



# **Race and the Intersection of Abuse, Power and Control:**

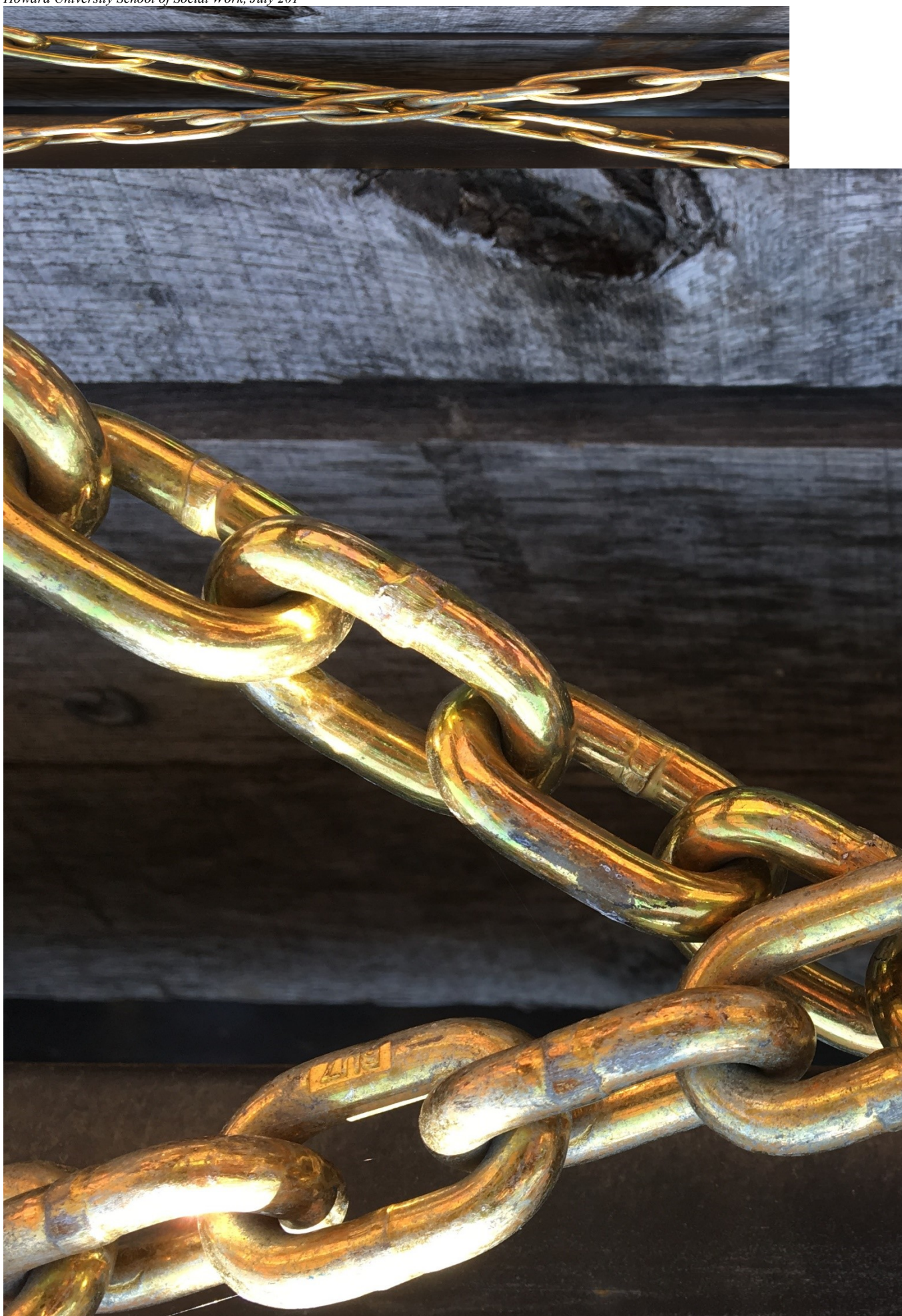
Research & Reflections from the  
Black Perspective

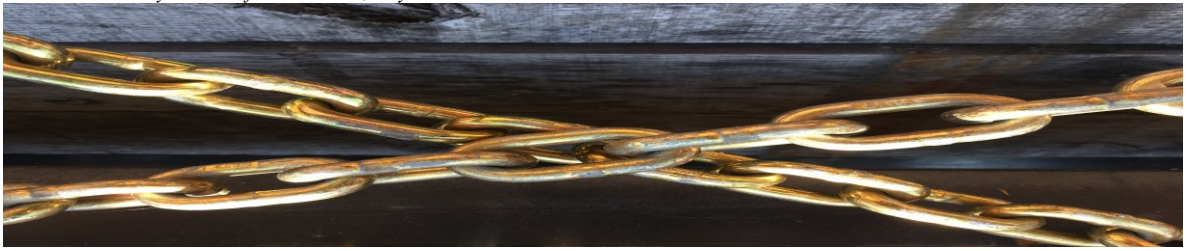
*Edited by*

Robert L. Cosby, PhD MSW, MPhil

Rachel I. Grant, MSW Candidate

**Howard University School of Social Work**  
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July 2018 Inabel Burns Lindsay Social Justice  
at the Cross Roads Monograph





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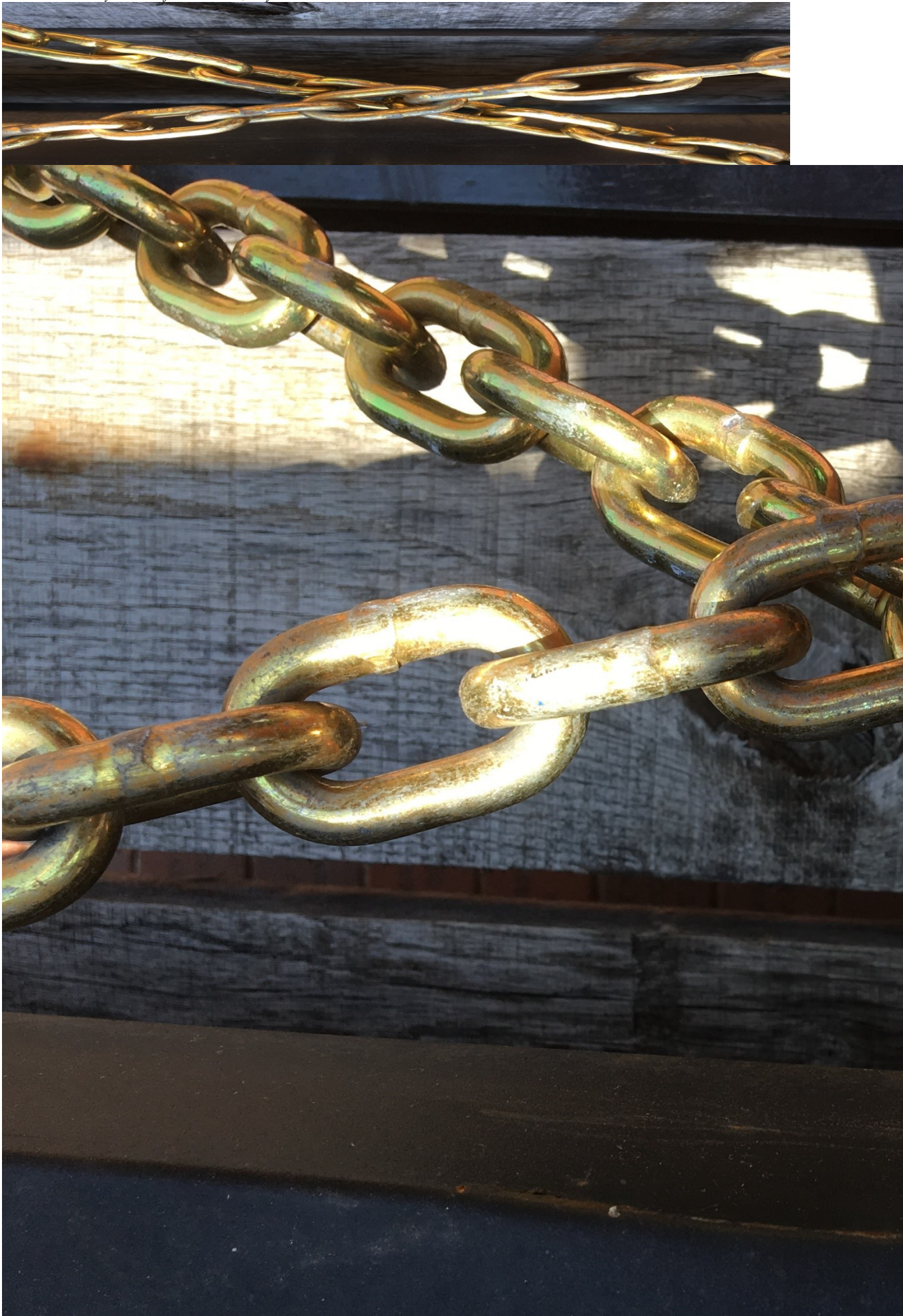
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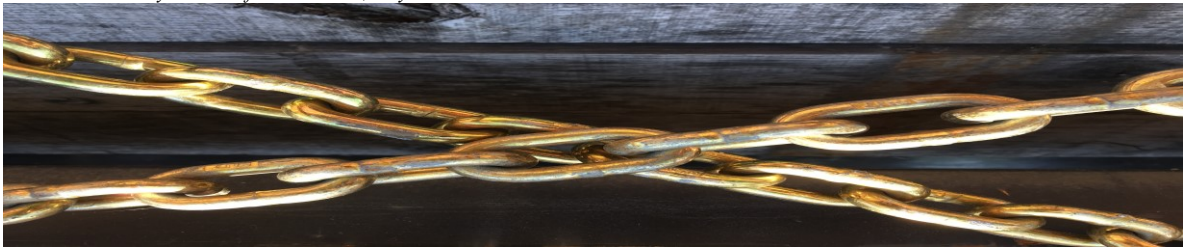
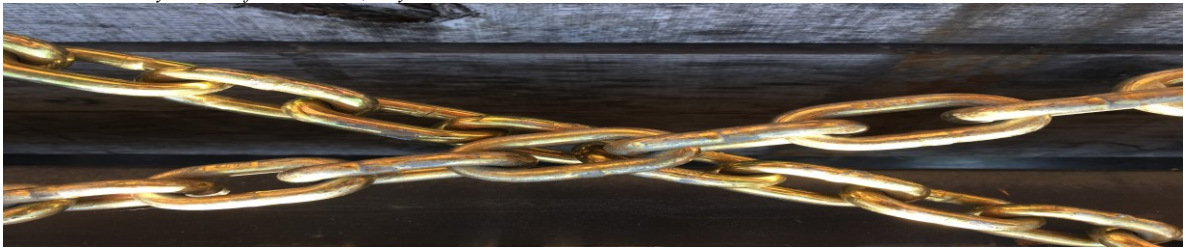


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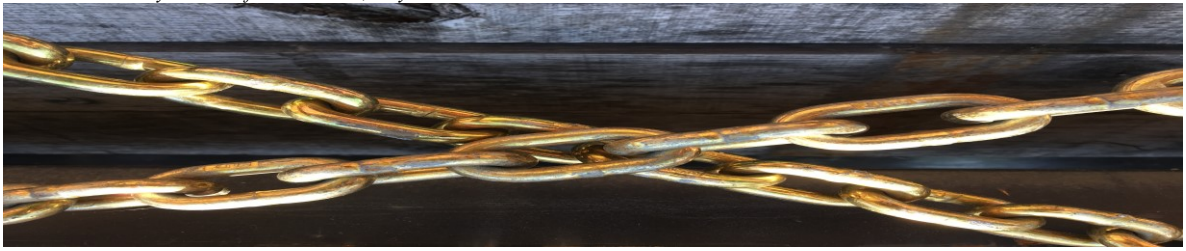




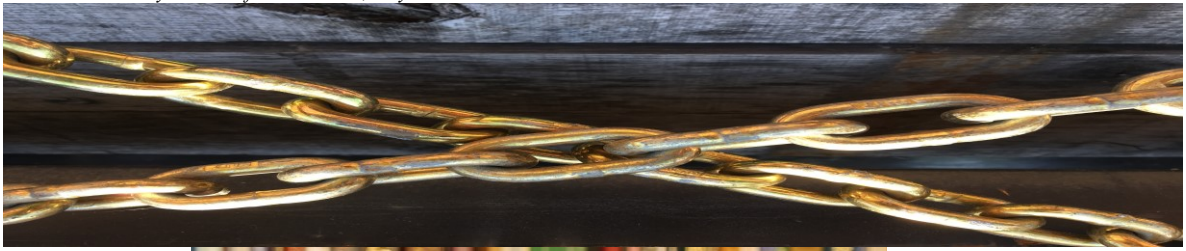


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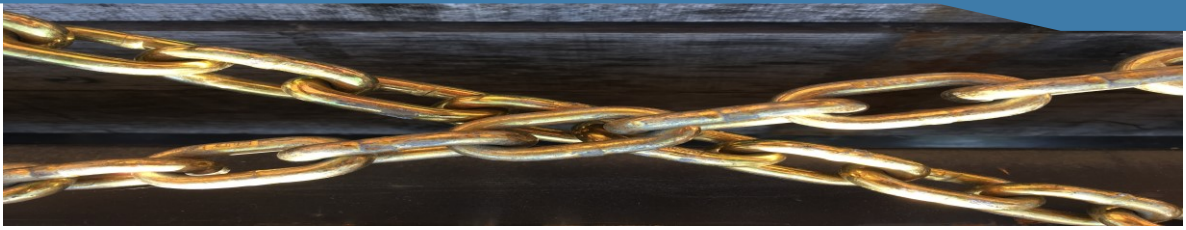
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### **Message from the Dean**

The Howard University School of Social Work's vision is "To enhance human well-being and transform those human, organizational, social and economic conditions which impact African Americans, Africans in the Diaspora, other people of color, and the global community." Dispelling and addressing racism is embedded in our vision and this publication is critically important to our school. This is the 50<sup>th</sup> year since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr was assassinated. As we reflected on what this means I am reminded of the context of civil unrest in 1968, changes in priorities of the new federal administration and renewed tension globally and in communities across this nation. Some language is different with groups such as the alt right such that some older persons of color have stated the language of the 1950's and 1960's appears oddly familiar. In 2016 HUSSW achieved a milestone with the first monograph reflecting on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the War on Poverty. Our faculty members explored various dimensions of poverty with a focus on preparing the next generation of social workers and scholars for culturally competent and informed practice with poor persons and their communities.

*Race and the Intersection of Abuse, Power and Control: Research and Reflections from the Black Perspective*



This monograph on Racism provides a rare opportunity for HUSSW faculty and doctoral students to offer their views and insights about Racism in the United States and some comparisons and contrasts to other countries. Racism provides historical as well as contemporary issues and challenges. As the dean of the school, I welcome this needed discourse and look forward to the voice of our faculty, students, and alumni in addressing important topics that can contribute to the fulfillment of the vision and mission of the Howard University School of Social Work.

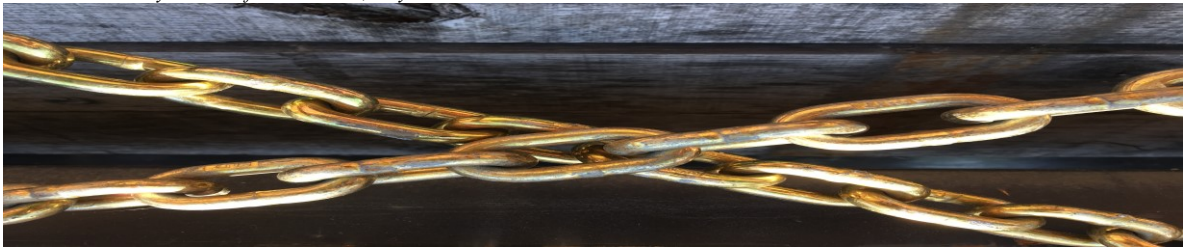
The School of Social Work has a rich history in this its 82<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of social work education at Howard University. We have stood upon and continue to stand on the shoulders of social work pioneers, including Howard alumni, who developed and implemented many programs that challenge the causes of poverty and social unrest such as racism. This monograph acknowledges some of this history and looks at contemporary related issues. The critical discourse herein sets the stage for the next generation of Howard prepared social workers and scholars to forge fresh solutions.

*Sandra Edmonds Crewe Dean*

Sandra Edmonds Crewe, Ph.D., ACSW

Dean

Howard University School of Social Work



## Introduction

This monograph *Race and the Intersection of Abuse, Power and Control: Research & Reflections from the Black Perspective* is but one of the cobblestones on the road to freedom, freedom of mind, body and spirit, and freedom from the oppression of color. The legacy of racism and the reactive broom of Civil Rights is inextricably linked. Why this Monograph, and why now? Why not, now?

Given the current events, the legal and legislative precedents, the willingness to look the other way, the changes that don't appear to make sense outside of the R word, yes, I think it may be the right time for this Monograph. Time for Social Workers to step up even more. As it happens to the least of us it happens to us.

The oppressive rug of institutional racism covers the floor of humanity where dirt, blood, sweat and tears are swept. Attempts to expose and clean the rug and free the oppressed has at best been episodic. The victories, economic, educational and cultural victories, in human and civil and rights terms, have been short-lived, and in need of continued scrutiny and help from within and outside communities and the walls of power.

In short, the pervasive nature of racism is far from dead.

The Reverend Amos C. Brown said, 'Racism is not dead' as a rallying cry for the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). However, the learned behavior of racism is centuries old and practiced = behaviors extend and are taught from the crib to the kitchen table, from the classroom to the corner store, to places of worship including the churches, synagogues, mosques and temples, yes, to the banks and boardrooms. The burden of oppressed people, due to racism, is not singular in its impact. Rather, the legacy of racism is pervasive

and must be better understood in order to understand its power to corrupt, to change and to keep the same. Efforts to combat racism begin with the belief that social justice must prevail over tyranny.

Until we discover our humanity in others, our conscious and unconscious racial biases continue. If it is painful to read, you need to better understand that it is not just the overt biases that are packed with hate but the latent biases and masked indifference that are equally toxic.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said only love can overcome hate.

Until we learn to speak up, to sing, to shout out the whispered rules of injustice that perpetuate racism the injustices will continue. Until we seek understanding, both spoken and unspoken, racism will endure. Until we educate and empower and overcome the physical, emotional and spiritual demons that oppress us we are doomed to continue the policies, practices and beliefs that are systemic.

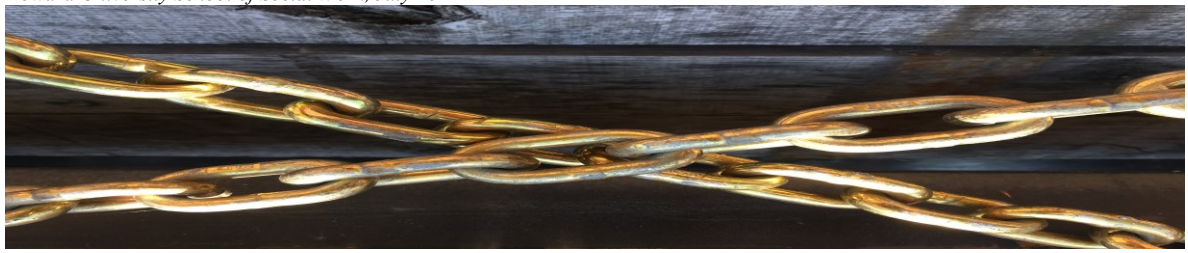
Martin Luther King, Jr. said color should not define us any longer. Instead, we should be defined by the content of our character. Not until the economic and social engines of greed, corruption and power no longer control us, we are destined to repeat and continue the oppression persons of color see and feel each day when the rug of institutional racism and indifference covers the floor of humanity.

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*Robert L. Cosby, PhD, MSW, MPhil.*

*Dr. Cosby is the Guest Editor for this Monograph and is Associate Professor and Director of the Multidisciplinary Gerontology Center at Howard University School of Social Work*

*Rachel Grant, Honor BA, MSW Candidate, is the Assistant Editor and is an MSW second year candidate at Howard University School of Social Work*



# Ending Racism: Making Our Social Work Values Our Responsibility

Sandra Edmonds Crewe,  
PhD, ACSW

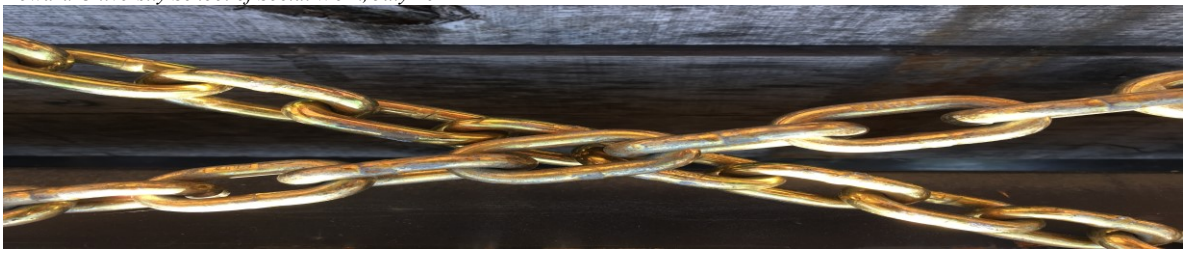
## Abstract

*There are defining moments in history that influence the paths we take and who we become. One such defining moment for me was the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968. Although cut down in the prime of his life, he passed the baton to us to continue his lifelong work of ending racism. As social work educators, the responsibility of preparing the next generations to become social justice warriors falls on our shoulders. This article discusses missed and new opportunities to harness our values to drive out racism in our society.*

**Key words:** HBCU, racism, social justice, social work education, social work values

This year we marked the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On April 4, 1968, many of us recall where we were when we heard the sad and

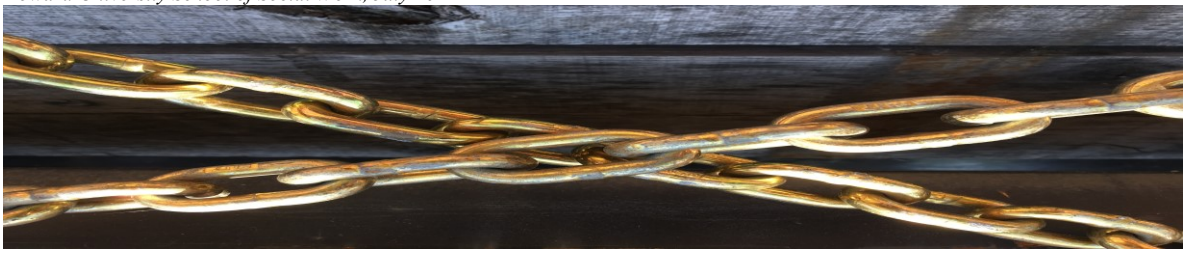
devastating news of his death. I vividly recall this day. As I boarded the school bus headed to a recently segregated (Freedom of Choice) public high school with an overwhelmingly predominantly white student body, I was greeted with chants “we finally killed that n.....r.” And the taunts were not restricted to students, many of their teachers also celebrated his death. Notice—I did not say my teachers—because clearly no one that I considered a teacher/mentor, acted in this disrespectful and immoral manner. At 16 years of age, after two years of this verbal abuse, I had become immune to the racial insults. Reminded of my father’s advice that the best weapon against the bigotry was success... I kept my eyes on the prize. Yet, this assault to the slain Dr. King penetrated my protective armor- their mean-spiritedness on this day not only stung, it hurt. Many African American families, including my own, had photographs of Dr. King prominently displayed in their living rooms—amidst their family photographs. For us, his death was personal- a member of the family was missing. Once again, racism showed its overt ugly head and left a void in many families. Fifty years later—I can still hear the chants and the insults hurled at this great spiritual ‘race man’ who gave his life for the cause of social and economic justice. Today, I wonder, did I stand up for my champion? Was I silent? Did I say, how dare you desecrate his memory? Or was I like the people described by Paul Laurence Dunbar—wearing the mask of torn bleeding hearts with a smile (Dunbar, 1913). I’m not sure. Perhaps, my past 50 years of unapologetic advocacy for social justice is penance. I do know that this powerful moment in time paved my path to social work—I knew that I could never be one who saw wrong and turned the other way. I knew then that those in power failed to live up to their claim of superiority. After all, what superior individuals would celebrate the death of a son, spouse, father, uncle and more. Perhaps they were the ones wearing the mask. I also learned that I had to channel my inner turmoil toward constructive



causes and not embrace the hate that was all around me. I understood that warriors, like Dr. King, who fought for social justice would be hated and they would with dignity bear the weight of the hatred so they could lift the burdens of others --- many of whom would become the beneficiaries of their sacrifices.

It is perhaps this early exposure to racism that eventually led me to the Howard University School of Social Work to pursue my doctoral degree. Founded in large part because the profession struggled to live up to its own values related to the dignity and worth of all persons, Howard University's School of Social Work is a social justice beacon within the profession. Dr. Inabel Burns Lindsay, founding dean, opened doors to African Americans who were denied, solely based on race, access to a social work education (Crewe, Brown & Gourdine, 2008). This lack of opportunity for African Americans also created a cascading effect on African American clients who had little exposure to social workers of their own race or ethnicity. Thus, social work, despite its focus on helping those in need, mirrored the widespread overt racism in society and integrated it into its practices in social work programs and human service organizations. While champions of vulnerable and marginalized populations, during the founding decades, sadly, social work failed to honor its own values and rather than fight discrimination, it spoke about helping while simultaneously practicing societal discrimination. To address this gap in education, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), created their own social work programs, starting with Atlanta University in 1920s and Howard University in the 1930s. (Gourdine & Brown, 2016). With the passage of Civil Rights legislation, more doors were opened to African Americans in other majority schools of social work.

It is my opinion that the missed opportunity for the profession of social work to be a leader against racism within its own walls has lingering effects that exist today. While strides have been made, disparities based upon race, continue to exist in the areas of leadership, scholarship, and practice. Although the core values of the profession give primacy to the eradication of racism, the profession still has considerable work to do to ensure that opportunities exist for African Americans to flourish as scholars, researchers, and practitioners. And to further complicate the issue, eradicating racism has been engulfed in a litany of other isms. I am not minimizing the importance of intersectionality. As an African American woman, I truly understand the intersection of race and gender. I understand the missed opportunities, omissions, insults, and assaults that were hurled because I was a woman. While exacerbated by gender, race for me has been my greatest challenge. Racism has subjected me to both micro and macro aggressions and it has remained firm in seducing future generations to be judged by skin color rather than the content of their character. I can't count the number of times that I have been praised for being "a credit to my race" or other equally irritating compliments that represent both conscious and unconscious bias. Embracing culturally biased gold standards for excellence is yet another way that structural racism is maintained because these standards are more attainable by the well-resourced and represent their values without questioning their validity. I understand the inability to walk back the racism that has informed our core values, etc. Because we can't change the past does not mean that we can't address the role it has in our present. Susan Goldberg, Editor in Chief of National Geographic states in her recent editorial, "to rise above the racism of the past, we must acknowledge it" (Goldberg, 2018). I agree—social work must acknowledge racism and its pernicious partners. Opportunities await us to "undo racism" through lens that question as well as affirm what we do.

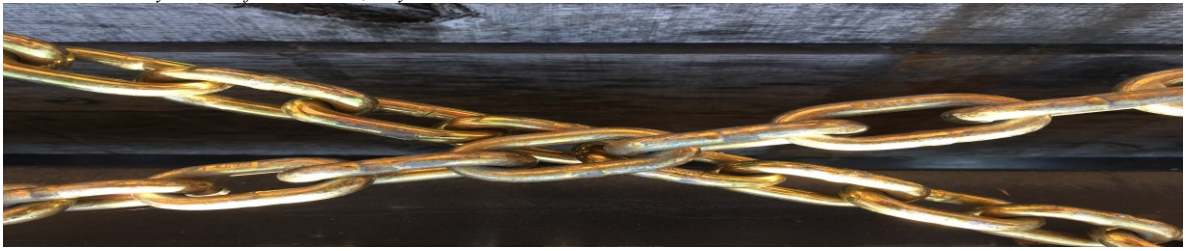


This is our “Rosa Parks” moment in history for social work education. We must keep our seats and take a stand against racism.

Because racism has created structural equalities that endure and negatively impact those we serve, a new social work education approach to racism may be in order- one that approaches it as a big “R” rather than little “r”. A quick glance at the major disparities in society show that race is inextricably linked to a range of disparities and resulting inequity. For example, the big “R” approach in social work education should equip every student with an in-depth understanding of racism and its concomitants in determining the pathways to equity (all aspects). Through the deconstruction of racism, social work students can better understand the persistent barriers that face many African Americans and other racial minorities and reject simplistic explanations that most often blame the victims for their circumstances. The big “R” approach in social work education allows students to sit with the discomfort of judging and being judged by your color. It will allow students to dismantle damaging responses such as “treating everyone the same” and move to the equity approach that acknowledges the racial trauma that has been passed on from generation to generation. While many have overcome insurmountable barriers, the big “R” approach to racism will acknowledge resilience as a protective factor while not over relying upon it to remove structural barriers. Resilience while importance, opens the door for some and not all. Using a big “R” approach will ask the question, “were structural responses adequate?” Racism cannot be ended by celebration of resilience—it must be tackled with a focus on opening doors wide enough for those whose resilience has been weakened through persistent battering. Self-help is a tool that has been effectively used to counteract racism—yet it alone cannot create equity for the masses who remain bruised by environmental oppressions. Consider the water crisis (crime) in

Flint, Michigan ... structural inequalities must find their way to the chopping block rather than an over reliance on personal responsibility to improve health and behavioral health outcomes.

For over 20 years I worked in the field of public and assisted housing. I worked in communities that were predominantly African American during the height of the crack cocaine epidemic. Unfortunately, this drug crisis was criminalized and many families lost their housing because of related lease violations caused by their rapid addiction to this predatory drug that consumed their entire being. Sadly, both using and selling became a crime and families were ripped apart, children placed in foster care or with grandparents or other relatives. For many, crack cocaine was their self-medication for the systemic injustices that awakened them daily. The stiff penalties for possession and sale helped to fortify the industrial prison complex and created employment opportunities in white suburban areas. Ironically, many of the incarcerated were themselves victims of lack of employment. Sentencing disparities for possession of powder versus crack cocaine is just one example of how the big “R” evidences itself. Today, I am angered more than ever about the horrific treatment of African Americans during the crack epidemic. Why? I am infuriated because today’s opioid crisis medicalizes the addiction while the crack epidemic was criminalized—the big “R” racism is like the scarlet letter that stigmatizes one group while it advocates treatment for another group--- simply based upon race and ethnicity. Perhaps, the more humane treatment for the opioid user is the outcome of lessons learned from the costly approach used to address the crack epidemic. While, I hope this assertion holds some truth, I am more inclined to believe that race rather than experience is the driving force for the differential approach. Addiction is a public health crisis – it is critically important for social work to be on the frontline advocating for treatment without regard to race or ethnicity. The current double-standard



is inconsistent with our core values. We cannot allow society to be comfortable with aligning their sympathies along racial lines.

As I reflect upon my days of practice in public and assisted housing, I am proud of the individuals that I supported and guided toward self-sufficiency or an improved quality of life. However, I am equally concerned about my missed opportunities to advocate to change unjust systems. Too often social work looks outside of our domain to point out racism. This lets us off the hook. We are the ones often called upon to enforce the rules that continue the status quo. When someone breaks through, we praise their perseverance and celebrate their resilience that allowed them to succeed against all odds. While acknowledging those who were strong enough to fight back, this approach leaves other more fragile individuals with wounded spirits and empty tanks to endure systems that further oppress and break them. Our voice must be louder for those who are not able to strip away the deep-seated pain of racism.

Social work education has embraced all the right values and principles that relate to eradicating racism, and what is most urgent now is to insist that these core values knock down the structural barriers that have provided protection for the status-quo. Every social worker must be equipped with heightened sensitivity to recognize structural barriers and use this knowledge to strike a mighty blow. This will require a big “R” approach to educating social workers to voice their intolerance of racism in its many forms. I am confident that the next generation of social workers-change-agents can continue and strengthen their collective advocacy for a just society. Indeed, they stand on the shoulders of NASW social work pioneers© who successfully advocated for social justice across many spans of practice.

