

# BIPOC Community Contributions in Volunteerism and Civic Engagement

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## INTRO

The purpose of this Photovoice project is to challenge the lack of representation and acknowledgement in the nonprofit sector, related to helping from the BIPOC community. Dominant discourse and ideology through a neoliberal, western cultural lens highlights deficit-based constructs when it comes to community engagement with BIPOC folks. Through Photovoice and storytelling, we can challenge this deficit-based perspective with positive examples of BIPOC people contributing to community through volunteerism and civic engagement.

## METHODS

Volunteer Alberta posted a call for Photovoice submissions through social media and [Volunteer Connector](#), an online volunteer hub. We requested photos from BIPOC community members representing what it means to them to gift their time and energy to helping community either through formal or informal activities. We then asked participants to describe what the photo is depicting, and what is important to them about the image. Interviews were conducted with 3 participants.

## RESULTS

Interviews were transcribed and coded for common themes in relation to their experiences of helping community. Findings demonstrated BIPOC folks are in fact very engaged civically and socially. This suggests more can be done in the nonprofit sector to acknowledge and represent the valuable contributions of BIPOC community members..



“Photo shows me volunteering at Heritage Festival at Nigerian Canadian Association of Edmonton (NCAE) stand/tent” Image by Adegoke Ogundeyi



“Senior making Masks during Covid pandemic” Image by Rossbina Nathoo – Founder of F.O.C.U.S. on Seniors

“[T]his is what I tell people, when you think about something that you feel is going to benefit humanity, don’t overthink it. Just start with action... I started with Africa Centre and progress from there... I took the first step to volunteer... I start thinking oh, I can expand this to other races. How can I expand this to people that don’t look like me? ... I start with Edmonton Foodbank.” (Adegoke Ogundeyi, Personal Communication, April 6, 2023)

“[B]ack home we’re very religious and most of our volunteer attached to the church. So, I do a lot of volunteer programs in the church... Most of the volunteering in Nigeria, that I am aware of they have something to do with religious activity... we can decide we need to go and donate, maybe food to orphanage homes... so most times we do more resources. When Canada is a little bit balanced, you talk about you donate your resources, you also donate your time.” (Adegoke Ogundeyi, Personal Communication, April 6, 2023)

“Volunteering in Taiwanese Pavilion in the Heritage festival promoting Taiwanese culture and food” Image by Hymn Chu



“Hong Kong is trying to hav[e] some changes in the volunteer culture which, promoting volunteer it could be your second life in work... so that really fascinates and motivate[s] people who are a bit lost in their job, or they found they need a switch in career paths.” (Hymn Chu, Personal Communication, March 23, 2023)



“Seniors using their creativity to make personalized Cards for Christmas” Image by Rossbina Nathoo – Founder of F.O.C.U.S. on Seniors

“This is my personal giving, and therefore I don’t want to comply with boundaries that are being set, that take too long... going through a process to say whether you are allowed to do this... and you cannot do this... I have a thirst for intellectual growth which I never had at University. I have lots to offer. I have time. I am offering this on my own with my own expenses and I will support it my way.” (Rossbina Nathoo, Personal Communication, April 6, 2023)

“[V]olunteering has been ingrained in us. In my faith-based community... volunteerism is always encouraged from childhood... whether we are volunteering in our prayer... serving water to an individual... vacuuming the carpets, or we’re taking out garbage.” (Rossbina Nathoo, Personal Communication, April 6, 2023)



“Photo shows me at Edmonton Food bank where I volunteer 2 hours per week” Image by Adegoke Ogundeyi

[I]n Hong Kong, like when I do my volunteer hour, so usually you can apply your hours to get some kind of reward. It could be team passes, it could be a theme park passes... I got 3 years of Gold Award... it means, having 200 hours of volunteer experiences in a particular year.” (Hymn Chu, Personal Communication, March 23, 2023)



“Volunteering for 50/50 Raffle (my first volunteer activities in Canada)” Image by Hymn Chu

## DISCUSSION

Findings from the Photovoice interviews support Cooney’s 2021 thesis.

According to Cooney (2021, as cited in Garner & Garner, 2011), “The lack of interest in potential racial differences suggests that researchers assume that BIPOC and white individuals volunteer in similar ways. However, this leaves any unique BIPOC volunteer experiences to be potentially ignored. For example, in a study looking at volunteer motivation, satisfaction, and frustration levels in connection to the retention of volunteers in traditional service organizations, there was no race specific analysis within the sample to see if experiences varied between racial volunteer groups” (p. 7).

Cooney (2021) further discusses that negating to account for inter- and intra-racialized group differences with their white counterparts leads to erroneous and false assumptions regarding the involvement of BIPOC folks within areas of civic engagement and volunteerism. Cooney (2021) also suggests as stated above that BIPOC folks are more likely to volunteer informally and differently than their white counterparts leading to inaccurate representation of volunteerism and civic engagement data within the western research paradigm and model.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Vicki Shaughnessy, BSW, RSW, Senior Coordinator, Learning & Resources, Volunteer Alberta  
 Valerie Ouedraogo, PhD, MSW, RSW, Faculty Supervisor, MacEwan University  
 Hymn Chu, active volunteer  
 Rossbina Nathoo, Philanthropist and Founder of F.O.C.U.S. on Seniors  
 Adegoke Ogundeyi, active volunteer



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