

BLACK + GOLD

LEADERSHIP BOOT CAMP

*STRENGTHENING BLACK
& ASIAN RELATIONS*

BREAKING BREAD, BREAKING BARRIERS
+
DIALOGUE ON RACE

In partnership with the Office of Immigrant Affairs and
the Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion



IMPACT REPORT

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

**Mayor's Office of Public Engagement &
Philadelphia Commission on
Human Relations**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 About the Leadership Boot Camp Series
- 2 The Path to Solidarity
- 3 Food Talks
- 4 Providing Intentional Spaces for Dialogue
- 5 Session Takeaways
- 6 The Road Ahead
- 7 Acknowledgements

ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP BOOTCAMP SERIES

Launched in February 2022, the Black + Gold Series is focused on building cross-racial conversations and dialogue to promote cooperation and mutual understanding. As part of the initiative, the Mayor's Office of Public Engagement (OPE), in partnership with the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR), the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), and the Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA), hosted the Black + Gold Leadership Boot Camp Series to bring together the City's appointed commissioners and key community leaders to discuss and identify opportunities for fostering unity and healing across Black and Asian communities.

The series spanned across three sessions employing a hybrid of the Breaking Bread, Breaking Barriers (BBBB) initiative inspired by the concept of utilizing public spaces to promote intergroup relations proposed by sociologist Elijah Anderson in his book, "The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life," and the Dialogue on Race program developed by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Community Relations Service (CRS) to facilitate open discussions on racial issues toward transformative outcomes and solutions.

The series provides a framework for structuring dialogue around race. As the first Leadership Boot Camp, it offers insight into the constructed narratives that beset Philadelphia's Black and Asian communities, and lays the groundwork for future initiatives aimed at strengthening the City's cross-racial relationships.



Session 1 – May 19

Breaking Bread, Breaking Barriers

Introductions through a shared food experience. Participants situated their personal story through the cultural lens of food, reflecting upon how lived experiences intersect with individual understandings of race relations and racial equity.



Session 2 – June 23

Dialogue on Race

Racial equity assessments in light of community assets. Participants engaged in a two-part discussion to examine: (1) the current state of equity within their communities and the factors informing the diversity of viewpoints shared among the group, and (2) arrive at strategies for collective action and empowerment.



Session 3 – July 21

Celebration and Dialogue

Recognizing efforts and commitments. Participants closed out the series in acknowledgement of their time and work in pursuing racial solidarity with a call to individual agency, building upon the momentum of the Leadership Boot Camp initiative.

THE PATH TO SOLIDARITY

THE IMPETUS

In recent years, we have increasingly witnessed the grievous repercussions of unexamined racial/ethnic biases and attitudes across the US. In the wake of a global pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement and anti-Asian sentiment took center stage as images of racist rants and racially motivated attacks displayed unapologetically across media platforms as though such things were commonplace.

On our own home front, racial tensions between Black and Asian American communities have given rise to overt expressions of prejudice and even violence. A series of tragic events, including the November 2021 SEPTA incident involving Black and Asian students, brought to light the need for active dialogue and engagement in bridging the divide toward unity and healing.

The Black + Gold Leadership Boot Camp Series grew out of this necessity for change.

OUR PURPOSE

Philadelphia ranks 11th as the most segregated city in the United States. If unchecked, this gap will only increase and impact racial relations among our diverse communities. The Black + Gold Series seeks to both restore and strengthen understanding among communities of color toward a shared vision and plan of action.

11TH
IN RANKING
MOST SEGREGATED
CITY IN THE
UNITED STATES

FOOD TALKS

The BLACK + GOLD Leadership Boot Camp Series engaged participants in reflection using food as a vehicle for discussion and critical analysis of individual understandings of race and racial relations.

"Food breaks down this wall of distancing...it evokes memories of one's childhood, so that was a very clever way to bring people out to talk about positive memories...but [sic] also was the trigger...to start talking about this issue that creates conflict."

