



Criminalizing African American Mental Health

Race-Based Trauma

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Race-Based Trauma



- RBTS is defined as real and perceived danger, threats, witnessing harm, or humiliating and shaming events to ethnoracial individuals similar to the self that may be sudden, beyond their control, and emotionally overwhelming (Chioneso et al., 2020; Comas-Diaz et al., 2019).
- Racial trauma can be inflicted by an individual or a system and be overt or covert (Williams et al., 2020).
- It is theorized that racially motivated behaviors towards POC cause psychological and emotional trauma for some people. Their symptoms are similar or worse than post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (PTSD) (Clark, 2007; Polanco-Roman et al., 2016, Williams et al., 2018).

RBT cont

- Microaggressions are subtle conscious or unconscious negative beliefs or behaviors towards a person based on their race or culture (Torres & Taknint, 2015).
- Microassualts are intentional rude words or behaviors towards marginalized individuals (Abdullah, et al., 2021).
- Racial trauma starts as early as conception and can continue across the lifespan (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Race and/or ethnic biased healthcare disparities start at birth based on racial discrimination by staff, the system, and how race and ethnicity determine access to care (Cook et al., 2009).



Systemic Racism

- Historically systemic racism and RBT started with the transatlantic Atlantic slave trade (1525-1866), enslaved people and their descendants have experienced or impacted by racial trauma from enslavement, Jim Crow Laws, Black Laws, Segregation, Redlining, Stopping, Stop and Frisk, 3 strikes law, War on Drugs, financial discrimination, employment discrimination, education, children of color being systematically removed from their homes, to refusing to teach all of American History in schools. These actions creating poverty, mental and physical health issues.
- All the systems (Social Services, Medical, Educational, Justice, Hospitals, Mental Health, Banks, etc) has labeled African Americans as a threat and pathological. Essentially dehumanizing African Americans/Blacks
- White criminals including mass shooters are immediately described as having a mental health issue
- Black Protesters- thugs, criminals, gangsters, predators, looters.
- White Protesters- Patriots

Mental Health and Injustice

According to Leah Pope (2019) Black "adults" are 3.5 times more likely to be incarcerated in jail and nearly 5 times more likely to be incarcerated in prison nationwide.

While we are more likely to be connected to the criminal justice system, we are less likely to be identified as having a mental health diagnosis or receive treatment while incarcerated.

Disparities exist in the evaluations, diagnosis, and treatment in and out of the criminal justice system exacerbating their mental health needs.

African Americans have less access to mental health services than European Americans

European Americans are more likely to be placed in a pretrial diversion program than African Americans.

Black and African American people with mental health conditions, specifically those involving psychosis, are more likely to be in jail or prison than people of other races.

The Children's Defense Fund 2021

- Black children were 2.4 times more likely to be arrested than white children
- In 2017 Black children were 4.6 times more likely to be committed or detained than white children..
- Two-thirds (67 percent) of children in the juvenile justice system were children of color: 41 percent were Black and 21 percent were Hispanic.

Mental Health and Injustice cont.

- Children of color are also disproportionately transferred to the adult criminal justice system, where they are tried and prosecuted as adults. In 2018, Black youth represented less than 15 percent of the total youth population but 52 percent of youth prosecuted in adult criminal court. Black youth are nine times more likely than white youth to receive an adult prison sentence, American Indian/Alaska Native youth are almost two times more likely, and Hispanic youth are 40 percent more likely
- In 2019 Black female students were 3 times more likely to be referred to law enforcement and 3.66 more likely to be arrested than their White female peers
- African Americans receive longer and harsher punishments than their European American counterparts
- Reports continue to come out regarding false imprisonment of innocent African Americans.

Mental and Physical Health Impact

- Posttraumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD)
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Addiction
- Complex trauma
- Relationship difficulties unable to trust or connect with people
- Unable to maintain a job, self isolate
- Anger and or shame
- Somatic health issues HBP, headaches, body aches
- Heart Disease





Healing

- HEART- Health Ethno and Racial Trauma
- RECAST- RACIAL ENCOUNTER COPING APPRAISAL and SOCIALIZATION THEORY
- Historical Trauma and Unresolved Grief Intervention (HTUG)
- Microinterventions that address microaggressions such as allies standing up and addressing things immediately, educate the perpetrator, and seek support from individuals trained in healing racial based trauma.

References

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