Toronto the Good?
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On 12 May 2014, Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly and former Chair of the Economic Development Committee City Councillor Michael Thompson convened the first and only Deputy Mayor’s Black Business Professionals Roundtable. The objectives of this Roundtable, as noted in the official report of the meeting, were to listen to Black business owners and operators participating, form partnerships, and address the issues Black business owners and operators face by introducing meaningful policies to help them succeed. The report opens with a message from Deputy Mayor Norm Kelly:

Toronto has a diverse business community that plays an enormous role in the vibrancy of Toronto’s economy and social fabric of our communities. At the Deputy Mayor’s Black Business Professionals Roundtable, we took an important step towards the formation of a stronger partnership with some of Toronto’s Black business owners and operators. The contributions from the participants form the basis for this report and for any initiatives that arise from it. The conversation has only just begun. (City of Toronto, 2014b, p. ii)

After reading this report, I was left with several questions, including why racism wasn’t explicitly mentioned anywhere in the report or attached summary notes. Was racism never an issue for “struggling” Black business owners and operators? Perhaps. However, of most concern was how the contributions of the Roundtable participants culminated in a set of recommendations I’d seen several times in City reports offering policy directions on diversity and racism, dating as far back as the 1970s. The recommendations of this report – “building education and awareness,” “skills development workshops,” and “creating a business professionals mentorship program” for the Black business
community – were offered up as ways to help Black businesses “grow and operate efficiently” (p. 9).

How does a meeting that invites Black business owners and operators to discuss the issues they face end up with a set of recommendations that reiterate their lack of training, skills development, and mentoring? By this point in the book, we have all hopefully become more acquainted with the impetus for recommendations like these: the City of Toronto draws on and then imputes familiar historical racial norms onto the bodies of racial Others whose mere presence might hint at the existence of racism, in order to keep the space of the diverse City intact. In this chapter, however, I want us to pay closer attention to how consultation with racial Others in the City of Toronto further enables the City’s diversity narrative.

For many scholars, organizations, and policymakers, the City of Toronto’s success in achieving diversity (equity, inclusion, and so on) is reflected in the increasing participation of and consultation with racial Others, especially on matters relating to their exclusion (see, e.g., Good, 2009; Graham & Phillips, 2007; Makinde, 2019; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2010; Qadeer, 2016; Siemiatycki, 2011; Tasan-Kok & Ozogul, 2017). Also explicitly noted in several City of Toronto texts is the City’s leadership in prioritizing consultation with racialized groups in their decision-making and policy development. For example, the International Policy Framework of the City of Toronto mentions that “the City of Toronto is a leader in developing innovative policies dealing with the issues of ethno-racial diversity and equity,” a “trendsetter” because of its principles of “transparency, participation, and inclusive decision-making processes” (City of Toronto, 2002c, p. 9).

While the City’s leadership on consulting with racialized groups continues to be circulated both locally and internationally, what is made less clear is how racialized groups in Toronto come to be incorporated into decision- and policymaking on diversity and racism in the City, and under what terms. As Ahmed (2012) explains, complaints about race/racism in institutions often get taken up as opportunities to promote organizational values of diversity and to reify the “goodness” of the institution, which can, in effect, contain future complaints. This chapter explores the specific terms under which “complaint” arrives in the City of Toronto. Drawing on interviews with City staff and City texts, I complicate the idea that democracy, political participation, diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or anti-racism are achieved via consultation with racial Others in the City. In this, I challenge the idea that engaging more racial Others is key to challenging racism in the City. I conclude by continuing my discussion on the relationship(s) between subjectivity,
belonging, and desire. Specifically, I contend that the belonging and desires of racial insider Others to be not-raced again depend on and are incited by the reproduction of racialization and race.

Consultation, Democracy, and Diversity

Many racialized City staff I interviewed promoted consultation as a way for the City to achieve its goals of becoming a truly “diverse” City, even as they acknowledged flaws in the consultation process. For example, Lauren described how consultation ensures that Toronto residents have “the opportunity to participate as much as possible in the decision-making process,” but was quite critical of how the City interprets, promotes, and encourages diversity in consultation “on a very narrow level”: a “ticking of boxes…. [A]t a public meeting you must be accessible, and must offer translation services and be wheelchair accessible, and so on.” For Lauren, a deeper and more critical engagement with diversity in consultation processes would “bring a broader range of views and opinions and perspectives and backgrounds to the City,” but with the overarching goal of changing the way decisions in the City are made, and by whom.