As I conclude this essay, I reflect upon the words of Dean Rev. Dr. Bernard Richardson

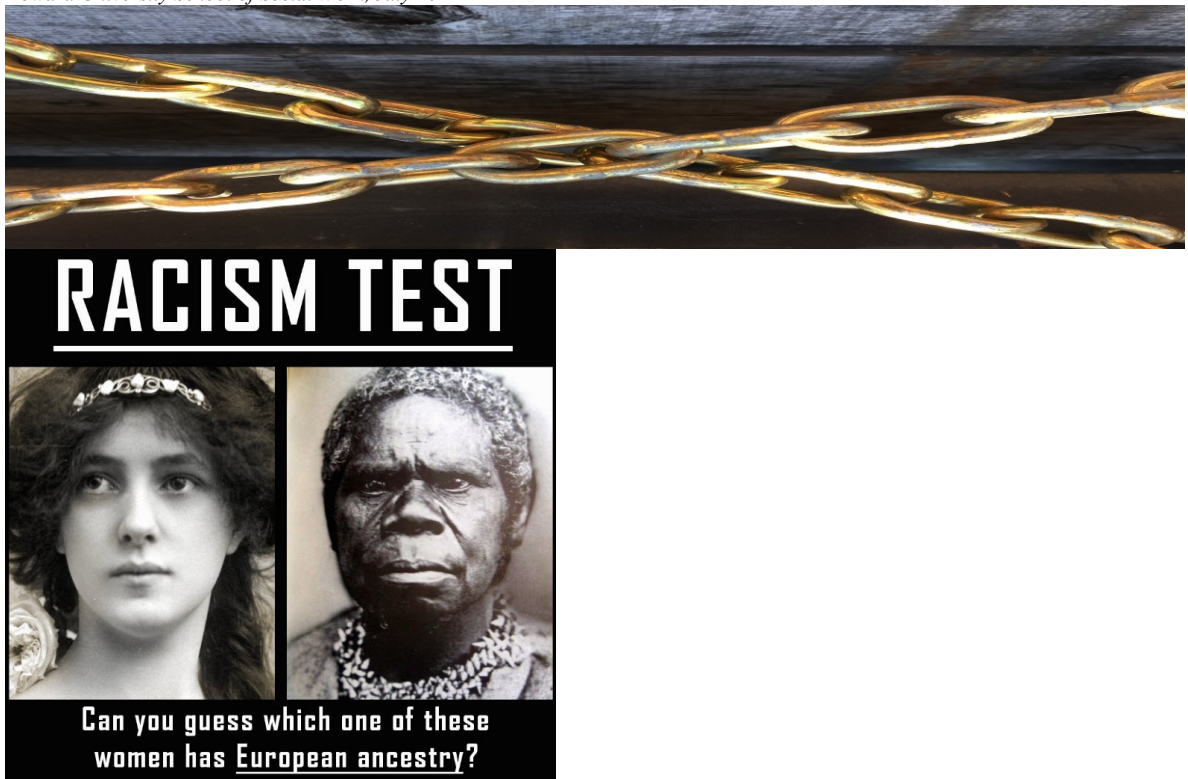
of the historic Howard University Rankin Chapel, who often ends his prayers with... this is our prayer, now make it our responsibility. The dignity and worth of the individual is one of our core social work values, now let's make ending racism our responsibility and infuse the next generation with the necessary passion and skills to continue the fight to end racism.

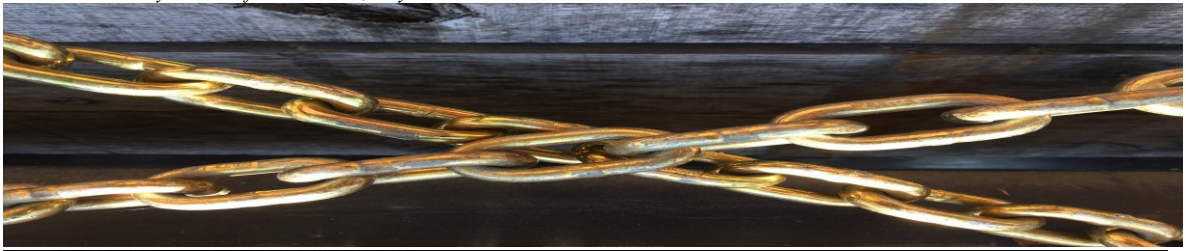
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*Dr. Sandra E. Crewe is Professor and Dean of the Howard University School of Social Work.*

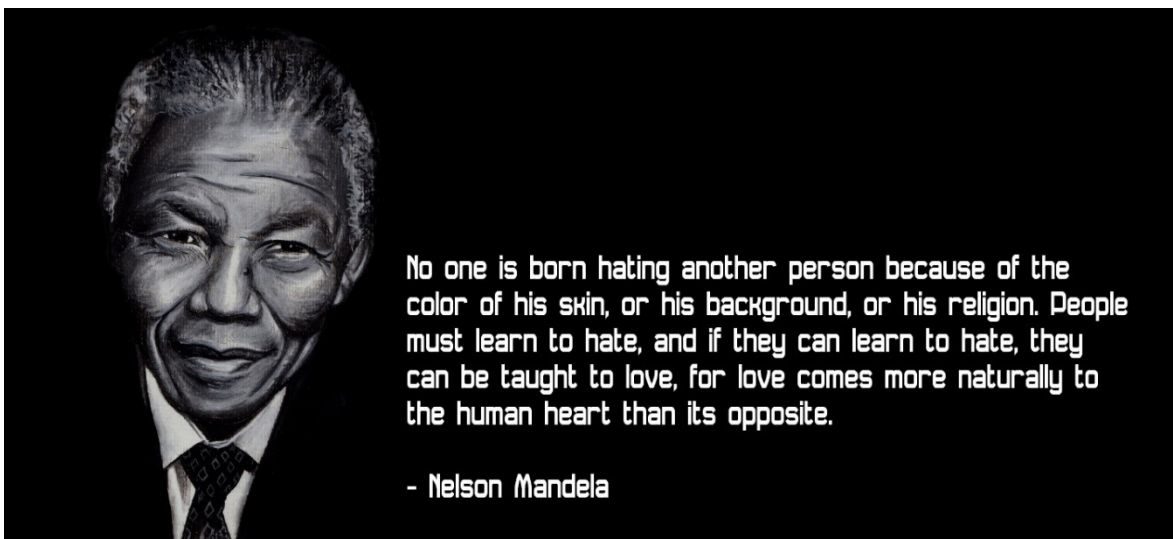




Racism is a grown-up disease and we  
must stop using our children to  
spread it.

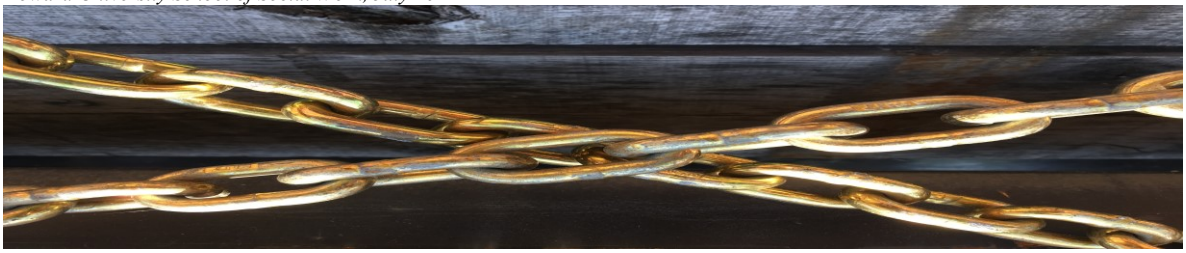
— Ruby Bridges —

AZ QUOTES



No one is born hating another person because of the  
color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People  
must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they  
can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to  
the human heart than its opposite.

- Nelson Mandela



## Historical Perspectives

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### What Does Racial Equity in Child Welfare Really Mean?

Ruby M. Gourdine, DSW,  
LICSW, LCSW

#### Abstract

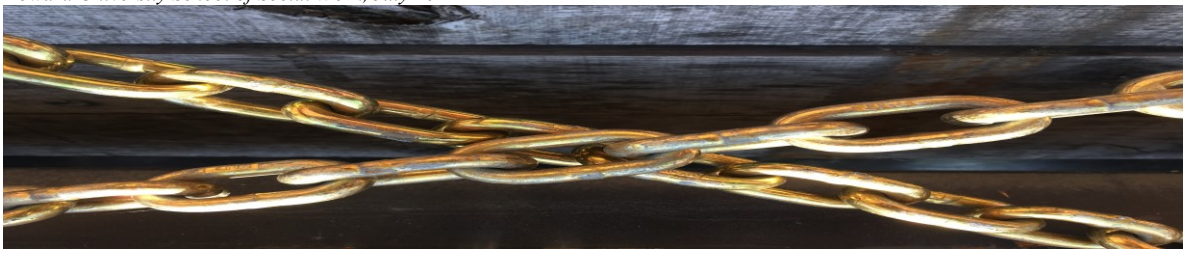
*Child Welfare has a difficult history regarding its relationship with racism based on practices that treat different races / ethnic groups differently. It is these practices that have persisted for over decades. Recent efforts and research are acknowledging that racial equality does not exist in child welfare especially it concerns African American children. Efforts are being made to eliminate the disparity. This article provides a brief history of the practices in child welfare.*

**Key words:** African American families, racism in child welfare, racial equality, transracial adoption



Many years ago, I determined that I wanted to become a social worker and work in adoptions, and it was a goal that I reached. However, I never anticipated that race would be prominent in the administration of child welfare services and in some instances become a controversial topic in the field of social work particularly as it related to adoption. In my youthful optimism I thought I would be responsible for placing children who at that time were housed in orphanages in loving homes and that the children would be placed with parents matching their own race. That was how society was structured.

However, in the late 1960's and into the early 1970's the idea of transracial adoption was born. For the most part it was practiced by white parents' adopting children of other races because the crop of white babies was limited (Ladner, 1977; Grow and Shapiro, 1974). Interestingly enough, this practice was illuminated in the aftermath of the civil rights movement. Leaders



in the National Association Black Social Workers in 1972 wrote a position paper opposing the practice of transracial adoption (NABSW, 1972). Their objection was based on the assumption that institutional racism had devastating impact on African American families (Ladner & Gourdine, 1995).

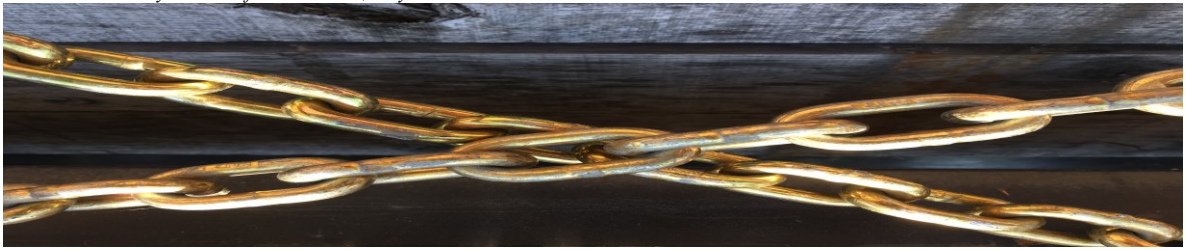
Further, this objection was due to their concern about black children losing their culture in homes of non-African Americans. Conversely, there was not a fair appraisal of African American couples seeking to adopt children often based on a 'worthiness bias'. This was unexpected because black children up to this point were not viewed as being the "most adoptable children." Some white academics researched the practice of transracial adoption and justified their quest to adopt across racial lines (Grow & Shapiro, 1974, 1975; Simon & Alstein, 1977). Debates abounded about whether Black children should languish in care while there were white families willing to adopt and or would Black families fail to meet the requirements for adoption due to what was described as worthiness standards (Ladner & Gourdine, 1995). This issue of transracial adoption became a very heated issue and caused a lot consternation in communities as to the efficacy of the practice. In earlier years the practice of adoption in the Black community most often occurred as informal adoption- that is most often informal arrangements were made with relatives or with fictive kin and/ or community members. Many families did not seek services through traditional adoption agencies or even attempt to legally adopt children that they cared for.

In 1994 the Clinton administration passed legislation entitled the Multi Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) which prohibited child welfare system to do child matching, particularly if there was family of another race or ethnic group waiting to adopt. In anecdotal conversations with adoption social workers of many child

welfare agencies were fearful of not placing Black children with white families because of potential law suits. So, in other words, Black families were judged against White families based on resources and often latent biases.

Another factor in child welfare services was the influx of drugs into black communities specifically crack cocaine. Drug usage and abuse became major factors in child removal. Cocaine in black communities was devastating to Black families. Use of powder cocaine, was generally seen on the street as the more expensive drug of choice used by White abusers. Crack cocaine was less expensive, meaning affordable and was targeted to AA communities. Punishment for the sale and use of Crack cocaine vs. powder cocaine had racial overtones. Mandatory jail sentences resulting in longer term incarceration were imposed for Crack Cocaine users and dealers disproportionately as compared to Whites for the same amount of the cocaine. This led African American people to believe that the only reason this could be possible was due to institutional racism. Members of Black communities would use and abuse drugs but were not seen as the "mules" that provided access to drugs. These mules that brought the drugs to the communities were most often not African American, and if so, were low level. In fact, some thought cocaine was an intentional plant in the Black community. The magnitude of the use and abuse created situations where the children entering the system were knowledgeable of drug use and were drug exposed or were older children with significant behavior problems. These children were defined as hard to place or as having special needs. This situation was viewed as contributing to the increase in child removal from natural homes.

In fact, the Black children in care approximately doubled their percentage in the general population. Some prominent research studies document that racism plays a part in the numbers of children entering care along with other intersecting factors like poverty (Chibnall et



all, 2003; HHS, 2007).

In recent years there has been a focus on the over representation of African American children in care and most recently a focus on racial equity implementing data analytics. Black Administrators in Child Welfare (nd) promote the idea of kinship care so that black children can experience a continual connection to their families and communities. They created and promoted a process entitled the Racial Equity Standards Areas (RESA) which are 10 factors that they believe promotes equity for black children in child welfare. They include the following: Data Innovative; Finance: Creative and Flexible; Engagement: Parent and Community; Kinship Services: Effective and Appropriate Use; Youth: Informed Practice; Education: Collaboration and Partnership; Health: Thriving Children, Youth and Families; Legal Services: Cultural Informed and Competent; Leadership: Culturally Competent; and Program Policies, practices, review and analysis. These Racial Equality Standard Areas (RESA) are designed to evaluate the child Welfare systems servicing African American children.

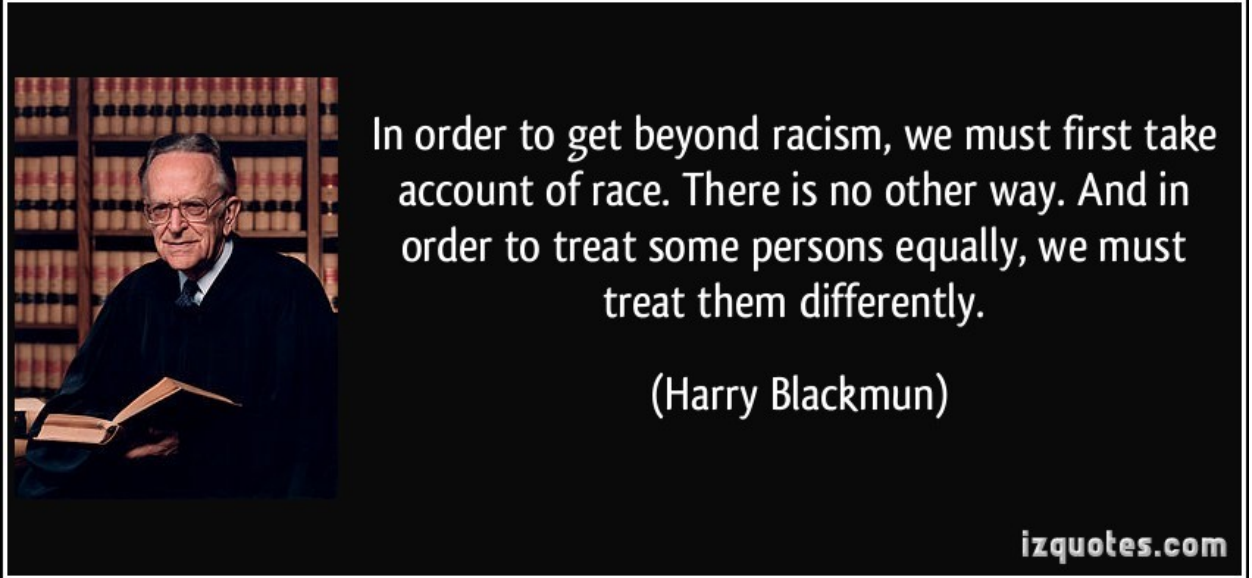
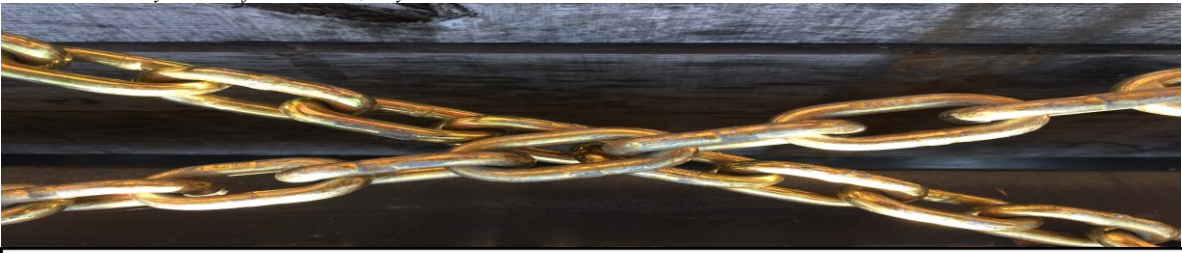
Child welfare organizations are looking at ways to promote equity in child welfare and they are promoting data analytics as a method to improve equity in child welfare. The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) a non-profit organization, has indicated that racial equity seeks to reduce disparities based on race, ethnicity, sovereignty, gender, sexual orientation/ gender identity and socioeconomics. CSSP acknowledge the significant role that race has played historically in contributing to persistent inequalities and as such they confront all forms of racism particularly institutional and structural (Center for the Study Social Policy, 2015). This focus seemed to emerge out of the consistent disproportionality acknowledged of Black children languishing in child welfare. There is a

focus of using data analytics as a method to address the inequalities in child welfare. In a recent study conducted by author and others it was determined that the lack of data to address the disparities experienced by Black children created a situation in which services were not tracked and there was insufficient data to clearly state what was working for the children and their families. BACW was an early advocate for examining systems by implementing their RESA standards. Child welfare has certainly exhibited systemic racial inequalities even while proclaiming that they treat everyone the same – even if their needs are different and require different strategies and services. One must understand that equality does not mean equal but addresses the ways children needs are assessed and dealt with regarding need not in the way others receive services. Once one acknowledges that inequality exist and honestly seeks to resolve it then racism in child welfare can be reduced.

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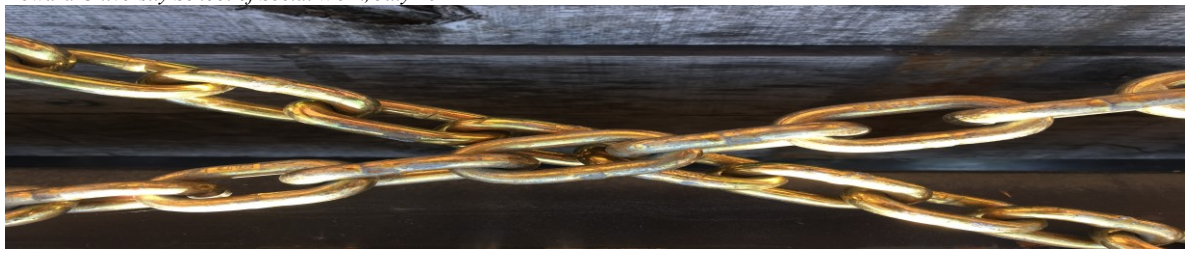
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*Dr. Ruby Gourdine is a Professor at the Howard University School of Social Work and Chair of the Clinical Practice Program.*



# Lessons from the Past Linkages to the Present: The Legacy of Racism in U.S. Social Welfare Policies

Karen M. Kolivoski, PhD,  
MSW

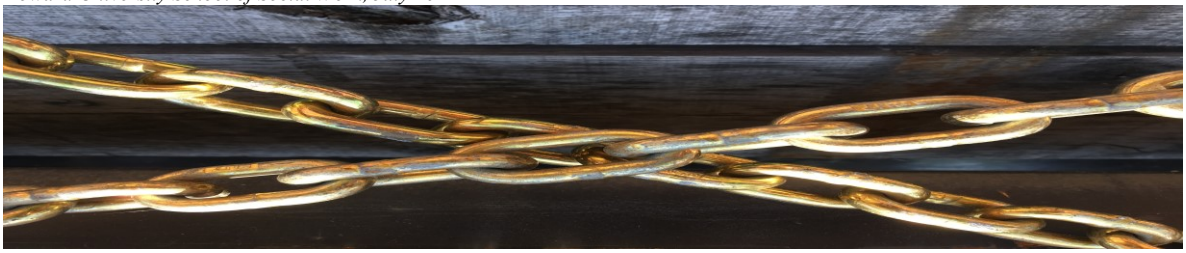
## Abstract

*Race is America's defining social problem, and part of its roots lie in the history of racist social welfare policies in the United States. These policies had effects not only in the short-term, but have endured through the racial disparities evident today. Social work is crucial to furthering racial and social justice. To effectively address racism, we must first understand the history of racist policies and how social constructions of race/racism were embedded in them, which is the purpose of this article. This builds the foundation for social work implications regarding socially just policy recommendations guided by the Black Perspective.*

**Key words:** race, racism, policy, social work, social welfare, social justice, racial justice

Race is America's defining social problem (Davis, 2016). Racial disparities cut across every aspect of social welfare domains: child and family welfare, juvenile and criminal justice, health and mental health care, housing, and the list goes on. Part of the source for these issues lie in the history of racist social welfare policies in the United States. Such policies have had effects not only in the short-term, but have endured through the racial disparities evident today. Although *de jure* racial discrimination, referring to the laws as written, has largely been addressed in our country's policies, we need to be knowledgeable about how *de facto* discrimination, regarding the reality of disparities, are still inherent in many policies that continue today.

Race has always been a component of major U.S. social welfare policies throughout history. A few of many examples are given here. After the Civil War, the federal government established the Freedmen's Bureau to provide help to newly freed slaves and white refugees from the Confederacy ("Freedmen's Bureau," 2018) and was the first federal agency devoted to social welfare. Yet, it was underfunded and was met with opposition, thus lasting only from 1865-1872. Legal segregation was allowed due to *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), Jim Crow laws in the South, and a plethora of additional policies with explicit racial discrimination. African Americans had always been part of the U.S. military, even when segregation existed. During World War II, the "Double V" campaign was launched to bring victory over international fascism as well as victory over domestic racism (Delmont, 2017). The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the G.I. Bill, was supposed to provide for returning veterans through help with schooling, mortgages, loans, and other forms of assistance. However, many Black veterans did not receive the same benefits as their white



counterparts (Humes, 2006), in part, due to enduring racial discrimination. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the landmark legislation aimed at outlawing racial and other forms of discrimination.

Despite landmark legislation, racial discrimination in U.S. policies has continued since the 1960s, although often in less overt forms. In 2016, it was revealed that one of Richard Nixon's top advisors described how Black populations were specifically targeted during the War on Drugs, criminalizing them and disrupting communities (LoBianco, 2016). Additionally, the social construction of Black populations through media images and narratives such as Ronald Reagan's 1976 campaign speech about the "welfare queen" has also contributed to erroneous perceptions (Schneider & Ingram, 2005) that endured through social welfare policies in the 1980s. Even in covert forms, racial disparities in policies exist. *Brown v. Board* (1954) outlawed school racial segregation, but racial disparities endure today such as through property taxes and impact unequal school funding (Chang, 2017). For criminal justice, there are ongoing racial disparities in mass incarceration related to impacts of policies such as "three strikes and you're out," felony disenfranchisement (Alexander, 2010), disparities in crack and cocaine sentencing, and immigration policies.

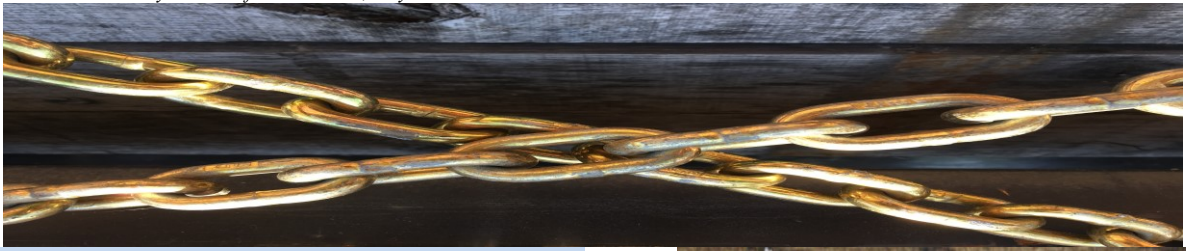
We could benefit from a new way of thinking about race and policy, which is especially important and timely for the current political climate. As Ibram X. Kendi writes in *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (2016), "Hate and ignorance have not driven the history of racist ideas in America. Racist policies have driven the history of racist ideas in America" (p. 9). Rather than ignorance and hate leading to racist ideas and discrimination, Kendi asserts that racial discrimination leads to racist ideas which lead to

ignorance and hate. Thus, the legacy of racism within U.S. social welfare policies today serves to reinforce additional discrimination and prejudice.

To understand where we are going in the future, we need to know where we have been. And we need laws and policies addressing all forms of racial discrimination. Laws and policies shape attitudes and behaviors, and by addressing both we can reduce racial disparities. This is consistent with what the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said when he spoke in 1966 at Howard University, "And so while the law may not change the hearts of men, it [law] does change the habits of men, when you change the habits of men pretty soon behavioral patterns are changed, attitudes are changed, and hopefully hearts will be changed." We need to recognize and address both *de jure* as well as *de facto* racial discrimination in our past and current policies to fully embody the American value of equality for all people.

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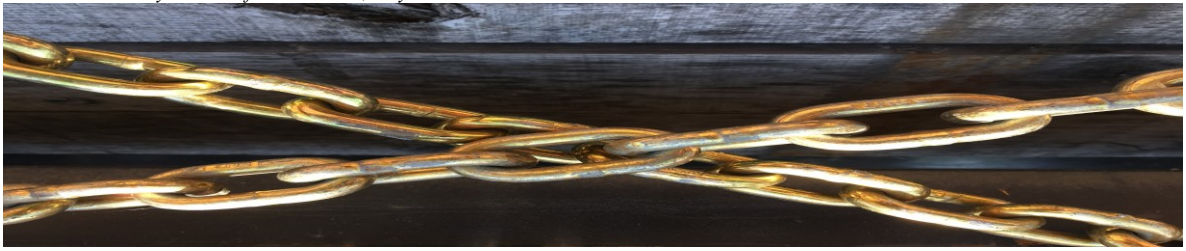
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*Karen M. Kolivoski is an Associate Professor at the Howard University School of Social Work.*



## Contemporary Issues

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### Insincere Good Will

Christine Y. Wiley, Ph.D.,  
MSW, M.Div.

#### Abstract

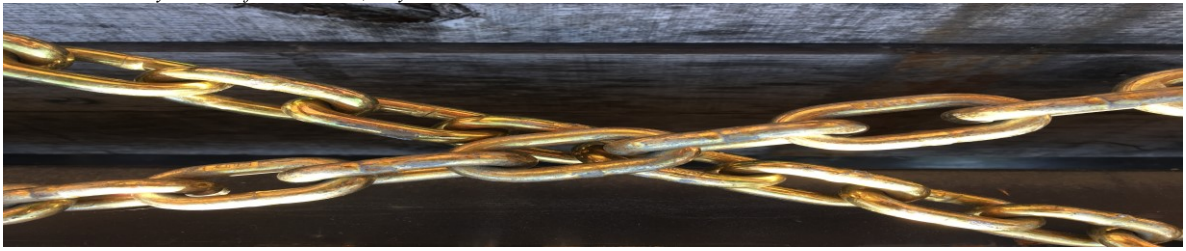
*According to the Pew Research Center, African Americans are more likely than any other group in the United States to report an association with a religious group. While most protestant African Americans belong to historically black denominations, a small percentage, belong to mainline and evangelical white churches. Mainline white churches have in recent days developed anti-racism policies illustrated by promoting the study of racism, white supremacy, and white privilege. The intensity of these policies come on the heels of "Black Lives Matter," the Trump White House, killings of Black and Brown people, and Charlottesville, Virginia. This paper will address these policies while addressing the statements of white officials of these denominations and the thoughts of African American members.*

**Key Words:** *Anti-racism, racism, white supremacy, white privilege, main line denominations, Historically black denominations, whiteness*

As a recently retired African American pastor, who also happens to be a social worker, I pastored a black church with a heavy social justice emphasis for 32 years. A short time ago, finding myself in yet another protest rally and march for justice, there was a new twist to this demonstration. This time the marchers, many of whom were social workers, were marching against the church. A prominent Unitarian church's white pastor in Washington DC and an association of the United Church of Christ had colluded to strip a UCC African American female minister, who had served this Unitarian congregation for seven years, of her credentials and her position in a cloud of what appeared to be sexism, racism, and white supremacy. The marchers from the United Church of Christ were African Americans who belonged to the UCC association, and the other marchers were predominantly white women who belonged to the Unitarian congregation.

How could this be? There are several predominantly white religious denominations and religious bodies known for their highly visible stance on justice and anti-racism. However, the fact of the matter is that some faith denominations at the national level will take positions on issues such as equality for women, anti-racism, support for immigrants, and welcoming and affirming LGBT persons. That, however, does not necessarily become the mindset, heart, and spirit of local associations, individual congregations, or even some leaders in key national positions.

The Unitarian Universalist's and the United Church of Christ--the church from which Howard University was birthed--are two of these institutions that have been known for their anti-racism and pro-justice policies. In searching deeper, however, we find that the Unitarian Universalist president stepped down amid controversy in 2017 because of lack of diversity due to his continued selection of white males for leadership positions in the UUA.



The local UCC association in the Washington, DC area has recently been embroiled in attacks against black clergymen and clergywomen, with accusations that have threatened these ministers' positions as pastors and their endorsement by the association. A group of ministers who are both clergy and social workers felt it was important to bring attention to this discrimination. Letter writing, rallies, meetings, and strategy sessions have taken place to address the injustice.

Social Work as a profession has a history of treating individuals as whole persons in their environment (Northcut, 2005). As the field of social work sought competence in clinical practice, it also became apparent that religion and spiritual beliefs, in addition to issues of justice, are significant in people's lives and must be addressed if wholeness is a goal in the lives of individuals (Heyman, Buchanan, Marlowe, Sealy, 2006; Seinfeld, 2012).

Compared to other ethnicities of both genders, African-American women are the most religious group in the United States, and the specific factors of spirituality and religion are known to aid their psychological well-being (Borum, 2012; Office of Minority Health [OMH], 2012; Taylor, Chatters, & Levin, 2004). The new dual degree, MSW/M.Div., at Howard University may indeed allow practitioners to not only shed light on spirituality, but also on the specifics of injustices such as sexism, racism, and white supremacy in the faith community.

Howard prepared religious professionals/social workers may find themselves entering positions in major white denominations that profess to be justice-seeking. They may find that those institutions that declare to be anti-racist, and seeking diversity, may in reality be perpetrators of injustice within their own institutions. Most African Americans in this country who profess a faith tradition are Christian. The question that the great African

American mystic, Howard Thurman, put forth decades ago still rings true today:

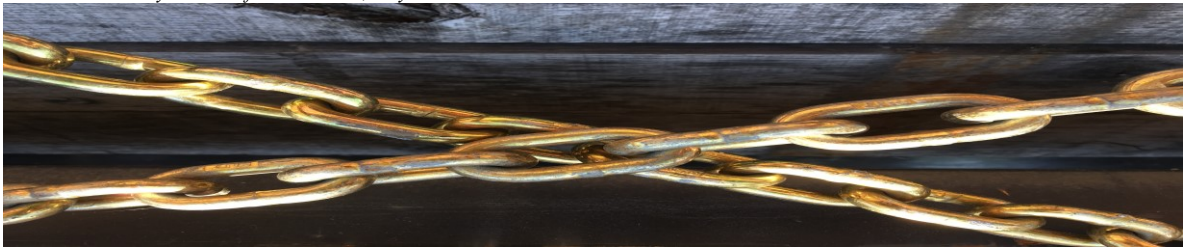
Why is it that Christianity seems impotent to deal radically, and therefore effectively, with the issues of discrimination and injustice on the basis of race, religion and national origin? Is this impotency due to a betrayal of the genius of the religion, or is it due to a basic weakness in the religion itself?

The question is searching, for the dramatic demonstration of the impotency of Christianity in dealing with the issue is underscored by its apparent inability to cope with it within its own fellowship. (Thurman, 1949).

Have the unified moral outcries protesting hypocrisy been drowned out by the systemic oppressions of sexism, racism, and white supremacy in these "justice-seeking institutions?"

Both the Unitarian congregation and the United Church of Christ association represent denominations that profess to be justice-seeking. While this declaration may appear to be practiced outside of the institution, it is not universally practiced inside of the institution. Paradoxically, both the Unitarian Universalists and the United Church of Christ have developed major writings and resolutions on the issues of the aforementioned oppressions. The UCC has developed a full curriculum for the denomination called *White Privilege: Let's Talk, A Resource for Transformational Dialogue*. Similarly, the UUA's 2017 groundbreaking book with discussion guide, *Centering: Navigating Race, Authenticity, and Power in Ministry*, was selected as a common read for the entire denomination. Unfortunately, these publications appear to have had little, if any, significant practical impact on the leadership of these two institutions.

