Over the course of data collection, photo-researchers shared with each other their thoughts on discrimination. Although photo-researchers did not share many personal experiences of racism, they did agree that racism exists and described how it affects people of colour, particularly racialized newcomers. More specifically, they expressed concern that white privilege and the negatives stereotypes associated with skin colour were barriers that made it difficult for racialized people to get good jobs and secure decent housing. Participants also agreed that people living outside of their neighborhood have very negative perceptions of residents in Black Creek. Photo-researchers noted how they feel ‘demoralized’ and misunderstood by the media and other outsiders.

Using photos and narratives, photo-researchers documented hidden boundaries in the Black Creek neighborhood that spatially organize residents according to income and education. Photo-researchers felt that they are unwelcome in areas within their neighborhood where upper-middle class residents lived; it was their impression that these areas are better maintained and well-protected. More importantly, they felt that the residents in these areas are not a part of their community and often were not involved in advocating for change in their community. Photo-researchers’ discussions of hidden boundaries also included reference to York University. Many of the photo-researchers felt that members of York University isolated themselves from the rest of Black Creek. In fact, they described the boundary between York University and the rest of Black Creek as the line between the rich and poor. Although, most photo-researchers noted that York University was not a place they visited very often, one of the photo-researchers – whose son was a student at York University – listed York University as one of her favorite places in Black Creek. She viewed the university as “the road that will lead [her] son out of Black Creek and into a better neighborhood.” This quote also echoes the mixed feelings that many Black Creek residents feel in being proud of their community but at the same time wanting to move out of Black Creek to escape the marginalization and discrimination.

“We are so demoralized living in these areas and have no way to move out nor do we want to move, cause some have lived all their lives here and are terrified to live anywhere else.”

“Racism is all around, who can stop it? Who can stop it? Who can stop racists? Especially when you colour is like ours.”

“I think the basis of racism is anger.”

“We are diverse because of Canada’s immigration policies but we need to promote cultural sensitivity and racial tolerance.”

“We are diverse because of Canada’s immigration policies but we need to promote cultural sensitivity and racial tolerance.”

“Yeah, its racist… when the people look me up and down when I wear like that. But I don’t care, I’m proud for my religion. I’m proud the way I look and I don’t care about the people. And I tell my kids, be proud of your name. Don’t you dare change your name…”

They [children] don’t know what ‘racism’ is. Even though it exists every where. Children don’t discriminate like people do. Learn from kids. Learn to live together in harmony.

“We need more people of colour working in corporations.”

Many people label you and give you different kinds of description based on how you look and they don’t know the full story of what you are all about.”
Driftwood & York
This is the border between Driftwood & York University. It is also the border between rich and poor. Houses on one side of the fence are far less valuable. I wish we could get rid of the fences so that Driftwood is not so isolated. Let’s make a more integrated community.
- Rui

Do Not Enter
There are signs like these around all private property to protect the place from trespassers. Places like these are heavily guarded. But some Government owned townhouses don’t have much security. That’s why crimes are easy to take place here. I think we need more security near our townhouses to prevent anything bad from happening, because there was a shooting near one of the townhouses near my building, and it was so easy for the criminals to escape through the lanes through townhouses with not much security.
- Muzna
The Canadian Dream

To me this picture represents the Canadian dream because of how high the flag is reaching, and the scenery is like something out of an immigration poster. The Canadian dream is thought of as being accessible to everybody but in actuality, like the flag in the picture, the Canadian dream is too high to reach.

-Safy

View from the Back

“Yeah, people that born here and live here they always get the first option when there is something, always. With less qualifications.”

-Photo-researcher
"The picture with the hands here was not one of the most positive but I see it in both...white power and the people of colour being suppressed in society. But also the coming together of the hands on top of hands that any hands, any work, anybody can do we're all equal as well."

"...the hands explain the oppression, the colour speaks for itself."

- Photo-researcher

Housing
Housing

Inadequate and sub-standard housing was a common theme that was discussed within all of the broader themes identified earlier. Photo-researchers took numerous photos that highlighted the neglect and deteriorated conditions of public housing. Pictures included holes in the walls, water damage, boarded windows, and excessive garbage in and around their apartment buildings. The discussions and narratives that accompanied these photos pointed to the need for more maintenance staff invested in regular upkeeping of the buildings and premises. Photo-researchers residing in public housing also highlighted the need to have their complaints genuinely heard and responded to by Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) staff. The majority of photo-researchers felt uncomfortable and even ashamed of living in public housing and were hesitant to view their space as their “home.” Overall, participants felt that if their building was clean and well-maintained, then residents would feel more at ease and comfortable in their homes and would treat their space more respectfully. A few participants suggested that the sub-standard state of public housing in the area contributed to an overall feeling of hopelessness in the community. One photo-researcher noted that while public housing buildings were overcrowded, private apartment buildings were struggling to find tenants. It was her view that residents want to leave public housing because “people don’t want to call this [area] their home.”