Many staff echoed Lauren’s concerns about the City’s superficial engagement with diversity in consultations. They argued that the City lacked meaningful participation, consultation, and engagement with racialized and other excluded communities. Corey, for example, described how “people with more time to come out, more privileged people” are often the ones who show up at community consultations. In fact, this is how he thinks the City came to choose the motto “Diversity Our Strength,” after consulting with “particular groups of privileged people with an agenda, who are interested in presenting Toronto to the world in a particular way.” Corey was also critical of the ways in which “marginalized communities are sometimes invited to contribute their thoughts on particular issues, but then the decisions made are left to the politicians.” Staff thus saw increasing meaningful participation as an integral part of their work.

For some, bringing in the perspectives of racialized and other marginalized communities would not only change the City’s diversity policies and practices, it would directly challenge traditional, hegemonic whiteness in the institution. As Michelle said of consultations in the City, “Only the white people come out.” Nicole elaborated on this point:

How can we build a democratic structure of community input, which is over and beyond town halls, because town halls and official consultations
… only the usual suspects show up. So this is the conversation. How can we have a permanent mechanism or series of mechanisms, and how can we recruit? And how can we actually have access or create access for those communities that don’t have a sense of entitlement? They don’t get to have their voice heard. How can we get to them?

While several racialized staff saw consultation processes as a means to challenge diversity policies and practices in the City, in the rest of this chapter I introduce a series of critical interventions to posit that the desires to incorporate more racialized and other marginalized voices in the City are an effect and affect of diversity discours in the City. In this, a sort of “consultation paradox” emerges: the invitation to racial Others to speak about race/racism in the diverse City reproduces racialization and race at the very moment that it purports to undo them.

This paradox crystallized as I reflected on my interview with Sherene. While Sherene believed that “doing diversity properly” in the City can mean “consulting with your population, with your people,” she explained how consultations in the City were particularly effective with Aboriginal populations because they are kept “purposefully separate from the diversity you’re talking about.” These “purposefully separate” consultations led to the establishment of the City’s Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee, comprising 13 Aboriginal members who “use their knowledge and expertise to initiate key Aboriginal-focused policies, such as the Statement of Commitment to the Aboriginal communities and the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.” For Sherene, the establishment of this Committee contributes significantly to the City’s leadership in the areas of access and equity, locally and globally, because it shows the City’s commitment to consulting with Aboriginal communities in decision-making and to “increasing the Aboriginal representation in our workforce” in particular.

Yet when I asked if she thought the Committee’s work to increase representation over the past few years will actually change hiring practices in the City, Sherene replied,

Ah, gosh [laughs]. No [laughs]. A lot has to happen in terms of hiring and that would be if the City of Toronto said, well … we’re only going to hire, target this to the Aboriginal community. But that won’t ever happen, I don’t think. I can’t see that happening.

I use this interview as a starting point into a critical interrogation of how consultations with racial Others can reconstitute racialization and race in the City. Sherene described consultation as one of the only
ways to keep Aboriginal communities from being caught up in what she called “the typical diversity policies and actions” of the City. However, as I later discovered in my review of City “consultation” texts, the recommendations of the City’s Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee often followed exactly those contained in the City’s “diversity” policies. These recommendations included representation, training, mentoring, and skills development for Aboriginal communities and/or “cultural competency training for existing staff” to better understand the Aboriginal community. Sherene also alluded to consulting with Others and the commitments that arise from them as merely symbolic gestures; yet she and others I interviewed continued to stand behind them as mechanisms for change. The question I was left with was: what does consultation with racial Others do for racialized City staff?

I am reminded here of some of the statements I heard in interviews: “If we wrote about racism [in City reports], no one would read them.” “If I talked about racism in the City, I’d, I’d probably get blown out the window.” Indeed, for many staff, bringing other racial Others in to challenge diversity discourse, race, and racism in the City can also mean depending on these racial “outsiders” to make race-based claims that staff are bound by diversity discourse and the terms of belonging in the City to not make themselves. But herein lies this rather elusive “consultation paradox”: while consultation with racial Others might encourage race-based claims in the City, consultation also reproduces the encounter with racial Others and the terms of their abjection that are necessary to the very discourse that many staff seek to challenge. An additional paradox emerges when we consider that Sherene and other racialized staff who invite and promote more consultation with racial Others to challenge diversity discourse, race, and racism in the City are doing exactly what they have been produced to do.

As Ahmed (2002) reminds us, “It is in such face-to-face encounters that bodies become racialized” (p. 56). I turn now to City of Toronto texts that advocate for/seek out consultation with racial Others so that the City can become better at “doing” diversity, democracy, and/or addressing issues of race. Illuminating what these texts do with race and/or racial claims in the City and within what larger, textually mediated processes is, I argue, crucial to understanding how the familiar historical racial norms of diversity discourse are simultaneously reproduced and occluded through consultation.
Being Through Commodification

What I resent most, however, is not his inheritance of a power he so often disclaims, disengaging himself from a system he carries with him, but his ear, eye, and pen, which record in his language while pretending to speak through mine, on my behalf.

