Racial Trauma:
The History, The Hope and The Healing
Presenter: Dr. Franki Reddick-Gibson
OUR MISSION FOR TODAY…

- Should we choose to accept it is:
- To have an open, authentic dialogue about the connection between oppression, race, and trauma AND how we can consistently use the information to confront racial disproportionality and enhance culturally responsive service delivery.
RACISM IS...

- “systematized oppression of one race of another. In other words, the various forms of oppression within every sphere of social relations—economic exploitation, military subjugation, political subordination, cultural devaluation, psychological violation, sexual degradation, verbal abuse, etc.—together make up a whole of interacting and developing processes which operate so normally and naturally and are so much a part of the existing institutions of society that the individuals involved are barely conscious of their operation”

James Boggs, Racism and the Class Struggle 147-148.
TRAUMA IS...

- Trauma is used to describe experiences or situations that are emotionally painful and distressing, and that overwhelm people’s ability to cope, leaving them powerless. Trauma has sometimes been defined in reference to circumstances that are outside the realm of normal human experience. Unfortunately, this definition doesn’t always hold true. For some groups of people, trauma can occur frequently and become part of the common human experience.

“Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life.” — Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*
RACIAL TRAUMA IS...

- racism-related stress as the emotional, physical, and psychological discomfort and pain resulting from experiences with racism, and we use the term *racial trauma* to denote severe cases of racism-related stress.
- racism-related stress and racial trauma are consequences of racialized interactions between individuals or groups and their environment.
- Stevenson (2003) notes that experiencing racist situations that cannot be resolved results in racism-related stress and racial trauma.
DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Discrimination means simply distinguishing between one thing and another. When we talk about discrimination as a social issue, we refer to distinguishing between population groups defined by specific characteristics – race, gender, religion, national origin, political opinions, sexual orientation, class – and treating groups differently as a result.

- Oppression is discrimination carried to its extreme. Oppressed people are not only discriminated against, but are also subject to physical and psychological brutality – and occasionally genocide – sometimes for disobeying or displeasing those in power, sometimes to discourage them and others from trying to change their condition, and sometimes out of pure hatred.
**DEFINING TERMS (cont)**

- *Historical Trauma* is defined by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, PhD as “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma.” Effects include:
  - Unsettled emotional trauma, depression, high mortality rates
  - High rates of alcohol abuse, child maltreatment and domestic violence.”
DEFINING TERMS (cont)

- Historical Guilt is the individual or collective guilt felt by some White people for harm resulting from treatment of ethnic minorities by Whites both historically and currently.
- It can be characterized as a strong emotional feeling of direct responsibility for the unequal circumstances of ethnic minorities living in historically and culturally European nations, or the Western world largely due to historical exclusion of non-Whites from mainstream White society.
Racial Equality is a process of acknowledging and undoing historic, social and political racial/ethnic discrimination.

It’s a social and political approach toward ensuring fair access to society’s major opportunity structures such as housing, education, business/employment, and health regardless of race, ethnicity/nationality, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation or ability group.
Racial Equity is a standard of measurement to assess if we are achieving equality.

“A social outcome measure that occurs when the distribution of society’s resources, benefits and burdens, and the achievement of good and bad outcomes are no longer predictable by race.”

Aspen Institute Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families
DEFINING TERMS (cont)

- Trauma-Informed Care is an approach to engage people with histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of traumatic symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives.
  - It is a paradigm shift from asking “what is wrong with you?” to “what has happened to you?”
- National Center for Trauma-Informed Care
- Trauma-Sensitive Care is care that incorporates working respectfully and collaboratively with an individual who has experienced trauma to promote personal healing and recovery.
Racism has plagued this country since its inception and continues to be one of the greatest problems our society faces. The non-white population in America has continually been subjected to individual and institutional forms of racism despite the efforts of civil rights groups and political leaders to eliminate discrimination in all its forms.
The views and opinions of entire groups of people are disregarded as a result of racial discrimination, which stifles America’s progress and places countless individuals in a position of hopeless discontent. Social inequality is most often the topic of conversation whenever one considers the destructive nature of racism, however one must also consider the negative effects racism has on an individual’s physical and psychological well-being.
TYPES OF RACISM-RELATED STRESS