"Poor maintenance, it’s tattered, you know it looks run down, you know some of the balconies look like they’re ready to drop any moment, you know and stuff it just looks really really awful.”

"I think it has to come from whoever’s in charge of the maintenance, whoever’s the top person for maintenance of the Toronto housing buildings... I don’t think these guys that come and do the half part of the job is the ones to blame because they’re only doing half part of what their boss has given them. So you know what I mean when we complain ... the staff will tell you that you know what I mean like “Oh I can only do this for you because we don’t do these parts”, or whatever, you know. That would be your boss. So I think you the community really needs to go to the higher end of the maintenance, who’s in charge, who has the say, who makes the decisions not the front line workers..."

Also like the problem is because the places we live in are supposed to be clean and if they are not we, the community would say that it is not taking care of it and stuff. The neighborhood would be given a bad name and stuff. We should do something about it like complain to City Council and the places that we live in should be clean.

Poverty is bad for Toronto because people can be left homeless and often many people have to sacrifice a home for food. There should be no excuse for people not having a home in a country as rich as Canada.

Nobody Cares, Nobody Listens

Buildings like this reflect our community in a bad way. There is no funding for repairs. Nobody cares and nobody listens.
Life

I took that picture because it reminds me of the first place I lived on Bleecker Street. Actually it kind of looks identical to that. And all of the awful memories of how the state of the apartment and the inside and the elevator’s dropping floors and you know how many times people’s jumped off the balcony and things like that and when I parked I saw that building immediately you know my reality is that I’m sure people are going through the exact same thing in that building as well. The picture there actually makes the building look much better than it really does. I took it to get the really awful sight of how it looked but it kind of...Really nice. Yeah, cause when I saw it I’m like “Wow, uh uh” that was like, really awful, you know so that camera did not capture the true ugliness. Yeah. Poor maintenance, it’s tattered, you know it looks run down, you know some of the balconies look like they’re ready to drop any moment, you know and stuff it just looks really really awful. And then it was facing a school I believe it was facing a school and a community. So it’s kind of like everybody looks out their window and sees this big kind of ugly place, you know and stuff so I wasn’t impressed when I saw it as to why I took that picture.

- Photo-researcher

Ann-Marie

We are so demoralized living in these areas and have no money to move out nor do we want to move ‘cause some have lived here all their lives.

- Photo-researcher
Metro Housing

This is the basement of my apartment building and the wall is damaged with water leaking on the floor. No one cares about it because it is a metro housing building. It is not safe and I wish I can move out from this apartment, so that I can live with my kids in a more safe place. We need to keep complaining about it by putting our strengths together.

- Safy

Ethnicity in Harmony

The paintings basically represent all the different types of people who live in that building and neighborhood. People who are from different ethnic backgrounds, living together in one loving neighborhood. Basically someone saw the multiculturalism in the neighborhood and decided to gather a group of people to make the painting and make it visible for everyone.

- Dorigen

“So many TCHC buildings have these paintings on it. It think it labels us so people know that we are poor.”

-Photo-researcher

“When I see the painting I think that a lot of people of colour live there. It makes me proud.”

-Photo-researcher

“I like that the paintings show fathers playing with their children. There are not enough fathers in our neighborhood.”

-Photo-researcher
This picture was taken within the Black Creek area. This is a private building. Most of the government buildings are full with people on assistance here. But you don’t often see private buildings overflowing. Private buildings, in fact, are quite empty. Everyone’s leaving these places because of the poverty stricken area and because of the violence that’s forcing them to be concerned about their wellbeing. Nobody sees a progressive, successful future for themselves when they’re residing here. People who aren’t on social assistance are moving out for a new, fresher start. People don’t want to call this their home.

-Muzna
The photo-researchers wanted to document how they cope and respond to inequalities and injustices they face, and highlighted things that give them strength and resiliency on an everyday level. For example, several photo-researchers took photos of their religious institutions to highlight the positive role their faith and religious community play in their lives. Similarly, others noted the role that their families, particularly their children, play in bringing a sense of hope and joy in spite of all odds. Many photo-researchers talked about the importance of community and collective advocacy as a way of coping and mobilizing positive change. These and the other ways Black Creek residents cope, respond and resist are captured in the photos in this section.

