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DRIVERS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DECLINE OF THE BLACK POPULATION IN AUSTIN, TEXAS:

A COMMUNITY-LED SURVEY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH 212 CATALYSTS ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Deanna Cureton, MPH | Tiffanie Harrison, MBA

Drivers Contributing to the Decline of the Black Population in Austin, Texas

A LIVED-EXPERIENCE DATA BLACK PAPER

MEASURE Community Led. Data Driven

Deanna Cureton, MPH | Tiffanie Harrison, MBA

ABOUT MEASURE

MEASURE has a mission to mobilize communities that are furthest from opportunities to fight against systematic disparities in health, economics, criminalization, and education through the MEASURE CARE (Community, Advocacy, Resilience and Evidence) Model and our other anti-racist evaluation tools. The organization's vision is for Powerful Black, Brown, and Multi-Racial/Ethnic communities to have access to information that will support them selfadvocate towards an antiracist and equitable future.

ABOUT 212 CATALYSTS & AALI

212 Catalysts

The mission of 212 Catalysts is to help organizations and initiatives make a positive impact in society. Their vision: Undeniable positive community transformation with measurable impact that everyone can feel. 212 Catalysts specializes in providing operational and strategic assistance, recommendations, and connections to both for- and non-profit organizations to identify and meet targeted goals. Business aspects covered include strategy, action planning, finance, data, evaluation and leadership.

AALI

The African American Leadership Institute (AALI) is a program in which Black professionals gain enhanced civic awareness and leadership opportunities enabling them to make contributions that have a positive impact to Central Texas communities.

BACKGROUND

212 Catalysts and the African American Leadership Institute approached MEASURE with a problem: Compared to other large metropolitan cities in the United States, Austin, Texas is unique in that the percentage of the Black population is declining as the overall population grows rapidly. Additionally, employers are having a difficult time retaining Black hires. **What prohibits Black Austinites from connecting with their community and remaining in the Austin metropolitan area?**

The MEASURE Community-Led Survey Tool is implemented using a racial-equity lens whereby those who are historically and systematically impacted by disparate social outcomes must make up the majority of those creating the survey instrument. This prioritization will result in an elevation of their lived-experience and voice as we gain meaningful understanding about the issue or need that we are working to assess. MEASURE assembled a Community-Led Survey Design Team to collaborate on a survey to seek answers regarding the exodus of Black Austinites.

Community-Led Survey participants provided clear guidance on what inhibits Black Austinites from building the community necessary to remain in the Austin area. By centering community voices and experiences we learned that policy, affordability, and a sense of belonging all contribute to Austin's declining Black population.

DEEPENING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF AUSTIN'S BLACK COMMUNITY

Modern day headlines characterize Austin's Black population as diminished by gentrification. After all, Austin is one of the few cities in the United States that boasts a rapidly growing overall population with a steady decline in the percentage of the city's Black population. The story of Austin's Black Community is deeper than gentrification; much of our more recent history is impacted by the sting of racist policy and governance.

The first known Black resident of Austin was a ten year old girl, Mahalia Murchison in 1839. In just one year the Black population would grow to over 200 residents. Known for its music, Austin would become a mecca for Black performers; musicians, Vaudeville and more. In 1928 the City of Austin introduced a city plan that would relocate Black Austinites to Central East Austin. An economic divide continues to reflect the geographic divide set forth in this plan. Over time, Black Austinites have experienced repeated crises that should be considered as factors contributing to the mass exodus, from the significant acts of violence by police like the Sophia King shooting and series of more recent police brutality, to the impacts of climate change and environmental racism. In 2021, Black Austinites were being disproportionately impacted by COVID19 while also experiencing a digital redlining that kept Black businesses from entering digital spaces (1).

A hallmark of Austin's dynamic culture is attracting people from around the world while also impoverishing people that live here. In 2021, median home prices in Austin-Round Rock rose to \$450,000, a 31% increase year-over-year (2). Census data shows that many African Americans who once lived in East and Southeast Austin have chosen to move their families out of the city, with Austin's Black population actually declining 5.4% from 2000 to 2010 (3). Additionally, Contributing factors for why people move from Central Austin include the rising cost of living in Austin, the tightening housing market, the desire for more space, and the importance of good schools and welcoming communities (4).