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989, p. 48)

That to speak is to exist absolutely for the other.

Franz Fanon (1952, p. 1)

bell hooks (1992) describes how the presence of the racial Other in institutional spaces can be offered up as a sign that progressive change is happening, as long as the Other is consumed and commodified in a recognizable form, to reconfirm whiteness and power. This commodified, recognizable form often relies on stereotypes of the “primitive” racial Other that are rooted in the idea of “traditional” cultures and lifestyles. Importantly, this commodified form of racial otherness is desired only in quantities that do not undermine or threaten white dominance in any way – a “spice, seasoning, that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture” (p. 21). Through commodification, voices of non-white Others are first enabled and then “eaten, consumed, and forgotten” (p. 26).

Thus far, I have explored how diversity discourse in the City of Toronto both evokes and reproduces racial norms to essentialize racial Others, thereby reframing and/or refusing racial claims. Some of the texts I have drawn on have evolved from consultations with racial Others in the City. However, following hooks, I focus now on how consultation serves specifically to invite and then commodify racial Others as Other, to signal proof of the City’s accountability and progress on race, and to maintain the space of the City as an exceptionally diverse and innocent space.

For example, the Framework for Citizen Participation in the City of Toronto proposes a forum with Toronto citizens along with “elected officials, researchers and members of academia from other cities” (City of Toronto, 1999b, p. 4) to discuss best practices for civic engagement. In this text, the City explicitly notes its commitment “to include the diversity of community groups in public consultation processes” and outlines its ongoing efforts to remove barriers to access and to “increase the presence of marginalized groups” in the political decision-making process. These efforts include how “information pamphlets and brochures are usually translated into different languages in order to facilitate their accessibility to different language groups” (p. 3).
In interviews several staff referred to these “translation” tropes as the problematic pinnacle of the City’s diversity work. Here, we should pay close attention to how translation emerges and is recirculated as part of the City’s commitment to consult with more “marginalized” (read: racialized) groups. Consultation with racial Others thus becomes both the trigger and mechanism through which to recirculate the historical racial norms of diversity discourse – in this case, an essential lack of language skills in racial Others – to not only occlude racism in the City, but also to enable the City’s narrative of being committed to diversity for addressing this lack (via translation). The irony is that the terms under which consultation with racial Others is authorized and carried out in the diverse City actually enable and justify their ongoing exclusion.

Importantly, there are cases where racism is explicitly named as the cause for consultation with racial Others. To prepare for the City of Toronto’s (2003a) Plan of Action for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination, approximately 50 community consultation sessions were held, bringing in over 1,000 people to contribute their thoughts on how the City could combat increasing experiences of racism and discrimination in Toronto. In the summary notes of the consultations were several statements about experiences of racism in Toronto:

Since 9/11, Muslim is a euphemism for walking bomb.
Racism is a growing problem in Toronto. How do I know? I know because the number of attacks on me keeps increasing.
There is no safe place. (p. 29)

The City’s accountability (or lack thereof) in addressing racism was also explicitly noted in the summary:

Participants expressed frustration that they were being consulted again. Individuals and community groups asked why they were being consulted when the City and other governments had a catalogue of actions that could be taken. (p. 27)

Yet in the body of the Plan, these and other comments made by “consulted” racial Others are commodified and reframed to perpetuate the City’s diversity narrative:

Diversity is a fundamental characteristic of our city. It gives Toronto strength through an ability to value, celebrate and respect differences. It is this recognition of diversity, which makes Toronto one of the most creative, caring and successful cities in the world. (p. 20; my emphasis)
The Council Reference Group invited residents, community groups and organizations to offer help and input to build the Plan of Action for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination. The Reference Group proposed that the Plan of Action build on the legacy and leadership for which the City is known. (p. 25; my emphasis)

They welcomed the opportunity to participate in these consultations with one of the few orders of government where discussion on issues of diversity is taking place. Participants expressed hope that the City of Toronto would continue to act as an advocate on behalf of its residents despite the current political climate, and that the City would continue to lead the country in addressing issues of diversity. (p. 28; my emphasis)

As Cheng (2001) reminds us, institutional spaces “often do not want to fully expel the racial other; instead, they wish to maintain that other within existing structures.... [T]hey need the very thing they hate or fear” (p. 12). I want to extend Cheng’s analyses to state perhaps the most crucial point of this chapter: “consulted” racial Others and their racial claims are necessary to and constitutive of the City’s diversity narrative. If we begin with this, we can then consider how even the mere presence of “consulted” racial Others in the City is always-already commodified to confirm the City’s commitment to diversity and progress on race, regardless of what participants might contribute and, perhaps more importantly, regardless of what policies and practices are put in place to address racism. The question of outcomes, including how many policies and practices to address racism have actually been carried out, also becomes absorbed into the continuous, discursive reframing of presence. This, I argue, is also the basis of Good’s (2009) claim that community organization leaders representing immigrant and ethnocultural minorities would not continue to take an active role in the City’s consultations on diversity and racism if the City had not already been highly responsive to their needs.

