

# weSpeak

Heterosexual Black Men  
Preventing HIV. Promoting Health

Real Talk: Session 2

weSpeak



Exprimons-nous

## Anti-Black Racism and Dominant Masculine Expectations: Impacts on Heterosexual Black Men's HIV Vulnerabilities

### PROJECT BACKGROUND

weSpeak is a 5-year program of research and related activities with African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) heterosexual men in four cities in Ontario to engage and mobilize ACB communities for HIV prevention and promote collective resilience.



Windsor



London

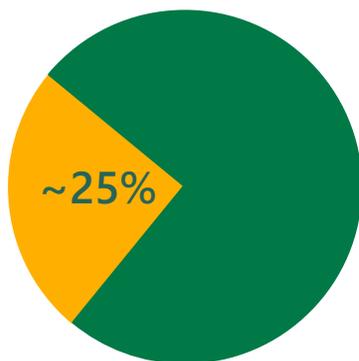


Toronto



Ottawa

### New HIV cases in Ontario (2017)<sup>1</sup>



● ACB People  
● Other Priority Populations

In Ontario, ACB people make up about 5% of the population but nearly 25% of new HIV cases.

### What We Did



Engaged more than  
**2000**  
ACB men and  
community members



1056

Heterosexual  
Black Men



Talked with

210

Heterosexual Black men and  
41 service providers through focus  
groups & individual interviews.



### KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

#### *Social Inequities and the "Man Trap"*



Systemic discrimination creates social and health inequities<sup>2</sup>.



Social inequities, manifested as oppressions (e.g., anti-Black racism, hegemonic masculinity, sexism, patriarchy, homophobia, etc.) increase HIV vulnerabilities.



Systemic discrimination limits the ability of Heterosexual Black Men (HBM) to acquire material and symbolic markers of masculinity. It also produces racist and sexist stereotypes on how HBM should feel and act.



As a result, HBM experience conflicts and tension about their self-defined vs. imposed social identities. Some HBM may internalize these stereotypes, some may resist, and some draw on both.



Social inequities and systemic discrimination increase HBM's vulnerabilities to HIV.

# What We Found

## Supporting Facts

HBM's sexual practices are shaped by how they construct, understand & perform their racialized masculine identities.



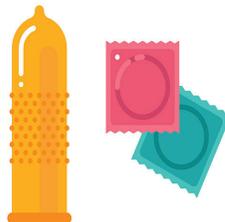
Anti-Black racist stereotypes in the media construct HBM as criminal, delinquent, irresponsible, hypersexual, and uncommitted in relationships.

## RESIST INTERNALIZE

HBM respond to these stereotypes either by:

- (1) Internalizing the stereotypes
- (2) Resisting and defining their identity based on Black Pride
- (3) Doing both

When HBM adopt or internalize anti-Black racist and sexist stereotypes, they may attempt to demonstrate manliness by engaging in sex with multiples partners and inconsistent condom use.



Homophobia and dominant discourse of HIV as a gay disease also discourage condom use. One-third of HBM in weSpeak said they would avoid using condoms if possible.



Effective HIV prevention must include critical dialogue on structural violence and resistance, HBM's racial-masculine identities, and collective action for change.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

### ...ON PRESSURES OF ACTING MANLY

"Getting this girl and then you finally get that chance like, do you really want to turn it down? It's a lot of temptation as well... like how can you say no to that? And then like your boys will tell you... 'Yo! You said no! Man if I was you I would have done this! I would have done that!' ...You feel like you're less of a man. Like, you're a punk and they'll punk you on that..." (Josh, 20)

### ...ON THE NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL OF BLACK MEN IN THE MEDIA

"The whole stigma around Black males and the over sexualization of Black males especially through the media is disgusting. Ah, it's very repulsive... Black males are discriminated against a lot compared to other races... Black males are being degraded every day and we see it as a whole but we don't do enough, which I feel like we should." (Marcus, 23)

### ...ON THE LIMITED WAYS SOME BLACK MEN MAY PERFORM "MANLINESS"

"Having multiple sexual partners, for some guys that's an ego booster that gives them a sense of worth. Personally I don't think that's healthy, but for a lot of guys, that keeps them going... Generally, guys who are like that tend to have more drama in their lives than men who are not like that."<sup>3</sup> (Terry, early 50s)



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### Sources:

- (1) Ontario HIV Epidemiology and Surveillance Initiative (OHESI). New HIV diagnoses in Ontario, 2017. Toronto, Ontario, July 30, 2019
- (2) Krieger, N. (2014). Discrimination and health inequities. *International Journal of Health Services* 44(4), 643-710. doi:10.2190/HS.44.4.b
- (3) Husbands, W., Miller, D., McCreedy, L.T., Williams, C., Guy, L., Harriott, A., Luyombya, H., Mohidin, O., Ozzoude, C., Poon, M.K., Tabi, E., & James, C.E. (2019). Sexuality and Sexual Agency Among Heterosexual Black Men in Toronto: Tradition, Contradiction and Emergent Possibilities in the Context of HIV and Health. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*.