I have been privileged to work with other majority white denominations as a religious professional and social worker doing workshops and giving lectures on white privilege, racism, and white supremacy. In working with a large Episcopal church, I found that they agreed with



the notion that 70% of white people do not have any social contacts with people of color. In working with the Alliance of Baptists, a denomination that is open and affirming of the LGBT community, I discovered that they are just beginning to use the United Church of Christ curriculum on White Privilege. They had to admit, however, according to the Baptist Alliance Board Retreat (2018), they had only one African American church in their denomination. They had dealt with inclusion with the gay and lesbian community, but not regarding people of color.

When denominations profess to be anti-racist and anti-sexist, but show forth systemic racism within their fellowship, this is a painful example of what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called *insincere goodwill* (King, 1963). According to black theologian Dwight Hopkins and womanist theologian Linda Thomas (2001), *Racism* is the ability and the power of one race to implement negative prejudice against another race.

*White Supremacy* is the most concentrated form of racism in the United States. It is the systemic strategy—conscious or unconscious, intentional or by force of habit—that institutionalizes power in the hands of white people as a group.

In today's culture that necessitates "Black Lives Matter" (the Washington DC group meets in the church I pastored), that endures the Trump White House, that watches the senseless killings of black and brown people, and that remembers the atrocities of Charlottesville, Virginia, we may find ourselves confused and unclear. The faith community is said to be that community in which there is solace and peace...the "Beloved Community." However, when examining the Black Church, we must acknowledge that even there, for African Americans, sexism abounds.

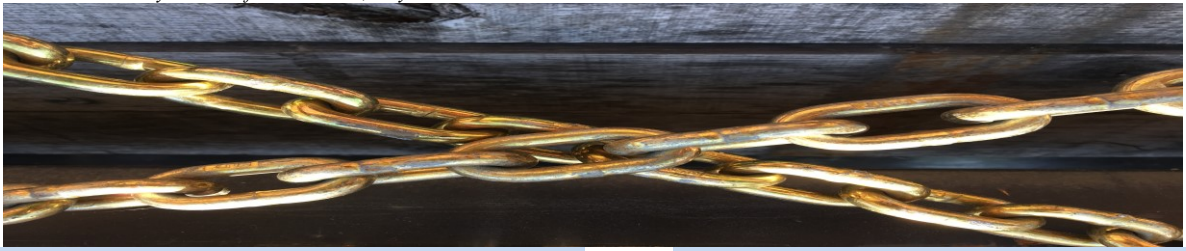
Sometimes we as African Americans may be unclear as to whether the sexist, racist, and white supremacist practices within predominantly white religious institutions are conscious or unconscious, intentional or force of habit, but we are clear about our internal discomfort. Mainline

churches have recently been more forthright in officially addressing racism, yet still ineffective, while their membership declines ("America's Changing Religious Landscape, 2015).

In the New York Times article, *A Quiet Exodus: Why Black Worshipers are leaving White Evangelical Churches* (2018), Campbell Robertson examines white mega churches which have attracted African Americans due to their short services, personal messages, and large programs for children. Since the 2016 election, more and more African Americans have been leaving these churches due to the failure of acknowledging racism in the country, unwarranted police shootings, and uncritical support of Donald Trump as being "chosen by God."

African American social workers, particularly Howard University prepared social workers, celebrate and affirm the lives of all people, especially those who are people of color and those who are marginalized and oppressed. These professionals can continue to make a positive difference in areas of racism, sexism, and inequality in this country, even in the areas of religion and spirituality. Social workers must stay abreast of the issues of intersectionality by teaching and enlightening all populations. They can become involved in identifying and addressing oppressive systems through research, writing, and practice. We must understand that white supremacy is a global issue, and our concerns and work must go farther than the borders of these United States. We must identify with the African diaspora, contributing wherever we can and making a commitment to the oppressed and afflicted, particularly when we find they are people of color.

The world is not color-blind, and this is not a post racial society. We have our work to do, even in communities of faith. Thank God for justice-seeking social workers.



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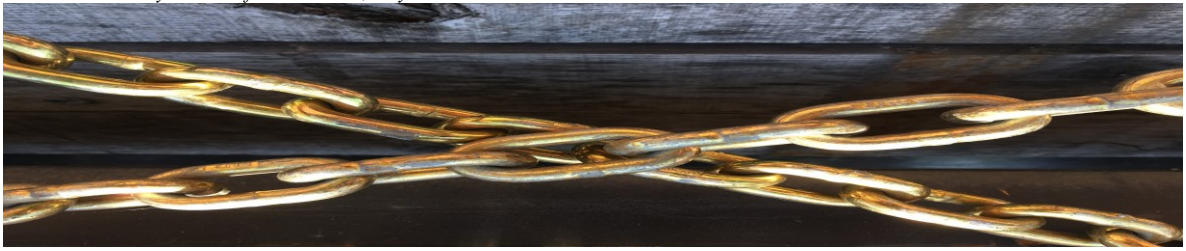
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*Christine Y. Wiley, PhD, MSW, M.Div. is an adjunct professor at the Howard University School of Social Work.*





# The Incarceration of African-American Women: Racism, Health Disparities, and Social Injustice

JaNeen Cross, DSW,  
MSW, MBA

## Abstract

*Social workers are called to answer the multiple grand challenges of incarceration for African-American women. This issue is pervasive, adversely affecting individuals, families and society. The harm and risks of a criminal justice response to psychosocial needs are discussed outlining racism, health disparities, and the need for social justice. The Grand Challenges of Social Work and the Howard University's Black Perspective are identified as needed frameworks to address the multiple grand challenges embedded in this systemic problem.*

**Key words:** racism, health disparities, social justice, psychosocial needs, incarceration, African American women

## Incarceration

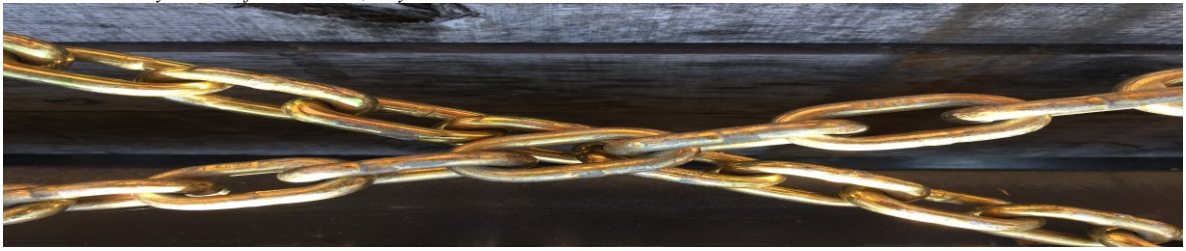
The incarceration rate for women is on

the rise. Currently, women represent 7% of the prison population (Garcia & Ritter, 2012) and it is estimated that there is 1.2 million in the criminal justice system (NRCJIW, 2016). Compared to other countries, the U.S. incarcerates more women per capita. This problem is exacerbated for African Americans as they are disproportionately represented based on their relative numbers in the overall population (Paltrow & Flavin, 2013; Roth, 2012). The rate of incarceration for African American and Hispanic women is 2 and 1.2 times higher respectively compared to white women (NRCJIW, 2016). This alarming trend requires increased attention from social workers (Kraft-Stolar, 2015). Economic disparities also exist as 37% of women inmates meet the federal poverty level and 20% of women cited public assistance as their primary income upon prison entry (NRCJIW, 2016). The Grand Challenges for Social Work along with Howard University's Black Perspective provides us with a theoretical framework in which to develop an action plan to address this issue.

The incarceration of African-American is a major crisis for African American families. The majority of women entering prison are primary caregivers most women entering prison are primary caregivers (NRCJIW, 2016). Approximately, 65% of women are parents of children under the age of 18 (Roth, 2012). Children are deprived of their primary caregiver and this can result in placement in to foster care or permanent placement if they are already in the foster care system prior to incarceration. Attachment-bonds are disrupted when primary caregivers are incarcerated. Normal psychosocial development of children can be compromised or delayed as an adverse outcome of incarceration.

## Micro & Macro Social Work Implications

The pathways for incarceration have implications for social workers in direct practice.



The most common disorder for female inmates is substance abuse followed by serious mental illness (Kraft-Stolar, 2015; Lynch, DeHart, Belknap, & Green 2017). In fact, mental health risks from childhood victimization and/or adult trauma can serve as a predictor for greater offending histories for women (Lynch, Fritch, & Health, 2012). If substance abuse and mental health are common pathways to incarceration, the incarceration itself activates and triggers these issues. In prison, women are 27% more likely to be sexually victimized by inmates and 67% more likely by staff (Swavola, Riley, & Subramanian, 2016). Full body searches and surveillance by male staff as women complete daily routines such as showering and toileting trigger trauma further activates trauma (Swavola, Riley, & Subramanian, 2016). Social workers in direct practice will need to provide interventions and treatment that address the pathways for incarceration while simultaneously providing services that address the trauma precipitated by the incarceration process to impact recidivism.

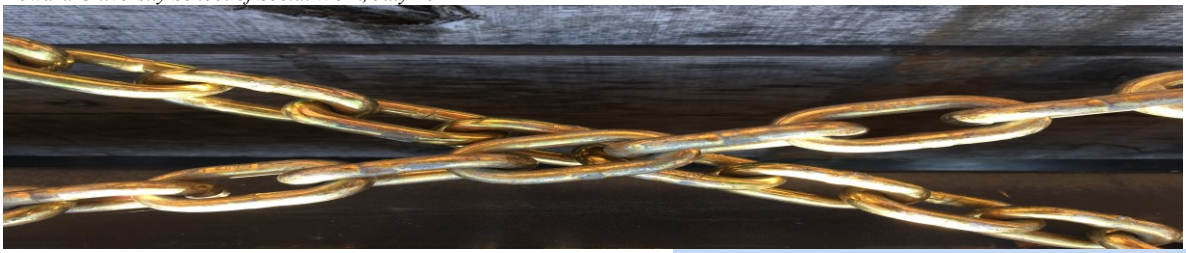
Incarceration is an issue that also has implications for social workers in macro and policy practice. Although it is known that inmates are the only group with the constitutional right to health care based on the Eighth Amendment, inmates do not receive equal standards for legal retribution as the general population when they do not receive standardized care or receive substandard medical care (Roth, 2012). Other policy issues include substandard reproductive health care, and even more concerning, policy and prison practices that put women and their fetus at risk when pregnant. One study found that 20% of women did not receive prenatal care while incarcerated while half (50%) of inmates reported not receiving any medical care at all (Roth, 2012). Kraft-Stolar (2015) discovered that problems with reproductive health care in the New York prison system included: lack of oversight, substandard written policies, and inadequate data collection/analysis. Other concerning policy

practices are the placement of pregnant women in solitary confinement, denying access to prison nursery programs (Kraft-Stolar, 2015) and shackling (The Prison Birth Project, 2016).

### **Future Direction**

The Grand Challenges for Social Work (AASWSW, 2017) highlight these key areas for social work: smart de-incarceration, eradicating social isolation, achieving equal opportunity and social justice, reducing extreme economic inequality, healthy development for all youth, and closing the health gap. A criminal justice response to substance use and mental health, the overrepresentation of African-American women in prison and crisis for African-American families represent multiple grand challenges. Indeed, for direct and macro practice social workers there are many opportunities to impact the pathways to incarceration and address the legal, health care, caregiving and family concerns systemically imbedded in this issue. The call to action is glaring yet clear and both direct and policy practice social worker must answer it from the lens of human rights, reproductive rights, social and economic justice.

Yet another unique perspective is needed to tackle the multiple grand challenges of incarcerated African American women and the assault to families of color. Howard University's, School of Social Work Black Perspective (Howard University, 2018). The Howard prepared social worker is "responsive to the perspective and experiences of other groups" focusing on "equality and freedom from oppression" as stated in the *social justice principle* (Howard University, 2018). The Howard prepared social worker understands that African-American women in prison require the principle of *affirmation*, more specifically, liberation from the traumatic experience of incarceration and the pathways that result in incarceration. The principle of *diversity* is also



important as each African American woman enduring prison is unique. Howard prepared social workers are ready to locate these narratives and elevate them for targeted, customized interventions and policy responses. *Strength* is another principle needed for African-American women and their families coping with caregiver incarceration. Howard prepared social workers locate and emphasize the inherent strength of each woman and family. Furthermore, Howard prepared direct and policy practice social workers utilize strength in response to systemically imposed oppression of African-American women (i.e. grief/loss, trauma, mental health, substance use, health disparities and access, economic, family crisis).

## Conclusion

Social workers in direct and policy practice are well positioned to address the grand challenges of incarceration and the threats to African-American women and families. Howard prepared social workers have the Black Perspective which allows them to tackle this problem from a unique advantage point. Addressing this issue requires a public health, social justice and human rights response as opposed to a criminal justice response. Furthermore, it is not enough to address the problem or develop solutions to decrease incarceration rates. The focus of social work must also be treatment and interventions that foster healing and well-being. Howard prepared social workers have the education and training to impact this issue but more importantly heal African-American women who endure these experiences.

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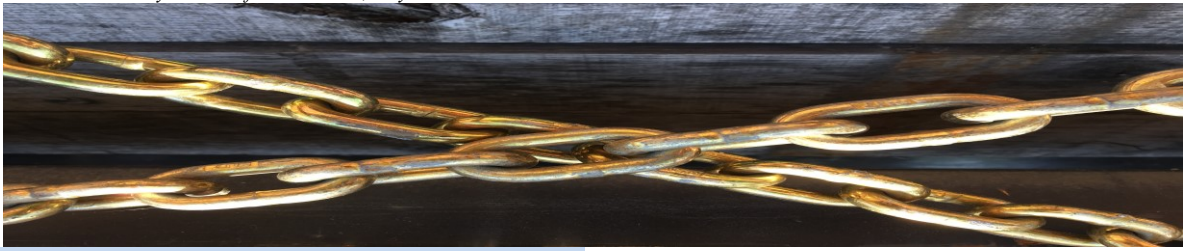
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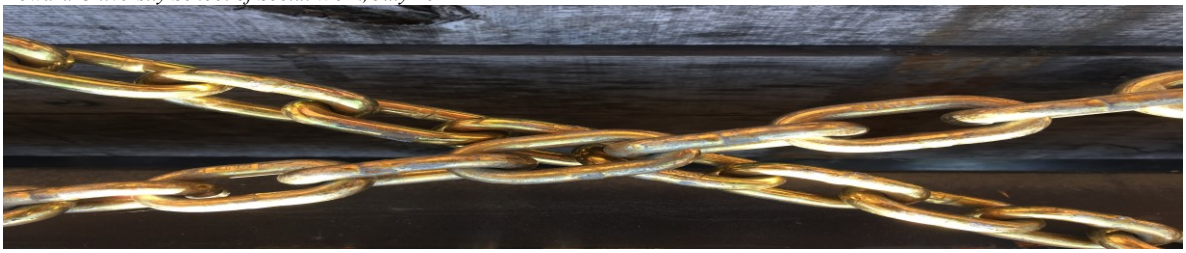


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*Dr. JaNeen Cross, is an Associate Professor at the Howard University School of Social Work.*





# **We Shall Not Be Moved: Respect for the Colorful Women Who Fought Against Invisibility**

Mewelau B. A. Hall,  
LICSW

## **Abstract**

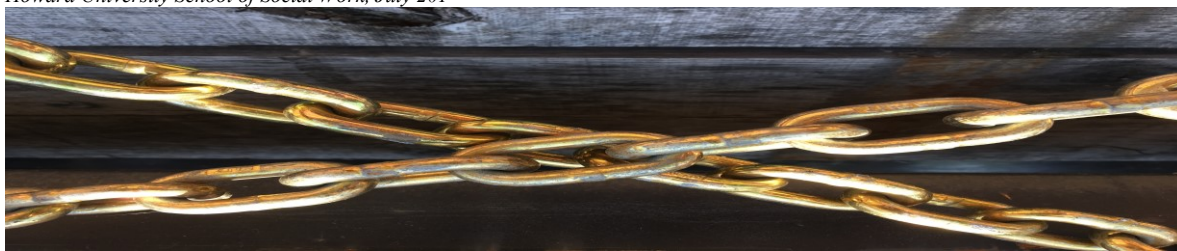
*This article addresses the question of how racial inequalities and racism are reproduced in grassroots organizing leadership. In the absence of community and intersectional based interventions, these inequalities seem not plausible for a field that posits supposed leadership. To exemplify this, an exploration of this phenomenon will list the magnitude of attention and support poured towards movements spearheaded by women of color versus white women with a past and present example. Repeatedly, women of color activists have pointed out that the feminist movement in the past is exclusive and still is, which demonstrates a traditional as well a more robust form of intersectional racism. In this post-womanist context, while these issues are known to some, the magnitude of inequality is still unaddressed and widely unspoken. Organizing women of color still have to work harder and longer, to gain some of same notoriety and vehicle as their white counterparts. From this perspective, their perceived powerlessness in terms of organizing respect is often a price they*

*pay for speaking up, in spite of history, their talents, merits, contributions, and persistence, has not changed since its infancy.*

**Keywords:** Intersectionality, organizing, black women organizers, racism, race, and gender

For centuries, Black/African American women and women of color have fought for the rights and lives of women, but when their contributions are integrated into the broader mainstream methods of storytelling of the feminist movements, the magnitude, detail, and evidence of their involvement and input is often missed. When engaging and cross-referencing history with instances of: slavery, indentured servitude, old and new Jim Crow, black women and women of color did so with a larger set of risks: sexual assault, rape, lynching, intimate partner abuse, physical assault, psychological stress, contractual social isolation (having to choose between femininity and blackness), and additionally political unrest (Beal, 2008; Feagin, 2010). Prime examples started, in US, with laws that refused the rights of black men to own or attain property due to being property themselves, but while that was at the forefront and repeated, with a womanist and Intersectional lens, black women and women of color were excluded from their agency in interpretation of those same restrictive laws and had to additionally deal with the inability to secure or manage property or wealth based on their gender (Beal, 2008; Gay et. al. 1998; St. Jean et. al., 2015).

To return to the topic of history, it would be important to quote a noted leader of the Suffrage movement, Anna Howard Shaw, not for her culturally inclusive and innovative attitude, but instead for her interpretations of 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the race towards white women equality at the consequence and competition against the black male with alright exclusion of the black woman. With words like, “You did not



wait for woman suffrage but disenfranchised both your black and white women thus making them politically equal. You have put the ballot in the hands of your black men, thus making them political superiors of white women. Never before in the history of the world have men made former slaves the political masters of their former mistresses!” (Boston University, 2001; Watson, 1999; White, 2010). Shaw shared the sentiment of many suffrage leaders (Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the like) who saw black men and men of color as the only members of competition to mention disregarding another half of the population. In these comments and racist thoughts against the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment, black women and women of color were often not even regarded as point of contention or as worthy and observable beings thusly excluding them from simple acknowledgement as viable people and additional from history (construction based social isolation). If we jump a little forward in history, this is not the only instance of women of color invisibility where the suffrage movement of white feminism was involved, we can turn attention towards the history of reproductive rights and the silence taken when discussing black women and women of color’s history with unconsented sterilization (Ko, 2016; Lombardo, 2017; Roberts, 2000; Ross, 1993).

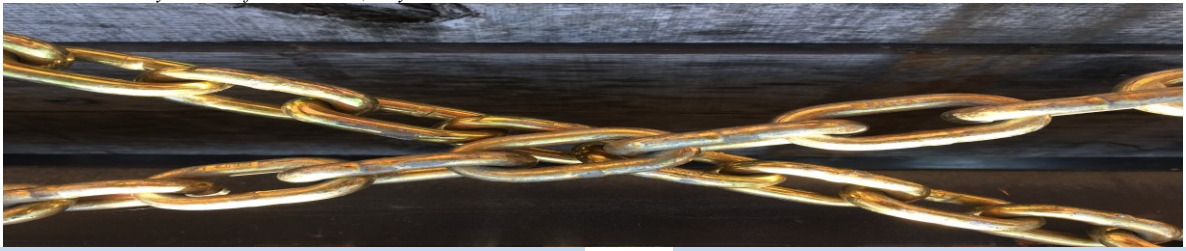
I bring up the past to hold the present accountable with the current wave of the #metoo movement. This resurgence of making black women and women of color invisible has parallels in history of the same kind (). Again, organizers and the communities they represent are not mentioned and with social media and newer forms of news distribution, the magnitude, detail, and evidence of their involvement and input is often missed again. Again, this phenomenon is reproduced through those in grassroots organizing leadership roles who are now living. Key strategists living in the legacy of ancestral pasts of women like: Shirley Chisholm, Ida B. Wells, the Mississippi - First Labor Union

of 1866, Lucy Parsons, Anna Julia Cooper, the Atlanta Washerwomen Strike of 1881, Maida Springer Kemp, Fannie Lou Hamer, Dolores Huerta, Yuri Kochiyama, Audre Lorde, and Marsha P. Johnson, Winona LaDuke, Luisa Moreno, Combahee River Collective, Paulette Barnes, Sylvia Rivera, Diane Williams, Sandra Bundy & Mechelle Vinson, and living elders in Angela Davis, Anita Hill, and May Chen to name a few, but to exclude none (Brownmiller et. al., 1992; Cohen, 2007; Dewey, 1969; Giddings, 1984; Hunter, 1993; LaDuke, 2017; Lee, 2000; Lorde, 2003; Richards, 2004). I list these names to aid in their legacy and visibility, but to also highlight how some of these names are unknown even to their peers and to encourage additional literary digging where I missed.

The point being made is that as much as the #metoo movement, not Burke’s Me Too movement, has added to awareness, storytelling, sharing, and accountability, history is still repeating itself, and initial thanks should be given to the women of color and survivors of color who have consistently pushed through the silence until white, some still racist, women continue to show up and take unjustified space (PBS Newshour, 2017).

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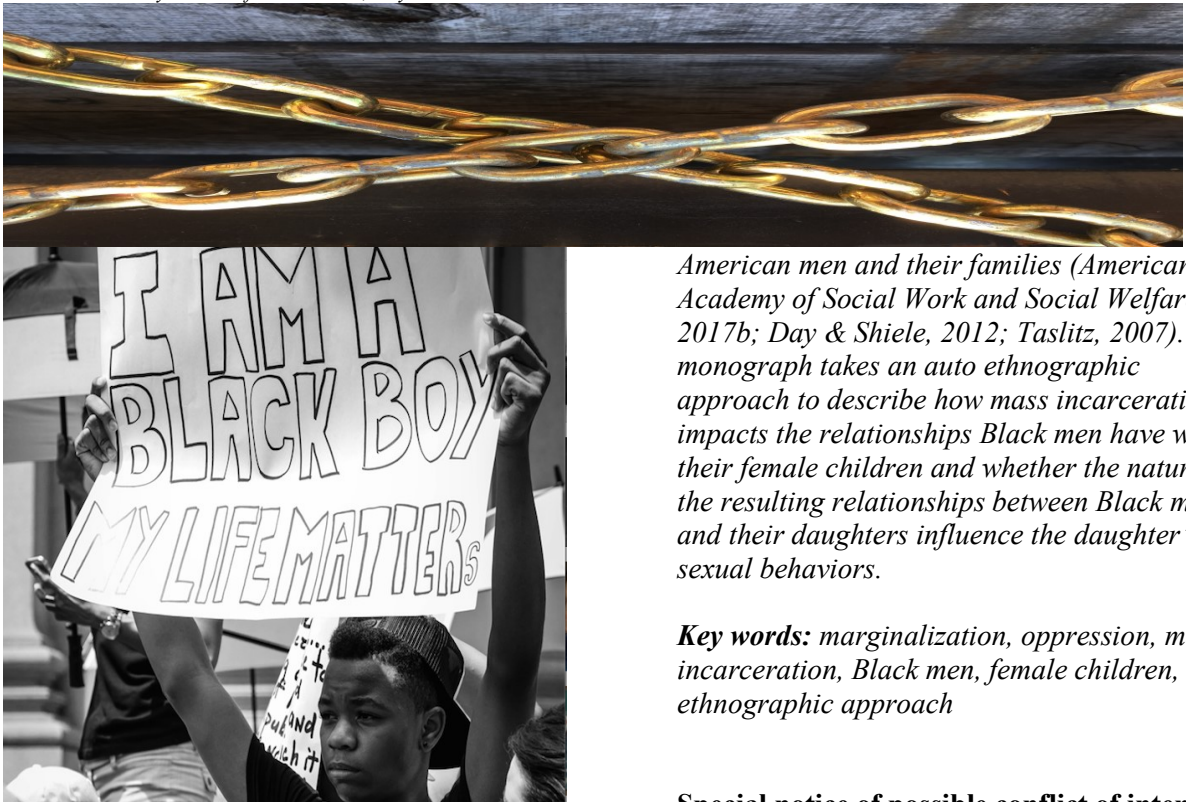
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*Ms. Mewelau B. A. Hall is a doctoral student at the Howard University School of Social Work.*



# How Mass Incarceration Impacts the Relationships of Black men

Ebony E. McCovery,  
MSW

## Abstract

*For over three decades, racism and social injustice via mass incarceration have been major contributing factors to the marginalization and oppression of African*

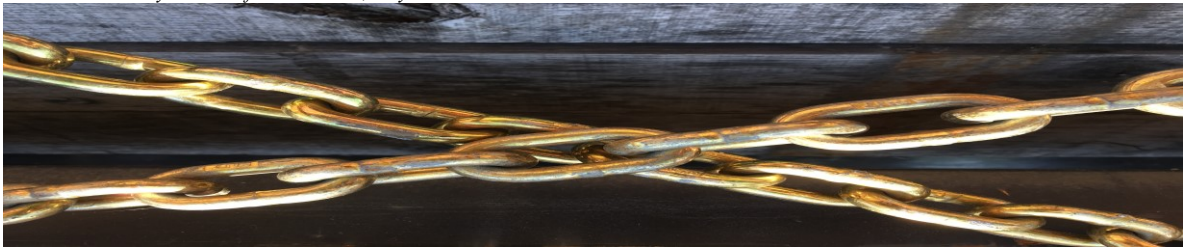
*American men and their families (American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, 2017b; Day & Shiele, 2012; Taslitz, 2007). This monograph takes an auto ethnographic approach to describe how mass incarceration impacts the relationships Black men have with their female children and whether the nature of the resulting relationships between Black men and their daughters influence the daughter's sexual behaviors.*

**Key words:** marginalization, oppression, mass incarceration, Black men, female children, auto ethnographic approach

## Special notice of possible conflict of interest

The author (25 years old), was born during the time when there was a massive surge in the incarceration rates of Black men, also known as mass incarceration (The Drug Policy Alliance, 2014). Her father was convicted of non-violent drug crimes in 1993 and 1997, having served a total of 10 years and six months in prison. His crimes involved the possession, distribution, and conspiracy to possess and distribute Marijuana and Crack- Cocaine; the author's father's crimes align with those that influenced legislative action such as the "War on Drugs" and policies like the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act which are frequently cited as demonstrating how racism and mass incarceration are made legal through the criminal justice system (Alexander, 2016; Day & Shiele, 2012). The author also has two sisters, an older sister, (31 years old, product of father's previous relationship); and her younger sister (19, same mother and father as the author) who have experienced adverse outcomes due to engaging in risky sexual activities as adolescents and attribute their father's incarceration to their experiences which is noted in the literature.

## Introduction



For over three decades, racism via mass incarceration has been a major contributing factor to the marginalization and oppression of African Americans (American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, 2017b; Day & Shiele, 2012; Taslitz, 2007). Paternal absence, a social phenomenon prevalent among African Americans, is commonly linked to adverse outcomes associated with adolescents engaging in risky sexual behaviors (Dixon, Schoonmaker & Philliber, 2000; Holder, 2015). The prevalence of absenteeism among African American fathers is largely attributed to the mass incarceration of Black men (Alexander, 2012). This monograph takes an auto ethnographic approach to describe how mass incarceration impacts the relationships Black men have with their female children and whether the nature of the resulting relationships between Black men and their daughters influence the daughter's sexual behaviors.

### **Methodology**

The information reported in this monograph was collected by conducting meta-analyses and exploring a wide range of databases with the desire to complete a comprehensive literature review. Personal accounts detailing the views and experiences of incarcerated fathers and their daughters were shared during hour-long individual telephone interviews the author held at separate times with her two sisters respectively.

### **Literature review**

The NAACP asserts that African Americans are incarcerated at a rate 5 times higher than whites for similar offenses and they insist racially rooted, unfair policy and administrative procedures within the criminal justice system are responsible for mass incarceration and the resulting prevalent, racial disparities (NAACP, 2017).

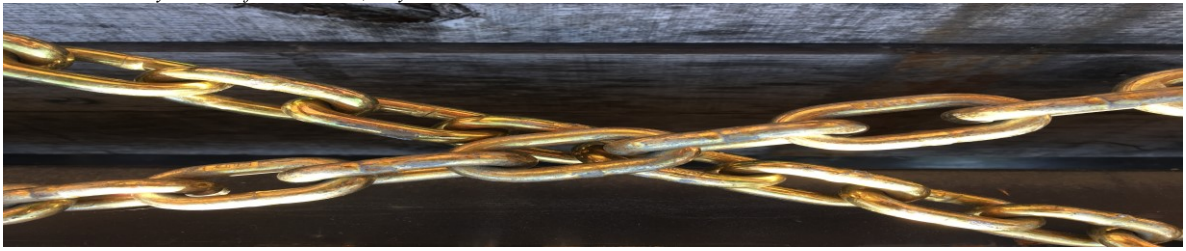
Mass incarceration removes needed fathers from homes which presents additional

risks for youth to experience negative outcomes (Swisher & Waller, 2008; Wildeman, 2009). African American children have the greatest risk of experiencing negative outcomes associated with mass incarceration given there is a 7.5% chance they will have an incarcerated parent, but only 2.3% of Latino children, and 1% of White children will experience this fate (Foster & Hagan, 2009). More alarming, African American girls who experience fatherlessness because of paternal incarceration are highly susceptible to negative peer influences; also, the likelihood of them living in poverty, dropping out of school, engaging in early, risky sexual behaviors, and experiencing teen pregnancy is greater than that of girls in other ethnic groups (Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Soicher, & Mincy, 2012; Dittus, Jaccard, & Gordon, 1997).

### **Results**

The older sister believes her father's incarceration has influenced the patterns of her relational and sexual behaviors. Experiencing life without her father in the home and living with her single mother subconsciously made the older sister believe she did not need to, nor should she depend on a man for anything. She later mentioned the notion of men being undependable caused her to have very low expectations of the men she has been romantically and sexually involved with. Subsequently, the low level of expectations, and the absence of her father during her adolescent years served as a buffer against the notion that she could not or should not depend on men. This led her to engage in risky sexual behaviors which ultimately resulted in her experiencing many of the adverse outcomes described in the literature.

The younger sister charges a lack of early, secure attachment with her father as the reason they do not bond, causing her to seek love, attention, and validation from males through risky sexual behaviors. She assumes that if her father had never been incarcerated, having more



presence in her early life, she might have formed a stronger bond with him which would have made her feel loved and not need to seek it through external sources and sexually risky behavior as a replacement for the attention and bonds with her father she supposes caused her to experience adverse negative outcomes.

The personal accounts of the author, who refrained from engaging in risky sexual behaviors as an adolescent and her sisters support claims within the literature that suggest, the sexual attitudes and behaviors of teens are influenced by parents (Hutchinson & Montgomery, 2007). Their experiences further supported by research claiming father presence is an inhibitor of teen female sexual activity while a lack of paternal exposure and/or the existence of a positive relationship between a father and his daughter infers these adolescent girls will likely engage in risky sexual behavior (Belgrave et al., 2000; Chin et al., 2012; Moore & Chase-Lansdale, 2001; Peterson, 2007).

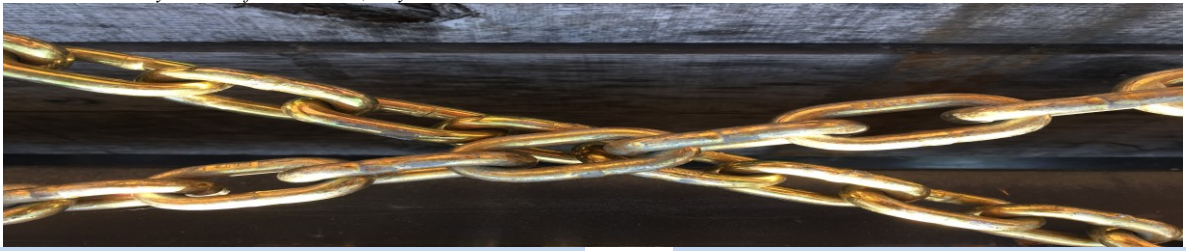
## Conclusion

Racism within the criminal justice system via mass incarceration inflicts consequences on African American offenders and their Black children (Foster & Hagan, 2009). Incarceration inhibits fathers' potential to aid in the healthy, positive development of their children by limiting paternal presence thus, hindering their ability to influence the choices their children make (Holder, 2015). A father's presence and influence on the choices his children make is especially important because, addressing adolescent risky sexual behaviors, has become a leading national priority under the 2010 Healthy People initiative; especially, as it relates to African American youth, who are disproportionately represented in the statistics describing the negative outcomes associated with engaging in risky sexual behaviors (Hutchinson & Montgomery, 2007; Dittus, Jaccard & Gordon, 1997). In order to meet the social work grand

challenges of addressing mass incarceration through promoting smart decarceration and ensuring the healthy development of all youth, the concerted efforts of interdisciplinary stakeholders involving research, policy reformation, social action, and the allocation of proper resources to support on-going efforts must be manifested and made readily available to combat the issues presented by racism, mass incarceration, risky adolescent sexual behavior (American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare; 2017a&b; NAACP, 2017; Sanders, 2014).