(Participant, interview)

Respondents shared that they valued the opportunity to break bread from various cultures as a way for people to come together who may not normally do so intimately otherwise. The stories that followed brought to the forefront the potential of food to intersect individuals across racial lines and shape specific narratives as a result of that experience, both positive and negative.



"Food brings people together in ways that [sic] dialogue or mission-driven work may not...I was learning how those foods were rooted in cultures of people...from a perspective that we don't typically talk about."

(Participant, interview)

2022

PROVIDING INTENTIONAL SPACES FOR DIALOGUE

58

Participants



27

City-appointed
Commissions & Community
Leaders



17

Organizations Represented



SESSION TAKEAWAYS

1

Like two peas in a pod.

Throughout the series, participants observed that there were more similarities than there were differences between Black and Asian communities. They appreciated the sharing of personal stories among "members of both communities who are ready and willing to have meaningful dialogue about building solidarity" (survey).

3

Half a load is better than none.

The Leadership Boot Camp Series is a start to providing the momentum needed to move our Black and Asian communities forward. This is the "beginning of hopefully a longer series of conversations that community leaders could take up on themselves" (interview). Participants saw the potential for this series to be adapted to include other settings involving additional community organizations and Philadelphian residents.

2

(Not so) Easy as pie.

The work of dismantling deep-seated biases and prejudices requires a multi-faceted approach. Distinctions among intergroup (Black/Asian) relations are often muted when naming individuals as a monolith. Additionally, addressing false narratives that have perpetuated the divide in race relations is critical to achieving unity and mutual understanding. "We need to engage more people and we need to do some meaningful things together" (survey).

4

Food for thought.

Open and honest dialogue is essential to breaking down barriers. It is important to work toward relationship building to dismantle historic fear and mistrust. To do so, we must "think creatively and build new spaces for public engagement" (survey). We should be willing to challenge the status quo of past efforts to pursue the "opportunity to take the things that are working and repurpose them and improve them" (interview).

THE ROAD AHEAD



This work cannot be done alone. The Black + Gold Series is merely the starting point for further engagement into these complex issues.

Possible opportunities for moving this initiative forward are listed below.

All participants were also asked to make a pledge to continue the work of enriching relations between Black and Asian Communities:

"I pledge to host more open and inclusive events and spaces in the hope to facilitate further conversations and interactions so we can build mutual respect across differences." (participant)

ACTION STEPS	DETAILS	IMPACT
Dialogue that delves into intercultural experiences	Invite and host a cross section of individuals within Black/Asian communities with dissimilar histories of cultural experiences in America.	Allows for greater understanding and appreciation of nuance among monolithic groupings.
Un-learn cultural bias and racism through shared experiences	By leaning into historic fear and mistrust the more likely it is that we recreate the same generational ignorance	Folks in AAPI and BIPOC communities have more similarities than differences
Continued relationship building	It is important to build organic relationships before delving into the issues that have caused tensions among our communities	The relationship building is necessary to get us to a point where people feel able to open up honestly to one another.

Source: Word cloud constructed from participant responses to Session 1 and Session 2 feedback surveys.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LEADERSHIP + ORGANIZATIONS

- Mayor's Office of Public Engagement (OPE)
- Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR)
- Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)
- Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA)
- Department of Behavioral Health & Intellectual disabilities Services (DBHIDS)
- Community Resource Corps, Mayor's Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteer Service (CRC)
- Philly Counts

- Mayor's Commission on African American Males
- Mayor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
- Mayor's Commission on African & Caribbean Immigrant Affairs
- Millennial Advisory Committee
- Mayor's Commission on Faith-Based & Interfaith Affairs
- Philadelphia Commission for Women

- Japan America Society of Greater Philadelphia
- Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation
- Philly Solidarity
- Philadelphia Praise Center
- Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia
- Helping Others Maintain Excellence LLC

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STAY ENGAGED

Black + Gold Series Website

bit.ly/BlacknGoldPHL

- Leadership Boot Camp Toolkit
- Submit Ideas
- Connect with Members

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