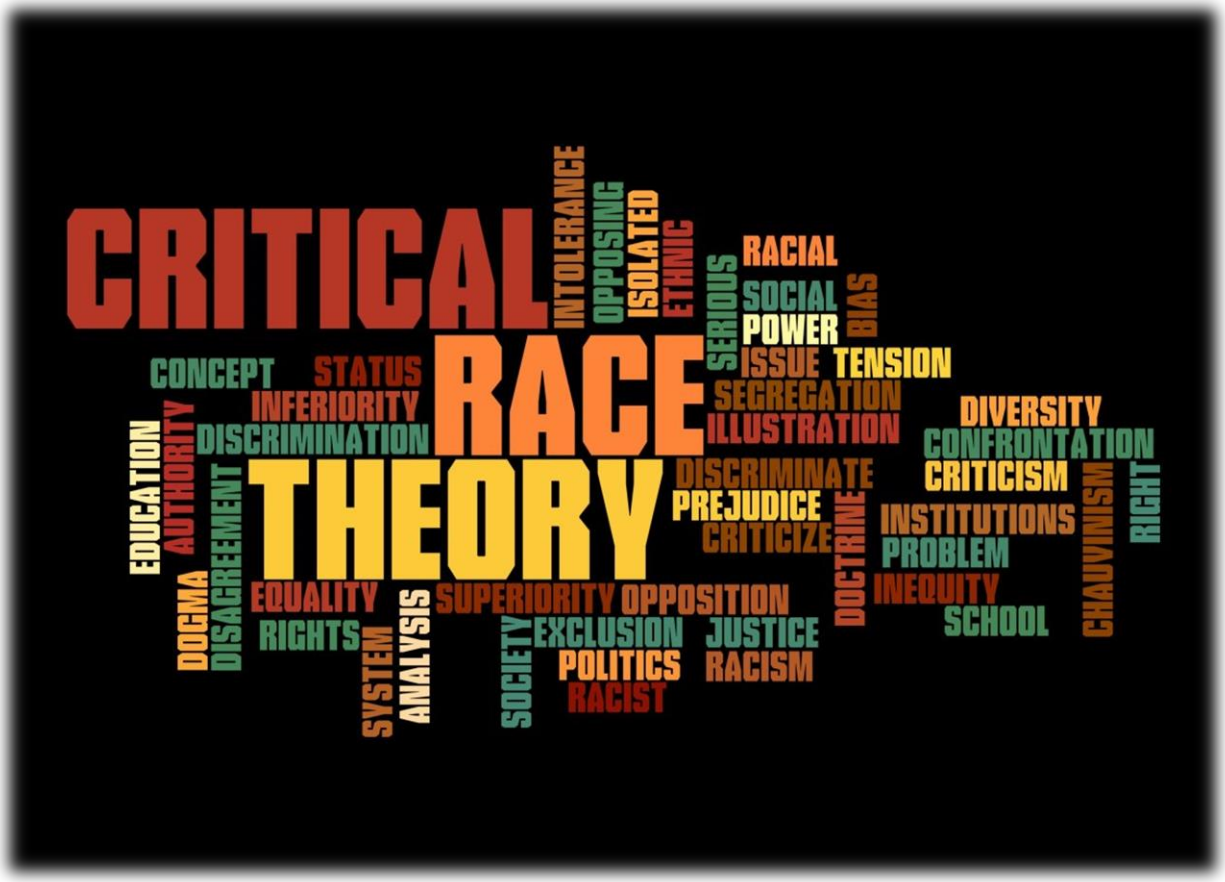

The Black Perspective Monograph 4: Critical Race Theory: Perspectives and Reflections