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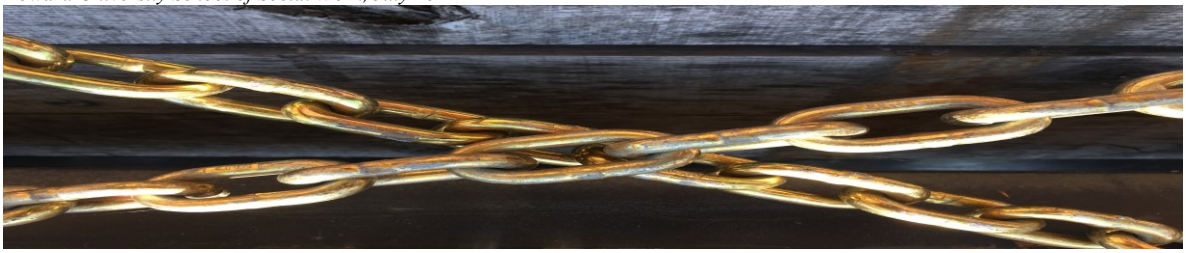
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*Ms. Ebony E. McCovery is a doctoral student at the Howard University School of Social Work.*



# African Americans Strive for Upward Mobility in Today's Workplace

Jean McRae, MSW

## Abstract

*African-Americans in the United States face a diverse, multicultural, and multifaceted work arena. However, they still face micro aggressions, racism, many pressures, and multicultural misunderstandings as they strive for upward mobility. The following article makes the case for why racism with its many complicated and sometimes straightforward biases requires Social Workers to play a role because racism and its impact affects all aspects of living, learning and working in the United States. Together these impediments present an often difficult series of hurdles to overcome.*

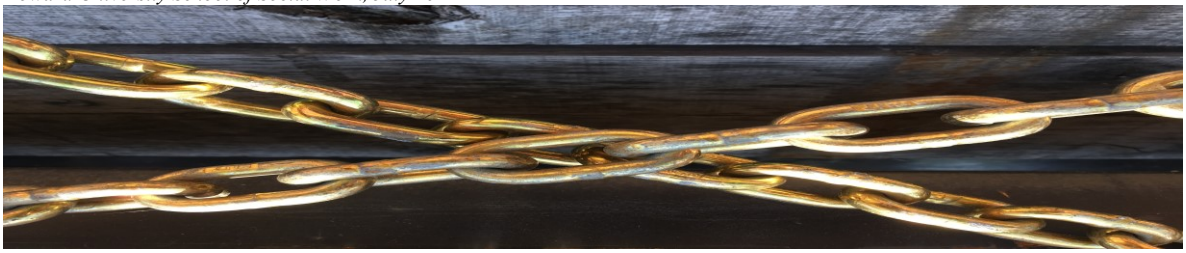
**Key words:** multicultural misunderstandings, workplace competence, performance burnout, micro aggressions, bias against Black women, racism

The “white only” signs are gone, but navigating today’s workplace is still difficult. Certainly, there have been black CEOs in Fortune 500 companies, but black workers are operating in an ever-increasing complicated environment (Griffin et. al, 2017). Dealing with pressures, micro aggressions, subtle racism, and doubt are ongoing (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006). The

workplace organization is a system that may fight attempts to change it, or even to refuse to consider mild suggestions to promote greater inclusion (Dale et. al, 2013). Who are the change champions? Are they punished or rewarded (Chrusceil, 2008)? These are the questions black workers ask as they try to define and navigate barriers to advancement.

*Competence and performance* may appear uncomplicated, but they may also present barriers. On the job, the competence of black workers is often doubted, in spite of contrary evidence. Many black workers feel that they must go above and beyond, or *out-perform* to prove they are worthy. Mentors are lacking. Attempts to seek other mentors may be turned away with “I don’t have time – find somebody else.” In a study of attorneys, the law partners gave a higher rating to the legal memo when they thought it was written by a white attorney, although the one credited to the black attorney was the same (Harwin, 2017). The lack of trust, both overt and implied, is quite stressful. Doctors and nurses may have to deal with racist patients, and sometimes the hospital administrations and boards side with the patients. In academia, Williams (2017) wrote an essay on racism at predominantly white institutions: “For any black faculty member who has ever felt discriminated against for reasons having nothing to do with your abilities, you may have been discovered to be Teaching While Black ... even for black folk who think they share MFB (most favored black) status, the rules of Teaching while Black apply. Let one white student get their feelings hurt during a lecture on race – a lecture that you have been *hired to deliver* – and you will see how quickly your MFB status changes!”

In spite of outstanding performance, blacks may be told, “you’re not fitting in with the culture here.” In management hierarchies, middle managers are often the gatekeepers. They may block upward mobility, and may criticize black

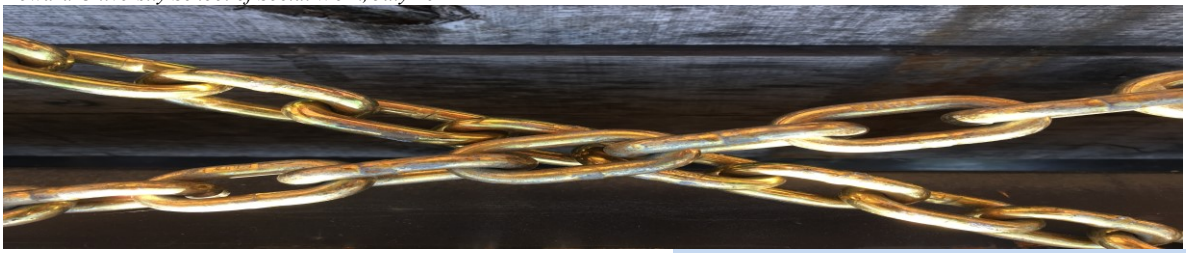


hair styles and methods of dress that may not be accepted. Black men try hard to overcome the “lazy slacker” stereotype, and black women try to escape the “angry black woman” stereotype if they speak out or ask important questions. When blacks speak with passion or enthusiasm, they are often called “loud” or are told “you scared me.” Then, when performance reviews come, they are told “you’re not passionate enough or invested enough in our issues.” There are many working and operating styles. Whites may be complimented for being creative; blacks may be criticized for being “too far out of the box” (Wingfield, 2015). Of course, having to constantly police one’s behavior is extremely stressful, and some have had to enter psychotherapy to keep functioning (Sue, 2010). In white-controlled nonprofits, black workers may be used as go-betweens or “ambassadors” linking the client community to wealthy funders. The linking role is recognized and applauded, but does not result in mobility. Public sector agencies are noted for employing black workers, but raises and promotions come slowly, unless they start their own agencies, which is more difficult because of a smaller fund base. Burnout is a hazard of working in the human services, which may hit black professionals hard as they try to move up, because they are doing emotional labor as well as physical and intellectual labor (Maslach, 1982). Many agencies don’t have burnout programs, and the workers are left to self-care.

Balancing work and family life is a problem for black women. Husbands and children may become irritated due to job demands. Especially for black women, supervisors may state “you’re not serious” if family emergencies or family demands must come first. Women with special needs children may be passed over for promotion. A woman may feel guilty over children’s needs versus job needs, and may feel like she’s walking on eggshells, especially if she’s a single mother. Workplace *influence* is important (Jonsson et. al, 2013). It is also harder

for a black woman to build and maintain workplace influence than men, with or without children. Black men may be able to bond with white men at work over sports in a way that black women cannot. White women may throw up barriers to closeness and bonding, even those married to black men, therefore many black women work in a super-chilly climate. In describing her experience, Margo Jerkins, a journalist, said: “I couldn’t have potential or be good. Good is for white women. I had to be *extraordinary*, and it almost destroyed me” (Oliver, 2017). In many instances, black women who are ready to lead are treated as invisible (Purdie-Vaughns, 2015). As one black woman said, “I’d just like to relax and be myself without all of these worries.”

Often, blacks in middle and upper management are expected to maintain links with lower-paid and lower-rated black employees, to maintain solidarity, and to offer support and mentorship. This is not easy. Paula, a black physician, was rushing to an elderly patient with chest pains when she passed a black cleaning lady who hissed: “Stuck-up, you can’t even speak, you’re so almighty!” Stan, a sales division supervisor, passed a route driver in the hall, who said loudly: “Look at him, he thinks he’s all that, he ain’t nothing.” This internal friction is yet one more layer of stress and frustration in navigating the workplace scene. Paula and Stan could just ignore the workers at lower levels, but due to history and a need for support at all levels, they feel obligated not to step away. Tensions between Afro-Latinos and African-Americans, or between Afro-Caribbean’s and African-Americans, may surface. In realizing that they are all viewed the same way by the power structure, they cannot be divided, and therefore must work out ways to negotiate difference. Sometimes African immigrants are caught up in this net. Whites may use subtle divisive tactics: “You’re so much easier to get along with.” This ignores the particular pain in American history, as



well as the diverse histories and backgrounds of blacks now in the United States. Or, if divisive strategies are not used, all blacks are consulted together. One man said: “Instead of being seen as a seasoned strategist, I was looked upon as a race relations authority.” This is one reason that organizations arose such as the Black Workers Alliance at IBM, the African American Forum at General Electric, Blacks in Government, and Black Employees at Time-Warner, among others. These organizations have provided much-needed support, information exchange, new ways to network, and ways to overcome difference to provide progress. These organizations do not provide the only answer, but are one arena through which all black workers at a particular base can work together for overall progress. What are the answers? Strong support groups for both men and women, network with experts (in the selected field or profession), psychotherapy when needed, particular action by social workers in providing psychotherapy and advocacy for issues, workshops given by social workers on racism and multicultural relations, and strong outside action groups to help make policy changes.

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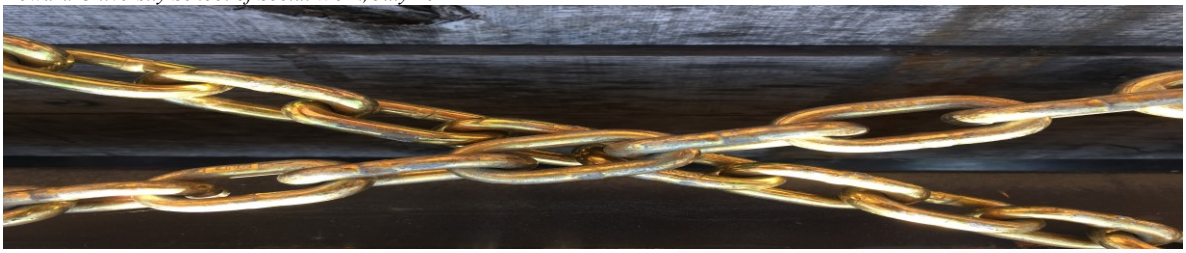
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*Ms. Jean McRae is associate professor emeritus from the Howard University School of Social Work and continues to serve as an adjunct professor*



# Psychiatric Apartheidism: The Mis-diagnosing of Aging African Americans

Janice Berry Edwards,  
PhD, LICSW, LCSW-C,  
ACSW, BCD

## Abstract

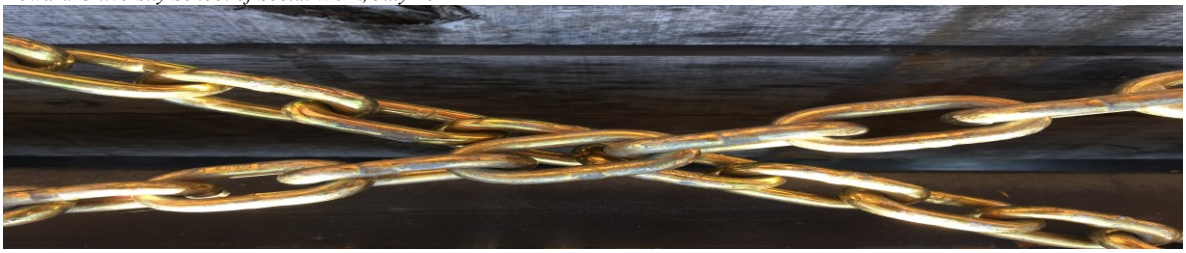
*African Americans encounter a complex system of inequitable and ineffective mental health care experiences similar to and compared against patterns of planned racism and racist activities once associated with Apartheid and practiced in South Africa. Together, Apartheid and Racism = a new word, 'Apartheidism'. Discriminatory practices against African Americans and people of color are well documented, and continue to be a significant issue in the United States particularly in healthcare. Disparities in psychiatric diagnosing and misdiagnosing are most often driven by racial bias and racism (Akinhanmi et al., 2018).*

*More needs to be added to the body of literature, which lacks a framework for mental health service delivery to meet the unique needs of this population. Misdiagnosing and the inappropriate diagnosing of this population only serves as a disempowerment in treatment of minorities and aging African Americans.*

**Key words:** *African Americans, Psychiatric Apartheidism, mental health care, disparities, marginalization, biopsychosocial contexts*

Although it is known that access to mental health services differs among racial and ethnic groups in the United States (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11414-017-9560-0> - CR6(SAMSHA, 2013)), it is not as well understood that African Americans encounter a complex system of inequitable and ineffective mental health care experiences (Hines-Martin, Malone, Kim, & Brown-Piper, 2003; Holden & Xanthos, 2009; Snowden, 2001). Discriminatory practices against African Americans and people of color are well documented and continue to be a significant issue in the United States particularly in healthcare. African Americans are more likely to report symptoms of depression, yet are less likely to receive mental health treatment, counseling, or treatment compared with their non-Hispanic White counterparts (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, 2014). The U.S. Office of the Surgeon General emphasized this issue in its 2001 report *Mental Health: Culture, Race and Ethnicity: A Supplement to Mental Health: A report of the Surgeon General* (U.S. Department of Mental Health and Human Services, 2001). Others (Pieterse, Todd, Neville, & Carter, 2012) have noted these practices. W.E.B. Dubois (1898) also addressed some of these issues in his study of Negro problems over one hundred and twenty years ago.

Simon et al. (1973) and Spurlock (1975) raised concerns regarding the extent to which cultural differences influenced how clinicians assessed the presentation of psychiatric disorders and warned mental health providers about making "erroneous" diagnostic assumptions (Coleman & Baker, 1994). Disparities in psychiatric diagnosing and misdiagnosing are most often driven by racial bias and racism (Akinhanmi et



al., 2018) and impede appropriate treatment strategies for clinical reintegration. These disparities hinder the adaptation of appropriate treatment approaches that encompass cultural differences and understanding of how racism-related traumas can be a significant part of any psychiatric sequelae presented. This lack of adaptation can undoubtedly lead to treatment failure and poor treatment outcomes for African American clients.

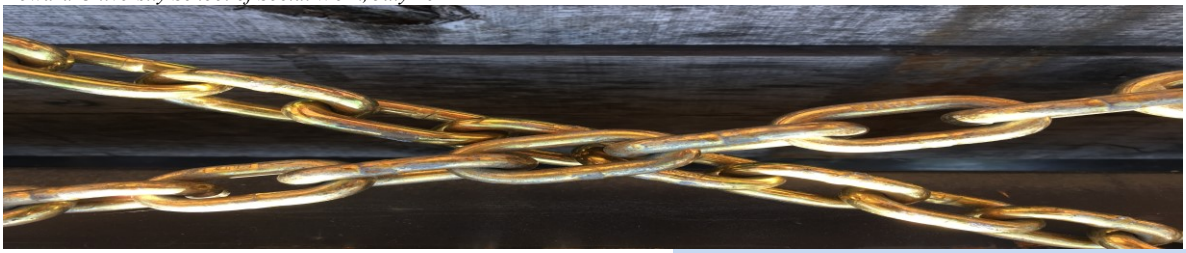
Aging African American individuals who over their lifetime have experienced discrimination, marginalization, oppression, and disenfranchisement are also subjected to and experience racism in the delivery of quality mental health services, particularly in the diagnosing and misdiagnosing of psychiatric disorders when seen by mental health providers (Akinhanmi et al., 2018; Bhugra & Bhui, 2018; Logan, 2018). In their study, Coleman and Baker (1994) found four factors that contribute to the misdiagnosis of elderly African Americans: clinician bias, misinterpretation of symptoms, use of biased diagnostic instruments, and patient-clinician cultural distance. Williams et al. (2014) indicate that many clinicians are unaware of their cultural bias and the effects of their own assumptions on understanding the psychopathology that African Americans present because of the tendency to deny or rationalize the presence of racism. Akinhanmi et al. (2018) are in agreement with Williams et al. as they suggest that disparities in psychiatric diagnosing are most often driven by racial bias or racism.

The literature addressing the diagnosis of psychopathology among aging African-Americans compared with Whites reveals that psychotic disorders are diagnosed more often and affective disorders are diagnosed less often in African Americans (Adebimpe, 1981; Baker, 1992, 1994, 1995). Comparison of patients on a geriatric psychiatric inpatient unit revealed that older African Americans were more likely to be

diagnosed with psychotic disorders and less likely than aging White people to be diagnosed with mood disorders (Fabrega et al., 1994). Most often the biopsychosocial context of the experience of aging African Americans is overlooked and not woven into the clinical conceptualization and understanding of their presenting psychological concerns. Negating this inclusion not only skews appropriate understanding, but can also lead to clinical recommendations, including the use of psychotropic medications that are not warranted, or can be detrimental physiologically due to the existence of other comorbidities. Each individually or together can have negative interactions with other medications and or physiology of the aging person. This places the aging African American patient at increased risk of physical complications, secondary psychiatric illness, and overall negative health outcomes.

Given this understanding and the disparity in treatment of aging African Americans, social work practitioners and mental health providers must be their advocates by educating those who provide treatment. These efforts will go far to help to prevent the unnecessary failures in diagnosing their psychiatric presentation. As practitioners we must address the disparities at the individual and systemic levels, and we must contribute to the design of culturally informed delivery models. This can and should happen in teaching institutions such as graduate schools of Social Work, in Medical Schools, in Psychology, Nursing, and Schools of Allied Health, and in the field through field placements. Also, this should be integrated into student practice curriculums by working in collaboration with Academic Health Education Centers (AHECs) in areas where health care may not be as readily accessible such as in health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) both in urban and rural settings.

Finally, we must add to the literature, which lacks a framework for mental health



service delivery to meet the unique needs of this population. Misdiagnosing and the inappropriate diagnosing of this population only serves as a disempowerment in treatment of minorities and aging African Americans. As such the outcomes remain as powerful products of institutional racism, which continue to disenfranchise, physically hurt and psychologically maim.

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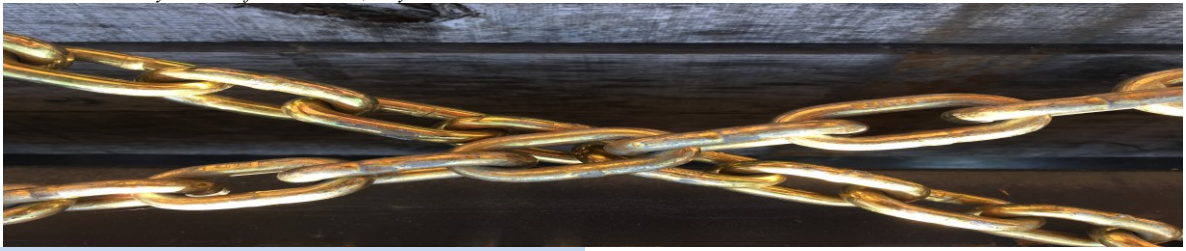
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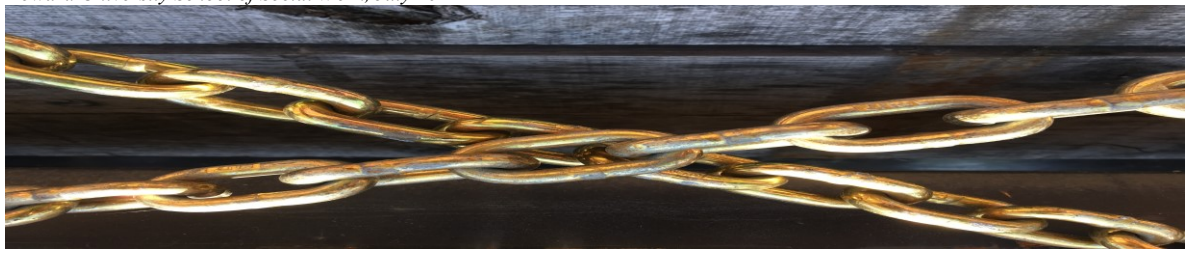


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*Dr. Janice Berry Edwards is an Associate Professor at the Howard University School of Social Work and a psychotherapist.*



# The Opioid and Crack Cocaine Epidemics: Disparate Outcomes for African Americans

Karen Stapleton, MSW

## Abstract

*Drug epidemics have plagued the United States for decades, and the U.S Government's response appeared to vary based on race. Today, the opioid crisis has reached epidemic proportions with drug overdoses as the leading cause of deaths in the United States. The President of the United States declared the opioid epidemic a "public health emergency". Conversely, the crack epidemic, garnered the War on Drugs campaign, which criminalized drug use, and enforced mandatory minimum sentencing; a vastly different response than that of the opioid epidemic. This article will examine the government's response to the opioid and crack epidemics, uncover disparate treatment of African Americans, and consider the implications for Social Welfare and Drug policy.*

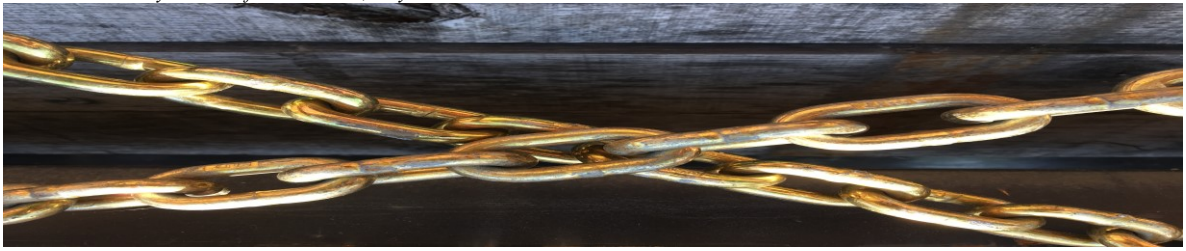
**Key words:** Opioid crisis, epidemic, addiction, racial hierarchies, disparities

**T**he Opioid and Crack Cocaine Epidemics: have created disparate outcomes for African Americans. Drug epidemics have plagued the United States

for decades, and the government's response appeared to vary along racial lines (Ballesteros, 2017; Lopez, 2017; Netherland & Hansen, 2017 & Tonry, 1994). Presently, the opioid crisis has reached epidemic proportions and is documented by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention as the leading cause of death by drug overdose in the United States (Hedegaard, Warner, & Miniño, 2017). Irresponsible health care providers in collaboration with pharmaceutical companies inundated the country with opioid painkillers (Lopez, 2017). Additionally, drug traffickers found a new and lucrative market in opioids, and ensured an abundant supply of the illegally manufactured version would be available for those unable to obtain refills or who required something stronger to achieve the desired state of euphoria (Lopez, 2017).

## The Response

In response, Donald J. Trump, the President of the United States declared the opioid epidemic a "public health emergency" and resolve to produce "really tough, really big, really great advertising" to combat the crisis, which has been compared to Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" antidrug campaign of the 1980s (Davis, 2017). The Just Say No campaign was largely unsuccessful and the needed resources for drug treatment, prevention and teaching were largely without resources, unfunded or underfunded. Unfortunately, by declaring a "public health emergency" instead of a "national emergency" as the President promised to do during a ceremony in the East Wing, he avoided the commitment of significant federal funding needed to fight the crisis (Ballesteros, 2017 & Davis, 2017). President Trump's and his administration's philosophy is to "fight back" against the opioid crisis together (Trump, 2018). *"Together, we will face this challenge as a national family with conviction, with unity, and with a commitment to love and support our neighbors in times of dire*



*need. Working together, we will defeat this opioid epidemic.” President Donald Trump*

The current administration’s commitment to fight the opioid epidemic is commendable; however, it begs the question, why now? Is it because those most impacted are white, and resemble those in power? According to Alexander, Barbieri, & Kiang (2017), the opioid epidemic claimed the lives of white Americans at disproportionately higher rates than that of Blacks or Hispanics, earning the moniker of ‘white only’. Dvorak (2018) of the Washington Post reflect on the words of U. S. Surgeon General, Jerome Adams, M.D. as he advised government leaders to regard opioid addiction as a chronic disease instead of a moral lapse in judgment.

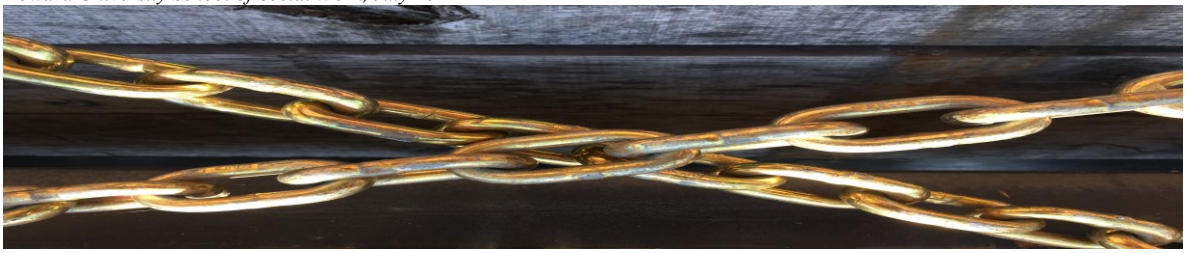
Unfortunately, this is not the first drug epidemic in the U.S. The crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s and 90s devastated black families and communities (Dvorak, 2018), as did the government’s response headed by ‘Drug Czars’, William J. Bennett, and John P. Walters, in the George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush Presidential Administrations “War on Drugs” Campaigns. Failed drug policies (Anderson, Reinsmith-Jones, Dyson, & Langsam, 2017) such as the Federal 100-to-1 rule mandated a 10-year sentence for anyone caught with 50 grams of crack cocaine compared to the same amount of time for 5,000 grams of powder cocaine, which created extreme racial disparities (The New York Times, 2007). Disproportionate numbers of African American males were incarcerated (Fischer & Coughlan, 2007) as rates tripled between 1980 and 1993 due to increased drug convictions (Alexandria, 2012 & Tonry, 2017). This law remained in effect and repeatedly “endorsed by the Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, and Bush II administrations” (Tonry 1995, p. 5), and elucidating racial hierarchies and disparities (Netherland and Hansen, 2017).

The perspective of crack cocaine addiction being recognized in sentencing and treatment as a chronic disease instead of one associated with criminalization and mass incarceration may have created a significantly different outcome in the African American community (Dvorak, 2018; Lopez, 2017). According to Lopez (2017), racial bias distorted the government’s valuation of the African American population, and reinforced the belief that African Americans were unworthy of assistance to overcome their addiction (Lopez, 2017). Dvorak (2018) posits, the \$1 billion spent to prosecute and imprison African Americans could have created infrastructures for drug treatment which would have endured to present day (Ballesteros, 2017 & Tonry, 2017; Dvorak, 2018). Fortunately, a comprehensive bill to eliminate disparities in sentencing and establish treatment programs introduced by then Senator Joseph Biden, Democrat of Delaware passed in the mid-2000s and began to provide needed drug treatment resources. (The New York Times, 2007; & Tonry, & Melewski, 2008).

#### Summary

Drug policies to combat the crack cocaine abuse during the epidemic failed to diminish the problem as evidenced by the growing number of addicted individuals with a long standing history of abuse (Fischer & Coughlan, 2007). In stark contrast, present day policies place great emphasis on compassion and treatment for opioid addicted whites (Lopez, 2017; Golub, Bennett & Elliott, 2015). Former Surgeon General Adams shared that his brother is currently serving a ten year prison sentence for stealing \$200 to support his opioid addiction (Dvorak, 2018).

Siemaszko (2017), in an NBC News story recalls Governor Chris Christie sharing his personal connection to the opioid epidemic. Christie described a friend he lost to opioid



addiction as successful and having it all. Christie reflected about the funeral, and remembers thinking, “There, but for the grace of God, go I”, as he watched his friend’s daughters weep for their father at the funeral. Christie further stated:

*“It can happen to anyone. And so we need to start treating people in this country, not jailing them. We need to give them the tools they need to recover, because every life is precious.”*

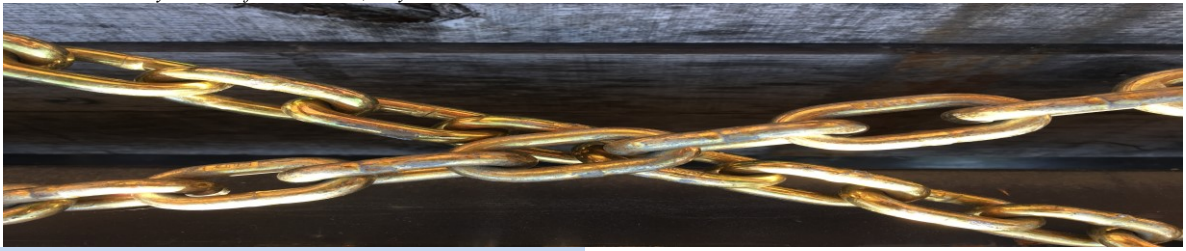
“Every life” Christie says, “is precious”. This would only appear true if that life resembles those in public office or in power (Lopez, 2017; Dvorak, 2018). If not, incarceration and death without treatment is their lot, as has been the lot of many African Americans since the height of the crack cocaine epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s. Perhaps if serious care, concern and attention were directed to this epidemic, an infrastructure for treatment and rehabilitation would be in place to address the current opioid epidemic (Ballesteros, 2017 & Tonry, 2017).

This presents an opportunity as well as a mandate for African American policy that focuses on Social Workers advocating to take a seat at the table to ensure a culturally sensitive approach to drug sentencing guidelines, and to more comprehensive drug policy development. Social Workers should join the ranks of politicians, and those staffers that write the legislation and sometimes the regulations at the state, local and federal levels to ensure policy makers are more reflective of needs of African Americans, from alternatives to incarceration, to different sentencing guidelines to better treatment and prevention efforts. In so doing, when opportunity presents, someone may say, “there, but for the grace of God, go I” and draft bills to enact laws for the benefit of all, White, African American, Latino, so that all communities have resources and successful ways of addressing the challenges of Opioid Addiction from Prevention, to Treatment, to equity in sentencing guidelines, to

re-habilitating abusers and more fairly addressing Opioid marketers who prey upon African American communities.

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*Ms. Karen Stapleton is a doctoral student at the Howard University School of Social Work.*

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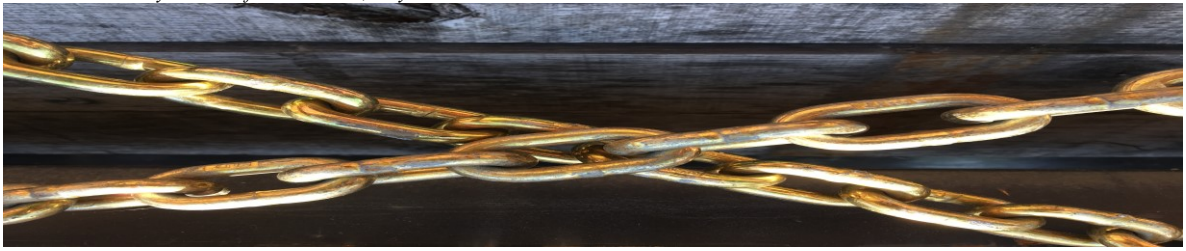
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## The Fatigue of Racism

Tracy Robinson Whitaker,  
DSW

### Abstract

*Abstract: Racism is a long-standing and painful issue in this country. The overt effects of racism are well-documented through disparate opportunities and consequences for African Americans in almost every facet of their lives. Yet, many African Americans struggle to describe the psycho-emotional consequences of living under the constant shadow of preconceived notions about their aptitude, criminality and humanity.*

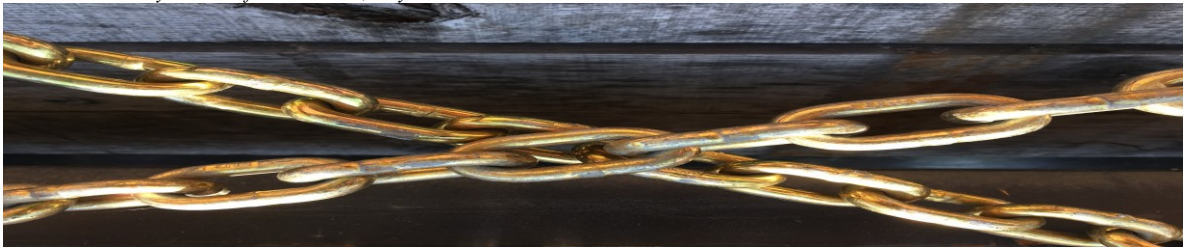
**Key Words:** Racism, fatigue, psycho-emotional consequences, micro-aggressions

As I contemplated writing an article about racism, I felt a conflict that was almost unconquerable. The experience of racism—my experience with racism—was so profoundly personal that I could not gather enough intellectual or emotional distance for an objective discussion.