"Austin has built itself on the backs of the Black community. For example, looking at the famed SXSW; Black people have been willing to do things for free for exposure."
 Black Woman Community-Led Survey Design Team Member



^{1.} Natarajan, R. (2021). Planning for Digital Inclusion in Texas (pp. 1–20). Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin School of Law, Civil Rights Clinic. Retrieved March 4, 2022 from

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As reported in the Austin-Statesman, "Nelson Linder, President of Austin's NAACP chapter, said that seeing Austin's already small, and once thriving. Black population continue to decline is a concern. To reverse the trend, he said, the city needs to invest in affordable housing, make sure jobs pay high enough wages for people of color, and put money back into the community and programs that foster Black culture (1)." Compared to 2010, 2020 Census data revealed relatively low population growth for Black Austinites. Of the total 171,465 population increase for the city, only 3% were Black. In contrast, Asian Austinites saw a population growth of 21% and now outnumber Black Austinites for the first time (2).

Black Austinites want people to know that while the population may be decreasing, there is still a group functioning as a cohesive unit within the community. This includes the dozens of families who return each week and contribute to the community through church groups, sports programs, and other extracurricular activities (1). Organizations like the African American Leadership Institute and 212 Catalysts are seeking to broaden and deepen the personal, professional and civic ties of the Black Community in Austin.



1. Luz Moreno-Lozano, L. (2021, May 30). As Austin's Black community shrinks, moves to suburbs, community leaders push for change. Austin American-Statesman. Accessed 1.10.20222.

2. Austin's Population Continues Another Decade of Growth According to U.S. Census Bureau. (2021, August 13). Austintexas.gov. Retrieved March 4, 2022, from https://www.austintexas.gov/news/austins-population-continues-another-decade-growth-according-us-census-bureau-0.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

the decline of the Black population in Austin, TX. See link for larger view of historical timeline (14). 212 Catalysts, AALI and MEASURE reviewed historical events that have contributed to drivers influenced



AUTHORS

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- see works ated for additional numbered citations.



Figure 6. Six Square Cultural Arts District Logo (7)

solutione

METHODOLOGY

FOCUS GROUP GOALS & TARGET POPULATION

The goal of the survey Community-Led Survey Design Team has been to determine what prohibits Black people in Austin from connecting with their community. For the purpose of this survey, we defined Austin geographically in terms of the wider Austin metroplex. This includes suburban and rural communities like Round Rock, Pflugerville, Bastrop, and Manor. For the remainder of the report, this definition can be applied to any mention of Austin.

It was important to the Community-Led Survey Design Team that we developed a survey that targeted Black current and former Austin residents across Nationality, Gender, Age, Career, Socioeconomic, Ability, and 2SLGBTQIA+ status. We wanted to acknowledge that Austin's Black Community was not a monolith.

RECRUITMENT

It was important to us that this Community-Led Survey Design Team had a wide representation of Black participants. We identified participants across demographics, industries, and life experiences, including but not limited to: corporate, local government, native Austinites, non-profit leadership, community organizers, educators, technology, medicine, mental and behavioral health professionals, entrepreneurs, arts, and culture, philanthropy, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

DATA COLLECTION

The Community-Led Survey Design Team and MEASURE collaborated to design a survey instrument that was deployed online using the Survey Monkey platform. The survey consisted of a mix of closed and open-ended questions and was active from January 24, 2022 - February 7, 2022. Responses from 375 individuals were received. To help reach the greatest number of the target populations, the African American Leadership Institute's Marketing Team created a social media strategy that targeted both current and former Black Austinites.

DATA ANALYSIS

Frequency data for close-ended questions were analyzed using Survey Monkey analytic tools. Data associated with open-ended questions were reviewed by researchers to identify common themes. Due to applied skipped logic and the allowance for respondents to self skip questions, the total number of responses per question vary.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- 89% identified as residents of the Austin, TX area
- 91% identified as Black or African American exclusively
- 74% identified as a woman
- 80% had a bachelor's degree or above
- 68% were age 50 or younger

Respondents represented a variety of industries, including government/public affairs, technology, education, health care, arts/culture/entertainment, and finance.

LIVED-EXPERIENCE DATA & STORYTELLING

"For the most part, our rich culture and history are absent from the fabric of Austin, so from museums/ theater to concerts to houses of worship, there are multiple opportunities for development."

- Black Woman in Austin who works in the tech industry

"When I moved to Austin the Black community had a voice and was part of Austin I moved here in 1987."

- 65 y/o Black Woman in Austin

"Hard to pay rent when your job won't pay you a living wage or give you opportunities.."