Kendall L. Moody, LCSW, Editor
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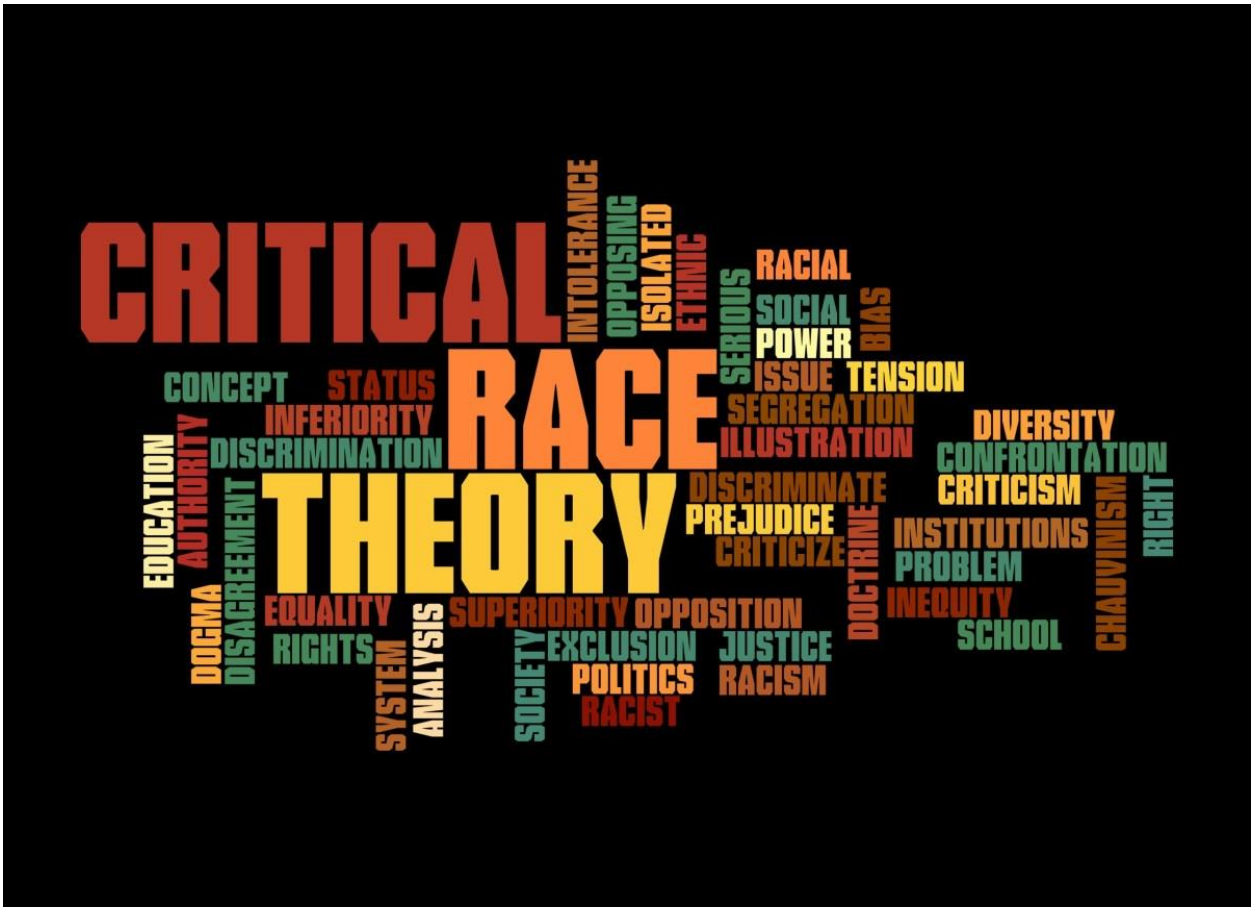
CRITICAL
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OPPOSITION
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RACIST
SYSTEM
ANALYSIS
SOCIETY
DOCTRINE
CHAUVINISM
RIGHT

Forward

In the current landscape of social discourse, Critical Race Theory (CRT) has ignited much debate and introspection. Emerging in the legal system in the mid-1970s, CRT has caused a paradigm shift and has challenged conventional understandings of race, power, and justice. Since then, CRT has transcended its origins and has been included in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