I live in a country that is chronically infected with the virus of racism, and it seems that every time we believe that the virus is under control, in unvaccinated hearts and minds, it gains a new foothold and threatens, once again, to wipe us all out. And, like a virus, racism makes me angry and tired. I am exhausted by fighting the same fight as my ancestors before me. We have all had to fight against this abominable disease and I, for one, am feeling the effects of generational fatigue.

I am exhausted from the same phenomenon and the same discussions. My five plus decades of life have been marked by the consistency of police brutality. As a six-year old, I saw it when fire hoses and police dogs were turned on civil rights workers (Siemasszko, 2012). I heard Marvin Gaye plaintively ask “don’t punish me with brutality” in the 70s (Cleveland, Gaye & Benson, 1971). In the 80s, as a young adult, I saw the war against drugs and black people played out with battering rams as Public Enemy urged us to “Fight the Power” (Enemy, P., 1989 ) and NWA encouraged us to do something expletive to the police (N.W.A., 1988).

In the 90s, I watched a videotape that allowed the world to see Rodney King being beaten to a pulp as he “controlled” the action from the ground (Scheck, 1992). And, in the new century, I see the violence of policing almost daily in my social media news feeds with African American victims who are young, old, male and female. I am exhausted by conversations constantly comparing how white perpetrators of



mass murder are apprehended alive by police, while unarmed black drivers with broken taillights who seemingly scare the bejesus out of these same police are killed while reaching for their licenses. I am exhausted from the knowledge that threatening to call the police on an African American can realistically be perceived as a death threat (Lockhart, 2018). However, I am mostly infuriated that my taxes employ people who terrorize, rather than protect and serve my community.

There is the fatigue of knowing that our lives don't matter. When my son was born in 2000, I knew that I would have to exert extra time and effort to ensure his survival in this racism-infected environment. And though there were glimpses of hope, such as the 2008 election of President Barack Obama, this hope may have lulled us into a false sense of security (Burnett, 2012; Fine & Johnson, 2013). One that led us to believe that the disease had been put down, when in fact, it had only been momentarily suppressed. By 2013, we were sure that we were no longer post-racial, as we saw a child gunned down in front of his Florida home and the killer set free. How could this be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In the years that followed, we became aware that it was officially hunting season, and young, black men were the prey (Person, 2013). Yet the national discourse revolves around whether football players have the right to kneel in protest, when off the field, they are not assured of their right to live (Cook, 2018).

There is the fatigue that comes from dusting off your great-grandmother's speech about dealing with the police to serve it fresh to your pre-adolescent child (Whitaker & Snell, 2016). The fatigue that comes from your child saying that he is like a spider and that people can just kill him without consequence. No, that is not fatigue—that is pure heartbreak. Fatigue comes from telling your child, again and again, that the big "it" is not fair, and that he is valuable and worthy

of protection.

There is the collective weariness that results from wanting to tell new stories, but having to retell the old ones, like slave spirituals, of far-away promises of freedom and safety.

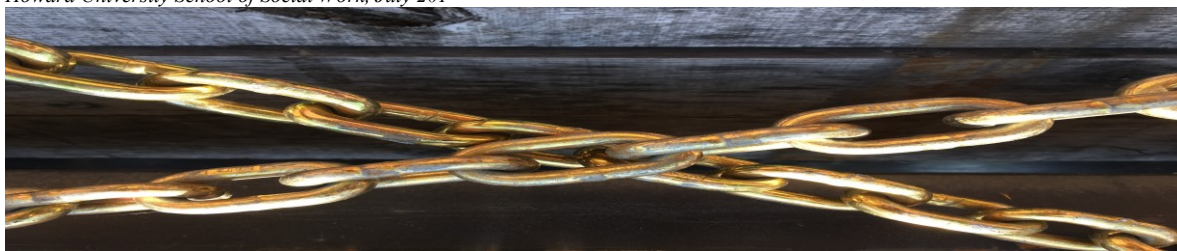
I am tired of African Americans being accused of playing "the race card" when we know that no matter the hand we've been dealt, that is the only card that is ever seen. There is the fatigue of new terminology for old problems. We learn about micro-aggressions, but we know that there is nothing micro about them. We know that only the nomenclature is minimizing, because the events themselves are not minimal.

Micro-aggressions, like macro-aggressions, exist only to let people know that they are inferior and unwelcome (Sue, Capodiupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal et al, 2007). Yet, if they are called micro, they are seemingly small and harmless, and their victims should resist the urge to macro slap the crap out of someone. Racism fuels anger—a low boil of rage—as a virulent, oppressive phenomenon that compromises our ability to exist.

And finally, I am exhausted from insisting that America is what it pretends to be. Generations of African Americans have fought racism, not only for our benefit, but for the collective benefit of a country that has hated our guts as it has loved our labor. As we enter another era of white supremacists' lies and fears, it is time for other groups to become as exhausted in this fight with, and for, America.

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1840

**VALUABLE GANG OF YOUNG NEGROES**

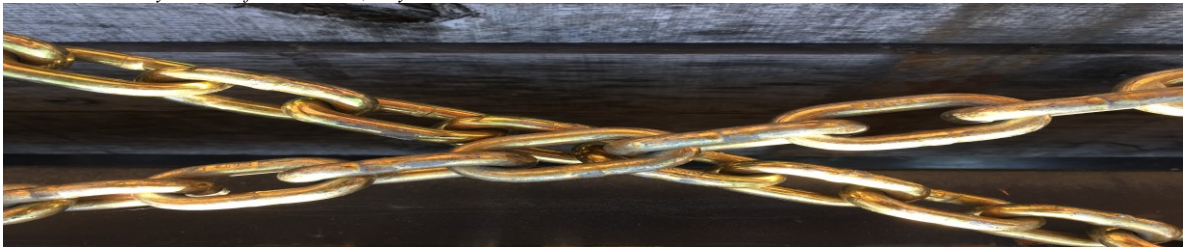
**By JOS. A. BEARD.**

**Will be sold at Auction,**  
**ON WEDNESDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> INST.**  
**At 12 o'clock, at Banks' Arcade,**  
**17 Valuable Young Negroes,**  
**Men and Women, Field Hands.**  
**Sold for no fault; with the best**  
**city guarantees.**

**Sale Positive**  
**and without reserve!**  
**TERMS CASH.**  
**New Orleans, March 24, 1840.**

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Tracy Whitaker is the Associate Dean for Academic and Student Advancement and Associate Professor at the Howard University School of Social Work.



## Lavender Hill

Sun shining bright on mean streets  
avenues of pain labeled like colors and flowers  
I suffer when I see

Poverty stays close like best friends  
I smile when I understand the smile of a mother  
welcoming home children

Fractured lives of hurt and abuse  
families peering out at violence  
tragedies similar and profound

Trauma  
See, feel and taste the violence  
offered like Leftovers from a meal of bitter herbs  
and pain

Am I under the influence  
drank, sucked, snorted, ingested and injected to  
escape the pain  
afraid of everything

Angry at most, taken for granted  
Numb  
I am a fractured soul looking for love

Touched by a painful poison  
to find and seek justice  
Let it begin with me

To be good  
to enjoy the sleep of the innocent  
to be free

Thoughts in my head  
Meditations of my heart  
to be human

To accept what is needed to survive  
Believe in the possibilities  
the audacious potential for good

To know when I fall  
the smell of lavender will soothe  
and not hurt

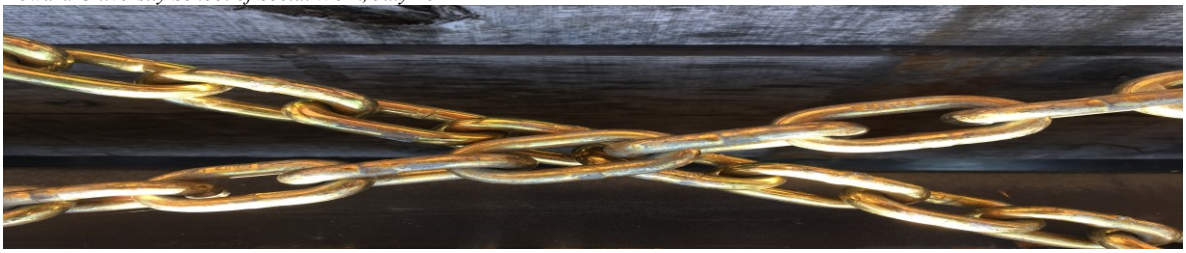
(Inspired by the residents of Lavender Hill, Cape Flats,  
South Africa)

## Robert. L. Cosby

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*Dr. Robert Cosby is Associate Professor and the Director of  
the Multidisciplinary Gerontology Center at the Howard  
University School of Social Work.*





# Racism: The Overrepresentation of Blacks in the U.S. Prison System

Kadee Atkinson, MSW

## Abstract

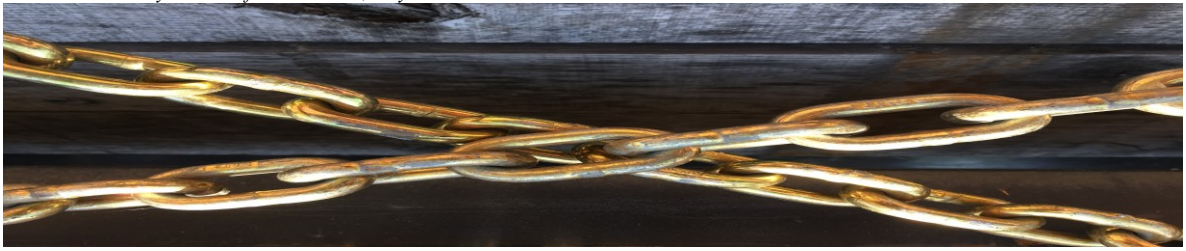
*African Americans make up approximately half of the U.S. prison population while only comprising of 13 percent of the United States population (Reisig et al., 2007). To narrow the scope, incarceration is now a common and/or predictable experience for young Black men, with Black women deemed as the “fastest growing segment of the prison population” (Roberts, 2003, p.1271). Thus, this specific paper will address the root causes associated with the disproportionate representation of Blacks in the U.S. prison system. Additionally, this paper will discuss impacts on the Black community as a result of overrepresentation of Blacks in the U.S prison system.*

**Keywords:** Racism, African-Americans, incarceration, Blacks, women, men in the U.S. prison system, criminal justice



## Introduction

Racism and discrimination is woven within the history of American society. With a past of almost 400 years of slavery, the effects of racism within the United States are pervasive, specifically for Blacks and the Black community. For the purposes of this article, Blacks and African Americans are used interchangeably. Such historical issues of racism and discrimination within American society emphatically parallel with the systematic oppression and overrepresentation of Blacks within the U.S. prison system. While only comprising approximately 13 percent of the United States population, African Americans make up roughly half of the prison population (Reisig et al., 2007). To narrow the scope, incarceration is now a common and/or predictable experience for young Black men, with Black women deemed as the “fastest growing segment of the prison population” (Roberts, 2003, p.1274;



Women's Prison Association, 2006).

### **Root Causes**

Historically, this issue of racism and the overrepresentation of Blacks in the U.S. prison system dates back to slavery, which ultimately set the stage for the mass incarceration among African Americans (the most incarcerated population). It was not until slavery ended that prisons became not only overcrowded, but disproportionately filled the cement and steel structures with Black bodies through a system of "hiring out prisoners" to continue the tradition of slavery and free labor (Pelaez, 2008, p.1). Furthermore, interpretations of the empirical data suggest that in the modern era, the root causes and conditions under which the problem of mass incarceration and racial disparities within the U.S. prison system occurs, and is perpetuated, is due to policies and sentencing guidelines for judges like three strikes and you are out, not only the correlation with the 1980s -1990s War on Drugs, which brought about both harsher prison sentencing and harsher drug use sentencing, but the targeting of African American communities as "hot spots" for imprisonment, further contributing to the causation of communities becoming enmeshed with higher levels of crime, inequality, and poverty (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005; Pettit & Western, 2004; Reisig et al., 2007; Roberts, 2003; Sampson & Loeffler, 2010; Turney, 2017; Western & Wildeman, 2009). Thus, the overrepresentation of Blacks in the U.S. prison system directly reflects the history of oppression experienced by Blacks within American society.

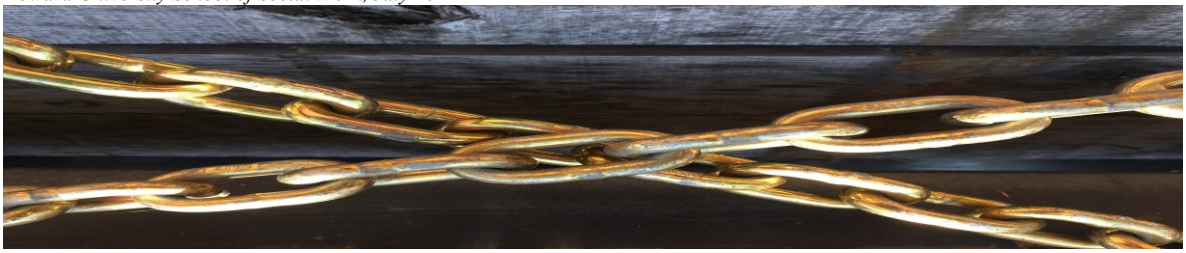
### **Impact on Black Communities**

Research on the effects of incarceration and the overrepresentation of Blacks in the U.S. prison system reveals that imprisonment alters the life course of both those who experience incarceration, as well as the community in which

they reside. In general, evidence indicates that the mass incarceration of African Americans is closely associated with the following: low wages, unemployment, family instability, recidivism, and restrictions on political and social rights (Pettit & Western, 2004; Roberts, 2003; Turney, 2017; Western & Wildeman, 2009). The impact of such overrepresentation among Blacks in the U.S. prison system can be broken down into three major components: (1) effects on the individual, (2) effects on the family, and (3) effects on the community. By analyzing this trifold effect of mass incarceration of African Americans, one will be able to better understand the cumulative and systematic effects of hyper-incarceration on marginalized and oppressed communities.

### **Individual Effects**

As mentioned above, imprisonment in general drastically alters one's life course. Effects of such imprisonment are negative and have long-lasting repercussions on an individual's life. Research indicates that from an individual standpoint, ex-prisoners, in comparison to those who have not been incarcerated, experience serious issues within the workforce because of their experienced legal barriers to both skilled and licensed work/occupations. More often than not, former offenders tend to have trouble securing employment, earn lower wages, and experience more unemployment than their counterparts who have not been incarcerated (Pettit & Western, 2004; Western & Wildeman, 2009). Additionally, another way in which mass incarceration destroys an individual's social citizenship is through felony disenfranchisement (the loss of voting rights, certain labor or job opportunities) and civic isolation (Roberts, 2003). As a result of being charged and convicted with a felony, in many states, this leads to a loss of voting rights, temporarily or permanently. Furthermore, the stigma associated with mass incarceration also creates other barriers to social



services/resources such as rights to welfare benefits (Western & Wildeman, 2009). Although these experiences appear to be common to all who are incarcerated, the stigma and barriers are amplified when it comes to Blacks within the criminal justice system because of racism.

### **Family Effects**

As a result of the prison boom of mass incarceration in the U.S. and economic advantage for those that incarcerate, many children, specifically African American children, experience an unprecedented amount of parental incarceration (especially paternal incarceration) (Turney, 2017). This warrants researchers to examine how children with imprisoned parents deal with such trauma and ambiguous loss accompanied by the removal of a parent from the home and introduction or re-introduction (recidivism) into the prison system. In general, research notes that children with incarcerated parents often experience psychological consequences (depression, anxiety, feelings of rejection, anger, shame, guilt, issues in school) (Pettit & Western, 2004; Roberts, 2003; Western & Wildeman, 2009). Additionally, researchers note that the mass incarceration of mothers may lead to even more stress on the family based on the nature of the roles mothers tend to play in families as the primary caretaker. Most women in the U.S. prison system are Black (approximately two thirds) poor single mothers whom are serving time for nonviolent drug-related crimes (Allen, Flaherty, & Ely, 2010; Frazier, 2016). Thus, children with imprisoned mothers often enter the foster care system, potentially permanently severing relationships with their mothers (Roberts, 2003).

Furthermore, the loss of the mother may disrupt the cohesion of the family unit, bringing about vast changes, including but not limited to the following: strain because of reduced or no economic resources for the family; physical and emotional tensions because of the stress to

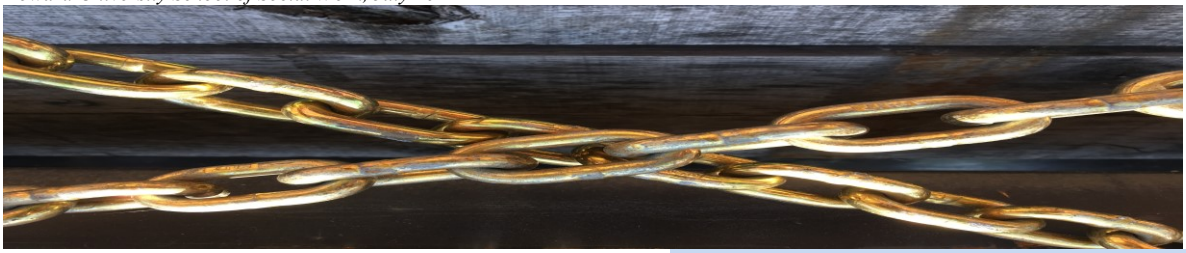
survive minus the mother; stress and worry about the incarcerated mother or other person that has served as the mother in the absence of mother, as well as worry about the incarcerated mother's safety while imprisoned; and the shame and stigma associated with the incarceration of a family member (Turney, 2017; Robert, 2003). Additionally, this raises concerns for intergenerational consequences of the family; and the formation of an environment that may provide a pathway back to prison (recidivism).

### **Community Effects**

The damage of mass incarceration at the family level ultimately resonates throughout communities in which families of prisoners reside (e.g.- in African American communities). Research on mass incarceration demonstrates that such imprisonment of many individuals from a single community, like that within certain African American communities, ultimately produces an adverse effect on the entire community (Roberts, 2003). This is apparent based on the evidence that mass incarceration puts a strain directly on the extended social networks that historically sustained low-income African American families, specifically during both social and economic hardships (Turney, 2017; Roberts, 2003). As a result, communities burdened with the issue of mass incarceration often find it hard to form expansive networks that can adequately produce social capital and familial supports.

### **Conclusion**

To effectively address the issue of overrepresentation of Blacks within the U.S. prison system, the U.S. must first recognize that this is an important issue worth addressing. When it comes to discrimination and the overrepresentation of Blacks within the U.S. prison system, it all boils down to the awareness and social consciousness of the discrimination and the reasons for overrepresentation. Without



recognizing the link between racism and its historical precedents of slavery the links to racial disparities within the U.S. prison system, there will not be the needed strategic strides taken for change in order to address this contemporary criminal justice issue. Similarly, as social workers, we must recognize that “if communities disproportionately produce prisoners, they will disproportionality draw them back upon release” (Sampson & Loeffler, 2010, p.6). As for social work practitioners, we must address the needs of both the individual and their families, who are in need of services during and after their interaction with the criminal justice system. The needs linger post transition. Furthermore, as policy making social workers, we must seek to promote effective public policy and eliminate bad policy that scapegoats some, systematically targets and disproportionately draws people of color to the criminal justice system. Instead, we must seek to make realistic and effective policy with resources, at the local, state and national levels that consistently promotes justice for all, regardless of an individual’s race, gender or creed. and not

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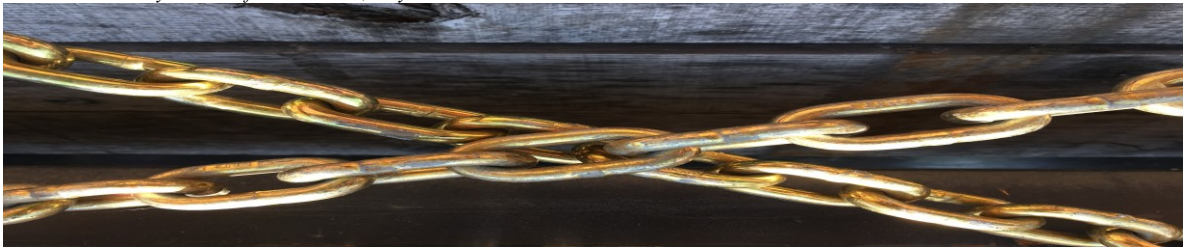
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Kadee Atkinson, MSW, is a doctoral student at the Howard University School of Social Work.





## I'm Not Racist, But...

Immigrant & Ethnic Minority Groups and Housing in Malta

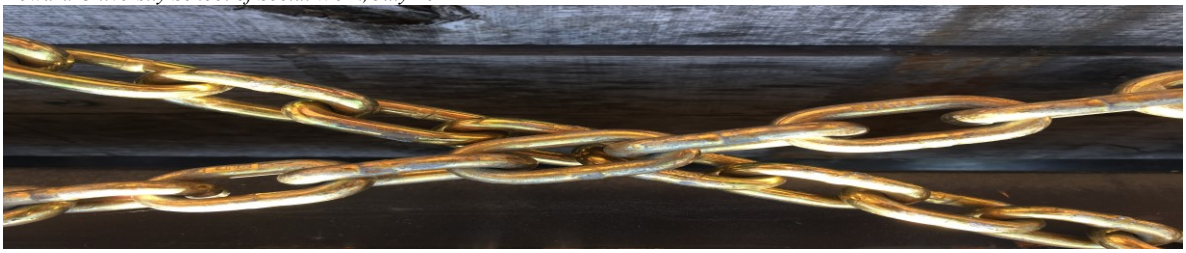


### *Quote of the Week*

“Racism is an unqualified evil in our society. Universities are not utopias, and people of color experience racism on our campus. This fact angers and disappoints me.”

— **Peter Salovey**, president of Yale in an email to the campus community after police were alerted to a Black student taking a nap in the public area of his dormitory, 5-10-18

# Yale



# The Impacts of Child Welfare and Economics on Generational Poverty

Peter Fitts, LCSW-C

## Abstract

*Generational Poverty has impacted the African American community unlike any other culture and community. African American poverty is linked to mental illness, child welfare impacts, and a lack of familial transfer of wealth. A national study of child protective services by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that "minority children, and 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". Generational Poverty has many causes and affects the African American community particularly harder than any other race.*

**Key Words:** *Generational Poverty, African American community, foster placement, child welfare*

## The Problem

Generational Poverty has impacted the African American community unlike any other culture and community. "Generational Poverty is defined as a family having lived in poverty for at least two generations."<sup>1</sup> "Among racial and ethnic groups, African Americans have the highest poverty rate, 27.4 percent, followed by Hispanics at 26.6 percent and whites at 9.9 percent. Approximately 45.8 percent of young black children (under age 6) live in poverty, compared to 14.5 percent of white children."<sup>2</sup> African American poverty is linked to mental illness, child welfare impacts, and a lack of familial transfer of wealth. Our traditional thought has us aware that the cause of poverty is a result of under employment, lack of training, poor education, a lack of opportunity, family illness, incarceration, and single parenting.

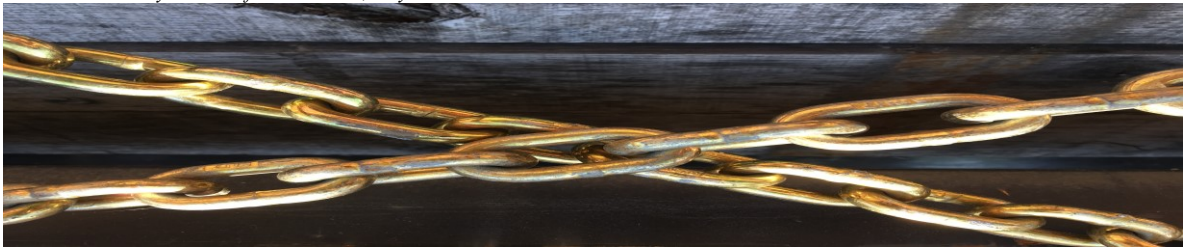
"According to federal statistics, black children in the child welfare system are placed in foster care at twice the rate of white children. A national study of child protective services by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that minority children, and African American children, 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 separated 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"<sup>3</sup>. For African American families however, the lack of "generational assets" and the child welfare

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<sup>1</sup> Urban Ventures

<sup>2</sup> Urban Ventures

<sup>3</sup> Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare



system impacts African Americans the most.

### **The Child Welfare System**

African American families and children in the child welfare system are often underserved and poorly represented, as evidenced by the reality that families are less likely to seek mental health services, child welfare supports, and family supports than their white and Latino counterparts. When African American youth are provided mental health services or child welfare supports; providers often lack the skills of cultural intelligence and operate at times with “implicit bias” which frames families and youth from a deficit perspective versus a strengths-based perspective.

African American children have often learned to not trust human service providers or the child welfare system as a “racial imbalance stems from fundamental flaws in the very design of most child protective services.”<sup>4</sup> African American parents report feeling punished for their life challenges by child welfare workers threatening to take their children away. Agencies' punitive function hits African American parents the hardest because they are the most likely to suffer from poverty and institutionalized discrimination and to be blamed for the effects on their children. It should be noted that child welfare practice became increasingly punitive as black children made up a greater and greater share of the caseloads.

As the child welfare system began to serve fewer white children and more children of color, state and federal governments spent more money on out-of-home care and less on in-home services.”<sup>5</sup> The resulting impact of this distrust is anger, passive aggressive behavior by the child, their family of origin, and their inability to fully

utilize the benefits available to them by being in “the system”. For example, children in foster care rarely take advantage of state sponsored free tuition made available to them.

Due to multiple home moves children often times change schools and never establish a consistent academic environment where counselors and mentor connections are made to support many students who have the potential to attend college.

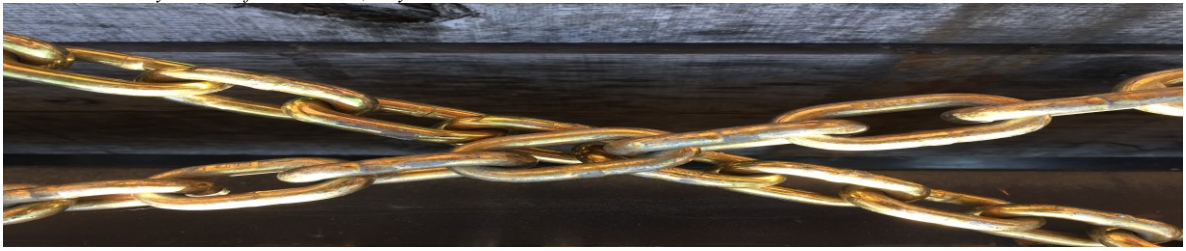
Children in foster care often abscond (run away) to family member(s) of origin or to friends they feel understand them at the risk of disrupting their educational progress. Incompetent or ineffective social workers often do not understand the importance of the need for children in care to maintain a consistent bond with their family of origin while working on ameliorating the problems that brought them into care.

Children and youth also are appointed legal counsel to represent them as a way to ensure their rights are made available to them. At times, the legal representation is flawed as legal representatives do not advocate for what is in the child's best interest but rather they advocate for what the child wants. For example, children are mandated to receive allowance while in foster care regardless as to whether they do their chores, budget their money, or spend their dollars in appropriate ways. As a result, children in care rarely learn skills necessary to care for themselves or their families as they become institutionalized to the fact that the “system” is in control and will provide a better lifestyle than they can for themselves.

African American children leaving foster care result in untrained, unemployable angry young adults who often end up homeless,

<sup>4</sup> Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare (2002)

<sup>5</sup> Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare (2002)



involved in sex trafficking, young parents or incarcerated thus adding to additional generational poverty.

### **A Lack of Generational Assets**

As stated earlier, African American families maintain the highest rate of poverty among all minority groups. “Although incomes for African Americans have improved significantly since the Civil Rights era, they are still lower than the national average. For example, the median income for Black families is twenty thousand dollars a year less than the national median income.”<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the debt to income ratio in many large American cities for African Americans is growing or in other words; African Americans are living beyond their means or “pay check to pay check”.

Minorities often risk or forgo asset development and growth and choose to invest in depreciating assets such as cars, over-financing a home, or creating high credit card debt. As a result very few minorities focus on the importance of retirement accounts, developing residual income, protecting their limited assets, or investing in real estate.

*One of the most significant failures of minority families is the ability to protect their assets via estate planning, Will preparation, and proper tax preparation. When family assets exist, poor planning results in family members being embroiled in estate battles, owing estate taxes, failure to have a family Will which results in estates being held in probate and families either walking away from assets or spending much needed funds to legally fight for assets. The weaker members of the family are often left out of the process without reaping any benefit of the asset, have drug dependency issues, owe back*

taxes, owe child support, or have poor money management skills.

As cities and urban areas experience “gentrification” minorities fail to realize their true value or worth in exchange for easy/fast money. Minority families must be educated on asset worth and money management as a very important method to maintain their worth and growth as a culture. The commercialization of culture, social media, and subliminal marketing affects all ages of African Americans. The power of such marketing goes back to the 1940’s when Black Psychologist Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted a series of “doll tests” to study the impacts of segregation on black children. In that study black children (primarily female) children chose white dolls over black dolls when given the choice of their preference.

In other words, the power of marketing, subliminal messaging, and social media significantly impacts the need of minorities to fit in with the larger community at any cost thus affecting the focus of self-awareness, cultural development, and self-confidence to develop in a genuine fashion.

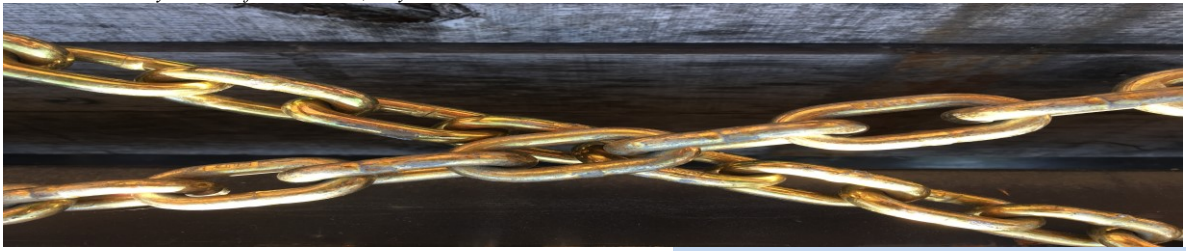
### **Summary**

Generational Poverty has many causes and affects the African American community particularly harder than any other race. Ineffective child welfare policies and a lack of generational assets serve to not only exacerbate and intensify Generational Poverty but also serves to further erode and breakdown families of color and their ability to effect change within the American socio-economic structure.

Efforts to reverse the impact of poverty can be addressed by:

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<sup>6</sup>Black Demographics.com



- 1) Providing earlier education in schools regarding life skills training, including financial literacy, Parent training (during formative years), home maintenance, and conflict resolution
- 2) Reforming Child Welfare/Human Services by utilizing strength based/culturally safe and congruent approaches that emphasize family structure and stability with time limited financial resources to decrease institutionalized generations of children/families and youth.