- 32 y/o Black Man in Austin



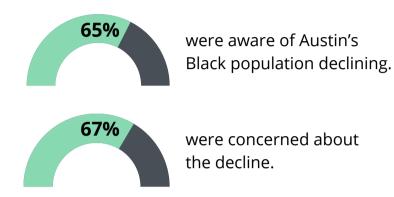
our experience makes us EXPERTS

AUSTIN'S DECLINING BLACK POPULATION

In the early 2000's, the Austin, TX area experienced a decrease in its Black population even though the total city population has continued to grow. (1,2)

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IDENTIFIED

Results of the survey uncovered a strong desire for more events that would promote and increase belonging in Austin. Additionally, a majority of respondents reported high living costs as a contributing factor that pushed them to move farther away from the Austin, TX area. Among 336 Respondents:



Among 334 Respondents, factors identified:

- Unaffordable cost of living (88% of respondents)
- Lack of belonging (80% of respondents)
- Experience of racism (47% of respondents)
- Job related (29% of respondents)

"There's no cultural / social hub."

- 49 y/o Black Woman who works in law and lives in Austin "Seeking better school opportunities"

- Person living in Austin

"I recall the 1990s lots of Blacks were living in Austin, from Atlanta, Memphis, Michigan, etc. But big layoffs hit the Black community hard and those people left never to return"

- 52 y/o Black Woman who works in manufacturing and lives in Austin

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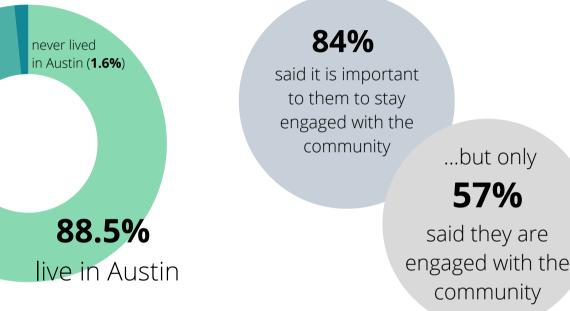
WHERE DO **RESPONDENTS LIVE?**

Of 375 participants...

9.9% formerly lived never lived in Austin in Austin (**1.6%**) 88.5% live in Austin

ENGAGING WITH THE **BLACK COMMUNITY**

Of 338 participants...



WHERE IS THE BLACK COMMUNITY?

Of the 328 participants that responded, over half (62%) said they know where to find community with other Black people in Austin. However, after mentioning these locations, participants did note there is a tendency to see the same people engaging.

PLACES PEOPLE GO TO CONNECT:

- The Victory Grill
- Austin Urban League
- Givens Park
- Champions of Change
- Encore ATX
- Kenny Dorham's Backyard
- Huston-Tillotson University
- Juneteenth Celebration event
- Church
- North Austin
- Pflugerville
- Black Austin Facebook Group
- Soulciti
- Political events

- Jack and Jill of America
- Carver Museum
- Downtown Austin
- Melanated Marketplace



"There are jobs out here, but they're not the most inclusive. It feels like we're always tokens or a small handful of people at these companies and organizations and it can be hard to find each other. A sense of belonging doesn't always exist. Plus, since a lot of workplaces skew white, that means that they aren't always as interested in hiring Black people or treating them right once they're hired." - 29 y/o Black Woman who works in education and lives in Austin

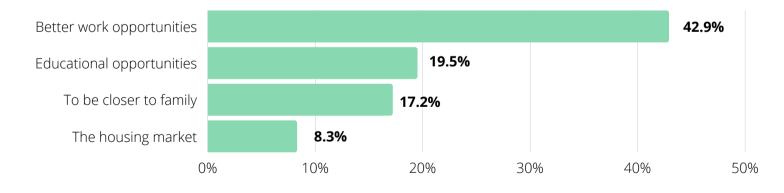
"In a liberal-leaning city like Austin, there's a tendency for employers to focus on "treating everyone the same". This pervasive view actively disenfranchises black and brown employees, who face distinct barriers in this city. By intentionally developing relationships based upon recognizing the distinct person hoods of employee bases, black members will feel better about working in these mostly white spaces."

-32 y/o Black Man who works in community-engagement and lives in Austin

"To live within the Austin city limits affordable housing is the challenge for younger and unestablished young people, if they are not working in the tech industry in some fashion it's gonna be tough sledding housing wise...Still expensive but more affordable housing is on the outskirts of Austin to its South, North, and East..."

- 59 y/o Black Man who works in technology sales and lives in Austin

RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED A VARIETY OF REASONS THAT BROUGHT THEM TO AUSTIN. OF 338 RESPONDENTS, ALMOST HALF (42.9%) REPORT MOVING TO THE AREA BECAUSE OF WORK OPPORTUNITIES.