This monograph, "Critical Race Theory: Perspectives and Reflections," is a timely and critical addition to the ongoing discussion surrounding its implications. In the text, an array of scholars and practitioners offer their insights and reflections on CRT's implications, applications, and controversies. As we navigate the complexities of government policies seeking to ban CRT in classrooms, invalidating the work of many historical and contemporary scholars, understanding CRT is academically and morally imperative. This monograph serves as a beacon, illuminating the multifaceted dimensions of CRT and inviting readers to engage critically, empathetically, and constructively with its ideas.

Through the lens of CRT, we confront uncomfortable truths about the enduring legacies of racism and oppression embedded within our institutions, laws, and societal structures. Yet, in acknowledging these truths, we also discover pathways towards transformative change and genuine equity. This monograph is a testament to the resilience of CRT as a tool for both analysis and activism, empowering individuals and communities to challenge inequity and advocate for a more just world.

In a time marked by polarization and discord, this collection offers a space for dialogue and introspection, transcending ideological divides and fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in issues of race and power. It is my hope that readers engage with these diverse perspectives with open minds and compassionate hearts, recognizing the urgency of dismantling systems of oppression and nurturing inclusive societies grounded in respect, dignity, and equity.

As we embark on this intellectual journey through the pages of "Critical Race Theory: Perspectives and Reflections," let us embrace the challenges it presents, heed the lessons it imparts, and, above all, commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice and equality for all.

MESSAGE FROM
DEAN SANDRA EDMONDS CREWE

The quality of life of Black families and individuals has been a long-standing focus of the Howard University School of Social Work. From our founding, we have unmasked the impact of racial inequalities on the quality of life. Beginning with the socio-cultural perspective under the leadership of our founding dean, Dr. Inabel Burns Lindsay, and spanning to our contemporary Black Perspective, we have documented how racism has created enduring hardships for Blacks and other minoritized groups.
This monograph continues our emphasis on the intellectual examination of theories and perspectives that help to understand and respond to historical oppression based on race. It is the fourth in a series focused on the Black Perspective and specifically addresses **Critical Race Theory: Perspectives and Reflections**.

The authors specifically address Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its relevance to the health and well-being of Black families and individuals, the impact of racism on communities of color, and implications for social work. The authors present salient information about the controversies surrounding CRT. Additionally, contributions from our international colleagues at the University of Western Cape (South Africa) and the Royal Holloway University of London (England) add context to the discourse on CRT. These scholars bring unique perspectives from their respective countries, enriching our understanding of CRT's global relevance. Notably, the authors share personal reflections that help to shape the discourse.
The authors collectively affirm the utility of CRT in social work practice. They are not just affirmative but bold in their statements about racism's negative impact on many aspects of the Black community. Their courage and conviction in declaring CRT a necessary lens for undoing racism and understanding its impact are truly inspiring and motivating.

This monograph is not just an example, but a testament to the boldness of our approach to social work and social work education. It is unapologetic in its approach to calling out polarization that attempts to silence the historical inequities that have perpetuated the haves and have-nots in society. This unapologetic stance empowers the audience and instills confidence in the fight against injustice.
I am proud of the legacy of the Howard University School of Social Work in leading and promoting the Black Perspective. Through its six principles, affirmation, strengths, diversity, vivification, social justice, and internationalization—CRT is framed as a needed social justice lens. These principles guide our understanding of racism and its impact on society, and they provide a framework for social work practice. In *Social Work, White Supremacy and Racial Justice* (Abrams, Crewe, Dettlaff and Williams, 2023, p. 227), I stated that "our profession should boldly reject any act that harms those that we are committed to serving." We should also embrace theories and perspectives that provide context for addressing racism and creating an equitable society. I appreciate the authors' contribution to our legacy of truth and service.