As we can also see in the Plan of Action, racial claims – what Ahmed terms “complaints” – are depoliticized and commodified, to signal “proof” of progress and institutional accountability on issues of race. They are, as Ahmed (2019) brilliantly posits, “stopped from getting through or getting out as the sound of institutions at work” (para 7). There is, after all, a certain irony in stating that diversity makes Toronto one of the most caring cities in the world, in a report that explicitly seeks to address heightened experiences of racism and discrimination in its midst. Those who experience racism and increasing racial attacks, and who feel unsafe because of their race and/or religion would hardly call Toronto “caring.” But we would be remiss to think that complaints are
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completely contained by institutionalized diversity tactics in the City of Toronto, or even that they are wholly deemed as the “problem,” particularly when we begin to understand complaints as being necessary prerequisites and effects of the diverse City narrative. In this, racial complaints can even be solicited by the City of Toronto to ensure the continuity of the City’s diversity narrative, and it is precisely because these complaints are never fully addressed by diversity that they return when solicited again, only to be commodified again. And the cycle continues.

Returning to Rose’s (1996) contention that the space of war invents new, inevitably containable subjectivities that keep discourse and power intact, I am suggesting we pay close attention to how consultation facilitates the inclusion of racial complaints through which to invent new subjectivities that simultaneously produce and contain “new” challenges to diversity. Put differently, consultation with racial Others is, quite literally, diversity’s space of war. It is where both global and local racial violences are translated, at the local level, into demands for government accountability and action, and also where the binds of diversity discourse are most tested; where its limitations and anxieties are provoked. These claims have certainly contributed to spurring shifts in institutionalized discourses and with them, a host of policy interventions and even direct action. Of course, tracing the actual implementation of policy recommendations that arise out of consultation(s) is a different project – one that might also trace the nuances of the relationship between participation and action in light of other “persuasive” local and global contexts.

Nevertheless, there is a delicate balance here. Consultation in itself can signify and be touted as anti-racist action, particularly in diverse yet institutionally white spaces. As Paschel (2016) writes, consultation spaces designed to meet new and/or increasing racial claims can also provide the state with a way to “institutionalize dissent” (p. 200). I have shown some of the ways this is done in the City of Toronto: claims about racism and/or the inadequacies of diversity rhetoric in addressing racism in the City have incited new ways (and opportunities) to suture the limitations and anxieties of diversity via reproducing the racial norms and erasures that make it up. What this also means, as I have discussed elsewhere (Almeida 2016, 2018, 2019; Joseph et al., 2019), is that “resistant” racial subjects can have a role in keeping the racial norms of diversity going.

Consulting the Same

Some City texts also recommend additional consultations with select “consulted” racial Others. For example, in 1991 the Toronto Mayor’s Committee on Community and Race Relations held a public meeting,
given the poor relations between the Black community and Toronto Police, “to hear from all spectrums of the Black Community about those relations and to avail the Black Community of an opportunity to express those concerns and give the Committee input on changes to the Police Act” (City of Toronto, 1991a, p. 204). The meeting resulted in a recommendation of further “private meetings between the Mayor, some members of the Committee, and the Black Community, to restore mutual respect and trust between the Black Community and the police” (p. 204).

The 29 October 2002 Notice of Motion: Principle of Zero Tolerance of Racial Profiling for Policing in the City of Toronto put forward by Councillor Shaw and seconded by Councillor Balkissoon outlines the unjust and purposeful targeting of “members of the Black community” (City of Toronto, 2002d, p. 1) by Toronto Police, including racial profiling, police traffic stops and searches, and other forms of discriminatory treatment. The motion also references several reports over three decades on racial profiling of the Black community in Toronto, many with outstanding recommendations. Recommendations include “hiring the required number of Police officers to reflect the ethnic compilation of the City of Toronto,” “diversity training programs to ensure police officers have the appropriate skills and training for policing within our diverse communities,” and that a “Toronto Police Services Board Race Relations Policy Advisory Committee” be established, comprising members of the Toronto Police Services Board, members of Toronto City Council, and “members of diverse communities” (p. 2).

