

IN THEIR WORDS

REFLECTIONS ON RACE, COVID-19, AND MENTAL WELLNESS



Youth Voice: Lived Experiences in the Sacramento Region

The written reflections below are those of young people who are currently in a PRO Youth & Families program or are PRO alums. These reflections were voluntary and responses are confidential. We believe these reflections provide a safe outlet in which young people can share their lived experiences— and we believe it's our responsibility to value their voice by reading it, reflecting on it, and sharing it with other community stakeholders.

Section 1: Youth reflections on racism & COVID-19.	
1	<p>Racism: I have witnessed many students being teased and bullied with racist remarks thrown at them. Personally, I haven't faced as much racism because I have lived in the US for most of my life and have assimilated pretty well compared to newer immigrants. It doesn't mean that I haven't experienced discrimination at all, but not as much as most.</p> <p>COVID-19: It has caused me to become a lot less motivated and tired of distance learning.</p>
2	<p>COVID-19 has impacted my life because I have not been interacting with people outside of my household much.</p>
3	<p>Every single family member of mine has been affected negatively by COVID. Either because of job loss, no more going to school, or even having a strain on our mental health. Racism although it hasn't affected me personally it is still shameful how it is still prevalent in our society. It is truly heartbreaking watching fellow people of color go through such hardships in a day to day basis.</p>
4	<p>Racism impacted my life by separating my family because of the different views.</p>
5	<p>I go to a private school so there are a few kids scattered around who make off-color racial comments and things like that. But since communication is virtual now, more of them have been getting caught and punished because there is a written record</p>
6	<p>I come from a black/arab muslim family, so racism is something we've always had to deal with. We've had much experience being called different slurs and sticking out no matter where we are. It's mostly just something we've learned to live with. We're all also very wary around law enforcement. COVID-19 is also of course a serious concern, my family worries about each other's health, and everyone mostly works from home.</p>
7	<p>As an asian, we were targeted racially at the beginning of the whole pandemic. I have never personally been targeted, but as a race yes. It made me feel smaller in the world. It made me feel like all the blame was on us, even though it wasn't our fault. It made me think "Just because we're asian doesn't mean we're all the same person. It doesn't mean we all did it."</p>
8	<p>i consider a lot of people from roseville/sacramento very ignorant and prone to racism so i avoid them most of the time. as far as racist incidents go, however, the worst ones i have experienced personally have been elsewhere</p>