6/25/24

Abrams, Laura, and others (eds), *Social Work, White Supremacy, and Racial Justice: Reckoning With Our History, Interrogating our Present, Reimagining our Future* (New York, 2023; online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 Oct. 2023), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197641422.001.0001, accessed 25 June 2024.

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Using Critical Race Theory to Restore Humanity to Black Mothers with Lived Experience in Family Policing

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Howard University School of Social Work

Abstract

A historical analysis of the treatment of Black motherhood in America presents a poignant example of anti-Blackness and the systemic denigration of the Black family. Structural racism is entrenched in our social welfare systems, which further negates Black existence. This opinion holds the profession accountable for its complicity in perpetuating harm to Black families and children through the family policing system, formerly known as child welfare. Regarding critical race theory, this author implores social work professionals to seek the counter-narratives of system-involved Black mothers to ground the movement towards abolition and to form the foundations of alternative approaches for Black family restoration. In concluding, recommendations for social work practice, policy, research, and pedagogy are offered.

Introduction

The term *welfare*, by definition, is "the state of doing well, especially in respect to good fortune, happiness, well-being, or prosperity" and "of, relating to, or concerned with welfare, and especially with the *improvement* of the welfare of disadvantaged social groups" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Therefore, the term *child welfare* implies children—their circumstances and well-being—are assumed to be better off after system intervention. Professionals know this is not the case for Black families, as much research has shown the negative impacts on Black children, post-system inclusion (Dettlaff, Weber et al., 2020). A discussion of Black family involvement in the child welfare system necessitates a historical review of the treatment of Black motherhood and a synopsis of Black mothers' interactions with system workers. A brief overview of critical race theory is provided as a precursor to centralizing counter-storytelling as a means of honoring Black motherhood.

Historical Context & Current Implications

The experiences of Black families with the American welfare system cannot be viewed separately from systemic racism (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). Historically, Black women have consistently been treated as inferior and have never been viewed as 'motherly' (Roberts, 2012, 2022; Story, 2018). Since the chattel enslavement period, their bodies were viewed as something to be owned and used (Turner, 2017). First, they were used for breeding more products for white capitalistic consumption (Nelson, 2018). Enslaved African women who had borne their own children were used for breastfeeding the babies of slave owners. These women were not viewed as mothers themselves and often were kept in a state of pregnancy for the use of their milk (West & Knight, 2017). These women endured forced separations as their children and

husbands were sold off as property. This was undoubtedly the beginning of the Black family disintegration in America.

The current foster care system is framed as a protective "safety net" for children, but research on the negative impacts and the lack of resources the system provides children and youth in care tells a different story (Nelson, 2018, p. 18). Enslaved children, like their parents, were regarded simply as property and therefore had no standing in decisions about social welfare. There was no morally or religiously motivated call to rescue the Black child from harm. Slavery refuted the need for concern for Black children and fulfilled the need to advance enslavers' economic circumstances as a commodity (Nelson, 2018). When America decided to create a formal system for child welfare, it wholly discriminated against Black children (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Dettlaff, Weber et al., 2020). Black children were never meant to benefit (or access) the child welfare system; therefore, by extension, the system that continues to exist today was never intended to maintain the welfare of Black children, making the use of the word *welfare* a misnomer.

As time continued, Black motherhood became a pawn in politicized policymaking. In the late 1970s, President Ronald Reagan coined the term *welfare queen* to label Black unwed mothers as abusers of the welfare system as a political strategy to oppose pro-welfare policies. This stereotype gained further traction with the *crack baby* myth, which existed in tandem to paint the Black mother as deviant and criminal (Dow, 2015; Nelson, 2018). Child welfare institutions intentionally fail to acknowledge the historical implications of midnight raids and racist policies that forced Black family separation. This governmental gaslighting forces (then and now) Black women to separate their families for survival and then blames their single parenthood on personal inadequacies. Negative views of Black mothers include the notion that

single and unwed motherhood cause an inadequate capacity to care for one's children (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). The politicizing of Black motherhood serves as yet another form of denial of Black humanity and informs any system with which Black women interact—including the child welfare system. This system is a "state form of structured violence" (Callejas, Jayaram, & Abella, 2021, p. 45) and is more appropriately termed the family policing system. The term *family policing* is used throughout this article to offer counter language that centers on the experiences of surveillance and regulation for Black mothers. This language, along with *family regulation*, describes the actual realities that Black families face.