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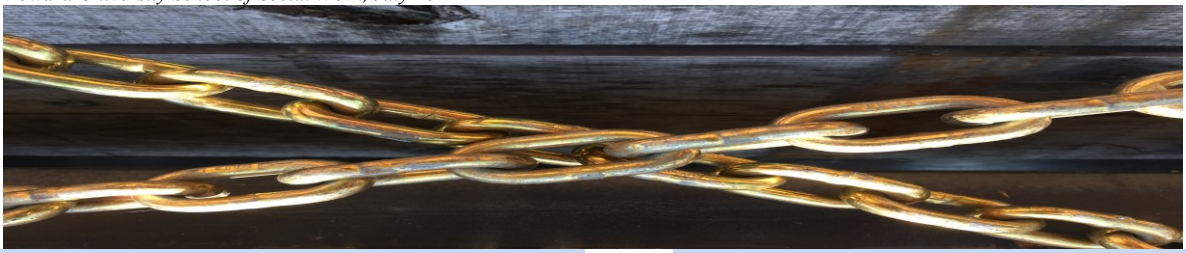
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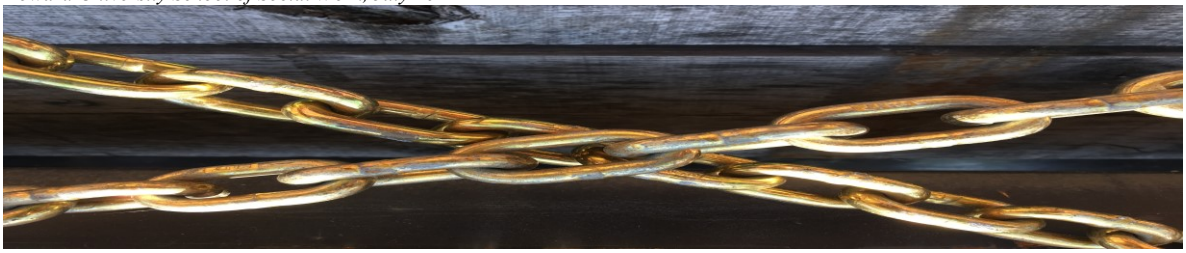
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*Mr. Fitts is Adjunct Professor at Howard University School of Social Work, He is the Regional Director for Foster Care and Independent Living at the Progressive Life Center, Inc.*



# HIV Stigma among African American Women Living with HIV/AIDS: Implications for Social Work

Shirin Sultana

## Abstract

*African American women bear a disproportionate burden of HIV/AIDS in the United States. Despite advances in highly active anti-retroviral therapy that substantially improved the overall quality and quantity of life for person living with HIV/AIDS, African American women with HIV remain vulnerable to adverse health outcomes associated with HIV related multilevel stigma including at interpersonal, community and institutional levels. Explaining multilevel stigma, this paper explains policy implications for social work education and practice to address the unique needs of this population.*

**Key Words:** HIV/AIDS, Stigma, African American Women, Policy, Social Work Education,

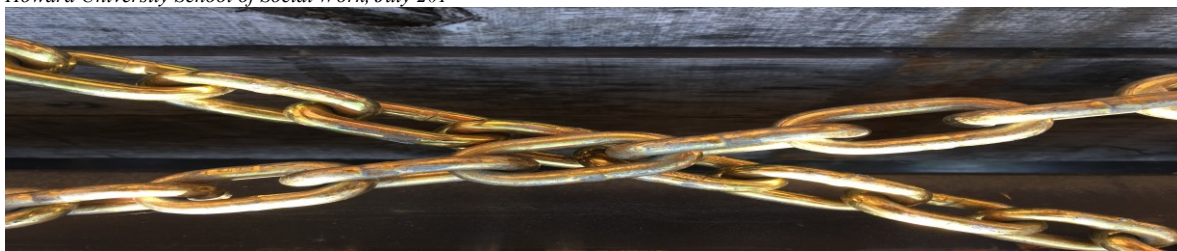
## Introduction:

Multilevel HIV Stigma (MHS) plays a key role in racial/ethnic health disparities in accessing and managing HIV care (Earnshaw, Bogart, Dovidio & Williams, 2013). Women with HIV/AIDS in the United States are disproportionately ethnic minorities and poor (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention {CDC}, 2014, Katz, Ryu, Onuegbu, Psaros, Weiser, Bangsberg, & Tsai, 2013; Fletcher, Ingram, Kerr, Buchberg, Bogdan-Lovis, & Philpott-Jones, 2016).

African American women (AAW) bear a disproportionate burden of HIV/AIDS in the country. Although they constitute only 13% of the US population, African Americans account for nearly 65% of all new HIV infections among women (CDC, 2016). CDC (2013) reported that around 1 in 32 AAW, 1 in 106 Hispanic/Latina women, and 1 in 526 white women were diagnosed with HIV. Moreover, HIV is the leading cause of death of AAW ages 24–35 (CDC, 2014). It is estimated that 15% of all new HIV infections are among people under 25 years of age, and the vast majority of these infections are a result of unprotected sexual activity (CDC, 2016; 2014). In addition, this population suffers comparatively greater adverse health outcomes related to HIV status. Multilevel HIV related stigma subsequently complicates disclosure decisions and make it difficult for African American Women with HIV (AAWWH) to access care, manage the disease and feel supported by family, friends, community or institutions.

## HIV related Stigma

Many researchers identify the definition of stigma in different ways. Erving Goffman (1963) is among pioneers who defined stigma as “an attribute or characteristic that is profoundly discrediting to the individual processing the



attribute or characteristic” (as cited in Florom-Smith & De Santis, 2012, p. 3). Later researchers classified HIV related stigma in two ways: external stigma (i.e. rejection, avoidance, intolerance, stereotyping, judgmental attitudes, disrespect and etc.) and internal stigma (i.e. shame, self-blame, fear of disclosure, despair and etc.) (Florom-Smith & De Santis, 2012; Lekas, Siegel & Leider, 2011).

The HIV/AIDS epidemic and related stigma disproportionately affect African American Women and their sufferings are more intense than their white counterparts (Rao, Molina, Lambert & Cohn, 2016; Rao, Pryor, Gaddist, & Mayer, 2008). For example, AAWWH experience tremendous existential despair as well as receive shunning and institutional disregards (Buseh & Stevens, 2006).

Existential despair is a form of internal stigma. It instills feelings of dread or depression upon learning of the diagnosis of HIV (Florom-Smith & De Santis, 2012) Receiving a notice of HIV+ was once a notice of impending or certain death. Now, if managed correctly, HIV+ is a chronic disease. HIV positive individuals who experience shunning, insensitive treatment and rejection by others often limit interaction with others and shun or socially isolate themselves from the social world. Institutional disregard occurs when staff in hospitals or other institutions (i.e. prison) treat the HIV positive individual with disrespect.

Thus, overwhelming multilevel HIV related stigma is one of the major causes that hinder HIV+ individuals in accessing HIV care and treatment among AAWWH.

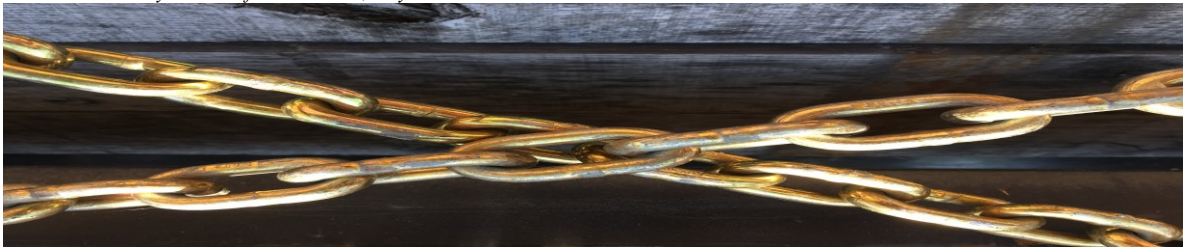
### ***Interpersonal-level Stigma***

Interpersonal-level stigma is defined by those experiences of stigma that cause “by and

within one’s immediate social environment impacting direct interpersonal interactions including family members and friends” (Fletcher, Ingram, Kerr, Buchberg, Bogdan-Lovis, & Philpott-Jones, 2016, p. 351). Both perceived (identified by target) and enacted (experienced acts of discrimination) stigma are the outcome of interpersonal-level stigma.

Perceived stigma involves the “assessment of experiencing prejudices, stereotypes, and/or discrimination from others in the past and anticipated stigma involves expectations of such bias in the future” (Earnshaw, Bogart, Dovidio & Williams, 2013, p. 3). Whereas, enacted stigma included discrimination in the forms of “rejection, verbal insults and ostracism perpetrated by family and friends, and was manifested as avoidance related to fears of infection, judgment, and an inability to understand why spouse or caregivers would choose to remain with people with HIV” (Florom-Smith & De Saintis, 2012, p. 4).

AAWWH frequently experience both perceived and enacted stigma from their immediate social environment (i.e. family and/or friends when they disclose their HIV status (Fletcher et al., 2016; Katz et al., 2013). Stigmatized AAWWH are unable to take care of their children due to HIV infection. The fear that they should not be in touch with the family members, they should not use the same utensils, and they should avoid physical contact with other family members often drive their behavior. These incidences occur as a consequence of overwhelming fear of infection, disclosure and lack of social support to AAWWH. Disclosing HIV positive status to family cause another overwhelming vulnerability to AAWWH, and it leads to many forms of discrimination (i.e. dislike, fear) against them (Fletcher et al., 2016; Katz et al., 2013; Rao et al., 2016).



### ***Community-level Stigma***

Community level stigma intersects within individual's immediate social circles (i.e. family and friends) as well as their broader community (i.e. church) (Fletcher et al., 2016). Due to community-level stigma AAWWH isolate themselves from their families and their communities. Persistent isolation and rejection lead them to other mental health problems including depression and low life satisfaction (Kalomo, 2017). Fletcher et al. (2016) and Sengupta, Banks, Jonas, Miles & Smith (2011) found that low socioeconomic status, and historical racism likely contributed to the heightened experiences of HIV stigma among AAWWH. Parental disclosure, disclosing HIV positive status in church settings directly or indirectly brings community stigma to the AAWWH.

A number of research studies found that involving the AAWWH in church activities is an important way for them to access and help themselves better cope with HIV stigma. However, many African Americans, participating in church activities may see church as an easy way to reduce the HIV+ person's social isolation as churches may offer social support, and safe spaces to many AAWWH.

However, some churches may further stigmatize, marginalize, and isolate many AAWWH as their status disclosure may draw backlash from other churchgoers often ignorant to their biases or who justify their actions of marginalization. (Fletcher et al., 2016)

### ***Institutional-level Stigma***

The institutional level of HIV stigma promotes intentional or unintentional mechanisms of exclusion, stigmatization, and discrimination within the healthcare system, pharmacy, employment, and prison (Fletcher et

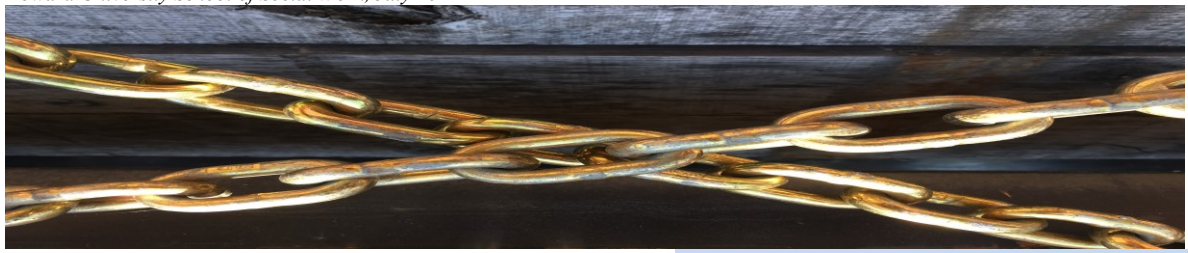
al., 2016). Larger societal structures and institutions with formal rules and regulations account for institutional level stigma (Fletcher et al., 2016). Due to historical discrimination and persistent institutional stigma, AAWWH often felt powerless to protect their legal and human rights. Despite the enactment of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which provides federal privacy protections for individually identifiable health information, PLWHA reported violations of privacy by healthcare workers and pharmacy staff (Earnshaw, Bogart, Dovidio & Williams, 2013; Fletcher et al., 2016).

Institutional levels of stigma are also associated with unintentional but still damaging disclosures that often causes social, emotional, and psychological disturbances to HIV positive women. Economically poor AAWWH often avoid local pharmacies for HIV medication refills to minimize HIV disclosure risks particularly in non-urban environments. Experiences of institutional stigma in the workplace generally are legally restricted from disclosing instances when members of their interpersonal or community-level social networks disclose a participant's status to their employer. Although many women recognized institutional-level stigma as a human rights violation, the majority of affected participants elected not to pursue legal action. Those decisions appeared to be rooted in disempowerment resulting not only from the associated HIV/ AIDS-related stigma but also from marginalization further posed by race, gender, and class.

### ***Conclusion and Implications***

Overall, multilevel HIV related stigma manifests itself through four factors including:

1. prejudice, 2. discounting, 3. discrediting, and 4. latent and overt discrimination (Steward, Herek,



Ramakrishna, Bharat, Chandy, Wrubel, & Ekstrand, 2008) that extensively affect to AAWWH. Although HIV infection is a chronic, manageable illness, AAWWH experience multilevel stigma from family, friends, community and broader society. It is crucial for social workers to understand these unique challenges and experiences of stigmatized AAWWH in order to offer better services, counseling and support for this population. Towards this goal, educational programming may be instrumental in deconstructing false perceptions about HIV/AIDS. Service-providing institutions could be more sensitive to this population if they strictly follow the regulations regarding disclosure and consumer and patient rights. Federal initiatives can encourage innovation and ingenuity in services and programs for this population, thereby establishing HIV as a chronic disease like other diseases that require care, information, and support while deconstructing the stigma around HIV status. This should be a national priority.

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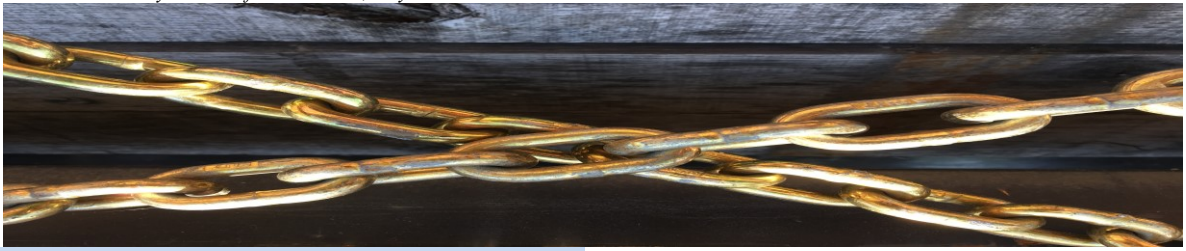
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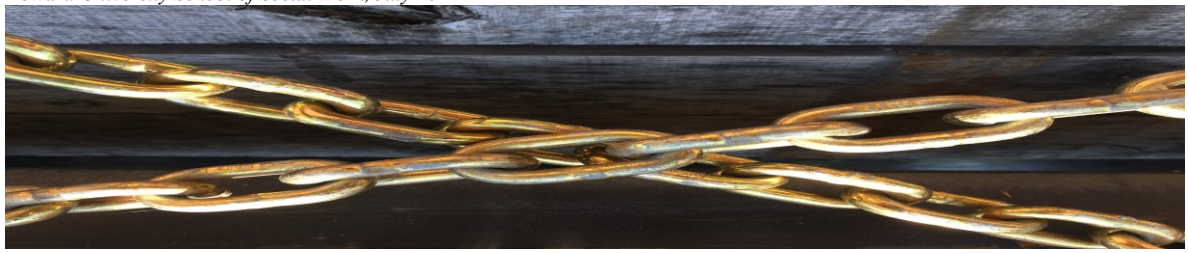
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*Shirin Sultana, MSW, is a doctoral student at the Howard University School of Social Work.*



# Learning Race, Racism and Colorism: Lessons Learned Growing Up Black in Washington, DC

Jacqueline Smith, PhD,  
MSW

## Abstract

*I learned the meaning of race, racism and colorism growing up in Washington, DC. Racism classifies people and orders the categories so that the characteristics of those persons in the bottom categories are labeled as inferior because of color. The assignment of negative stereotyped meanings applied by African Americans to the color of other African Americans is known as colorism. Racism and Colorism are forms of conscious and unconscious bias. Studies have shown that racism and colorism negatively impact self-efficacy and achievement. HBCUs should use unconscious bias training to create teachable moments about racism and colorism for faculty and students.*

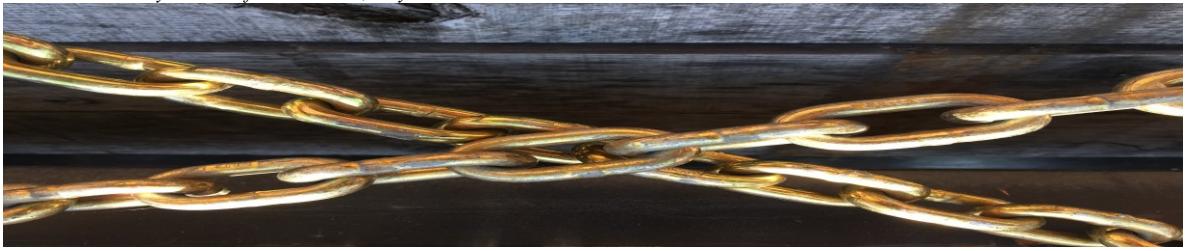
**Key Word:** Historically Black College University (HBCU), Learning, Race and Racism, Washington DC,

You are not born knowing what race means. You have to learn it. For very young children, parents and others around them teach the meaning. A while back I was the only person of color on board a plane that had landed. As we lined up in the aisles, there was a middle age adult woman behind me and a little boy about 5 or 6 years old in front of me. The little boy turned back and looked at me. He had what I would characterize as a look of surprise. His eyes were wide, his mouth was shaped like an “O”, and he pointed at me. With a very loud “whisper” he said “That lady is brown.”. His mother put her finger to her lip to silence him. Meanwhile, the lady behind me said, probably to herself, but, loud enough for me to hear, muttered : “That’s why my children meet and play with all kinds of children so that they do not say things like that.”.

The little boy was right. He knew his colors. I am brown. But his mom missed a teachable moment for teaching race. His mom’s action taught him that the color was something that should not be acknowledged, perhaps never talked about, perhaps something that should be in a dark, shameful, private place.

Racism assigns meanings to color. Racism assigns people to a category and orders the categories so that members at the bottom category are assumed to be at the bottom because they must be inferior because of color. Children of color must learn race because of the threats posed by racism. Both the learned association of racism or defense against racism begins in the home with the family.

Such learned associations can be judgmental stereotypes rigged to be true, and presented as facts, they can be unspoken images that block the light that shines on the potential, the talents, the intelligence and the achievements of people of color. For example, when I was growing up there was a daily paper called the Washington News.



When a crime (rape, murder, etc.) was reported, the story would usually have somewhere in the first paragraph, “X, a black man”. However, if race was not reported, the reader could only assume that the perpetrator was white. Thus, the color black was associated with crime, and crime was associated with the race. As I was growing up in Washington, DC and read the Washington Daily News there was the recurring teachable moment that black was a not just a color but it was a race, and that the Black race was associated with crime. However, each time I read the weekly Afro-American newspaper, I experienced a qualitatively different teachable moment because the paper reported both crimes and achievements of African Americans

Over time without teachable moments in the homes and families of African Americans, all children reading the Washington Daily News would have consumed the “fact” that African Americans are criminals- the rapists, the murderers, etc. I never saw the headline, “. . . prize winner, Ms. X, was African American.” But in my family, I learned by seeing, by listening to other facts- about all the black people in my community who were not criminals, who had jobs, who worked, who had much of which to be proud. My family seized the opportunities for teachable moments that racism in the school, in the political system and in society had systematically and intentionally blocked.

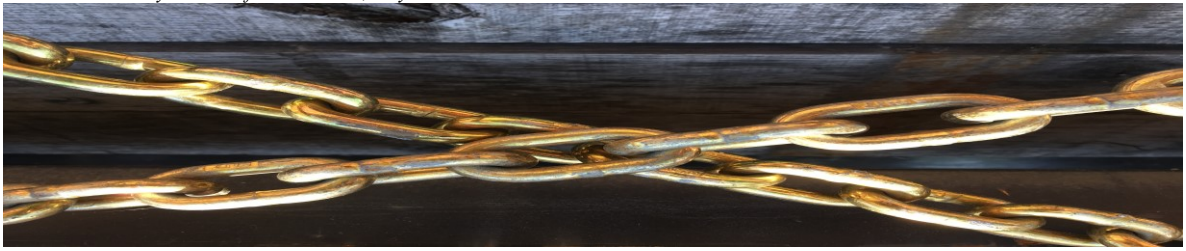
My family educated me, and taught me to aim for what was blocked by the mountains, canyons, the boulders and the stones that blocked my path because of race. I will always remember the pride I saw in my mother’s eyes when she introduced me to the Howard University educated African American general practitioner who served our community.

When I was growing up in Washington, DC, color was also assigned meanings by African Americans for other African Americans. The

assignment of burdensome, negative stereotyped meanings applied by African Americans to the color of other African Americans is known as colorism. More specifically, colorism is a form of discrimination with the assignment of inferior status based on skin color by members of the same race/category. Generally, skin tones closer to white are assigned privileged statuses, while dark skin tones are assigned inferior statuses and penalized (Gasman and Abiola, 2016; Allen, Telles and Hunter, 2000). Nance (2005) point out that at first glance even though colorism seems to be identical to racism, the two are not identical because race and color are not the same. “People confuse skin color and race because skin color is used to assign people to racial categories (Nance, 2005, p. 438)

Colorism emerges in the context of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Colorism is not limited to African Americans. Among Hispanics, Spanish colonizers supported a system where dark-skinned people were assigned to lower SES roles (Nance, 2005; Quiros and Dawson, 2013). In South Africa, colorism was supported by a systematic structured caste system developed in the context of colonialism. The earliest expression of colorism in the United States occurred during the oppressive caste system of slavery. E. Franklin Frazier (1957) in the Black Bourgeoisie writes that after slavery African American color hierarchies were supported by African Americans as well as whites.

Racism in the United States has been responsive to social change brought about social movements (e.g. civil rights movement). However, some writers have provided evidence that the achievements of the black bourgeoisie described by Frazier (1957) in the post slavery period rested on discriminatory colorist practices based on institutional privileges within African American communities. Thus, within some African American institutions (e.g. schools, sororities, churches, etc.) discriminatory practices



flourished under a system of conscious bias at HBCU's (Taylor, 2009; Gatewood, 2000). Racism has also been responsive to the civil rights movement. Some writers have noted that post the civil rights movements, some lighter skin African Americans experienced discriminatory backlash by other African Americans because of the light color of their skin (Gasman and Abiola, 2016).

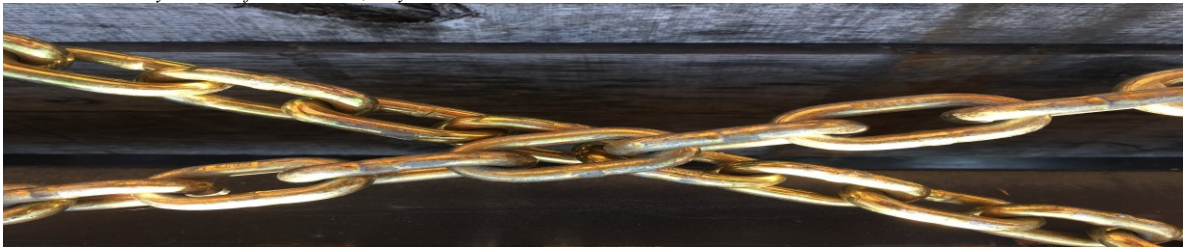
One colorist discriminatory practice was known as the paper bag test. Kerr (2005) reports that the paper bag test was one of several "complexion tests" used for color based discriminatory purposes. Persons who passed the test were admitted to the elite society if his/her skin matched or was lighter than a brown paper bag.

The brown bag complexion test is both fact and folklore. Folklorist Kerr (2005) studied colorism in Washington, DC, Philadelphia and New Orleans. She used snowball sampling techniques to interview a sample of African Americans comprised largely of persons at HBCUs and other African American organizations for her studies. Later using snowball sample data she had collected in the nineties, she reported on data extracted from a subsample of Washingtonians comprised of Howard University faculty, students and administrators, as well as respondents from local churches and other organizations. Kerr interviewed persons who either had actually experienced the paper bag test, or who only had knowledge of the test rather than direct experience. Her report confirms that the brown bag complexion test was both fact as well as folklore. Kerr argues that "... folk forms are not merely objective viewpoints, descriptions, and responses; rather, they are deeply encoded practices of knowledge that organize or affirm our understanding of who we are (Kerr, 2005, p. 287).

If the conceptualizations of colorism presented here are applied to my experiences with colorism growing up in Washington, DC, the question that

arises is "What I have learned or experienced about colorism growing up in Washington, DC? What were the moments- the teachable moments- that I experienced? What was it like to experience the colorism folk lore growing up in Washington, DC? I have two types of experiences that provide answers to this question. One experience might be categorized as folklore since I did not directly experience it. Prior to the desegregation of schools when family members (e.g. mother, aunts and uncles) attended high school in DC, there were two public schools, Dunbar and Cardoza, available for African Americans. It was said that lighter skin blacks went to one school and darker skin blacks went to another school. The second is a persistent perception regarding the lack of diversity for students who were accepted by my HBCU. Throughout elementary and high school years, I heard that there was a paper bag test to be accepted into the University. If you were darker than a paper bag you would not be accepted. As a 17-year-old I believed the Washingtonian folklore so I choose to attend a PWI. I was mature enough and strong enough to challenge racists, but lacked the strong self-efficacy required to challenge the colorist folklore. Later, when as a mature twenty-year-old I applied and was accepted into the MSW program at my HBCU, I saw firsthand that the colorism that I assumed to be a fact, was not true. There were plenty of people in classes who did not pass the paper bag test. Folklore had blocked my conscious decision, but life experiences had raised my conscious awareness.

Interestingly, the next year when I briefly took doctoral level courses in one of the social science departments, colorism surfaced. Several students advised me not to take courses from a particular professor or to be watchful because the professor never passed dark skinned people. When I asked them to explain, they described the differential treatment and dismissive attitudes they observed the professor meted out to students who did not pass the complexion test. Up until this point I had



successfully navigated my way through my studies at both universities. Because of my experience in the MSW program it never occurred to me that I would not earn credit for the work that I would do in other classes.

Both of these occurrences contain teachable moments. Enrolling in the MSW program taught me that the folklore was not true. The paper bag test clearly had not been applied to the persons in my classes and to the diverse rainbow of students that I saw all over the campus. The second occurrence where classmates informed me about a professor the discriminatory colorists practices of a professor also was a teachable moment. Just as family had taught me how to recognize the discriminatory practices and micro aggressions of racism, my classmates were teaching me how to define and recognize colorism in the classroom. They seized the opportunity for the teachable moment.

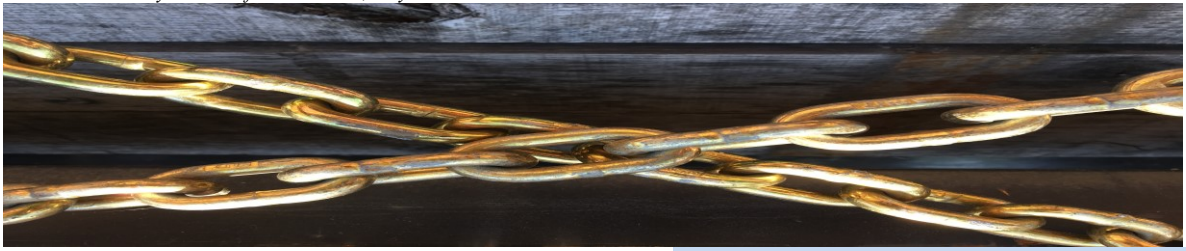
As a mature adult, I also see the teachable moments that I have seized. For example, in a meeting my colleagues and I were introduced to woman in an overwhelmingly white organization. As we became acquainted over the luncheon meeting she complained of the discrimination she had experienced because of her race. She had very light skin and would not have had any problems passing the paper bag test. I sympathized with her and told her so, but my colleagues were silent during the conversation. Later when the meeting ended, my colleagues agreed among themselves that the woman acted “white” and did not really experience discrimination. They said that she believed that she was “better than us”. Our conversation about their perception and my perception was my attempt to seize the teachable moment regarding racism and colorism.

In both of the above examples, colorism served as a barrier to attaching meaning to the dynamics of race and racism. So, what are the lessons learned

from experiencing race, racism and colorism while growing up in Washington, DC? What should organizations, particularly academic institutions, do to seize teachable moments in order to remove barriers constructed by colorism? Gasman and Abiola (2016) recommend free discussion by students and faculty on the issues that surface. Further, they recommend staff that who work in student support positions be trained on how to have greater awareness of how colorism can influence self-esteem and self-efficacy.

If, indeed, discussions about the impact of colorism raise awareness, then it seems reasonable to assume that raised awareness of colorism represents raised consciousness. It is also reasonable to assume that HBCU student support staff are already guided by policies and practices that spell out criteria that limit conscious bias. But it is also just as reasonable to assume that colorism, like racism and sexism, also rests on unconsciousness bias embedded in American cultural beliefs and social stratification systems. This suggests that HBCUs should create teachable moments that raise awareness of the unconscious bias of colorism.

Today organizations train critical stakeholders to be aware of unconscious biases. As a faculty member engaged in recruitment, I received at my HBCU training in recognizing unconscious bias. The training helped me to recognize unconscious biases because of age and gender. AT HBCUs this type of training should also be used to create teachable moments about race, racism and colorism for faculty and students. I also highly recommend that student tour guides receive unconscious bias training. The guides are trained to be knowledgeable about the history of the university. But the guides can also combat colorism. Often the student guides are the first in person experience that some African Americans students have with a HBCU institution. The tour guides in recounting the history of the University



can provide examples that contradict the colorist folklore or the colorist practices of individuals. Words spoken by a real person can be inspiring enough to chisel away the mountains of racism, sexism and colorism that block self-efficacy and achievement.

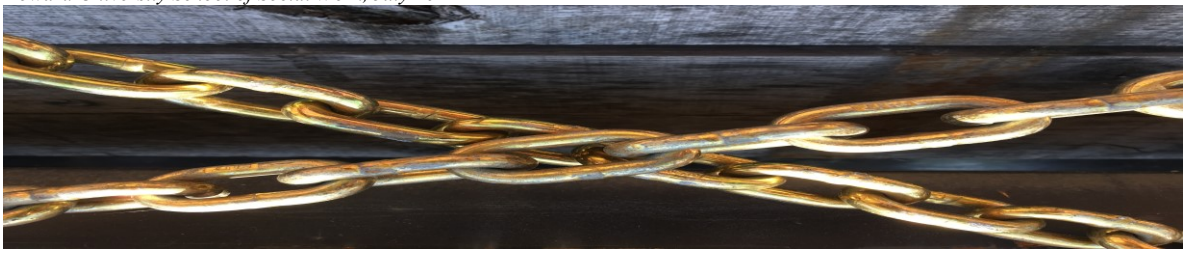
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*Dr. Jacqueline Smith is Associate Dean of Research and Associate Professor at Howard University School of Social Work*

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# Creating A Brave Space for Difficult Dialogues and Critical Thinking

Samuel B. Little, MSW,  
PhD, LCSW-C

Victoria D. Stubbs, PhD,  
MSW

## Abstract

*Interpersonal and inter-group communication can be difficult in the best of times because of implicit-explicit biases. Misunderstandings lead to fractured feelings and frequently erupt a range of tensions as one attempts to build “safe spaces” and critical thinking capacity in the classroom.*

*As a part of our profession’s mission, values and ethical responsibility, social workers assist oppressed and marginalized populations. As educators we must embrace a new way of being in the academic world, one that is a parallel process and can enable educators to enhance their position to navigate the difficult terrain of discussing issues of race, class, gender, oppression and privilege in the classroom.*

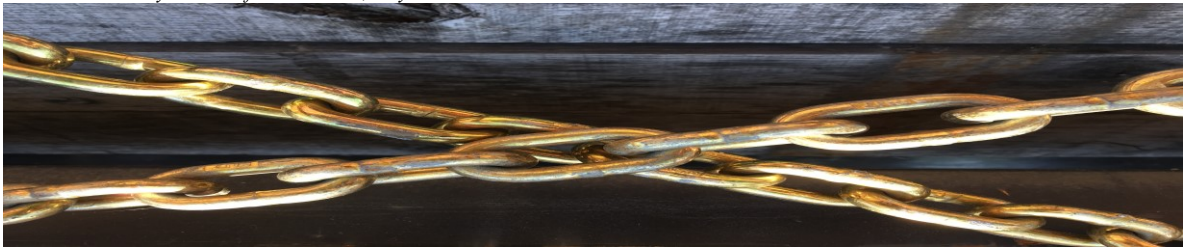
**Key Words:** *Interpersonal communication,*

*oppressed and marginalized population, critical thinking, implicit-explicit bias.*

Interpersonal and inter-group communication can be difficult in the best of times because of implicit-explicit biases. Misunderstandings lead to fractured feelings and frequently erupt a range of tensions as one attempts to build “safe spaces” and critical thinking capacity in the classroom. There is evidence that safe classrooms promote learning. Mayo (2010) examined difficult dialogues about multicultural issues. Her work suggests that a sense of safety is required to overcome the tension-filled moments involved in thinking, discussing, and listening to others during conflict-laden topics. Surprisingly, a 2017 survey conducted by LendEDU found college students practically split on safe spaces. Of the 1,659 respondents, roughly 35% of students believed safe spaces are absolutely necessary as compared to 37% who felt they were completely out of touch from reality. However, for those who hold a thumb down view, the conversations and debates that occur between students and faculty turn safe spaces into miniature “marketplaces of ideas,” where unique cross-racial exchanges can occur.

Increasing attention in social work focuses on helping students manage discomfiting viewpoints, emotional discomfort, and vulnerability created by fear and conflict in their interpersonal and intergroup relations. These are not words that one often thinks of when considering the role of a social work educator. We may think about professional skills, core competencies, and evidence based research. The ability to instruct students on technical ways of being a social worker also includes delving into the use of self and taking a look at one’s own level of self-awareness.

As a part of our profession’s mission, values and ethical responsibility, we assist oppressed and



marginalized populations. There can be no better reason to empower students on what it means to be oppressed and marginalized. To do so means to examine the ways in which our experiences have been shaped by and contribute to a system of oppression. Examining issues of race, class, and gender in the classroom often creates a level of fear, vulnerability, uncomfortableness and threatens one's sense of emotional safety.

Much has been written about creating safe spaces in the classroom in order to have such sensitive and challenging conversations, but 'safety' is subjective. Students may be concerned about being judged or offending others. Additionally, students may feel they are the only one who thinks a certain way. Similarly, instructors may feel concerned about their course evaluation scores and how that impacts job security. Many instructors might also feel a sense of incompetence around certain topics which challenges one's idea of what it means to be seen and/or perceived as an expert merely because they carry the title of Professor. Educators of color, especially those in predominantly white institutions, are especially fearful of and vulnerable to the evaluations of students who, in some ways, hold the key to an instructor's tenure and job security. It seems more apropos to begin to examine how both students and instructors can enter into difficult classroom conversations about oppression and privilege in a brave way that honors everyone's fear and vulnerability. Instead of focusing on safety, which could be restrictive, it is advantageous to focus on expanding the way in which we see, hear and experience ourselves and each other.