9	Ever since I was a little kid I have pushed away my culture and traditions because I was made fun of for them or for being "too asian". As a result of this I currently find myself lost in a mix of who I truly am and who I was trying to be.
10	Covid-19 made me think about what I can do to help our world.
11	COVID-19 has affected my relationships with people and loved ones being that we are unable to see each other as we normally would. My mental health has been affected because I feel more alone and lack resources. School is online, something I wasn't prepared for.
12	I noticed that customers act different around each other.
13	I moved to Minneapolis, so things are very advocated here. But, violent.
14	It gave me more spare time
15	COVID-19 has changed the way we interact with one other and is leading to more isolation.
16	racism: I used to work in fast food, and I honestly lost track of the number of times I or my old coworkers were demeaned and harassed on the basis of being Hispanic. I've had customers ask that I not speak Spanish to my supervisor, refuse to let me tend to them because of the "language barrier" despite my being more fluent in English than Spanish, and reduce the staff to lazy, stupid Mexicans to our faces. When those people came in to order, they didn't see that I have interned for a civil engineer, that I have aspirations of becoming a civil engineer myself, that I graduated in the top 3% of my senior class, that I have been admitted to UC Berkeley—they saw a Hispanic girl in a fast-food uniform who was beneath them.
17	I feel that people have become more "woke" about racism in my community recently due to some inappropriate events...I find it good that people understand that racism is still a problem in the world.
18	COVID has affected everyone's life cause they can't do anything
19	COVID-19 specifically has impacted me and my family. Being cautious going outside even before quarantine because we were scared of acts of racism against Chinese people. Seeing so many videos of people saying and committing horrible acts against Chinese people relating to the virus. When the BLM movement started up, only more uncertainty grew. I support the BLM movement, though at the time it seemed like fuel for more hate crimes and crimes in general.
20	I'm asian, I've gotten some stereotypical dog jokes and dirty looks during the initial outbreak. That's about it.
21	<p>I have not personally experienced racism targeted towards myself or my family. My school is socioeconomically and racially diverse--diverse in sexuality as well--and accepting of different groups, so I do not often witness racism on a personal basis in my school environment. This does not mean others at my school haven't. I will sometimes hear racial slurs as "edgy" jokes in passing from other students, but I do not understand this kind of behavior and despise it because those words can be insidious and hurtful. Generally, I stick to my friend group at school who I have not heard use that language and are adamantly against racism.</p> <p>I have seen COVID affect my mental health and others' my age as well. Some of my friends have struggled with a decline in structure and/or health in their life or lifestyle because of the quarantine and I would have reported the same a few months ago, although I am doing much better now. I don't know anyone who has contracted the virus. What I know is that, like anybody else would say, COVID has disrupted the flow of daily life, and we must learn to adapt. I worry for young children and my peers, if they are getting the quality education they need, as school is very unsure in our district right now. Up until today, administrators at our school did not know what the first day's schedule would look like. And above many other things, I worry for victims of domestic abuse who feel they have nowhere to escape to during this pandemic. I know that group has been mostly silent during this pandemic, but I know that they are out there and I think there needs to be more aid and promotion of abuse hotlines for their awareness.</p>

22	I have experienced racism first hand when I was at a store with my friend. He was saying stuff like planned parenthood was made so "my people" could stay down and saying stuff racist to my friend saying "Go back to your land and stop stealing US resources. I have never experienced it first hand like that :(
23	COVID-19 has impacted my life by not allowing me to have the same role I had before in my community. Before COVID, I was super involved in the soccer community throughout the Sacramento Region as a soccer coach, soccer players, soccer referee, and even a planner for a few tournaments/events. Since COVID, I haven't been involved with soccer at all and have felt completely disconnected from one of the main parts of my life.
24	It made my family struggle financially as literally days before we had started a small business and having a worldwide pandemic occur killed our hopes.
25	COVID-19 has impacted my family because we're all home, it's hard to do school online.
26	Become boring, I barely have energy left to eat.
27	Being stuck at home while blm gained momentum, showed me internalized racist beliefs even within my own family. There was a lot of unlearning and education done within this time, and some of my family members and I are still learning and are definitely going to be more mindful of others. It also showed me that one of my family members unfortunately does not care about blm or minorities in general. Some people sadly don't change :(
28	Racism in Sacramento has been prevalent for all races. People deal with racial discriminations as if it is nothing however.
29	Since COVID-19, I've learned that there are several people, who I considered friends or acquaintances, that blame the virus on the entire Asian community which is extremely disheartening.
30	It makes everything harder to go out and having to be very cautious of what you do & say. Or even just what you touch.
31	Racism is hard to talk about in my family. Usually talking about current event topics with my Mom was easy, but with BLM and the protest we have very different opinions which is hard to engage in a conversation about.
32	Its troublesome because being a young black Afro-American I shouldn't be scared to walk down the street and get harassed by an officer or a White person (Not All)
33	I was not personally attacked, but I saw on the news that asians are getting attacked because they started the pandemic. Even though it started in China, other Asians are being attacked because people are racist and think that all Asians are chinese.
34	Living in a neighborhood that previously discriminated in housing has caused my community to be primarily white. It has reduced my ability to connect with Latinx culture that pertains to me racially.
35	being in a Spanish speaking family has shown how racist people can be towards us. Old (caucasian) men and women have yelled at us to speak English or to go back to our country. Not being able to call the police because we are afraid that the police will attack us because my parents don't speak their language or because my parents are of darker skin. Being in a community that is mostly full of Hispanics, black people and Asians we are discriminated of being poor because we don't live in pocket or green haven
36	The racism has caused our community to come together in a way that I've never witnessed before.