In response to the Motion, Police Chief Julian Fantino “met with members of the Black community” and subsequently made commitments to “enhance the TPS recruit orientation and training programs by arranging face to face meetings with police recruits and members of the Black community prior to their graduation” and “to coordinate a Race Relations Conference in Toronto where the TPS, the Black community and all levels of civil society/government focus on problem solving” (City of Toronto, 2003b, p. 7). Attached to this report is the City of Toronto’s Race and Ethnic Relations Committee submission that “sufficient studies and reports have been prepared on the subject of racial profiling and systemic racism over the last 27 years” and “now time for action on this important matter” (p. 21). The action the Committee recommends is that the African Legal Clinic, the Toronto Police Services Board, and other stakeholders – those already consulted numerous times on racial profiling in Toronto – be invited to make deputations to the 23 January 2003 meeting of City Council.
The meeting of the Black Business Professionals Roundtable meeting I discussed at the beginning of this chapter also recommends the constitution of a “Black Business Professionals Program Advisory Committee” (City of Toronto, 2014b, p. 4) comprising key stakeholders and members from the Roundtable meeting, to provide ongoing advice to the City on the lack of success among Black business owners and operators in Toronto.

As I discovered in my research, repeat consultations are most often recommended in response to what the City has in more recent years officially called anti-Black racism. Historically, these repeat consultations have often invited the same “consulted” individuals and groups from Toronto’s Black communities to continue discussions on policing, racial profiling, support for Black-owned businesses, and the lack of representation of Black employees in the Toronto Public Service.4

Following my arguments in the previous chapter, being invited back into consultation can also certainly be premised on achieving a certain level of civility, trust with, and proximity to the somatic norm. But the idea that only those who perform “right kind of minority” scripts are invited to return is again, dangerously simplistic. Instead, I suggest that the invitation to return is in itself a productive, civilizing institutional practice of diversity. In this approach, surmising which racial Others are invited back and under what terms becomes less important than tracing the discursive permissions afforded by repeat consultations that increasingly seek to produce and envelop those at the “margins” of diversity, including those who do not participate. As Ahmed (2012) writes, those who speak about racism in “diverse” institutions are constructed as angry figures who are simply unwilling to put histories of racism behind them. I contend that in the City of Toronto and under the racial norms of diversity discourse, repeat consultations with Black Torontonians in particular additionally produce and emphasize the “angry” Black outsider figure who lacks the ability and civility to “put racism behind them” and thus refuses to participate on defensive grounds.

Take, for example the media reports that emphasized the absence of Black Lives Matter Toronto during the City’s numerous consultations in preparation for the City’s Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism.5 One such report, from CBC News (2016, 18 April), begins with Toronto Mayor John Tory’s offer to meet with Black Lives Matter Toronto to discuss policing issues – an offer that, in Mayor Tory’s own words, “has been not just not responded to, it’s been absolutely rejected. And that’s fine, but I’m just saying that I want to move forward.”
Importantly, Mayor Tory positions the absence and generally angry, “uncooperative” spirit of Black Lives Matter Toronto against the “other community leaders who are people that I think can give me some advice on how we really address the core issue here” (my emphasis).

In this report, as in others, we can see how not participating in the City’s consultations can be an equally powerful tool of the City’s diversity narrative. Not participating not only reaffirms the historical, racial norms of diversity discourse that associates racial outsiders with incivility and lacking the ability to “move forward,” as Tory himself suggests; racial outsiders are also then held almost exclusively responsible for both their own racial “demise” and any lack of progress in the City on issues of race. Repeat consultations in the diverse City thus stand in for and as action on issues of race – anti-Black racism in particular – while also producing “new” discursive boundaries and subjectivities through which any semblance of inaction on the City’s part can be contained.

Fanon (1952) writes, “There is a quest for the black man. He is yearned for, white men can’t get along without him. He is in demand, but they want him seasoned a certain way” (p. 152). Ahmed (2012) draws on Fanon’s work to also remind us that bodies become racialized through the encounter. Historically, white and Black bodies were produced as ontologically and epistemologically different, such as through civil/uncivil and moral/immoral dichotomies, both as a function and justification of the colonial project. And yet the “seasoning” doled out by Mayor Tory transfers these historical racial tropes to separate Black bodies from each other. This, I argue, is an effect and affect of discursive and material racial inclusion, necessary to the City’s diversity narrative, but also anxiety-producing. Importantly, the anxieties of inclusion in the diverse City can also include refusal of the encounter, and by extension, the racial tropes (and democratic claims) that are reproduced through it. Refusal also triggers psychic anxieties; it is, after all, through meeting the Other that the subject “is determined to keep his own superiority” (Fanon, 1952, p. 186).