Resiliency and Resistance

"...I strongly believe in my God, and this is where these people sit to communicate or commune with God. This place here. They sit here and do their puja, their offering whatever. The priest, the head priest sit there, with her, what she’s going to read from the holy book or hymn, whatever. But then because I feel like people up here can’t help you nothing and I got a strong belief there’s a greater being than we human being. And I believe strongly in that super being. And I always sit and I always like to be among people who sit to do these kind of work. Because it’s quiet and it’s peaceful and you can sit and you can meditate and without no noise or anything.”

“Yeah, and I found this good because it’s good to have a friendship in our community like Jane and Finch right.”

I see myself enjoying nice spring weather. I’m getting away from all the stress in life, and I’m simply enjoying myself. We all need to get away from the daily stress and worries in our lives.

We need to keep complaining about it by putting our strengths together so that they fix it immediately.

Family bonding and family values are important to us. Our culture is family oriented. We need to make sure we keep doing family activities together.

“I’m happy because I have a friend, I feel I’m popular at the community. Everybody knows me. Me and my kids because I help this community maybe around 17-18 years or more. I help volunteering. I help with food bank. I help out abused women, I help the woman take the welfare take disability. Even I go with them to court to translate. I’m not translator by, legally, but I go like that. Even I advise the people. I advise if I see abused child abused woman I advise them I said no, you don’t have to take that. You have to go to the community.”

“Oh, it helps them a lot, because... they [Seniors in Black Creek] don’t have no where much to go, right, so within their self they come, get together and they do these things and they feel good within their self and feel good. Just going, sit there, sing a few songs, the priest read some nice thing about God and they feel happy and they come good.”
"When the people look at me especially at the summer I always get at the mall lots of people come to me. Some people come with good intentions, "Oh well, you’re not hot?". Some people came, "Are you crazy?". Some people, "Are you stupid to wear this?". That, you know. This is not right either, this is racist."

-Photo-researcher

"Like you know anybody, the Christian they’re proud of the church, I’m proud of my mosque."

-Safy

"They come, get together and they do these things and they feel good within their self and feel good. Just going, sit there, sing a few songs, the priest read some nice thing about God and they feel happy."

-Photo-researcher
The light is returning from the dark. Everyday the sun setting brings new hope for tomorrow. We just try to capture it.

-Ann-Marie
My kids

These are my 3 kids sitting on the steps of a playground. The siblings are bonding. Family bonding and family values are important to us. Our culture is family oriented. We need to make sure we keep doing family activities together.

- Samira

"Let's band together. Results come in numbers, signatures and letters. It time to hold people accountable for improper actions."

- Photo-researcher
“We should do something about it like complain to City Council…”

“We can advocate for positive policy change so that the Canadian dream can be realized for everybody”

“We need to advocate for policy change.”

“We need to promote cultural sensitivity and racial tolerance.”

We need to keep complaining about it by putting our strengths together so that they fix it immediately.

We need to advocate governments and funders to invest money in our communities.

More private buildings should be built in Jane and Finch, and there should be more job opportunities. So the people can become more independent and start to live in nice, tall, private buildings rather than living in the government housing and living on welfare.

Let’s make a more integrated community.

We need to advocate governments and funders to invest in our communities. They should invest in more accessible activities.

“Different levels of government. Signatures, then phone calls. Their emails should be over-flooded with us complaining.”

“Children don’t discriminate like people do. Learn from kids. Learn to live together in harmony. Just like kids, people all around the world should be able to welcome anyone to be a ‘part of their fun’.”

“Because of my low income it’s important and vital to find inexpensive ways to entertain our children. We need to advocate governments and funders to invest in our communities. They should invest in more accessible activities.”

“I would like to see more intergenerational programs… I believe our seniors and adults and our elders have a lot to offer and a lot to teach our youth and I think they’re willing and they’re out there but there’s again there’s no programs that or not enough programs that offer that or they offer it with such rigid things that don’t fit into people’s schedule and things like that so it’s unrealistic to happen.”

“You need the person to finish the job but if your boss isn’t giving you the paint, that part of the building will never look fixed, you know (in reference to TCHC buildings).”

“A skills based school and stuff like that. This is perfect for those students to gain those skills and, you know, be in the apprenticeship program and for their own community.”