- Harrell (2000) identifies six types of situations in which racism-related stress and racial trauma occur: “racism-related life events, vicarious racism experiences, daily racism microstressors, chronic-contextual stress, collective experiences of racism, and the transgenerational transmission of group traumas”
CASE OF ANNA

Consider the case of Anna, who is a healthy (no psychiatric history), lower-middle-class black woman who worked in a retail store for several years. Unlike other employees, she was denied time off, was given menial assignments (e.g., mopping), was yelled at and spoken to in a demeaning manner by her store manager, and was required to follow black customers around the store. She made a number of complaints through the proper organizational channels and as a result, her store manager retaliated. Because she needed the job, she endured the mistreatment and threats of termination. She was subsequently fired and filed a lawsuit.
For trauma to be present, the reactions need to be associated with symptoms of intrusion, avoidance, and arousal. The reactions may be exhibited emotionally, physiologically, cognitively, behaviorally, or in combination. One may express the trauma through anxiety, anger, rage, depression, low self-esteem, shame, and guilt. While the reactions noted here can apply to many other types of experience, the point here is to outline reactions to racism that might indicate that the individual experienced traumatic stress.

Psychiatric Times, December 2006
POST TRAUMATIC SLAVE SYNDROME (PTSS)

- PTSS-coined 25 years ago by Dr. Joy DeGruy, is a set of behaviors, beliefs and actions associated with or related to multi-generational trauma experienced by African-Americans that include but are not limited to undiagnosed and untreated PTSD in enslaved Africans and their descendants.
● It is a result of the consequences of multi-generational oppression from centuries of chattel slavery and institutionalized racism; it also identifies the resulting adaptive survival behaviors.

“When we look at American chattel slavery, we are talking about multiple traumas over lifetimes and over generations. Living in Black skin is a whole other level of stress.” DeGruy (2005)
ISN’T RACISM OVER?
ISN’T IT?

Because the Courts have eliminated statutory racial discrimination and Congress has enacted civil rights legislation, and because some minority people have achieved some measure of success, 

many people believe that racism is no longer a problem in American life, so it certainly cannot be affecting children of color in care ….right???
BASIC TYPES OF RACISM

- INTERNALIZED = people of color internalize the negative messages spread about minorities and come to loathe themselves for being “different.”

- INTERPERSONAL/INDIVIDUAL = overt acts by individuals that cause death, injury, destruction of property, or denial of services or opportunity.

- INSTITUTIONAL = Institutional racism is more subtle but no less destructive. Institutional racism involves policies, practices, and procedures of institutions that have a disproportionately negative effect on racial minorities’ access to and quality of goods, services, and opportunities.

- An important notion: when talking about institutional racism, that doesn’t necessarily mean intentional racism:
BASIC TYPES OF RACISM

"[a] long tradition of studies in sociology has shown that discrimination against some groups in society can result from the majority simply adhering unthinkingly to the existing organizational and institutional rules or social norms" (Scott & Marshall, 2009).

- You’ll find these same notions elsewhere: "its two main points [...] are, first, that actions may regularly have inadvertent and unintended consequences [...] and, second, that the effects of an organization's operations are often other than those desired by any or all of the individuals who comprise it" (Bruce & Yearley, 2006).
BASIC TYPES OF RACISM

- STRUCTURAL/SYSTEMIC = is the basis of individual and institutional racism; it is the value system that is embedded in a society that supports and allows discrimination.
- *Systemic racism* concerns Joe Feagin’s (2006) theory that America is founded upon racial oppression and continues to function upon this foundation, and that this oppression by the White manifests itself through all of the US major societal institutions:

  "As I will demonstrate, systemic racism encompasses a broad range of racialized dimensions of this society: the racist framing, racist ideology, stereotyped attitudes, racist emotions, discriminatory habits and actions, and extensive racist institutions developed over centuries by Whites."
DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

- Oppressed lifestyle
- Employment
- Early School Drop Out
- Schooling
- Birth
- Early Childhood

Individual
RACISM
Institutional
The structures of our society are subtly racist, for these structures reflect the values which society upholds.

