

The Black AI Optimist Column Part V: Practical Tools for Advancing Multicultural Communities

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As artificial intelligence (AI) continues its rapid evolution, the democratization of these technologies presents a crucial opportunity for multicultural communities. While concerns about AI's potential harms deserve serious consideration, accessible AI tools offer practical benefits for overcoming barriers, preserving cultural heritage, and advancing professional goals—often without significant financial investment.

The most powerful shift today is how technologies once restricted to corporate giants and elite institutions are now accessible on our smartphones, tablets, and personal computers. This accessibility creates unprecedented opportunities for communities that have traditionally been technology consumers rather than creators and decision-makers. As important as it is to ensure that members of multicultural communities with access are engaged in AI development and implementation, equally crucial is broadening these tools' benefits to the widest possible segments of these communities.

There are numerous AI tools available today with several impressive capabilities; and everyday companies are looking to innovate and introduce new tools. DeepSeek, for instance, was released in January of this year and has some impressive capabilities that are worth exploring. An understanding of AI tools and their capabilities and limitations will empower communities to understand how best to leverage AI at large. Below are four powerful AI tools with practical applications for multicultural communities. These are by no means the only AI tools that folks should be considering, but they are a great starting point for experimenting and getting familiar with their capabilities.

ChatGPT (OpenAI) transforms how we communicate and learn through natural conversation.

- Students in underserved schools can access personalized explanations of complex topics tailored to their cultural contexts and learning preferences.
- Job seekers can practice interview skills with customized feedback, helping them navigate workplace cultural norms while preserving their authentic voices.
- Community organizers can efficiently draft newsletters, grant applications, and event descriptions, saving valuable time for direct community engagement.

Canva AI places design power directly in community hands.

- Small businesses within multicultural communities can create professional-looking marketing materials without requiring extensive design skills or costly software, helping

level the playing field in the marketplace. Canva AI also offers a plan to nonprofits that allows free access to their tools.

- Community organizers can rapidly produce engaging social media graphics for events, announcements, and cultural celebrations, amplifying their reach and impact with visually appealing content.
- Educators and advocates can develop accessible infographics and presentations that explain important concepts and highlight diverse perspectives, making information more engaging across cultural contexts.

DeepL Translator offers nuanced, high-quality language translation.

- Non-native English speakers can translate complex documents and communications with exceptional accuracy and natural-sounding results.
- Community interpreters can leverage its superior contextual understanding to better preserve cultural nuances when bridging language barriers.
- Multilingual families can maintain connections across generations by translating messages, stories, and important documents with greater linguistic precision.

NotebookLM revolutionizes how we process and retain knowledge.

- Community advocates can efficiently analyze complex policy documents that impact their neighborhoods, identifying key provisions and implications.
- Students can upload course materials and receive explanations that connect academic concepts to their cultural contexts and lived experiences.
- Entrepreneurs can organize research materials and identify market opportunities that others have overlooked, supporting business development in underserved communities.

When approaching these tools, critical engagement remains essential. We must acknowledge their limitations—AI systems often reflect biases present in their training data, sometimes misunderstanding cultural nuances or reinforcing stereotypes. Privacy concerns remain particularly sensitive for communities with histories of surveillance and data exploitation.

This is precisely why active participation from multicultural communities matters. When we use these tools and provide feedback, we help shape AI that better understands and respects diverse experiences. By teaching others in our communities to use these technologies effectively, we ensure the benefits are widely shared. By maintaining a critical perspective while embracing practical applications, we can harness AI's power while mitigating potential harms.

The path forward requires both individual exploration and collective action. As individuals, we can incorporate these tools into our daily lives, education, and professional development. As communities, we must advocate for ethical AI development that includes our perspectives and addresses our unique needs.

A practical advocacy opportunity exists in the federal government's recent [Request for Information](#) on a national Artificial Intelligence Action Plan. This plan aims to “sustain and enhance America's AI dominance” while ensuring “unnecessarily burdensome requirements do not hamper private sector AI innovation.” **Responses to the RFI are due March 15, 2025. (Note: It is best to file by Friday the 14th and avoid filing on Saturday the 15th.)**

The framing of the RFI’s requests raises concerns about prioritizing technological advancement over necessary safeguards. While the “move fast and break things” approach drives innovation, it often neglects critical protections. The RFI will likely attract numerous responses from those prioritizing speed and profit over harm prevention. It is therefore essential that voices advocating for responsible AI development—those who believe in addressing potential risks before deployment—participate in this process to balance these perspectives.