WORK ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO AUSTIN

THEMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Address Housing Affordability Crisis & Austin's Black Unhoused Population

- City of Austin Elected Officials and Policymakers need to center the voices and lived experiences of Black Austinites to influence the cost of living.
- Evaluate existing zoning policies to allow and encourage mixed-income housing.
- Study existing housing voucher programs to improve housing mobility.
- Regarding the unhoused Black population, work with organizations such as Austin Justice Coalition, ECHO, and Community First to encourage the inclusion of Black people with lived experience to be part of the decision-making process.

Devote Efforts to Address Barriers to Advancement in the Workplace

- Encourage the adoption of practices to account for the experiences of Black employees.
- Address the tokenization and isolation of Black employees.
- Initiate conversations with employers about aligning wages equitably to keep up with costs of living that are followed by measurable action.
- Increase leadership and advancement opportunities for Black workers.

Create and Amplify Black-centric events and spaces.

- Leverage technology and social media to better communicate around what the Austin area Black community is doing.
- Stay sensitive to gate-keeping and improve the atmosphere of inclusion in existing Black spaces.

DISCUSSION

Housing affordability in Austin continues to be a crisis that disproportionately impacts Black people. This issue will not correct itself overnight. Respondents of the survey shared that Black Austinites are having difficulty accessing housing that does not outpace their income. On the matter of income, members of the Black community expressed the sentiment that they have the skills to be competitive in the workplace. They also expressed that they often feel under-appreciated and undervalued and as a consequence are often underpaid. It is important that employers be aware of this lived experience and work to create work cultures that affirm the expertise of Black employees in a welcoming environment. The need for a welcoming environment extends past the workplace and includes Black-centric spaces for events and gatherings. While we look to hold elected officials and policymakers accountable for the experiences of Black Austinites, we also believe that Austin's Black Community can come together to collaborate towards an increased sense of belonging. Any of the aforementioned recommendations can and should be expanded upon through additional research and study such as dedicated focus groups. There has been prior work done on exploring the drivers contributing to the decline of the Black population in Austin, TX and It is our belief that in concert with the continuation of exploratory work, it is also time to develop a comprehensive plan that will have lasting positive impact on Black Austinites.

AFFORDABLE **OPPORTUNITIES** WORK

DNISUOH

SPACES BLACK

OUR EXPERIENCE MUST INFORM CHANGE

It is clear Austin, TX is booming, with its growing technology industry offering job opportunities, an active and organic music scene, and the ability to turn out a highly educated workforce. However, despite experiencing exponential population growth, the Black community has continued to shrink as a percentage of the total population for the past 45 years (1,2). This shrinkage is a result of initiatives that systematically targeted Black Austinites. This includes institutional and structural racism, a lack of affordable housing, and policy that has led to redlining, environmental racism and the repeated gentrification of Black communities. As a result of atrophying numbers, members of the existing community are experiencing a lack of belonging and connection to the city leading to a discouraged desire to remain in Austin. This circumstance will continue unless greater care and strategic actions are taken at both individual and even more importantly, at macro social, structural, and institutional levels. This Black paper adds voice and perspective to aid in decision making as those strategies are developed and implemented by the leaders and stakeholders who influence the changing housing, employment, social and cultural landscape of Austin, Texas.

Employers are the top player in attracting Black people to Austin, but it is the community environment -- factors outside of the employer sphere of direct influence -- that are causing people to leave again. Therefore, investments in solutions like AALI or others that work to build community for the Black population, are necessary to ensure that Black talent remains in Austin."

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BiNi Coleman, AALI Co-Founder



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APPENDIX 1: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

2022 Survey to better understand Austin's shifting Black population

212 Catalysts, on behalf of the African American Leadership Institute (AALI), and MEASURE are working together to better understand why the percentage of the Black population of Austin, TX keeps declining while other populations continue to grow¹⁻³. Austin has been described as having a thriving economy and in 2020 was listed as a top destination for job seekers. However, employers are having a tough time retaining Black employees, and there do not appear to be enough incentives for Black people to stay and live in the Austin, TX area.

Your survey responses will help AALI better understand the Black experience in Austin so that we can get to the root cause(s) of the declining Black population. We seek to help identify ways we can change and grow Austin's Black population and increase the sense of unity within the Black community.

For the purposes of this survey, the Austin, TX area is defined as including the following counties: Bastrop County, Caldwell County, Hays County, Travis County, Williamson County.

