

“We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends.”

- Mary Mcleod Bethune

Why is the engagement of Black girls¹ important?

- Identification and dismantling of harmful policies and practices
- Black girls with lived expertise are able to enhance programming by identifying gaps in services
- Decisions made and executed by diverse teams deliver 60% better results (Forbes)²
- Enhance organizational culture
- Unique perspectives and valuable insights from lived expertise
- Advancement of the work by prioritizing those most impacted and marginalized

What are the benefits of engagement with Black girls?

- **Benefits of engagement for Black girls**
 - Sense of power and control in their life
 - Social and emotional well-being
 - Increases engagement and connection to their supports
 - Represent own interest
 - Positive attitudes and behavior
 - Self determination skills
 - Self advocacy skills
 - Identity development
- **Benefits of engagement for the organization**
 - Black girls who are being served by your organization are becoming more engaged
 - Improved understanding of local trends, cultures, and needs
 - Improved outcomes for Black girls in your organization
 - Staff development and culture
 - Enhance your program practices in focusing on Black girls
 - Preparing Black girls for leadership roles and transition
 - Helps meets the needs of Black girls to help serve all girls
 - Reduce the criminalization and adultification of Black girls

Black girls are disproportionately affected by sex trafficking. Despite the fact that young Black girls face disproportionately high rates of sexual exploitation, little attention is being paid to this issue, which implies they are not receiving the proper supports and solutions. Engagement of Black girls is crucial to tackling this issue.

¹Girl - Any girl who identifies as a girl, as well as non-binary, transgender, and gender expansive youth.

²Citation: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/eriklarson/2017/09/21/new-research-diversity-inclusion-better-decision-making-at-work/?sh=2ce8fffc4cbf>

Barriers to Engagement of Black Girls	
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to funding ● Access to support for encouraging different opportunities for Black girls
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stereotypes ● Lack of information or knowledge ● Access to supports ● Transportation
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Racial and gender bias ● Lack of women in leadership positions ● Lack of mentors with same racial identity ● Cultural norms and environments ● Family obligations

What are some ways to engage Black girls in your organization?

- Youth Advisory/ Action Board (YAB)
- Peer staff (i.e., mentor, advocate, outreach, navigator)
- Youth-Specific staff positions (various agency roles)
- Internships & fellowships
- Consultants & Subject Matter Experts
- Participatory Action Research
- Youth-Led Organizing

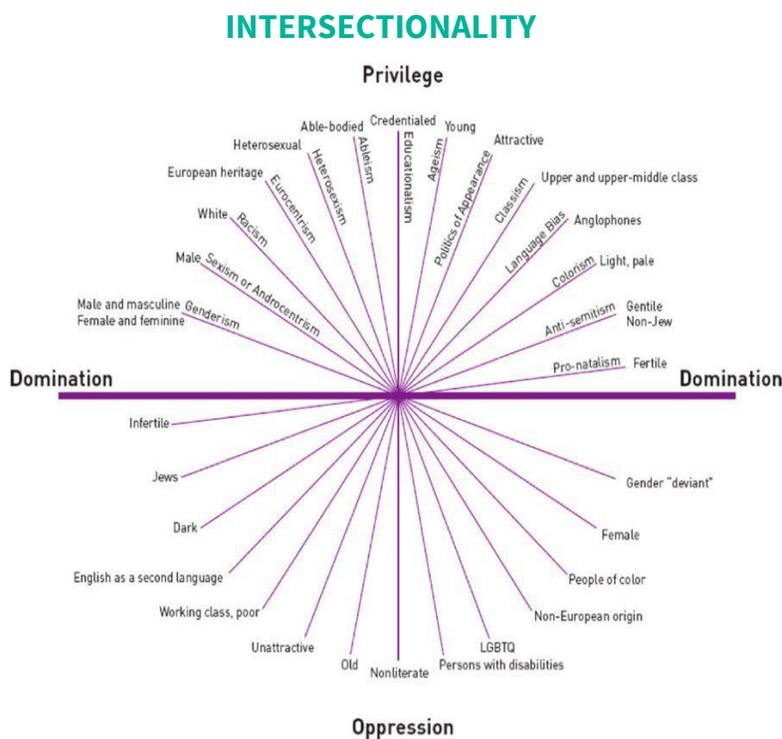


What are some recommendations for organizations that serve Black girls? (Ready to Lead*)

- **Awareness** Instead of relying on data that focuses on the personal experiences of White, cisgender, and often middle-class girls; leadership, research, and policymaking should also center the needs and strengths of girls of color.
- **Activation** To combat bias and discrimination, investments in training on mitigating bias, gender equity, and social change are needed in order to support Black girls and leadership development.
- **Action** Providing support to Black girls requires a holistic approach that combines anti-racist, healing-focused, gender-inclusive approaches to leadership.

Intersectional Approach to Partnership with Black Girls

Intersectionality requires recognition of the voices of Black girls that are directly impacted, because they are frequently excluded from mainstream conversations. Valuing their voice means lifting up, promoting, and supporting the leadership of Black girls that are most affected by policies and practices and centering their suggestions and values into any given project and media advocacy. Valuing voice allows Black girls affected by policies to play a substantial role in building their own story.



Source: Morgan, K.P. Describing the emperor's new clothes: Three myths of educational (in)equity. In *The Gender Question in Education: Theory, Pedagogy, & Politics*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1996, 105–122.

Considerations When Engaging Black Girls

- Racial equity and intergenerational power-sharing
- Avoid tokenism and exploitation
- Equitable compensation and career pathways
- Create spaces for youth to feel physically and psychologically safe
- Eliminate adultism
- Build and maintain trust
- Respect youth/young adults for their ideas and expertise
- Set young people up for success
- Communicate with youth, not at youth
- Reduce barriers & provide accessible information



Consider the following questions when it comes to engaging Black girls in your organization.

- What are the best ways to engage Black girls in your organization and to hear their voices and learn about their experiences?
- What holds girls of color back from leading or wanting to lead?
- What leadership opportunities are available to girls of color in your organization?
- Do your systems and policies support the healthy development of Black girls? If so, how have you achieved success? If not, what challenges are you facing?
- Ideally, what does the successful engagement of Black girls look like?

Further Resources

- [Authentic Youth Collaboration](#)
- [The Necessity of Authentic Engagement: 5 Ways to Build Connections with Youth Facing Adversity](#)
- [Anti-Racism Resource: Checking Adultism to Deepen Dialogue with Youth](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Mentoring for Youth of Color](#)
- [*Ready to Lead: Leadership Supports and Barriers of Black and Latinx Girls](#)

