

A Time to Listen.

SUMMER 2020



**Our Communications
Intern Rafael Gonzales
sets the stage with this short
semi-autobiographical story...**

It's 5pm on a hot Tuesday in July. I've been sitting in my "home office" for the whole day just trying to cling onto any form of what used to be and forget about what is. Going downstairs I run into a couple of my family members scrolling through their news feeds, reading out the newest COVID statistics and gasping about the most recent act of police brutality . It all feels heavy, but the only response to the cries of the world I can muster is to return to my room.

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 **Youth Unlimited™**
YFC TORONTO

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On my own feed, I see all these black boxes posted by 'friends' new and old, people who only seem to care about systemic racism or their "privilege" since it became the latest hashtag. So I sit in my anger, unable to talk to anyone because the last time I did (and the time before that) no one was able to say the words I needed to hear.

Fast forward to September and I'm still waiting for those words. Words that validate the way I've been feeling. Words that tell me I matter, my feelings matter, my situation matters. As all these selfish thoughts attempt to take over my mind like a parasite, I become aware of the tug of war brewing between my head and heart: a conflict between love and anger, pride and selflessness, me and the world. I don't want to be selfish but I can't help it, I'm convinced the world owes me more than what I have.

After all the wrestling and silent shouting at the world, my spirit is exhausted and collapses. The tugging and fighting stops, and I'm left in silence hearing the sounds of the city.

The hearing becomes listening. Listening becomes understanding. And understanding opens the door for God's love to rush in and capture my heart.

Let's listen to what our city has to say. 🗨️



RAFAEL GONZALES
COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

Rafael Gonzales has been serving as part of the YU team as an Intern since the Spring of 2019. Rafael is excited to support the communications for our upcoming City-wide Listening Circles, and is passionate about being a mentor to support young people through their challenging growing-up years.

Hear the Voices of Our City.

From **October 22 - November 5**, Youth Unlimited will be hosting a series of online dialogues — our City-wide Listening Circles — to tune in to the critical issues facing Toronto and its youth today. Here are some of the voices we are tuning in to, and we look forward to dialoguing with you towards the transformation of our youth and city.



For many youth – **nearly 75%** – their fears surrounding catching the COVID-19 virus have resulted in them struggling to sleep at night. **Just over 70%** said they often and sometimes feel anxious.

Almost half (48%) of all youth gang members are **under the age of 18**. Most (39%) are between 16 and 18 years old.

Although **94% of Black youth** aged 15 to 25 said that they would like to get a bachelor's degree or higher, only **60%** thought that they could, according to Census data from 2016. For the rest of the population **82%** would like to get a degree and **79%** believed they could.

The **average college student** now reports as much anxiety as did the average psychiatric patient 50 years ago.

In the immediate future, Toronto is projected to have **more than 2.5 times** the extreme hot days per year as it has now. In older buildings with more affordable rent, **almost ½ of people** live in poverty. The consequences of this excessive heat for those living in apartments include trouble sleeping (62%), feeling exhausted (50%), headaches (37%), and feeling nauseous (25%).

Toronto has the largest Indigenous population in Ontario and the 4th largest in Canada, at **46,315 residents**. Indigenous Peoples make up only **4.3%** of the overall Canadian population but comprise **30.6%** of the youth homelessness population.

Only **1 in 5** Canadians claimed a donation on their tax filings in 2016. In response, social enterprises are growing with **68%** in Ontario focusing on poverty reduction.

In a national survey, **63% of homeless youth** indicated abuse and neglect as the primary reasons they left home.



Learn more at yugta.ca/circles to join in the many Listening Circles that will be talking about the lives behind these facts and how we can respond together to make Toronto a place of wellbeing for all.

*For the sources of all these stats and facts, please visit our Summer Snapshots page at yugta.ca.

Transformation by listening first.



SCOTT MOORE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

All throughout the stories and songs of Scripture, we repeatedly read the message that God hears us. He listens and responds to the cries of those who call out to Him. I also believe God has purposely chosen us to be a part of that response to our brothers and sisters — our neighbours, as Jesus put it. However, as Rafael's story so poignantly

highlights, we cannot respond if we are not listening!

So it is with a heart to see our young people and our city transformed, that we are hosting Youth Unlimited's first-ever City-wide Listening Circles this Fall. As you've read some of the 'cries from our city' through the stats and facts in this special edition of our Summer Snapshots, my hope is that your heart has been moved to want to listen in, learn more, and help us respond to the critical needs of the GTA's one million young people. I hope to see you — virtually — throughout October 22 - November 5!

COVID Corner.

CRISIS CARE & EMERGENCY RELIEF



229

of youth & their families who received groceries, food, meals and grocery gift cards



170

of youth or families supplied with basic household essentials, care packages, hygiene items or kits

RELATIONAL SUPPORTS



233

of youth involved in virtual programs (i.e. movie nights, Jiu Jitsu, online games, leadership and counseling)



480

of youth engaged in virtual contact via social media, messaging, phone & video calls and other formats

ADVOCATING IN OUR COMMUNITIES



59

of youth or families we helped navigate new systems & processes to get the supports needed with changing government policies, subsidies, etc.



This summer we ran **3 day camps** offering much-needed activity and mentoring support to **114 campers**.



This summer, we provided **26 students** with summer employment and mentorship in **8 different programming locations**.

13,000+

of new users accessing Compassion Series live webinars, resources, and COVID colouring pages

Reach out
to us!

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