In the diverse City, these anxieties are recovered through again attending to physical and racial proximity, separating Others who are just close enough from Others who are too close. The space of the diverse City and the claims that bind it further entrench Black “outsiders” as also fundamentally anti-democratic, in liberal terms. We can also learn here that the commodification and subjectivization of Black bodies under the racial norms of diversity discourse do not necessitate their actual inclusion and/or presence in the diverse City, as hooks (1992) might suggest.
Commodification Through Recirculation

Perhaps most surprising in my research was the degree to which “consulted” racial Others are further commodified through recirculation in City texts. For example, at the March 1998 meeting of Toronto City Council, a Task Force on Community Access and Equity was created to ensure that diverse, equity-seeking communities in Toronto continued to have a voice in decision- and policymaking in the City, post-amalgamation. Comprising City Councillors and City staff, the Task Force was charged to “strengthen community involvement and public participation in the decision-making processes of the municipality, particularly for equity seeking communities” and “ensure that the contributions, interests and needs of all sectors of Toronto’s diverse population are reflected in the City’s mission, operation and service delivery” (City of Toronto, 1998b, p. 1). In the terms of reference for the Task Force, these equity-seeking communities – “women, people of colour, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, lesbians and gays, immigrants/refugees, different religious/faith communities” – are used interchangeably with “Toronto’s diverse population” (p. 1). The Task Force held several City-wide consultation meetings, where they reported hearing community members’ concerns, including increases in hate crimes, difficulties in gaining Canadian work experience, and barriers to accessing City services.

In the final report, Chair of the Task Force City Councillor Joe Mihevc listed the Task Force’s most significant accomplishment: the establishment of Community Advisory Committees and working groups, made up of two-thirds community “experts” who were to give advice to City Council on “issues of access, equity and human rights” (City of Toronto, 1999a, p. 2). In the report, Councillor Mihevc also summarizes the Committees’ and working groups’ feelings about their contributions in the City:

Members of the groups have very positive feelings about the past and ongoing efforts of the City to be an advocate to other levels of government and to respond to the diverse service needs of its population. Community members also stressed that the assembly of people from all corners of the world living and working in the City has created a social fabric that is the envy of many. (p. 3; my emphasis)

Although the Committees and working groups represented marginalized communities, their establishment travels across several texts
over several years to demonstrate the City’s leadership in addressing racism in particular:

Toronto City Council has undertaken the following as part of its commitment to the elimination of racism and discrimination in this City: Established Community Advisory Committees on Access, Equity and Human Rights. (City of Toronto, 2001a, p. 7)

The City of Toronto is a leader in developing innovative policies dealing with the issues of ethnoracial diversity and equity. For instance, the City of Toronto adopted the Report of the Task Force on Community Access and Equity…. The City of Toronto can share valuable expertise and knowledge with cities around the globe about these management practices. (City of Toronto, 2002a, p. 12)

Active involvement by Toronto’s diverse communities is in line with the trend for enhanced local democracy and public accountability and opening up the process of local government … as demonstrated by the specific advisory bodies established by Council to address access, equity and human rights issues. (City of Toronto, 2006, p. 3)

Importantly, the Task Force, Committees, and working groups are also circulated by scholars and organizations several years after their inception, as proof that the City of Toronto is proactive in addressing diversity, democracy, and racism. As Ahmed (2012) argues, the recirculation of diversity in texts stands in for (in)action on addressing racism. However, I also offer that in the City of Toronto, it is the circulation of consultation with racial Others in texts across time that furthers the commodification of racial Others and regenerates the confluence of diversity discourse and the historical, familiar norms of race.

Yet perhaps most powerful about the practice of recirculation is how it intensifies affect (Ahmed, 2004). Building upon my argument on affect in Chapter 4, I suggest that the more diversity discourse and consultation recirculate, the more they contain and reproduce signs of achieving the ideals of diversity, racial inclusion, and democracy. As such, it is my contention that the recirculation of diversity discourse and consultation, in tandem, acts as an affective technology. Recirculation can certainly elicit pride in being diverse, post-racist, democratic, and so on, which binds the diverse City against other “less progressive” spaces and, perhaps more importantly, assuages both the need for and anxieties about close(r) encounters with “difference,” as Ahmed (2004) and Hook (2005) suggest. But we mustn’t forget that racialized City staff also encourage, recirculate, and re-cite more consultations with racial Others as a way to
transform diversity policies and practices. The impetus of racialized City staff to include more racial Others in decision-making in the City might certainly be to address and challenge racial barriers to participation, and as a way to negotiate and imagine new forms of belonging for racial Others in the City. What we must also consider is that promoting consultation with more racial Others also bolsters the belonging of racialized staff, as insiders who have the capacity to bring outsiders in. Indeed, some staff even articulated this capacity as exceptionally theirs. In this, recirculation further aligns the ideals, instrumentations, and “self-regulative practices” (Hook, 2007, p. 216) of the racial Self/subject as not-raced – contained via specific forms of racial inclusion in the diverse City – with the broader political objectives and practices of government.

