- **Funders:** Increase resources for community organizations committed to supporting youth activism and other activities that create space for Black adolescents to cultivate their sense of purpose and contribute to their communities.
- **Community-based Organizations:** Build staff capacity through training and ongoing support to reduce turnover and increase sustainable adult-youth relationships.
- **Community-based Organizations and Universities:** Develop or strengthen partnerships for training and supporting youth development program staff in using evidence-based best practices to meet the needs of Black adolescents.
- **Youth:** Engage in community-based programs that support your capacity for social action; share these opportunities with other youth and take advantage of social media platforms to communicate your message and involve others in the work.