37	Covid has given me more time to understand and identify a lot of the problems plaguing our world such as racism and bigotry
38	I lost many friends over them not understanding my experiences as a woman of color
39	As a Mexican American, I have experienced racism so many times. My mother caught COVID-19 and it was very hard. My biological dad who is a ex felon got his insurance taken away and now my little brother and get tested for COVID-19. I haven't been able to go to very important doctors appointments due to this as so as my friend who needs a lung transplant as well my friend who needs a catheter and feeding tube
40	Being Asian-American, me and my family were the targets for xenophobia and racism. With the invisible enemy of COVID, many wanted a physical entity to blame. This unfortunately was the Asian-American community. During this time, we've had to be extra cautious when we go out to get groceries and make sure we did not get beat up or spit on.

Section 2: Youth reflections in response to "Describe something that could improve the mental health of youth in Sacramento."	
1	More youth involvement, because I think the youth in general would respond or take advice easier from people who look like them and that are the same ages.
2	Make it something that's normal to talk about because I feel it's a topic people avoid
3	Its being posted out and more participants
4	Giving out free family counseling so that home life can be excellent for more people.
5	therapy sessions without parents consent
6	more accessibility for youth
7	Schools and parents push their students into health programs.
8	Revision of on how people view mental health by offering more programs like mental wellness champions.
9	more POC therapist
10	Reaching out to get help and make mental wellness a priority in young teens lives.
11	Increased availability and effective promotion/advertisement of no-cost mental health resources, ranging from the smallest ailment or concern to the higher degrees.
12	Having parents check up on their kids
13	If they could spread out that would be good
14	If more youth got together to hang out without judgement, and just have fun
15	I would increase awareness about mental health issues.
16	They should take it more seriously
17	More accessibility for high school students and middle school students
18	more black therapists and doctors and lawyers
19	If we had groups or community meet ups so that everyone who has a problem can talk to people one on one
20	More programs for the mental health of youth in Sacramento.
21	a constant reminder that they can seek help if they need it.
22	More open-minded individuals and community events taking safety precautions.
23	Making more buildings and encouraging people to speak up
24	Getting more people of color as therapists just so they have someone to talk to and feel comfortable with
25	Being surrounded by people that genuinely care about your well being.
26	I would suggest that maybe there are more POC mental health professionals so POC with mental illnesses can feel more comfortable
27	black therapists
28	A buddy system where people are able to talk others they trust.

29	I think that if there was more awareness about mental health and if there was a place/person where the youth can be open and express how they feel then that would help the youth in Sacramento.
30	Having a little bit of patience would help improve.
31	Having better home lives. By somehow getting parents to be more empathetic and encouraging towards their children.
32	The way I deal with certain things
33	Just being able to talk with one another and feeling like we have a safe space to talk with others.
34	I think adults should start listening to their children's stories and if not a trusted adult. We need to let children know that there is help that they can get out there that doesn't make them think they are crazy because of talking to someone.
35	Just to talk to someone everyday
36	I would start my own program where anyone who is having problems can come talk to me or anyone working on my staff and just talk about their problems
37	Having conversation like giving the youth a place to speak freely about how their mental health is
38	Accountability System.
39	Promote mental health so that people mental health problems can help with problems
40	I would make it more accessible and make it more forceful like even if you don't need it forcing someone to go to it would make them feel comfortable and if they even do need it they know who to go to.
41	Nothing I'm learning a lot of stuff that's going to be important later in life
42	More therapists that were POC
43	Meetings with kids who on record experience trauma and Those off record. Training others to help kids who have mental health issues
44	Adding more counselors in high school that just talk to students and give insight to help.

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