This exceptional capacity is an important marker of the intersections of diversity discourse, consultation, subjectivity, and belonging. “Bring outsiders in,” as we learned from my conversation with Sherene, has come to exemplify change/resistance/war in itself, thereby occluding what actually happens when outsider voices are included and under what terms. But the capacity of staff to incorporate more racialized voices is also an integral part of how staff articulate their Selves. Again, and in relation to diversity discourse and consultation, this is not about what staff do; rather, it is about who they are. In this case, racialized City staff as “insider Others” become bound and contained to aligning their identities and ideals with the performative practices of diversity discourse in the diverse City; importantly, both require the race-claims of other Others/outsiders.

Through Consultation: Final Thoughts

Critiquing the idea of radical democracy in the West, Dhaliwal (1996) argues that exclusions constitute the formation of liberal democracies. Democracy and inclusion discourses often miss (or, I would argue, occlude) how racial Others can be selectively included to reproduce a hegemonic Self, to “reaffirm a hegemonic core to which the margins are added without any significant destabilization of the core or continue to valorize the very centre that is problematic to begin with” (p. 44). For Dhaliwal, the motivation to increase democratic participation and inclusion of marginalized/racialized Others thus needs to be questioned, in the context of reproducing Western superiority and colonial relationships.

This chapter has taken up Dhaliwal’s desire to question the motivation for democratic inclusion politics as well as Butler’s (2011) theorization of the constitutive outside to suggest that the democratic participation of racial Others in the diverse City is premised on the commodification
of bodies who make racial claims. I have drawn on several City “consultation” texts to show how the presence and claims of racial Others, institutionalized through Committees, Advisory Bodies, and other means of consultation, are reframed as “proof” of the City’s leadership in enhancing democratic participation and engaging racialized communities in decision-making, regardless of what their contributions might actually be. I have also offered that it is through hailing the desires to be not-raced that the racializing terms under which consultations are held and repeated become occluded, in speech acts and through text. As I discovered in my research on consultation, the sense of the City of Toronto as a leader on diversity and racism is maintained and reproduced in large part because of racism. Put differently, the City requires racism, in order to continue its claims of being increasingly democratic and progressive. The City also reproduces race, at the very moment that it claims its undoing via consultation with racialized groups. This is the violence of diversity discourse in the City: racial Others and their experiences of racism exist solely as vessels for its reproduction(s).

Race as Pleasure

Whiteness is not a color; it is a way of feeling pleasure in and about one’s body.

Anthony Farley (1997, p. 457)

Farley’s (1997) intervention on race as a form of pleasure is also an important facet to consider when thinking through consultation with racial Others on racism in relation to commodification and/or the reproduction of race. As he argues, white subjects experience pleasure in the body when they humiliate the Black body and then deny that race/racism exists in the first place. The denial is the greatest injury to the Black body, more painful than the original humiliation. The pleasure of race is also derived from the white subject’s continual gaze on the Black body’s inferiority and subordination, confirming over and over again for white subjects that they indeed are on the right side of the colour line while also satisfying “a self-created urge to be white” (p. 463). It is in these moments of denial and desire that Black pain is translated into white power.

Farley argues that the state is especially instrumental in creating spaces for race-pleasure to occur, through the repeated itemization, narration, structuring, and denial of the colourline. He describes the mechanisms through which it is done:

[R]ace-pleasure may be obtained directly or textually. The direct pleasure in saying “Look, a Negro!” is akin to the textual pleasure of talking, read-
ing, writing, or thinking about the “black problem.” The discourse of race involves lavishly decorating the black body with statistics, stories, and images of violence, narcotics, illiteracy, illegitimacy, and disease. (p. 475)

In the City of Toronto, consultations with racial Others on issues of racism provide the conditions of possibility for the race-pleasure that Farley describes. As I have shown, it is also where racial Others have been recast as bodies to be consumed, pacified, and/or erased, directly and textually. But I am also reminded here of the consultations on issues of racism I attended when I was a placement student and then as political staff in the City: watching racialized Toronto residents share their painful experiences with an audience made up of politicians, staff, organization representatives, advocacy and community groups, and/or other residents. I remember the feeling in the room as the more detailed or painful experiences were being shared. There were audible gasps, sometimes also tears. I remember watching as people – mostly white staff and other white bystanders – put their hands to their chests, breathing deeply. The pain being shared was absolutely palpable. But as people left the meeting, there were collective sighs of relief. I heard people exclaim things like, “Whew! That was rough!” or “I never knew how bad it was.” I remember feeling quite uneasy, hearing this. It was only recently that I began to think that these might have been expressions of race-pleasure. Not knowing how bad it is can also be a form of pleasure-via-denial.

One aim of this book is to get us thinking more critically about the idea that the inclusion of racial Others in diverse institutions necessitates progressive, anti-racist change. Race-pleasure helps us to understand how one form of racial inclusion, the “democratic participation” of racial Others in the state, can be violent. In these last three chapters, I hope I have also underscored that when we think of achieving progress and institutional change solely in terms of racial inclusion, we miss how racial subjectivities can be produced, enabled, and contained to reproduce historical, racial norms that uphold whiteness in institutions.