Racial Context of Service Provision

Post-World War II saw a dramatic increase and well-documented disproportionality of Black families involved in this system. Researchers have documented that at every point in the child welfare continuum, Black children and families experience negative impacts. In general, there is an over-representation of Black children in relation to the population of Black children (Callejas et al., 2021; Dettlaff, Weber et al., 2020; Kolivoski, Weaver & Constance-Huggins, 2014; Roberts, 2012). Black families are subjected to over-reporting for neglect based on issues of poverty (Callejas et al., 2021; Dettlaff, Weber, et. al, 2020; Harp & Bunting, 2020; Nelson, 2018). Black children are more likely to be investigated, have allegations substantiated, and be removed than white children (Dettlaff, Weber et al., 2020; Harp & Bunting, 2020; Kolivoski et al., 2014; Nelson, 2018). Additionally, they are less likely to be reunited, to have placement instability, and to be in care for longer periods (Dettlaff, Weber et al., 2020; Harp & Bunting, 2020; Nelson, 2018). Data provide evidence of racial disproportionality in child protection "investigations, substantiations, caseworker evaluations, and reunification policies" (Harp & Bunting, 2020, p. 266). The family policing system predicates its assessment of Black mothers'

parenting on a Eurocentric model that ignores the cultural customs of Black families, giving them sole responsibility for child rearing and protection (Nelson, 2018). Black families parent through mutual aid and fictive kin relationships, but state-authorized assessments of parenting fail to view this as strength-based. Negative conceptions of Blackness are steeped in White paternalism—the notion that White people are the experts on what is best for others. This concept underpins the family policing system and gives authority to White workers who judge Black mothers' parenting and capacity to thrive by their discriminatory standards (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972).

Roberts (2012) remarks about the intense supervision Black mothers face that lends to their over-involvement. Black mothers have historically been denied the ability to nurture their children, who historically have been snatched from them at birth without the ability to bond or even to name them (Nelson, 2018). The subconscious view of Black mothers as 'less than' breeds a biased sentiment of their deserved punishment. Workers in the family policing system construct Black parents as 'failed' when allegations are reported (Hughes, Chau, & Vokrri, 2016). Harper and Bunting (2020) highlight that racially stereotypical ideas underlie workers' assessments of the risk of harm. Kolivoski et al. (2014) noted that workers admit that they "ignore structural realities and focus on the personal failings" of their parents (p. 271). Instead of viewing Black mothers as women who want the best for their children, research shows that workers automatically see them as entities to be punished through "corrective treatment" (Wells, 2011, p. 440). This informs case plan compliance that focuses on tasks meant to be the "evidence of mothers' motivation to care for their children" (Wells, 2011, p. 440). Furthermore, workers fail to assess strengths and use deviant language such as "angry," "loud," and "hostile" (Roberts, 2012, p. 1486). Additionally, Black mothers have been held to similar living and parenting

standards as Whites, while White parents have had an undue advantage (Kolivoski et al., 2014; Roberts, 2002). Access to resources helps to differentiate parenting experiences, but more than that, it gives Whites the capacity to hide abuse and neglect within privileged spaces. How, then, can Black mothers be held to the same standard? For Black mothers, this "demeaning and disrespectful behavior" by workers dispenses further subjugation (Callejas et al., 2021, p. 38)

