



Centre of  
**Excellence** for  
**Black Student**  
Achievement



Toronto  
District  
School  
Board

Youth Participatory Action Research Newsletter

## **BSSLP-YPAR Alumni Join Professors in Creating Podcast: Transforming Education with Research, Leadership, and Black Joy**

Issue No. 1 | April 4th 2025



BSSLP alumni Coleen Dudley, Holidae Robinson, and Jahiem Thomas-Williams posing after recording session with Toronto Metropolitan University staff, TMU Professors Sejal Petal and Dr. Janelle Brady, and Dr. Alana Butler from Queen's University.

### **The Toronto Metropolitan University's Media Production Studio became a hub of dialogue and innovation, merging YPAR skills with creative media production.**

On March 6, 2025, Toronto Metropolitan University's Media Production Studio became a hub of dialogue and innovation as Black Student Summer Leadership Program alumni—Coleen Dudley, Holidae Robinson, and Jahiem Thomas-Williams—collaborated with faculty experts to explore and celebrate the multifaceted concept of Black Joy. Under the leadership of Dr. Sejal Patel (TMU), and in collaboration with Dr. Janelle Brady (TMU) and Dr. Alana Butler (Queen's University), this initiative merged youth participatory action research (YPAR) skills with creative media production, setting the stage for a transformative podcast project.

## A Journey of Collaboration and Creativity

Throughout the process, students and faculty held multiple meetings to plan and execute the project meticulously. Their collective efforts sharpened research and podcasting skills while fostering an environment of mutual learning and empowerment. This collaborative spirit underscored the critical role of mentorship, community engagement, and a shared commitment to advancing equity in education.

### Building on a Legacy of Equity

The podcast project draws inspiration from the [Enhancing Equity in Ontario Elementary Education Symposium](#) held in October 2023 at TMU. Spearheaded by Dr. Sejal Patel alongside partners from Queen's University, the University of Guelph, the University of Toronto, the University of Ottawa, York University, and other esteemed institutions, the symposium united Ontario district school boards, education stakeholders, and scholars. It ignited transformative conversations aimed at reimagining educational environments that uphold equity and human rights for all students.

## A Message from the Alumni

Reflecting on her experience, Holidae Robinson, a 2024 BSSLP-YPAR alumna, shared,

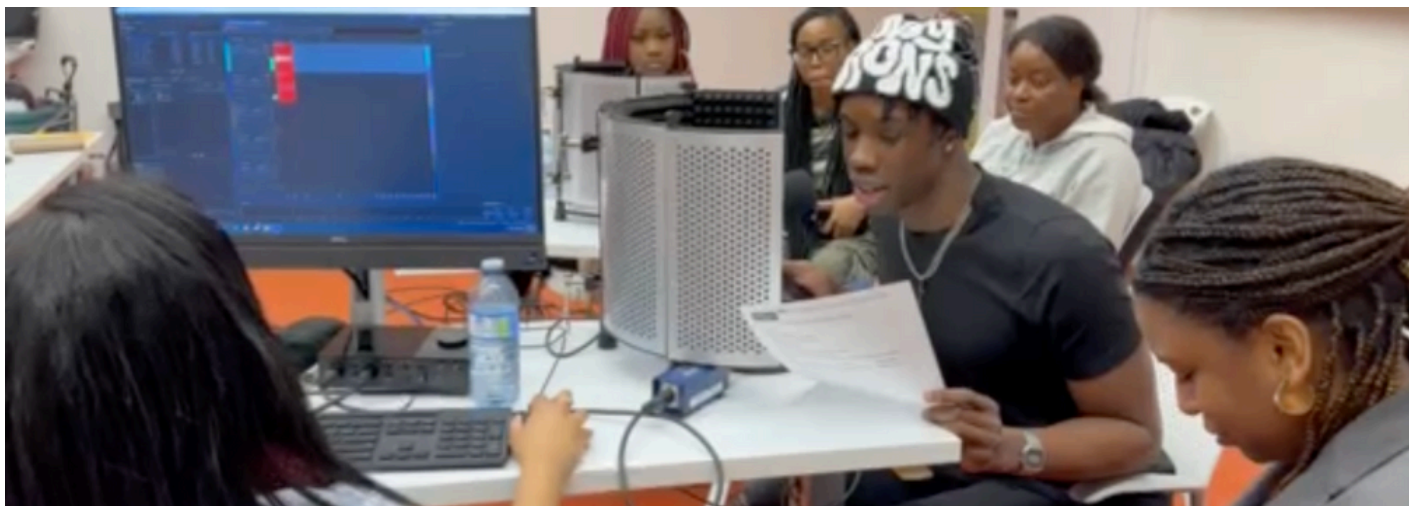
"It was such a great experience, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to be part of such an important conversation."