All responses will be anonymous. We are using SurveyMonkey to collect and store answers to this survey. Please see SurveyMonkey's privacy policy and security statement for further details about how they store and protect data. MEASURE will collect and analyze all responses and then share the observations with the community. If you have questions about this survey and how data will be used, please contact MEASURE at hello@wemeasure.org.

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1. Do you currently or have you in the past lived in the Austin, TX area?

Currently live in the Austin, TX area.

Have lived in the Austin, TX area in the past.

I have never lived in the Austin, TX area.

No (please describe):

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APPENDIX 1: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

2. If you no longer live in the Austin, TX area why did you choose to leave? (Check	c all that apply.
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High cost of living
To be closer to family
Better work opportunities
Educational opportunities
Lack of belonging
Prefer not to respond
Other (please describe):
3. What attracted you to live in the Austin, TX area? (Check all that apply.)
Better work opportunities Educational opportunities
The housing market
To be closer to family
Other (please specify)
N/A - I grew up in the Austin area.
4. How engaged have you been with the Black community in the Austin, TX area?
Disengaged
Somewhat engaged
Very engaged
5. How important is it to you to stay engaged with the Black community in Austin, TX?
Very unimportant
Somewhat unimportant
Somewhat important
Very important
6. Do you know where to find community with other Black people in the Austin, TX area? (Please describe your Yes or No response.)
Yes (please describe):

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APPENDIX 1: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

7. If someone were to move to the Austin, TX area, where would you suggest they go to connect to the Black community?

8. Since the early 2000's the Austin, TX area has experienced a decrease in its Black population even though the total city population has continued to grow. Considering the above statement, check the statement(s) that most accurately apply to you.^{1,2} (Check all that apply.)

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1. Luz Moreno-Lozano, L. (2021, May 30). As Austin's Black community shrinks, moves to suburbs, community leaders push for change. Austin American-Statesman. Accessed 1.10.2022

2. Eric Tang, PhD, E., & Ren, PhD, C. (2014). (issue brief). Outlier: The Case of Austin's Declining African American Population (pp. 1–12). Austin, TX: Institute for Urban Policy Research and Analysis.

I was aware that Austin's Black population was declining.

This declining shift in Austin's Black population is concerning.

This statement is reflective of my experience.

Other (please describe)

Prefer not to respond

9. In your own experience, why do you believe Black people are leaving the Austin, TX area? (Check all that apply.)

Job related
Unaffordable cost of living
Lack of sense of belonging
Experience of racism
Other (please describe)

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

10. If you believe job-related issues are reasons why Black people are leaving the Austin, TX area, please explain.

11. What do you believe are actions that can be taken/implemented to increase the number of Black community members who live in the Austin, TX area? (Check all that apply.)

Improve employee – employer relationships

Having a more affordable cost of living

Improve sense of belonging

Address racism

Other (please specify)

2022 Survey to better understand Austin's shifting Black population

12. If you believe an improvement in employer-employee relationships will increase the number of Black community members who live in the Austin, TX area, please explain.

2022 Survey to better understand Austin's shifting Black population			
13. If you have never lived in the Austin, TX area ever, why? (Check all that apply.)			
High cost of living Educational opportunities			
To be closer to family			
Better work opportunities			
Other (please describe)			
Prefer not to respond			

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

14. What is your current age (in years)?

15. How would you describe yourself? (Check all that apply.)
Hispanic or Latino
Black or African-American
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
Asian
American Indian or Alaska Native
White, non-Hispanic, non-Latino
Multiple or other (please describe)
Prefer not to respond
16. To which gender do you most identify?
Man
Woman
Transgender
Agender
Genderqueer

 Agender

 Genderqueer

 Genderfluid

 Gender non-binary/non-conforming

 Prefer to self-describe (please describe):

Prefer not to respond

17. What is your highest attained level of education?

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APPENDIX 1: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

\bigcirc	Master's degree or above
\bigcirc	Bachelor's degree
\bigcirc	Associates degree
\bigcirc	High school degree
\bigcirc	Other (please describe)
\bigcirc	Prefer not to respond
18. li	n which industry do you work?
\bigcirc	Arts/Culture/Entertainment
\bigcirc	Consumer Services
\bigcirc	Education
\bigcirc	Environment & Utilities
\bigcirc	Entrepreneur/Start Up
\bigcirc	Finance (e.g. Accounting/Banking/Insurance)
\bigcirc	Government/Public Affairs
\bigcirc	Health
\bigcirc	Manufacturing
\bigcirc	Multiple industries or Other (please describe):

Prefer not to respond

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APPENDIX 2: TARGETED MARKETING ON FACEBOOK



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