Critical Race Theory and Social Work

There has never been a time in the history of America where the prevailing sentiment has not been anti-Black. The permanence of racism positions Black mothers in a place of racial inferiority and has been the foundation for the treatment of Black motherhood from the Maafa until the present (Dettlaff, Weber, et. al., 2020; Nelson, 2018). The critical race theory (CRT) framework "challenges conventional social processes and normative standards that only reflect the white experience" and provides an understanding of how the intermingling of "race, racism, and power maintains and supports racial inequality" (Kolivoski et al., 2014, p. 270). Its tenets acknowledge the permanence of racism in our society, the colorblindness of equality, the absolute rights White people have, and their interest in marginalization and oppression to the extent it benefits them. Furthermore, it honors intersectionality and positions counter-narratives as a means to shift power. Critical race theory supports the analysis of social work practice in relation to race, racism, and the construct of power. Its application appeals to social welfare topics because social justice, as a social work value, recognizes areas where particular groups experience marginalization, discrimination, and oppression. This aligns tremendously with family policing as a long-standing mechanism for Black family disintegration based on racial bias and oppression.

Counter-Narratives as a Restorative Approach

The use of counter-storytelling can have a critical role in re-humanizing Black mothers and families by hearing "narratives, family histories, biographies, chronicles, and parables" (Kolivoski et al., 2014, p. 271). Clear dynamics involving race, power, and authority underpin Black mothers' complicity with the system, which is required for Black women to preserve their families. This complicity has been engrained in Black family behavior since the period of chattel slavery (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Dettlaff & Boyd, 2020; Roberts, 2012). This auto-response is a survival tactic, rendering Black mothers powerless to the race-based, stereotypical judgments of child welfare workers and court officials. Centering their narratives gives Black mothers the platform to refute racist descriptions of their parenting and regain their dignity and worth. It offers them a lane towards self-determination where they narrate their experiences and counter-worker narratives that "omit and distort" their encounters (Nelson, 2018, p. 24).

Current quantitative research on Black mothers' involvement in the child welfare system focuses heavily on pathological reasons for alleged abuse and neglect. There is a dearth of research that begs to hear about experiences in the child welfare system from Black mothers' points of view. Mothers' counter-narratives allow for experiences to offer rich context that illuminates racist structures and power differentials between Black mothers and system workers. Callejas et al. (2021) support using qualitative research with Black mothers to serve as a mechanism for them to become "active agents, fighting for resources, safety, and dignity" (p. 44). Furthermore, discussions on Black families and the family policing system must be centered through the lens of the Black experience to counter the structural oppression, racism, and power this institution has been predicated upon (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972).

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, Research, and Education

The profession of social work is complicit in the disintegration of the Black family and the traumatizing of Black mothers connected to the child welfare system. In general, social workers can own their complicity by applying counter-storytelling (and other relevant tenets of CRT) to social work practice, policy, research, and education. A small but poignant application is the shifting of language to vocabulary that centers on the strengths of Black families. For example, describing a Black mother as 'under-resourced' instead of 'poor' highlights a socioeconomic issue, not an individual personal deficit. Likewise, instead of saying workers 'protect' children, say workers 'ensure child well-being.' The notion of 'protection' directly implies that parents cannot protect their children. Developing a strengths-based and justice-driven lexicon redistributes power and works to dismantle myths and stereotypes cast upon Black families.

Practice Recommendations

Kolivoski et al. (2014) recommend that CRT be used to evaluate racial disparities at both the worker and organizational levels. With research pointing out that workers have negative perceptions of mothers, prior to investigation, it is critical that workers practice basic empathy, which is standard for social work values. Countless cell phone videos on social media capture White social workers threatening to take Black children away from Black mothers in exchange for case plan compliance. Not only does this practice disregard evidenced-based measures of assessing risk, but it, more importantly, is a blatant state-sponsored abuse of power disguised as child protection. Evidence shows that the disproportionality of Black children in child welfare is directly linked to racialized beliefs about Black mothers by child welfare workers (Dettlaff & Boyd, 2020; Dettlaff, Weber, et. al, 2020; Hughes et al., 2016; Nelson, 2018; Roberts, 2012,