Her words highlight the power of engaging with young people to discuss their concerns and possibilities in education—incorporating their experiences and ideas to inform meaningful change and empower future generations.

### Looking Ahead

The podcast, a product of dedicated student research and collaboration, will soon be featured on the [Enhancing Equity in Elementary Education website](#). We invite educators, students, and community members to join us in celebrating this bold initiative.

Together, we can reimagine learning environments that not only acknowledge challenges but also foster spaces where Black students can truly flourish.



The team begin their recording of the podcast with Toronto Metropolitan University staff, TMU Professors Sejal Petal and Dr. Janelle Brady, and Dr. Alana Butler from Queen's University.

## Angelika Bell Honored with the 2025 Pam McConnell Award for Young Women in Leadership



Angelika poses proudly alongside Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow.

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### **Angelika Bell's extraordinary commitment to social justice, advocacy, and community empowerment has earned her the prestigious Pam McConnell Award for Young Women in Leadership.**

Angelika Bell's extraordinary commitment to social justice, advocacy, and community empowerment has earned her the prestigious Pam McConnell Award for Young Women in Leadership. Named in honor of the late Pam McConnell, the former Deputy Mayor of Toronto whose legacy of mentorship and service continues to inspire, this award celebrates young women who are redefining leadership in our community.

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Angelika beams as she holds her certificate and the Pam McConnell Award for Young Women in Leadership.

## A Trailblazer in Advocacy and Education

Before turning 18, Angelika accumulated over 2,000 hours in philanthropic service, demonstrating an unwavering dedication to equity and financial literacy. As a twice-elected Student Trustee representing more than 235,000 students, she has been instrumental in securing over \$2 million in funding for youth programs. Her efforts include driving key policy initiatives such as the expansion of access to 23 million free menstrual products in Ontario schools, a transformative change for countless students across the province.

## Breaking Barriers and Inspiring Future Leaders

Angelika's leadership extends beyond local initiatives. As the first Black national officer for both FBLA Canada and Target Alpha, she has spearheaded professional development conferences that have empowered thousands of young people. Her work in Youth Participatory Action Research with the TDSB's Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement has led to groundbreaking advocacy efforts, including Ontario's first universal equity certification for K-12 educators—a testament to her ability to drive systemic change.

## Reflections on Receiving the Award

In her heartfelt remarks upon receiving the award, Angelika shared:

"I am incredibly grateful to be recognized with the Young Woman in Leadership Award by the Mayor of Toronto and the McConnell family. It gave me a moment to slow down and reflect on all the work I have been privileged to do for my community, alongside those who support me at every level of leadership. When you're deeply passionate about advocacy, it can snowball so quickly that you forget to pause and take in the impact you've made with others. This award reminded me to pause and reflect, and I'm truly grateful for it and for those who support me endlessly; especially the staff at the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, who saw something special in me and nurtured it."

Her words not only demonstrate her humility but also her recognition of the collective effort behind her achievements. The award serves as a reminder of the impact of dedicated mentorship and community support, and it highlights Angelika's role as a beacon for future leaders in Toronto.

## Looking Ahead

Angelika Bell's journey is a powerful example of how young leaders can initiate meaningful change. Her ongoing work in education and advocacy continues to shape policies that benefit communities across Ontario, setting a new standard for leadership and inspiring a generation to take action.

Stay tuned for more inspiring stories of young changemakers in our upcoming newsletter editions.