They are geared to the success of the majority and the failure of the minority. Members of both groups give unwitting approval by accepting things as they are.
THE IMPORTANCE OF STRUCTURE
Structural Racism Directs Us To Examine The Way The Wires Of Our Agencies Are Interconnected…
Perhaps no single individual is to blame.

The atrocity is often anonymous but nonetheless real.

The depravity is social in nature in that each of us, in varying degrees, is responsible.
• Under the guise of other motives, racism is manifest in the tendency to stereotype and marginalize whole segments of the population whose presence is perceived as a threat.

• Racism is manifest also in the indifference that replaces open hatred.
White People “FIND”

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana.

(AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

Black People "LOOT"

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

Associated Press

These stories and pictures both appeared in August 30, 2005

Yahoo! News

Http://news.yahoo.com/photo/050830/480/1adm10208301530

Http://news.yahoo.com/photo/050830/photos_ts_ftp/050830071810_shxwaoma_photo1
The minority poor are seen as the byproduct of a post-industrial society -- without skills, without motivation, without incentive. They are expendable people.
Certain children from families of color are still more likely to be:

- Referred to the child welfare system;
- Removed unnecessarily from their homes;
- Left to languish in foster care without returning home or finding an alternative lifelong family connection; and/or
- Denied the cultural and linguistic supports and family connections to transition successfully to adulthood.
- Aged out of care even though they first entered care at age 0-3…
• According to federal statistics, Black children in the child welfare system are placed in foster care at twice the rate for White children. A national study of child protective services by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that "minority children, and in particular African American children, are more likely to be in foster care placement than receive in-home services, even when they have the same problems and characteristics as White children"

• Most White children who enter the system are permitted to stay with their families, avoiding the emotional damage and physical risks of foster care placement, while most Black children are taken away from theirs. And once removed from their homes, Black children remain in foster care longer, are moved more often, receive fewer services, and are less likely to be either returned home or adopted than any other children.
For Children Entering Care (AFCARS)

- Race is an important factor that affects the decision to place a child in foster care. It’s most overwhelming with African-American children who make up 14% of the population, but 30% of the children in foster care. Nearly every state has a disproportionate number of African-American children in care. The exceptions? Any guesses?

- **Length of Stay**
- Median length of stay for African American children is 18 months; for Caucasian children 10 months.

- **Number of Placements or Moves**
- African American children are twice as likely to have experienced three or more moves as compared to White children in care for an equivalent length of time.

- **Limited Services while in Foster Care**
- Some research shows that families of color, when compared with Caucasian families, have less contact with child welfare workers, receive fewer services and are substantially less likely to receive services in their homes.
We have long since grown accustomed to thinking of Blacks as being “racially disadvantaged.”

Rarely, however, do we refer to Whites as “racially advantaged,” even though that is an equally apt characterization of the existing inequality.

Harlon Dalton
Race Advantage

got privilege?

THE HEART OF WHITENESS
CONFRONTING RACE, RACISM, AND WHITE PRIVILEGE
ROBERT JENSEN
In my class and place, I did not recognize myself as a racist because I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth.

Peggy McIntosh, 1988
Today's racism flourishes in the triumph of private concern over public responsibility,

individual success over social commitment,

and personal fulfillment over authentic compassion
Blacks comprise 13 percent of the national population, but 30 percent of people arrested, 41 percent of people in jail.

Human Rights Watch: Incarceration and Race
THE HOPE

- The wounds of Racial Trauma can be healed!
- What Happened To The Village?
- How Do We Rebuild It? Rally It?
- Calling For The Village
- How Do We Include Race in the Discussion?
- Using ACE scores can assist
THE HOPE

- We can assist:
  - Acknowledge the wounds which may be unseen
  - Help them __________
  - _________what?
What a wonderful world!