Ultimately, designing a space in which instructors are modeling the use of self in the classroom, a key component of social work which sets social workers apart from many other human service professions. It's the creation of a *brave space*. The idea of a brave space allows for the presence of emotions. It recognizes that both the student and the instructor are stepping into the classroom with

some level of fear, while knowing that the only way to address the fear requires all to be vulnerable while knowing that there is strength and connection in allowing oneself to be in such a position. A brave space encourages open and honest communication and leaves room for errors. It encourages students and instructors to be curious and seek understanding instead of shutting down or making assumptions about other people.

The construction and implementation of a brave space itself requires an instructor in particular to put themselves in a position to be vulnerable and uncomfortable but it is ultimately no different than how most people or marginalized populations feel most days navigating spaces where they are seen as the other. Therefore, allowing oneself to embrace a new way of being in the academic world is a parallel process and can enable educators to enhance their position to navigate the difficult terrain of discussing issues of race, class, gender, oppression and privilege in the classroom.

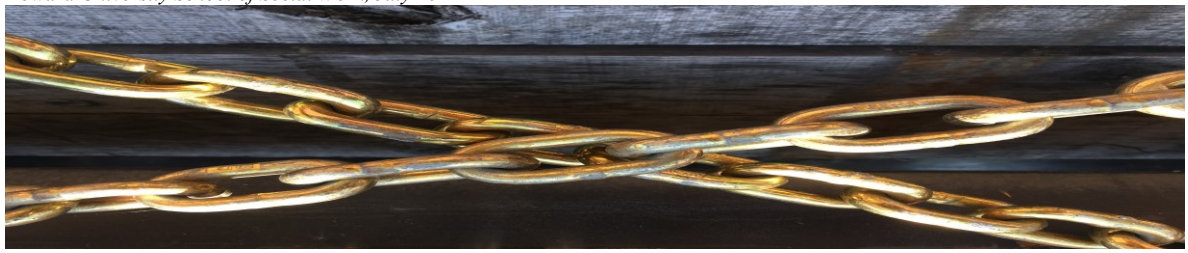
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*Dr. Samuel B Little is Associate Dean of Field Education at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, School of Social Work and Adjunct Professor at Howard University School of Social Work*

*Ms. Victoria Stubbs, PhD, MSW, is a Clinical Instructor at University of Maryland, Baltimore, School of Social Work, and a Howard University School of Social Work alumnus.*



# Who's Black? The Impact of Racist Exclusion and Its Assault on Affirmative Self Definition and Identity

Sheryl Brissett-Chapman,  
EdD, MSW, Ed.M.,  
ACSW

## Abstract

*This essay addresses: 1) the experience of an African American female who has been educated in predominantly white institutions (PWI's) for her entire career, 2) the pattern of exclusionary messages that interfered with her development and influenced her Black identity formation, and 3) the identification of effective coping and adaptive strategies that emerged despite the resultant effects and "insidious trauma" that are correlated with the persistent social and intellectual racist rejection that targeted her. The narrative illuminates the unrelenting, consistent assault on affirmative Black identity as well as coping, adaptive responses which collectively serve as protection.*

**Key Words:** culturally deprived, exclusionary messages, hegemony, identity, marginalization,

*racial rejection, racism, racial betrayal, resilience, social activism, trauma effects*

## Introduction

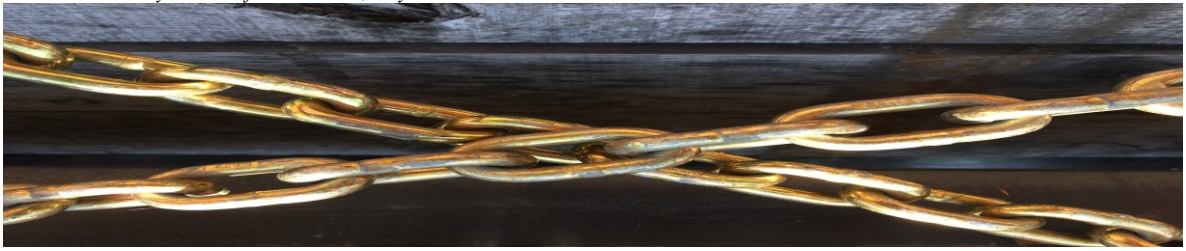
How and what one communicates fundamentally is a political act. Asante (1998) suggests:

Through a choice in language and action, maintenance of the current white supremacist hegemonic order becomes "intertwined in the most intricate patterns of our conversation and language." (p. 87-88)

Born in rural Black South Carolina, and the only female offspring of a family who migrated to New England when I was two years old, I have intercepted racist exclusionary messages since I first walked into doors of a white elementary school. What follows is a qualitative examination of how I viewed and incorporated racial rejection as I transitioned from childhood to mature adulthood.

## Black Girl

In the segregated world I knew, my body reality was accepted. I was a "brown, pretty child" who responded well to people. I was a first born and was reared to be responsible for my only sibling, a younger brother. When I began school in a new neighborhood, however, I encountered exclusion that challenged my sense of belongingness. The white male students became angry when I had correct answers to the teacher's inquiry, and raised my hands. Vindictively, they tied my braids to the back of my chair or stuck them in the black inkwells. In class, they made jokes about "Sambo and his pancakes", while looking at me with laughing disdain. The white girls simply ignored me. Most critically, even the teachers who appeared neutral about my presence in the



school building, ignored the negative interactions I suffered with my schoolmates. I learned that although I was in the classroom, and did my work, I was an outsider. I did not realize until later that my status was because I was the Black Girl. I learned to hide my isolation, sadness, and confusion from my family and friends. I relied on books both to expand my perspectives and to comfort me. My grades slipped. My physical and social difference was palpable, and provoked hostility and/or disinterest. I did not understand what this difference was, or why it mattered so much.

### ***Culturally Deprived***

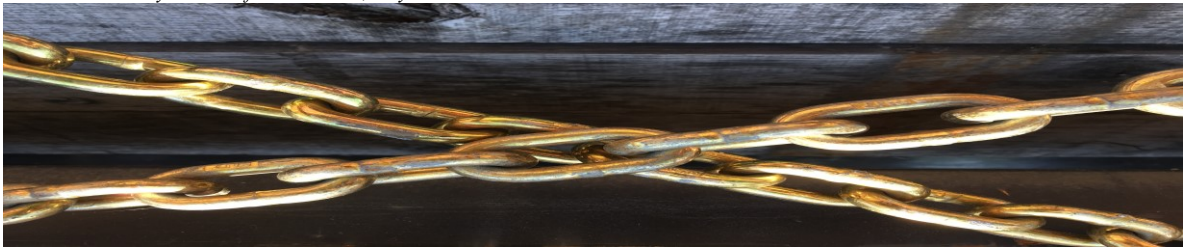
In the seventh grade, I entered a six year, highly competitive, classical Girls Latin School based on a teacher recommendation and my high performance on a math standardized test. Daily, I walked past a predominantly Black, non-accredited high school to attend a school without Black teachers and only a handful of Black students. I was in unfamiliar territory, with no guideposts, and no models. The racial divide was hidden by the gender homogeneity of a single sex school. Upon reflection, from the very beginning, there were no expectations that I would perform like the white girls. When I inquired about attending an Ivy League college, I was redirected to consider the city's local state university annex. We read Shakespeare and Moby Dick, and no culturally specific literature was ever assigned. It was as if no Black writers or scientists or Black persons of prominence existed. When I was a rising senior, I was referred to a program for "culturally deprived" students, at the prestigious technology institute. My summer job there involved keeping a science laboratory clean and monitoring eggs as part of an experiment. I was harassed by a researcher, in an environment that normalized aggression on females. At the same time, my sense of racial identity was linked to the burgeoning Civil Rights and protest movements. I lived and functioned in two worlds and I never

could bring them together, nor did I know how to try. Developmentally, I wanted to be the same as my white peers, be included, but my blackness would not allow that, nor would it ever be adequately addressed in that environ. I had some white friends at school, but not outside of the building. Other white students resented the few teachers who were openly kind to me, referring to me as a "teacher's pet". There was widespread innuendo that this Black girl might well tarnish the stellar reputation of the institution with predictable mediocre academic achievements. I rebelled and refused to excel.

### ***Social Activist***

Based on my mathematical gifts, I did make it to the Ivy League, however, as an adolescent admitted to an institution that was merging its women's college with its male university, while modernizing the curriculum and its social contracts. One of 8 Black women in my class of 300,

I went into "culture shock" as I tried to reconcile my Black identity with its complex intersections of gender, class, and sexuality. Who's Black? I am, yet we Black students all were invisible, unmarked, and voiceless. The burden I carried was multi-faceted: a) Emotionally, I felt betrayed. Why was I allowed to come if I did not belong? b) Socially, there were double messages. Why is it threatening for the Black students to associate so closely together yet we were not invited authentically into the white spaces? c) Intellectually, there was a significant dearth of interest or knowledge about people of African descent. Why did they teach theories and applications that perpetuate racist stereotypes, explicit biases, and untruths, and not allow me to challenge, even as one professor quipped, "you can speak when you become published" (in response to my critique of Moynihan's later recanted expose' on the Black matriarchal family in America)? and d) Physically, at seventeen years of age, I suffered from several fainting



episodes and chest pains, as well as bouts of depression, chronic symptoms of my fragile attempts to internalize and maintain the positive labels I had received as a child.

While in college I could no longer return home each day. How could I continue to reap the benefits of being perceived as worthy, claimed by family and community as the individual I truly am? My body was countering the racist, exclusionary signals that I received routinely.

I understood finally, the answer to this existential and holistic question, Who's Black? I also recognized the corresponding need to engage in confrontation. At the beginning of my second year, 23 Black women made demands on the school administration to increase Black admissions from 2% to a minimum of 11%, then the national representation of Blacks in the society. The school officials rejected this demand although there was agreement to provide additional resources. 43 Black male students, in a testimony of support, joined the Black women and marched off grounds of the university in protest. The Black Student Walkout of 1968 has changed the university until today, having forced an inaugural campus wide discourse on race relations, diversity, and inclusion. It also made an affirmative, and powerful imprint on those who walked out and stayed at a nearby Black Church for several days. We recognized that we had to protect ourselves from the exclusionary assault; had to create allies, Black and White; and had to embrace fully our collective identity and history as Blacks in America. We had to become visible, which we became when we were no longer there (at university).

### **Patterning Racist Exclusionary Messages**

After completing my undergraduate education, I received five additional degrees and certifications from four additional, elite PWI's. Although older, and fully cognizant of racial coding, I

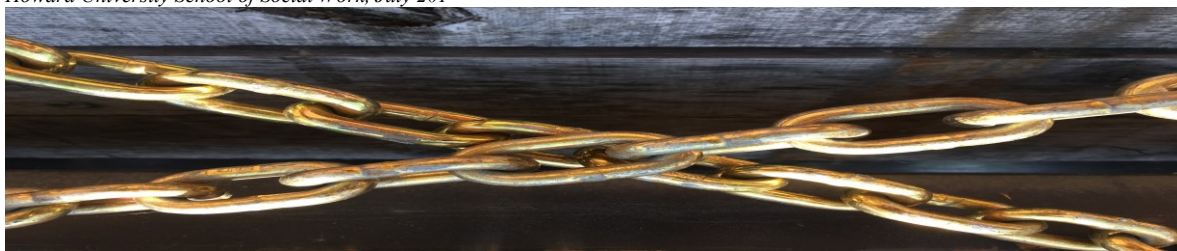
began to incorporate an understanding of intersectionality with its overlapping and conflicting dynamics of inequality and historical oppression. It was easy to excel academically, but the exclusionary messages continued. I was aware, conscious, and anticipated them. Researchers are building bridges to address structures of power and inclusion (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 2013) and the relationship to identity and marginalization (Verloo, 2013), yet others (Lewis, 2013) argue the centrality of racializing, along with gender, and class for examples, as the major determinant for social inequality and subordination. Since it proved qualitatively impossible to disentangle these intertwined exposures I suffered. I have summarized here the racist exclusionary messages I received throughout my lifetime and the adaptive, coping responses which have mitigated against feelings of denigration and hopelessness, and instead have affirmed my racial identity.

### **Messages Associated with Exclusion**

The themes below are repetitive with little variation, except in the level of subtlety and the respective organizational context, its culture, use of imagery and symbols, and language. The liberal or progressive orientation of the institution in contrast to a conservative, traditional stance has failed to differentiate the likelihood of my encountering these messages, or the need for me to manage the implications.

### ***Blackness as Never a Benefit***

A common expression I heard in childhood was "If you're Black, Step Back". This assaultive concept suggests that your Black physicality alone overrides your talent. By the circumstances of your birth, you are less than. You cannot do it. My journey through PWI's confirmed this widespread assumption. A white professor questioned that the brilliant philosophy paper did



not belong to the Black female student in his class. It had to be plagiarism. There was disbelief in her performance and capability. The Dean had to intervene.

### ***Lower Expectations Due to Blackness***

Throughout many educational school systems, teacher expectations are so much lower for Black than white students, one can see the extreme impact...major racial disparity in academic outcomes. Ultimately, the message is received. Although failure is unacceptable, you will fail. If not always, you eventually will fail. Sometimes this assumption is foisted on the family and the community to lower their expectation, also. The only counselling, I received from a white post-doctorate student assigned to me regarding my struggle with Physics, was "I almost failed too. You will be alright". I did not fail, but barely, and I never took a science course again.

### ***Success as Exceptionality***

If you are academically successful, particularly in a non-traditional field or endeavor, the message may be that you are "distinctive", and not like "other Blacks." This way, the collective group stereotype is sustained. You, however, become neither Black nor White. You are isolated, disconnected from your cultural/racial identity, which is a source of strength and counters traumatic stress reactions to racist exclusion. There were only two other Blacks in my doctoral program, and we formed a study group for a quantitative research methods class. I was one of only three with an "A" in the course. Several white students wanted to know why I did not join their group, and suggested that I was "unfair".

### ***Minimization of Accomplishments and Authority***

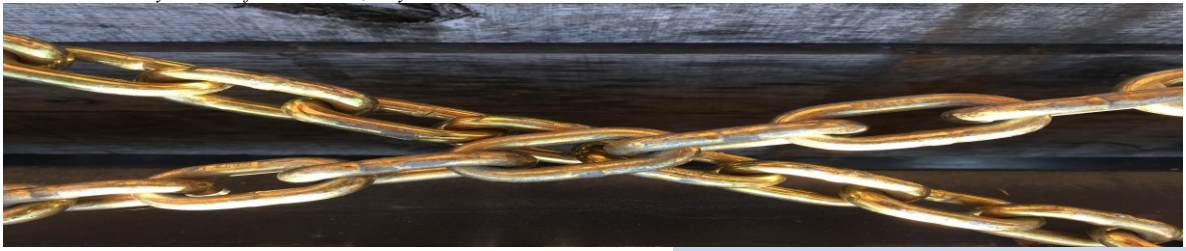
A complicated message involves the identity of

whites, who may retreat to this collective, non-individualistic, white identity when Blacks are in the room. In this instance, there is clarity that Blacks cannot expect to be like whites. In fact, there may be a dumbing down of the value of Black contributions, hence the common belief, "If you are Black, you have to be at least twice as good". Black achievement is always tested, as if it is not likely to be genuine. Finally, Black expertise cannot expect the authority that reflects their level of responsibility and discipline. As a teaching fellow for the Dean of the graduate school, I learned that I had to speak in two languages to accommodate the anger of the white males who had not been selected for this position. First, I engaged at the Dean's level to serve as his extension, and at my peer level with colleagues, some who were university or college presidents, who also viewed the only Black female in this highly selective class as inherently incompetent and subordinate.

### **Resilience and Discovery of Affirmative Self and Identity**

The combined impact of racist exclusionary messages experienced in PWI's by Black students can have detrimental effects on their identity as a lifelong process, and especially on adolescents and young adults whose developmental focus is on addressing the questions concerning who they are, what they believe, and what they will become (Berman et al., 2001). The American Psychological Association (APA) defines resilience as the "process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy or significant sources of stress... It means 'bouncing' back from difficult experiences."

Upon review of my qualitative experience with negative, undermining and rejecting racial messages throughout my education and training at PWI's, I must note that despite the consistency and prevalence, I thrived and formed a Black self-definition and racial identity that I fully embrace as a major strength. The following factors, both



intrapersonal and environmental, represent a mosaic matrix of features that continue to protect me from assaults:

- Intuitive temperament used to know and define engagement with people
- Visual/visionary instinct to embrace change
- Leadership and bold attitude which inspire followership, collegiality and confidence
- Acceptance that one cannot control the messages, but do not have to accept them. Look for ways to change them
- Ability to be vulnerable, but always seeking evidence and a body of knowledge to make a case
- Inclination to seek consultation and advice from a trusted adult with an unconditional relationship (i.e., mother) or selectively someone with essential or relevant expertise.
- Willingness to ask for help
- Direct communication with peers and adults about the issues
- Incorporation of a strategic approach, complemented by risk taking and follow through.
- Transcendence of age, generation, and cultural differences
- Continuous study of African American history and culture and contemporary developments

## Conclusion

In conclusion, these combined psycho-social elements served as both critical products of racist exclusion, as well as inherent, and dynamic drivers that blocked the accompanying threats of depression, isolation, poor morale, fatigue, school drop-out, and economic and social disparities that too often characterize victims of chronic racial betrayal.

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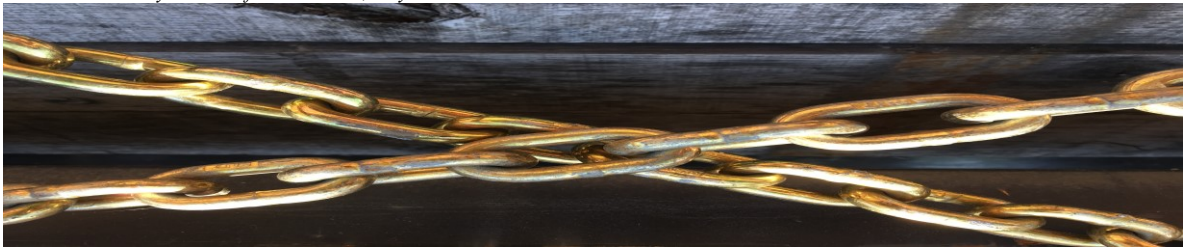
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## Biography

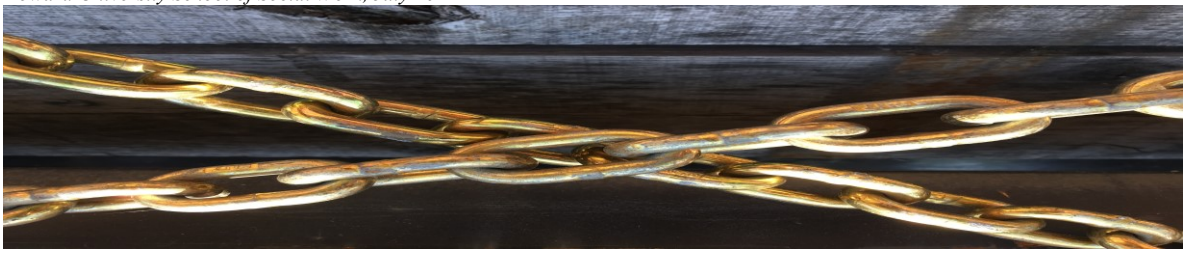
Sheryl Brissett Chapman. Ed.D., MSW, Ed.M., ACSW, Executive Director, National Center for Children and Families (NCCF) provides overall agency leadership and consultation to 21 programs serving 40,000 in the Washington Metropolitan region. Dr. Chapman is adjunct associate professor for HUSSW, with an MSW from the University of Connecticut, and Doctorate and Master's degrees from Harvard University School of Education. An international



and published expert on trauma, poverty, child and family welfare, and juvenile delinquency, she sits on numerous local and national boards, and is a recipient of numerous awards.

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*Dr. Sheryl Brissett-Chapman is Executive Director of the National Center for Children and Families (NCCF) and an Associate Adjunct Professor at the Howard University School of Social Work.*



## The Price of Visibility

Robert L. Cosby, MSW,  
PhD, MPhil

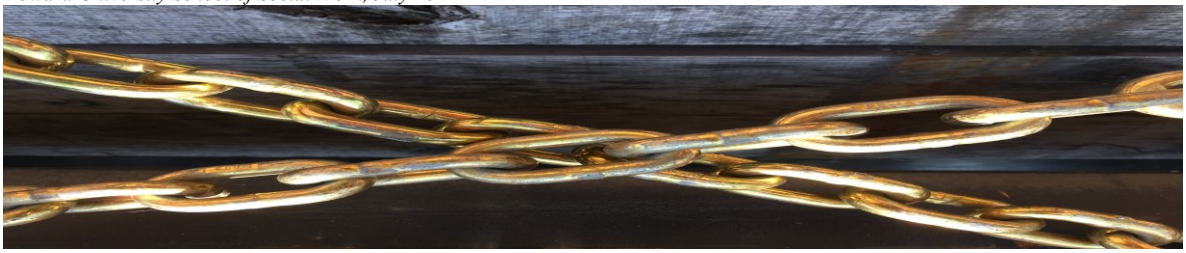
### Abstract

*Stories of race and racism among persons of color used to come via the oral tradition and came with painful baggage. However, there is a profound difference for African American men in that the nuances and the result of that pain historically, intrapsychically and economically have impacted African American men, as U.S. citizens, in such a way as we collectively share similarities to African slaves, to the disenfranchised as chattel, and as working Americans who feel the pain of oppression, even today. It is this psychic pain that emanates from oppression over the generations. We, including we as social workers, have allowed ourselves to be silent, and thus 'we' have become polarized in our respective positions around and because of racism, such that the 'we' do not see the collective power of "We". 'We the people', includes us. The negative impact of racism on the lives of so many persons of color remains an issue of social justice. We ignore its impact on the lives of persons of color at our own peril. Vigilant and visible is how we work for change.*

**Key words:** Racism, social justice, race, Civil Rights, change, persons of color, African American men.

As an African American man, my discussions about race and racism come with baggage. Depending on who I speak with my progress in sharing my views of race and racism often becomes mired as dialogue lapses into discussions with pronouns we and you. I realize just before or during the discussion that folks want to nibble on the thinly sliced meats like hors-d'oeuvres that can be set aside for the main course at a moment's notice. But, often I feel that the same meats are prepared differently for the main course and I feel the meat has a very personal taste to it. In other experiences, I wonder if I am being seasoned and prepared for the meal, and like the lobster realizing the pot has boiling water I resist. At best the subject is way too personal for me to not have an opinion and some facts to offer. I want to bring my little part to the table like I am walking in two by two into this huge Ark of a conversation filled with history, laced with opinion, wrapped in oppression and pain.

Stories of race and racism among persons of color used to come via the oral tradition. Your grandparent or other older relatives would share a story of "we" came to this country in the 1600's or 1700's or early 1800's in shackles. Or, "they" escaped and were befriended by American Indians who took them in. That is why your great auntie is one half  $\frac{1}{2}$  Cherokee or Seminole, etc...Or, other stories were shared of your great great-grandmother who was purchased along with her mother in Shockoe Bottom or Shockoe Slip Auction Block in Richmond, VA. Most African Americans in the Richmond, VA area knew that profits from the slave trade of African and African American human beings fueled the creation of great wealth for Southern whites that continue today. Back then slaves drove the economy in the Richmond area and in the Antebellum South, making a bright line between the growing, harvesting of crops, the wealth of whites and the buying and selling of



slaves. The success of slave labor was directly related to the success of agriculture where cotton was king.

One of the stories that were told was how one of the Richmond streets was known as the Wall Street of its day because slaves were sold like the Mercantile Exchange sold Pork bellies. During the pre-Civil War antebellum period, several surrounding blocks in part of Richmond near the James River was known as Shockoe Bottom, The area served as home to more than 69 slave dealers homes and auction houses.[4]

Many Black families started with the sale to the X family (who were White). Thus, as a slave, your name was X as you were chattel. You were property owned by the X family. In Richmond, there is and has been this quaint revisionist view of history where people speak of the City's historic roots and its heydays of Robert E. Lee and the Richmond of old as the Capitol of the Confederacy. The revisionists don't always speak about Richmond being the second largest slave selling port in the U.S, second only to New Orleans, LA.

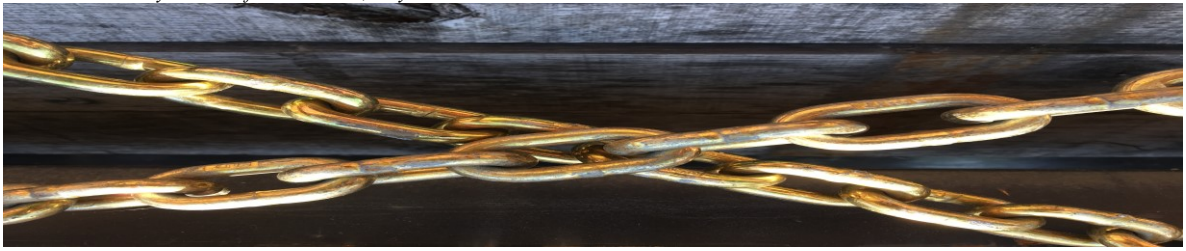
In the 1980's when historians, many of them Black noted that the whole area of Shockoe Slip should be memorialized because of the historical significance and antiquity of slave sites and slave burial sites. These historic areas located along a floodplain of the James River were repopulated by the 1980s with many trendy restaurants, Bars, and shops. In the 1990s the historians scored a few victories and Shockoe Slave historians and the conducted research and tours by the Richmond Historical Society. An industry of tourism flourished and museums created Shockoe Tours as another line of business.

By early 2010 real estate developers were hard at work with City planners to obtain zoning rights and permits to build on the slave areas and

destroy this hiccup of indigestion in an otherwise well-digested meal. They called their project "Revitalize RVA," which was a controversial plan introduced in 2012 to construct a minor league baseball stadium, a Hyatt hotel, a Kroger supermarket grocery store, and residential and commercial office space at the site. For now, 2018, the historians have won out but this issue is far from over. A newer conflict issue, across town at the historic Monument Avenue has been brewing where there are several Civil War monuments, memorializing Arthur Ashe and Confederate leaders like Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Jefferson Davis. African Americans would like to have removed some of the monuments that celebrate "When America was great!" Many Caucasians oppose moving, dismantling or changing anything about the plaques or the monuments to the White leaders. The conflict continues.

Here is the meat from my perspective on race and racism. All too often issues of historical significance for one group are not appreciated by another. In this case, the area of Shockoe Slip or Monument Avenue showed how oppression led to gain for one group of people that do not look like me, at the expense of another (African and African American's expense). This win-lose scenario for the revisionists shows history is told through the eyes of the beholder. What is acceptable to those who view progress as another way to make money and be done with any reminders serves as another slight and a slap in the face of African Americans. Caucasian business people appear eager to move on now that economic circumstances favor those with wealth and pale color. In the Antebellum Colonial South slave lives did not matter, only the balance sheet and money in other persons' pockets mattered. All in the name of progress. I ask for whom? These issues remain.

I was very young when some of these stories were shared with the youth and adults by older relatives or persons believed to have more knowledge and



wisdom of “our” history. Many of my cousins and I, sitting at the little card table next to the ‘grown folks table’ during special holidays listened with ‘big donkey ears’ to the adult stories.

It is always a risk to share a perspective that others may construe as speaking on behalf of an entire group.

I choose to echo the older persons’ perspective now that I get to sit at whatever adult table I am invited to. For this article I choose to share the perspective of one of the giants that have gone. I choose literary giant James Baldwin. One of our authors and Commentators, Juan Williams, stated while at the Washington Post that James Baldwin’s writings “became a standard of literary realism. ... Given the messy nature of racial hatred, of the half-truths, blasphemies and lies that make up American life, Baldwin’s accuracy in reproducing that world stands as a remarkable achievement. Black people reading Baldwin knew he wrote the truth. White people reading Baldwin sensed his truth about the lives of black people and the sins of a racist nation.” To speak on behalf of a cultural group is risky because African Americans are not a homogeneous group.

So, whatever wisdom shared at that dinner table, or in the literary commentary or books written and shared by James Baldwin, I cannot, and do not speak on behalf of all African Americans. African Americans are a heterogeneous group with many perspectives, but this gnawing view of oppression, as told from my lens as an African American male, makes this exercise in part, personal. I share the following inalienable truths; I am a social worker. I am African American. I am an American citizen with all the gains and privileges of every citizen. This last point gets a bit cloudy and our interpretation of what the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights share is not readily shared among all African Americans. However, I assure you this one minority person’s view is delivered with my own individual experiences of oppression and

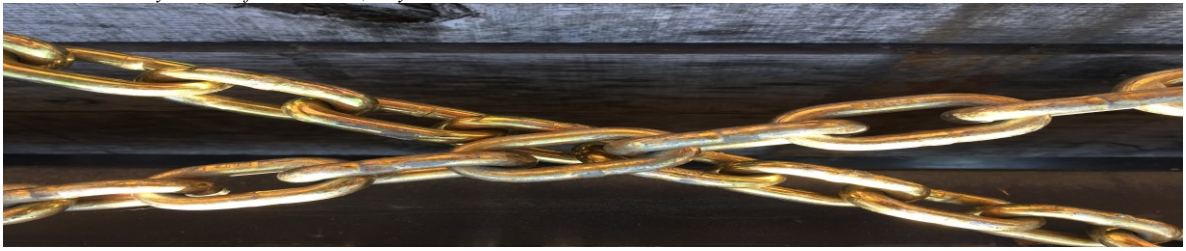
pain.

However, there is a profound difference for African American men in that the nuances and the result of that pain historically, intrapsychically and economically have impacted African American men, as U.S. citizens, in such a way as we collectively share similarities to the slaves, to the disenfranchised as chattel and as working Americans who feel the pain of oppression, even today. It is this psychic pain that emanates from oppression over the generations that is embedded as the elephant in the room.

This pain of oppression resonates in the souls of African Americans. Others who are void of this internal siren at best see race and the effects of racism as a point of mild discomfort and lack an understanding of the pain that they cannot see.

Our dialogue around racism, as persons of color, comes with baggage. We, African Americans and African American males carry that baggage regarding the personal impact of racism great distances in our hearts and heads. From the hurt of micro-aggressions of disrespect, and pain related to experiences of abuse of self, of family, of friends by others, racism’s impact may be and I submit, is, very personal.

The sting of being slighted because of racism may be both current and historical. This acknowledgment of racism often starts with a perpetrator and an act. It is built on opinion and results in an act that is factual. Racism builds upon a callous and sometimes calculated disrespect for another, and when one is victimized the resulting pain of the victim takes on a whole different level of concern as witnessed by the African American historians or sympathetic folks following the events at Shockoe Slip. Of course, if the slight, the act, does not affect you because of your privilege your consciousness may not be as high as the person that sees and feels the slight



every day. This is not heavy-handed. It is a realization that

I think of individual actions as being linked to respect for those having been oppressed, and can be seen on two levels of interaction. On one level Trauma, is often born by those that witnessed a traumatic event or know of those that witnessed a traumatic event. This second type is vicarious trauma. Regardless, both whether vicarious, or trauma experienced firsthand, can be devastating. In the lives of anyone that is a person of color this can have a cumulative impact. Trauma can result from a major loss due to incidents of injury and or death, such as a family member that was lynched or saw someone that was killed through a violent act. These levels of trauma are not easily forgotten. They may remain submerged until a micro-aggression or similar event triggers the memory and brings the person back to that ugly time when the event originally occurred.

This internal dialogue continues. *What does it mean to be an African American who is familiar with racism?*

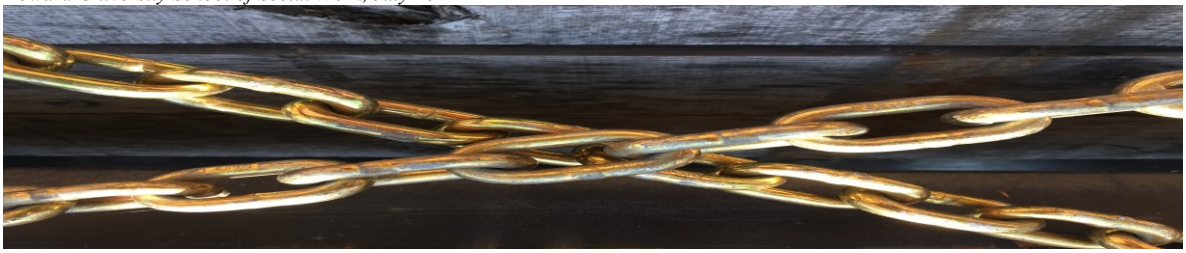
I resort to critical listening particularly when one person suggests or implies or boasts that they understand the 'brotha', and therefore they understand me.

This level of understanding can be taken for granted, but I believe the core of understanding requires some parsing of thought. In much the same way that a person develops a level of expertise in a chosen field, like social work, my understanding of racism is acutely tuned sometimes hyper-tuned because of my skin experiences. More than 10,000 hours of experiences involving racism up close and personal may constitute some type of training over the course of my lifetime.