2022). Workers also report that their focus on child safety influences their view of mothers as perpetrators (Hughes et al., 2016). Counter-narratives from Black mothers provide insight into the "colorblind approaches" (Kolivoski et al., 2014, p. 272) that child welfare workers employ. Black mothers' stories enlighten workers and administrators about their reliance on stereotypes and biases in making decisions to report abuse allegations, substantiate investigations, and remove children from Black families. Once acknowledged, worker bias can be addressed through professional development and supervision. Programs should evaluate workers' perceptions of families from a client satisfaction perspective in order to craft and design race-based professional development opportunities (Hughes et al., 2016). Agencies can be intentional about hearing mothers' perspectives to design assessments to position mothers as women who nurture their children and not as perpetrators, especially since neglect allegations tend to stem from systemic poverty-related concerns.

Policy Recommendations

Two particular legislations have authorized state-sanctioned policing of Black families. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974 established child protective services in their current structure and federally defined *child abuse and neglect* as "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caregiver that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm" (CAPTA Reauthorization Act, 2010). The Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 gives states the authority to terminate parental rights after a limited period. These laws are steeped in notions of Black inferiority and Black family deficits and authorize investigative assessments from workers' biased standpoints. Social workers should work to repeal these laws or, at minimum, lobby to amend the legislative language to protect

Black families from subjective harm. For example, there is current community activism toward changing mandated reporting laws to "mandated supporting" laws (Just Making a Change for Families, 2022). The use of mandated reporting laws is historically undergirded by racial bias and approached with the intention of punishing families. They are subjective to the assumptive perspectives of the professionals mandated to report and cause further harm. Black mothers' stories reinforce the need for this shift in the law. Social work students and professionals should advocate for this shift and be trained on "alternative responses to mandated reporting that are liberatory, harm-reductive, decolonial, and [that] center families" (Just Making a Change for Families, 2022).

The current campaign towards system abolition has limitations that can be addressed by intentionally prioritizing blackness. First, while Black mothers with lived experiences are involved in the movement, those leading the movement are legal professionals and social work, sociological, and education academics. Facilitators of the abolition movement should seek to build a community with mothers with lived experiences and position them as experts. Their inclusion is not the same as their leadership. This opens the opportunity to hear all of the stories Black mothers want to tell—stories of other-mothering, of spirituality as coping, and of community mutual aid—and not just the horror stories of their experiences with family policing. Thus, we will find that alternative, culturally prioritized ways to keep Black children safe exist.

Research Recommendations

The minimizing of the enslaved African experience, and therefore, the welfare of their children, continue to inform the dehumanizing of Black people in modern scholarship. Social work researchers do not prioritize qualitative research, despite the apparent alignment with honoring people's humanity. The vast majority of research on Black mothers in the child welfare

system relies on quantitative data to offer pathological reasons for the disproportionate number of Black families involved in the family policing system. With the social values of self-determination, the dignity and worth of a person, and the importance of human relationships, we must question why social work practice and pedagogy give a cursory glance over qualitative research. Qualitative research centered on Black mothers as experts could assist in developing the answers to the "if not this, what then?" question often posed by those currently advocating for abolition.

Additionally, those currently leading efforts to abolish family policing highlight papers and studies written by recent and/or newer researchers and scholars. This denies decades of scholarship and advocacy by Black academicians. Black scholars have written about how the family policing system mimics slavery (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Roberts, 2002, 2012, 2022) and the availability of alternative approaches that are culturally aligned with the Black family way of life, particularly as African-centered beings (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Martin & Martin, 1985). These stories have been told for decades, and those researching and writing in this academic area should prioritize citing Black scholars' work.