世界真美好...
One study found that by the age of 11, 11% of youth have experienced a traumatic event. By the age of 18, 43% of youth have experienced such an event ("Identifying and addressing trauma in adolescents," 2007). This means that during adolescence, there is a dramatic increase in the exposure to trauma.

Brain development in infancy and early childhood lays the foundation for all future development. Neural pathways form at great speed and depend on the repetition of experiences. Experiences teach the brain what to expect and how to respond.
When experiences are traumatic, the pathways getting the most use are those in response to the trauma; this reduces the formation of other pathways needed for adaptive behavior. Trauma in early childhood can result in disrupted attachment, cognitive delays, and impaired emotional regulation. Also, the overdevelopment of certain pathways and the underdevelopment of others can lead to impairment later in life (Perry, 1995).
Exposure to chronic, prolonged traumatic experiences has the potential to alter children’s brains, which may cause longer-term effects in areas such as:

- **Attachment**: Trouble with relationships, boundaries, empathy, and social isolation
- **Physical Health**: Impaired sensorimotor development, coordination problems, increased medical problems, and somatic symptoms
- **Emotional Regulation**: Difficulty identifying or labeling feelings and communicating needs
- **Dissociation**: Altered states of consciousness, amnesia, impaired memory
- **Cognitive Ability**: Problems with focus, learning, processing new information, language development, planning and orientation to time and space
- **Self-Concept**: Lack of consistent sense of self, body image issues, low self-esteem, shame and guilt
- **Behavioral Control**: Difficulty controlling impulses, oppositional behavior, aggression, disrupted sleep and eating patterns, trauma re-enactment

Cook, et al, 2005
HOPE...HMMMM...

- Start with the understanding that racism is “hard-wired” into our society and institutions.
- It is like the electric wires in the walls, or the plumbing, or the air and heat ductwork.

- It is a life-long struggle for justice...
THERE IS VALUE IN THE VALLEY

- The valley provides us opportunity, daily, to do things differently
- It provides us opportunity to see the mountain even from the depths of the valley
- There are some strengths to be gained, that are only gained in the valley
THE HEALING

- Recognizing
- Responding
- Resolution
- It’s going to take anger!
- It’s going to take involvement!
- It’s going to take engagement!
How to combat racism?
Be willing to move beyond your comfort zone
Transformative Education

- Educate Self and Community about the history and reality of the barriers of structural racism, how it affects us, how it affects others.
- Involves psychological, convictional and behavioral changes
Create Safe Environments for Authentic Discussion
Listen to People of Color
LET’S GET ANGRY!

- Actively Against Injustice
- Advocating for the Disenfranchised
- Always Strengths-Based and Solutions-Focused
- Abstaining From the Neutrality of Indifference
LET’S GET INVOLVED!

- With our Legislators
- With Each Other
  
  Collaboration (strength in a collective voice)

  Consultation

  Communication
LET’S GET ENGAGED!

ENGAGEMENT INVENTORY

- Are you a SINGLE service provider?
- Are you SHACKING?
- Are you MARRIED?
- Are you SEPARATED?
- Are you DIVORCED?
- Are you WIDOWED?
HOW CAN WE BE DIFFERENCE MAKERS?

- Lessons from the Air
  - Check-in
  - Briefing
  - Pre-Flight Inspection
  - Altitude
Questions For Reflection

- Are you integrating this knowledge/information to support and catalyze growth for yourself, your agency, community and the children of color in your care?
- How do we promote system revisions and alignment to reach the mountain top and eliminate racial disproportionality in children of color in care?
- A reminder: It’s not about guilt or blame or shame, but identifying and challenging unearned privilege and replacing it with justice for our most vulnerable!
RESOURCES TO ASSIST

- “Undoing Racism” Workshops
- Race-Based Traumatic Stress (RBTS) Scale
- RACE: Are We So Different Project
- “How Real Is Race” Mukhopadhay, Henze, Moses
- “Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African-American Identity” Ron Eyerman
- “Between the World and Me” Ta Nehesi Coates
- “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome” Joy DeGruy, PhD
- “Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare” Dorothy Roberts
“CHOCOLATE CAKE”
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MANY THANKS!!

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