Malcolm Gladwell (2002) in his book *Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big*

*Difference* talks about how certain people develop skills and proficiencies that make one more attuned to recognize patterns and differences that can be exploited to one's advantage in science, in sport, in business. I would submit that this is also true in race relations and in discussing race and racism. This hyper understanding and experience does not always mean you are respected for this knowledge, only you recognize the patterns of oppression much earlier.

Please note that I am not saying that persons of color cannot be racist. I am saying that all too often persons of color, African Americans, are asked to make allowances for the positions taken by majority groups. This level of tolerance is expected of African Americans when the same tolerance or courtesy is not offered to African Americans by Whites or Caucasians. This point is not meant to be dismissive or derisive. Rather, this point should be analyzed and the why question explored in frank and respective discussions with Whites and Blacks around the difference in terms of race, class, and gender. Too often, persons of color are frustrated that others, most often Whites do not see Blacks as being on the same level across the board. As a result, if African Americans emphatically share that the dominant White perspective is wrong, they are roundly criticized as being racist, unable to understand... (you can fill in the words) ... business, education, legislation, politics, and yes, even Social Work. If African Americans are disenfranchised then they come to believe that they are not on the same level as their white counterparts. This cumulative cataloging of aggression can be internalized and build into the poisoned position that they are not worthy of due respect. If during discussions that appear to be stacked against persons of color, the African American should speak up. However, the mental gymnastics of weighing the pros and cons, the possibility of being labeled as an unkind person,



a racist, etc. But sometimes, it may be a tactic of people that do not agree with you, in this case, Whites who are alarmed by your bold and frank assertions that may make them feel uncomfortable, may use the same allegations made by the person of color against the White person/s against the African Americans. The equivalent of a strong defense may be a stronger offense. So, some African Americans point out in predominantly White settings it may be best to stay quiet and NOT make waves. I can say in my lifetime that that perspective of remaining quiet rarely gets you the respect you deserve, and swallowing the pain can have a cumulative and deleterious effect on one's health, both physical and psychological health.

It should not be lost that this tactic of remaining quiet comes at a high price. This is because what is left unsaid is to yield to a permissive stance gives the impression that the "status quo" is okay. And that the historical injustices of oppression will continue. I can say on many occasions I hope that I may be wrong in my assessment. I hope that there is room for growing levels of understanding and actions to support that new-found position of Whites, whether it be on new curriculum development, or gentrification, school busing or saving Shockoe Slip. The key has always been understanding but sometimes catalysts like Bus Boycotts and Sanitation Worker Trash Strikes help people to see the importance of change and social justice.

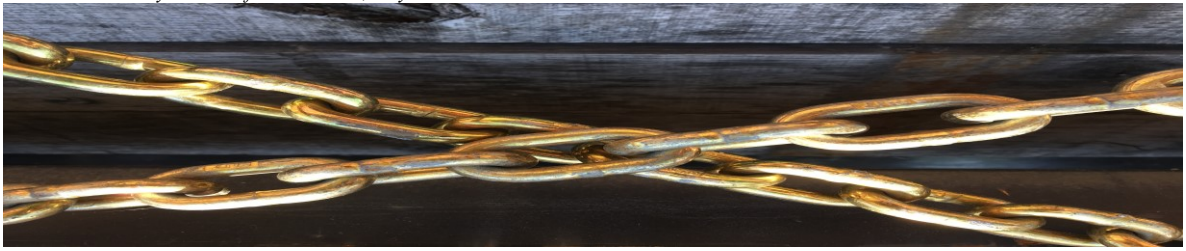
For most White persons this territory of privilege and superior understanding may appear so innate that to suggest otherwise may be unwise and certainly unfamiliar. Whites that are genuinely interested in advancing their knowledge and empathetic understanding of oppression, and of African American's views on that subject. It must be more frustrating when some African Americans do not want to engage in dialogue with Whites because it may be construed as not helpful because it stirs up hurt or anger on both sides and

have been down this road after several turns do not feel that this time will be any different. I think of the festering brew of Richmond's Monument Avenue debate.

However, it is because of a willingness to go down that road of understanding that the hope of reconciliation, education and change, even with forgiveness, are possible. *To not believe that is possible is to say we are doomed and entrenched in opposing viewpoints.*

It is my belief that even in the current climate we must nurture dialogue. A deeper understanding may start with some willingness to hear the other person. This is not the same thing as the well-meaning White person who may feel your disagreement comes across as a lecture, so they avoid dialogue thinking that this understanding can be reviewed at their leisure, or at their own pace. If the argument is about an issue such as Health care and poor access to affordable health care, delay can be seen in simple and stark terms, life or death. I am reminded of Fannie Lou Hamer's quote "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired" (Lee, 2000),

Please note this is not so different from the African American who sees the results of racism every day and therefore at times is not up for the one-sided education lesson. It is this lesson in the form of chiding, humor and serious discussion and many other approaches that still are necessary to advance our position as African Americans. In this new era of enlightenment, I see fewer persons willing to engage in dialogue on this subject of racism. I am told it is in part because of the vitriol and lack of civility of shouting down anyone that opposes your position and when providing facts and data... dismiss it as fake news. It is very much worth the challenge as social workers to affect change. The questions start with how best to proceed?



Many well-meaning White persons may be willing to embrace difference from an intellectual but not experiential perspective. When persons of color are not immediately willing to accept this educational opportunity, I believe it is an oversight on the part of African Americans. Those that choose not to play are seen as militant or non- inclusive.

From the level of understanding the African American, this understanding is steeped with the experiences of those like Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, Whitney Young, Medgar Evers, and others that speak to a level of historical oppression. This inability of Whites to see the oppression through the same lens as African Americans is often seen by African Americans as a bridge too far too cross because history has shown that there still exists an unwillingness on the part of Whites to recognize their White privilege as having anything to do with economic security, education, housing, healthcare, and access to each of these.

There is also another reality, that there is the possibility that some African Americans do not know and appreciate their collective history. This only perpetuates the racism and the examples that some Whites use to prove their rule. To accept this position as fact can be painful for African Americans. This is particularly painful for those that see our collective plight as tied to all boats. All boats in the African American community need to rise in order to appreciate that the tide will drown all of us without each knowing our history and being willing to work for the advancement of all. That is how we all learn to survive, whether it be bringing more boats, or lending a hand to a person who can barely tread water or the person that is too tired or simply unable to swim.

Perhaps my point of view is skewed because, although I am not my brother's keeper, we must recognize that we are joined together in this fight against racism and the resulting oppression. If

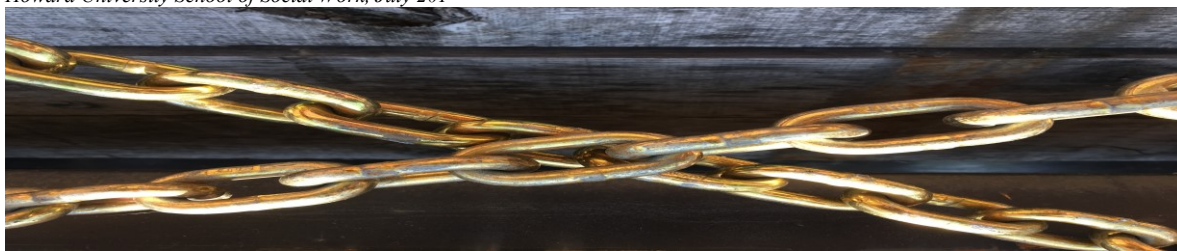
'they' do not see that this war of pronouns 'your/'our' successes (Here are those pronouns, again), historically these words come with claiming respect, working for change and empowering others to do the same.

We must have due respect for those that toiled on behalf of others, but we must pick up our hoes, and picks and shovels, for there are many more rows to toil. Without this perspective then we are likely to repeat past mistakes. This leaves some of us out in the cold, demeaned and without solution to the racism.

I am often amused by some comments shared about our collective wisdom and I am coming around to see it much like James Baldwin indicated in his amusement with those that could not fathom their difference from Whites.

He said this could skew the balance of the relationship. He suggested we fail to see the possibilities for a win-win scenario, in terms of advantage for both Whites and African Americans.

By way of illustration of the cumulative impact of racism, and a way of seeing how racism affects privilege and opportunity I use a sports analogy. I see this view of racism like a sports team, let's say a track and field team that has been well coached, well trained, well financed. This team has the best of everything, equipment, etc. They have been running these track and field events for at least four hundred years. Now when we discuss education, housing, economic achievement, wealth achieved through inheritance and skill, we are talking about allowing members of the well trained, and coached team to gain a head start in each event, but for the purposes of illustration we will select one race, the mile run. (This race is *approximately* four laps around a 400- meter track). Now you say this is a staggered start race. Each runner must stay in their lane for some period with some runners on the outside having a bit of a lead because they all must run in lanes the same distance. However, that is not how this race goes. The well-coached team is allowed, takes or



is given somewhere between a two to three lap lead in a four-lap race. The African American team is self-coached, is without much equipment and is not adequately prepared for this race. As the gun goes off and both teams compete the teammates or representatives of those two teams begin running. They run hard. The likelihood is very high that the well-coached, well trained team will finish first.

Now, you might say, what if the other team is also well coached and well trained. They may improve but the likelihood that they will win a four-lap race when they start two to three laps down is highly unlikely.

This illustration is not meant to be simplistic. It is also a metaphor for how many people in the United States view this issue of racism. If you are part of the dominant group, used to winning, your perspective is wholly different from the other group, in large part by education and cultural experience.

African American males are keenly attuned to this difference. They may begin to perceive the differences as part of an organized mechanism of indentured servitude behaviors that shackle the oppressed group in yesteryears. In more recent times despite gains in areas such as Civil Rights advocates 'comments like 'we' need to level the playing field is appropriate on one hand but still does not address for how long it was not level and what should be done to address the historical injustices. The fact that there was an African American man in the White House does not mean injustices have gone away or that social workers need not consider race or ethnicity in understanding the context of oppression and poverty in their work and the clients they work with. This is very different from saying from here on we will all play more fairly. We have accumulated several trophies, and other benefits such that if all was level from here on, the rewards have been so great, the economic advantage is

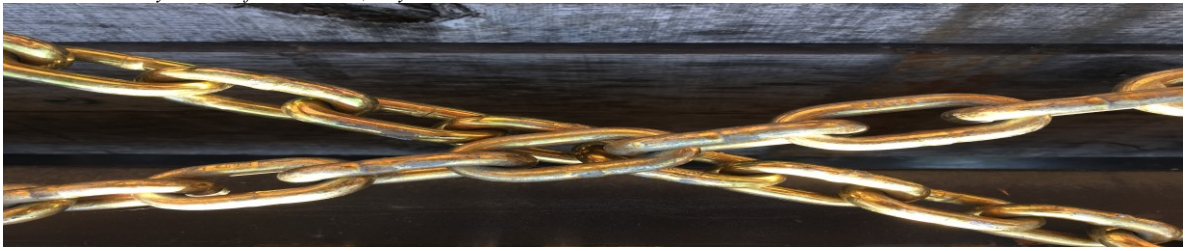
insurmountable. It would be at least two hundred years before there were equality and equity, and as we know things do not stay the same. The field is not level and the score is still something ridiculously high for one team vs. the other. That would imply unfair competition. The field is not level nor are the others able to run their best race untrained, partially trained, without the proper equipment, etc. Mental toughness or ability to compete is one important part but not the entire part of the training and the race. Another example is one offered by some to say we are in a post-Civil Rights Color-Blind society. We are there because in the U.S. we elected a two term African American as President of the United States.

However, we can see that strides toward freedom and deeper parity in the areas of worker equity, financial wellbeing, contracting for work in government, public and private sector housing education, health care, etc. remain flawed. So, when African Americans are unable to win the mile run having started 800 meters down, even when they close the gap, they still lose.

This is how systems of racism have clouded people's ability to have frank dialogues about how we got to this place on the track, as well as act upon the recommendations for how we move forward.

When one body feels that this is not their fight, knowing that they have the authority to do most anything they choose to do so because of White Privilege. This creates consternation and more for African Americans. That is not to say that African Americans reject the premise of working hard to achieve. But, it is a lie to say that we all can do better if we simply pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, without the stock tips, the inherited funds, the critical support and oversight, the critical thinking skills that are learned, shared and offered for some and not others.

The physical act of pulling one's self up by their boot straps is not possible, but the race is so



skewed that one team does not have boots or running shoes for the race or shoes to cover their feet. It is not that I do not ascribe to working hard, because I do believe that 'hard work' is beneficial.

However, to say that it would be significantly easier and fairer to perpetuate success for one group while simultaneously saying we will train the other is like asking African Americans to do better in some communities and not others, and to share this Faustian bargain for a limited time only.

When there is acceptance and willingness to change fundamental ways of acting and allowing time for African Americans to adapt to the possible new reality this may be an improvement but is not fair either. Even though one has run the race, the distance and the speed at which you accomplish and complete the race may be completely different.

Running five minutes may show great improvement but if your competition continues to run four-minute miles the five-minute miler will continue to lose. Many older persons may say I remember the Civil Rights Movement!

I was living in that time period. If you are an older African American, living around the time of 1955 when Emmett Till was killed, you may remember the successes of the Civil Rights Movement. I would argue that the Civil Rights movement stalled several years ago when some Caucasian persons figured out legal remedies to change the rules of the game, either implicitly or explicitly.

The study looked at data from 2000-2012 on and found that this racial segregation is greater now than it was before the U.S. Government dismantled legal segregation in the schools in the 1960s.

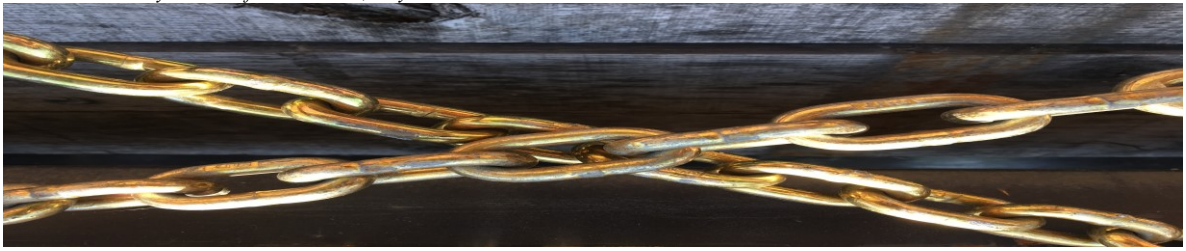
African Americans did not complete their lessons in how to combat these negative legislative and judicial changes. The interaction and the result has been that there remain lots of deficits that may prove to be equally as profound as the post-WWII reality when African Americans GIs returned home to worse levels of racism than they encountered fighting the enemy in Europe, Africa, and the Pacific.

It is particularly hard when one of the impediments to understanding why there are significant obstructions is the very essence of racism we see in our communities today has never stopped. It was taking place while African American GIs fought and died in WWII. It is easy to recognize for African Americans that the field remains unleveled. We still have fundamental misalignment of resources and opportunities. Collectively, we continue some fifty years after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to have failures to work and live where we want to live amidst gentrification, imminent domain, etc. MLK said that Sunday was the most segregated day of the week. He based that statement on the fact that the churches, synagogues and temples continue to separate people. The case can be made that it still is the case for those that still believe in worship.

Separation does not create racism but beliefs in inherent racial differences and related superiority of one group over another certainly does give sway to racism.

When I asked a family member what did they see as the three or four reasons for why racism continues to persist they offered the following:

1. Persons of color are treated differently.
2. Institutions of work, education, health care, etc. promote difference from a hierarchy of superiority that starts with White men.
3. The mass incarceration of African Americans has perpetuated a permanent indentured class of



persons that have essentially taken at least two generations of African American Men off the streets, out of the classrooms and workplaces and created at best a servant class in the schools to prison pipeline.

4. Voter Disenfranchisement – because persons of color were taught to utilize the right to vote because of the Civil Rights movement. Now, through gerrymandering, voter apathy, lack of education and changes to the voting rules many persons of color, African Americans have been disenfranchised and are losing ground, so the elected officials, in effect the farm clubs of local and state political structures, they do not have representation and support of their constituents across the board. This is a cancer for the democratic process that has been what many have said is our shining example of what differentiates our country from others.
5. And lastly, there is that new term coined ‘green washing’ that has affected those African Americans who have become successful and thereby been brainwashed with money and have become silent to the plight of those around them. The persons who have been greenwashed have moved out, moved away, and have been silent to the vagaries of some of our communities that have suffered from gentrification, violence, drugs, apathy, etc.

Social Workers need not worry about green washing on that level, there are not too many affluent millionaire social workers. There is and will be plenty of work to do for those willing to do it. Still, it is our responsibility as social workers to advocate for social justice, for needed change, and making a positive difference in the lives of those less fortunate.

I think we are often stuck in a cyclical space when discussing racism where neither party advances the discussion of race because one is unable to clearly understand the other’s position.

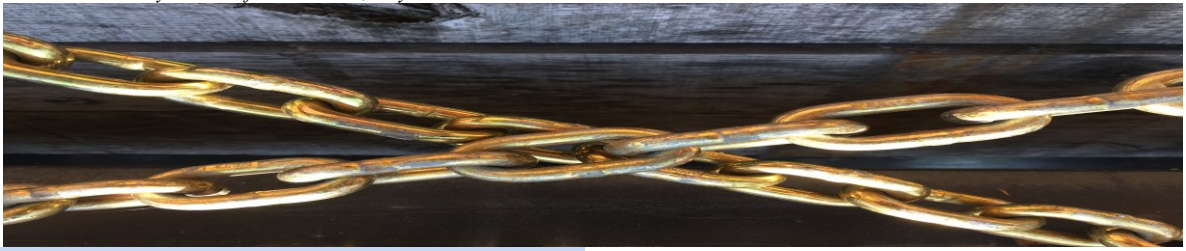
Too often it is the person of color, often the African American that is asked to better understand, to be sensitive to XY and Z’s position...to not be militant... because some people still are afraid of what an African American might do... And where possible, accommodate the position of ‘other’.

In fact, at times the dialogue becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy because many African Americans perceive individually that the other person does not truly want to talk to or interact with or even acknowledge them because they do not respect their existence.

This has a cumulative impact that at best creates a win-lose dynamic. This must change. ‘We, including we as social workers,’ have allowed ourselves to be silent, and thus ‘we’ have become polarized in our respective positions around and because of racism, such that the ‘we’ do not see the collective power of “We”. *We the people*, includes us. We, too, must be part of what is good, right and just. We must speak truth to power and we must work to control our own destiny. Understanding and combatting racism is not easy. The negative impact of racism on the lives of so many persons of color remains an issue of social justice. We ignore its impact on the lives of persons of color at our own peril. Vigilant and visible is how we work for change. The position I often find myself in these is days is questioning in this current climate, whether others see I am visible. “I am **NOT**”, as Ralph Ellison stated, “an invisible man”.

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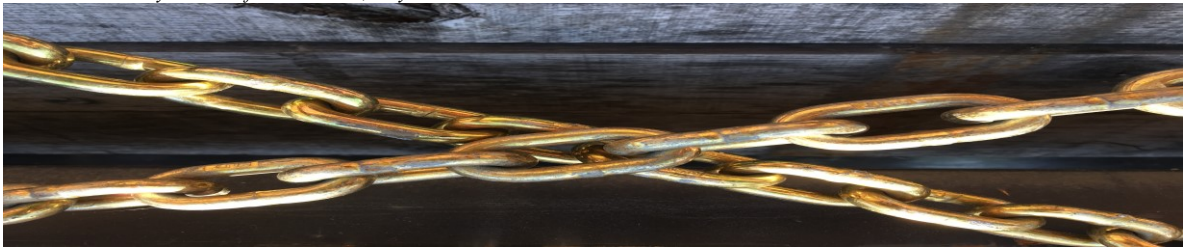
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*Dr. Robert Cosby is Associate Professor and the Director of the Multidisciplinary Gerontology Center at the Howard University School of Social Work.*



## Lift Me

clouds of love and grace lift me  
raise me from my ordinary life  
where I am lost in me

magnificent love you offer  
powerful, strong and hard  
you carry me  
so sweet like a mother's love past the pain

unconditionally imprinted on my heart  
your loving strength sets me free  
surrounds me with mystery

where music and your spirit together  
fill me with a love I have not known  
hold me on edge  
and then resolve like a melodious chord

rising along stained-glass prisms of light  
your peace grows in me  
I am captured by your wind

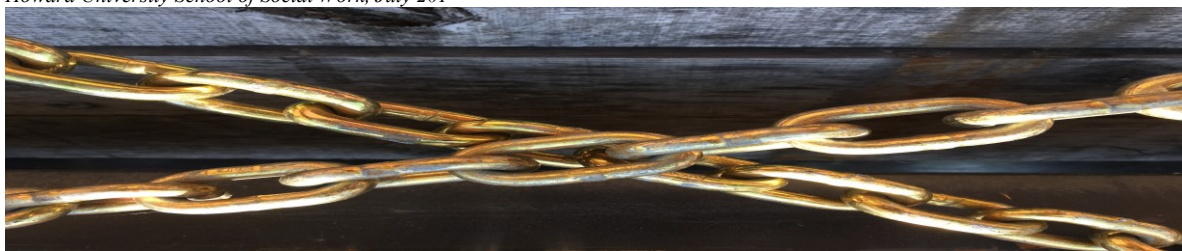
where billowing clouds of our love gather  
bind me to you  
in thought and spirit  
hold me tight and boost my passion

your tenderness surrounds me  
you satisfy and soothe  
hold me close  
love me whole and heal my soul

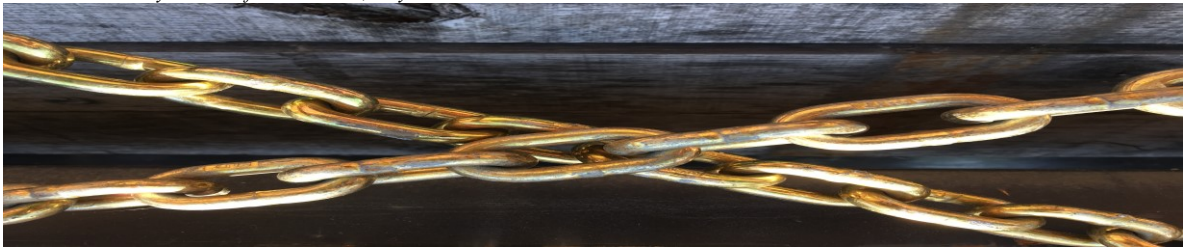
## Robert L. Cosby

\*\*\*

*Dr. Robert Cosby is Associate Professor and the Director  
of the Multidisciplinary Gerontology Center at the Howard  
University School of Social Work.*



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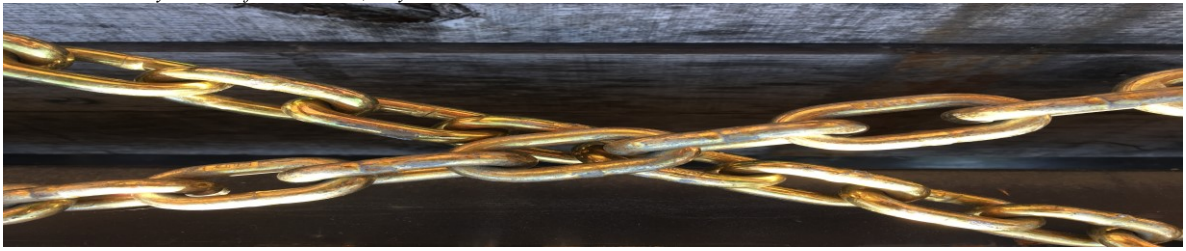
## HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

# Understanding and Combatting Racism Practice Competencies for Social Workers\*

Social workers enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with focused attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (NASW, 1999). As such, social workers should be able to:

1. Understand that the effects of racism are factors of social and economic injustice.
2. Understand the history of and root causes of racism especially the interconnectedness of factors which perpetuate sexism, classism and poverty.
3. Understand the difference between the racism of economics and how it manifests itself at the individual, institutional and societal levels contribute to the poverty of spirit within culturally diverse populations.
4. Increase the knowledge and understanding of the negative impact of racism on the well-being of the individual, family, local community, nation, and global community.
5. Actively challenge and deconstruct myths and stereotypes surrounding the causes of racism and how it is perpetrated on groups of people including people living in poverty.
6. Promote research, advocacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration to eradicate racism.
7. Empower people living with the effects of racism and its links to poverty and oppression, within the contexts of biopsychosocial skills, and provide educational resources necessary to reduce and or eradicate racism and its connections to social injustice and poverty.
8. Foster a climate that acknowledges the dignity and worth of those most impacted by racism.
9. Acquire knowledge to promote the understanding that a person's intrinsic human value is not defined or limited by the color of their skin or culture.
10. Employ strength-based language and strategies when working with people affected by racism by highlighting ways to nurture resilient behaviors.

\*These competencies were first developed for poverty competencies by the Howard University School of Social Work Faculty, October 2014. They have been adapted to address the topic of Racism, 2018.



## CONTRIBUTORS

### HOWARD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK FACULTY

*Sandra Edmonds Crewe, Ph.D., ACSW*  
Professor & Dean

*Cheryl Brissett-Chapman, Ed D,*  
*ACSW*  
*Adjunct Professor*

*Robert L. Cosby, Ph.D., MSW,*  
*MPhil*  
Associate Professor

*Ruby M. Gourdine, MSW, DSW,*  
*LICSW, LCSW*  
Professor

*Peter Fitts, LCSW-C,*  
Associate Professor

*Samuel B Little, MSW, PhD,*  
*LCSW-C*  
Adjunct  
Associate Professor

*Jean McRae, MSW*  
*Professor Emeritus*

*Christine Y. Wiley PhD, MSW,*  
*M.Div.,*  
Adjunct Professor

*Janice Berry Edwards, PhD.,*  
*ACSW LICSW, LCSW-C, BCD*  
Associate Professor

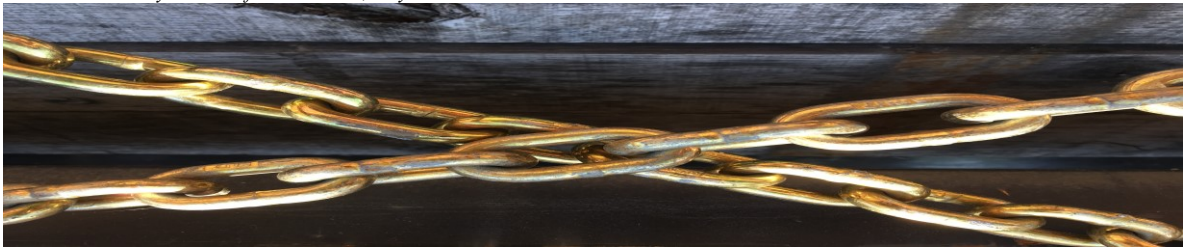
*JaNeen Cross, DSW, MSW,*  
*MBA*  
Assistant Professor

*Tracy R. Whitaker, DSW*  
Associate Dean for Academic  
and Student Advancement and  
Associate Professor

*Jaqueline Smith, MSW, PhD*  
Associate Dean for Research  
and Associate Professor

*JaNeen Cross, DSW, MSW,*  
*MBA*  
Associate Professor

*Karen M. Kolivoski, MSW, PhD*  
Associate Professor



## STUDENTS & ALUMNI

*Shirin Sultana, MSW*  
Doctoral Student, Howard  
University

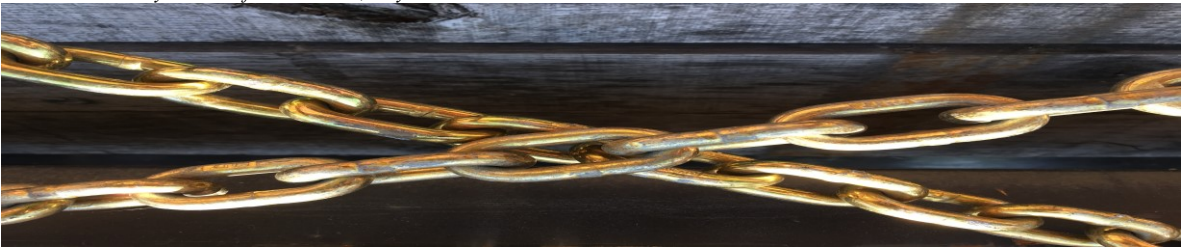
*Ebony McCoverly, MSW*  
Doctoral Student, Howard University

*Mewelau Hall, B. LICSW*  
Doctoral Student, rsity

*Karen Stapleton, MSW*  
Doctoral Student, Howard University

*Kadee Atkinson, MSW*  
Doctoral Student, Howard University

*Victoria Stubbs PhD, MSW*  
Howard University Alumnus



Burk Uzzle (American, born 1938), MLK Funeral street scene with National Guard, Atlanta, 1968, gelatin silver print. High Museum of Art, Atlanta, purchase, 2016.116.  
Burk Uzzle, courtesy of High Museum of Art

A photograph of a large, historic brick building with a prominent clock tower and a dome, likely Howard University. The building is surrounded by trees and a clear blue sky.

Nowhere  
but **here.**

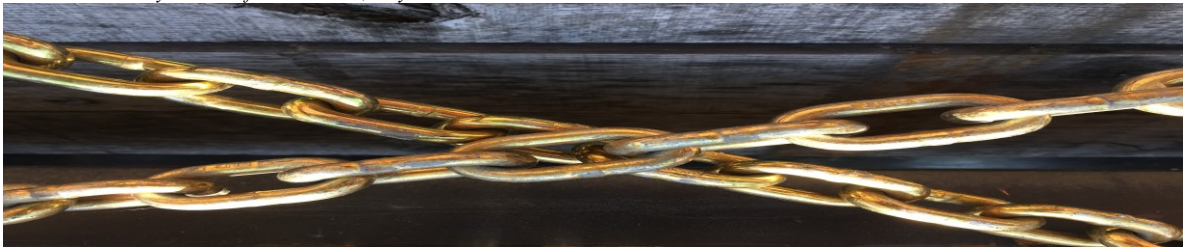
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**Sandra Edmonds Crewe, Ph.D., ACSW, Dean  
Howard University School of Social Work  
Inabel Lindsay Hall  
601 Howard Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20059**

*Race and the Intersection of Abuse, Power and Control: Research and Reflections from the Black Perspective*



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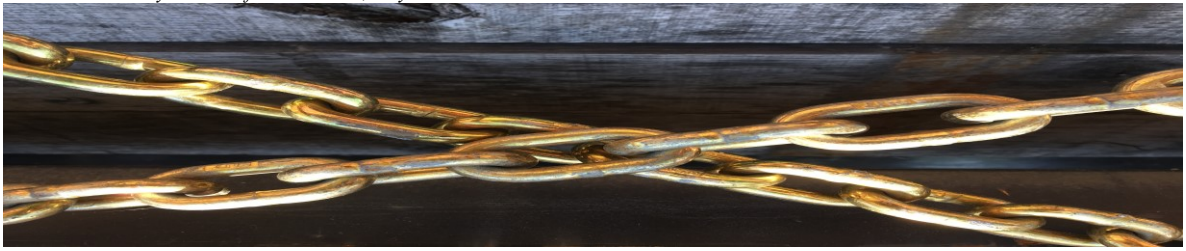
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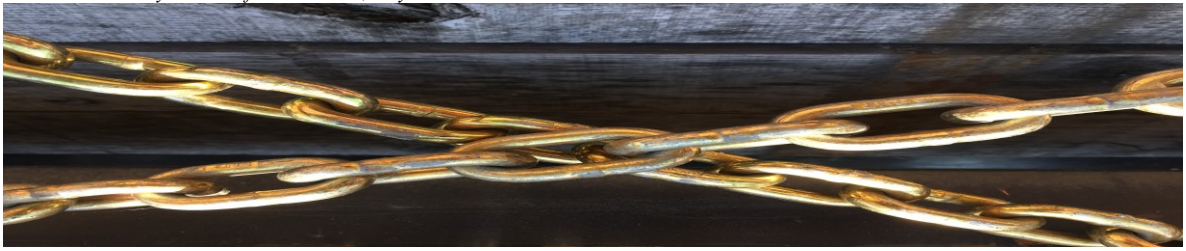
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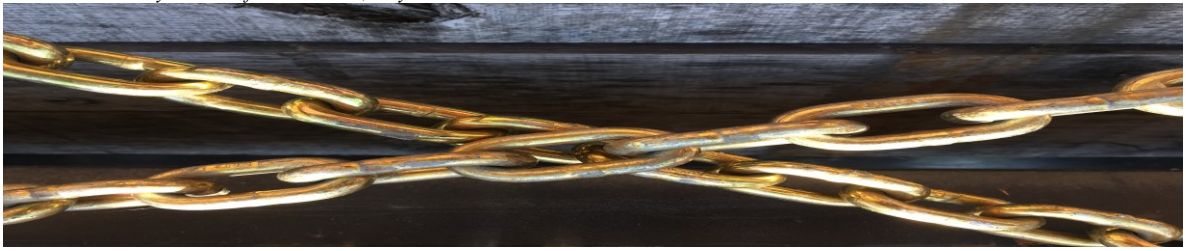
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