I also argue that diversity discourse in the City of Toronto does not determine who is “outside.” It makes outsiders. Consultation with racial Others is an integral part of making outsiders. The question that remains is whether, if diversity makes outsiders in order to reconstitute itself, must racial “insider Others” do the same to reconstitute their belonging. I hope that I have begun to illuminate in these last three chapters that if diversity discourse in the City of Toronto reconstitutes itself via abjection of racial other Others/outsiders, the subject positionings that
animate and are contained by diversity discourse in the City of Toronto – those who are “inside” – *must do the same and are produced to do the same.* As I have shown, “insider” positionings that constitute and are constituted by diversity discourse (and the racial norms that are incited into it) are made intelligible in the City via their varied remaking and refusal of racial outsiders.

In her colonial reading of Foucault’s work on European sexuality, Stoler (1995) writes that desire follows from and is generated out of discourses of sexuality “where it is both animated and addressed” (p. 165). As such, critical interrogations into the relationships between discourse and desire must not begin with the “true” knowledge of desire itself, but with how desire is both constituted and constituting. Following Stoler, I suggest that the desires to be not-raced emerge from and reproduce the racializing and racially normative conditions of diversity discourse. This means that, yes, diversity discourse reproduces race, but also that the desires to be not-raced are invited, regulated, and released through *that reproduction.* Racial subjects of diversity discourse in the City of Toronto thus experience desire as an effect and *affect* of diversity.

In this vein, I suggest again that we move away from the idea that attaining greater participation and inclusion means we have “solved” the problem of racism in the City of Toronto and beyond. Instead, I ask that we investigate, illuminate, share, and then begin to disrupt the racial practices that are legitimized through diversity and other discourses to reinscribe race and power. As I stated in the outset of this book, when we trace and share how diversity discourse and race manifest and under what terms, we can begin to build a global reservoir of knowledge and strategies that seek to undermine their re-authorizations, in and across institutions.

In 2017, the City of Toronto initiated 41 “community conversations” across Toronto in preparation for the *Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism* (City of Toronto, 2017e). Over 800 self-identified Black Torontonians participated. In preparation for the consultations, an extensive review of reports on racism submitted to the City over the past 41 years by “Black leaders, activists, educators, community groups and public servants” (p. 5) was conducted to determine if the City had acted upon their recommendations. The review showed that few actions had been taken.

Although the Action Plan states that the review was conducted by the City of Toronto and “Black leaders and organizations” (p. 5), it does not disclose from where (or whom) the idea for the review originated. However, unique to this Plan’s process and overall strategy is that consultation with racial Others became the mechanism by which to hold the
City accountable for both its inaction and commodification, which then justified a series of institutionalized measures centred solely on tracking implementation of the new Plan’s recommendations and actions.

Whether this strategy will work, only time will tell. As I write this, the recommendations of the Anti-Black Racism Plan are slowly being carried out. Governments in Canada, Germany, Sweden, Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Ireland, Brazil, South Africa, the United States, and elsewhere are responding to the current global, political climate demanding justice for Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) communities experiencing violence at the hands of the state by engaging these groups in decision- and policymaking, under the auspices of achieving truly integrated, diverse, inclusive, democratic, anti-racist and/or decolonized societies. While some have, in their respective locations, also argued that consultations generally co-opt the presence of racialized and Indigenous groups (see, e.g., Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Back et al., 2009; Bhavnani et al., 2005; Came, 2014; Cowen & Parlette, 2011; Fakier, 2018; Green, 2017; Mascarenhas, 2012), Paschel (2016) showed us in intricate detail how the participation of Black social movement actors in state consultations led to the official recognition of Black rights in Brazil. The more nuanced details – such as which “consulted” group contributions actually shape government policies aimed at combating racism and how, which contributions are considered “illegitimate” and under what terms, and the larger historical, political, and racial landscapes, forces and tensions that produce and/or hinder government consultations, policies, and actions to address racism – are severely lacking. This is an important knowledge gap that I hope to tackle in future work.

The next and final chapter of this book continues my examination and discussion of the possibilities of agency in the diverse City. Building on Davies’s (2000) conceptualization of agency as an awareness of the containment of desire(s) in discourse, I discuss how contradictions and erasures, once made visible, become a site of agency via an interruption of the idea of our Selves and our desires as continuous, essential, individualized, and autonomous. I ask, in emphasizing a move away from the “rational, autonomous Self” (and the binaries/dualisms thus implied), is it possible to embrace these contradictions as part of an understanding of how subjectivity is experienced and not authored by our Selves? What happens to discursive constitutions and subjectivities when they are spoken and written in terms of contradictions, complicities, abjections, and erasures?