Education Recommendations

Anti-racism and anti-blackness cannot coexist. Most social work education programs do not outright teach or provide the space for a true justice-driven critique of the history of child welfare for Black families. Burford and Adams (2004) highlight the profession's goal of "social control" under the guise of empowerment and healing (p. 8). Racist social policies and laws have been upheld that social workers have fully supported and enforced. This also makes the profession complicit in the disintegration of the Black family unit over time. Scholars have researched and written materials from a Black humanity perspective that never sees a social work

classroom. Critical race theory, in general, implores an evaluation of current social work pedagogy pertaining to child welfare and its effectiveness in ensuring the well-being of all children. As social work programs shift to the 2022 EPAS mandate towards anti-racist, equitable, and inclusive explicit curriculum, programs are strongly urged to select materials and create course content that centers Black scholarship, which offers counter-narrative that teaches social welfare history and social policy from a true racialized perspective (Council on Social Work Education, 2022).

Additionally, designing a social work interprofessional curriculum, particularly with education, law, sociology, and criminal justice, offers future social work practitioners a more solid foundation in social justice from a multidisciplinary lens. This allows for a more comprehensive critical analysis of structural racism and the interlocking system of oppression. It returns students to the radical activist roots of social work.

Dorothy Roberts (2002), a law professor and long-time advocate for Black families, summarizes succinctly what should motivate social workers to work for an end to the family policing system:

> Racial inequities in the child welfare system...cause serious group-based harms by reinforcing disparaging stereotypes about Black family unfitness and need for white supervision, by destroying a sense of family autonomy and self-determination among many Black Americans, and by weakening Blacks' collective ability to overcome institutionalized discrimination (p. ix).

If we genuinely seek to elevate the Black family, we must elevate the Black mother. To elevate Black motherhood, work must be done to "undermine systems that work against [them]"

(Nelson, 2018, p. 6). Centering the narratives, stories, and experiences of Black mothers involved in family policing is truly the way forward toward abolition and re-imagining the Black family's well-being and restoration.

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The Black Perspective Monograph 4

Who Is Caring For Our African American Mothers?

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and

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Background

In the U.S., the maternal mortality rate for African American women is 55.3 deaths per 100,000 live births, approximately three times (2.9) more than for White women (Hoyert, 2022). African American women continue to face stark health disparities, limited access to quality health care, and, most importantly, a high maternal mortality rate (Louis, Menard, & Gee, 2015). It is dangerous for Black women to give birth in the U.S. (Cooper-Owen, 2021). Social determinants of health, challenges in the health system, and health disparities are some factors that result in maternal deaths. It is crucial to acknowledge and address maternal mortality and critically examine how this issue has evolved and is currently perpetuated in the healthcare system. Critical race theory (CRT) provides a lens through which to examine the healthcare institutions providing care to African American mothers. Maternal mortality is a public health challenge that needs to be examined from the perspective of CRT. This article considers birthing practices in the U.S. from a historical perspective. It is postulated that the foundation for maternal health practices and subsequent health policies results in multiple barriers that African American

women experience when seeking and receiving healthcare services. These barriers result in poor outcomes and, ultimately, death. Recommendations are provided to improve maternal health outcomes through policy and practice.

CRT & Social Work Practice, Policy & Research

CRT is a post-modern theory that challenges oppressive societal structures and champions social justice (Abrams & Moio, 2009). American history is embedded with racist ideologies, dominant discourse, and power constructs. CRT targets oppressive structures, demands remedies, and provides a voice to the oppressed and marginalized (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). CRT provides social workers with a tool to challenge oppressive societal structures and promote social justice.

CRT offers an effective paradigm to deal with the complexity of diversity, provides a method applicable to multiple facets of social work, and emphasizes a focus on social justice. The significance of CRT can be viewed in combination with an overall epistemology of cultural competence (Williams, 2006). Yet, CRT can be utilized to replace the limitations of the cultural competence model (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Despite the arguments for its best use, CRT is being applied as a standard to critique social work education, literature, and practice (McDowell & Jeris, 2004).

CRT can effectively be applied to social work practice. The use of CRT can inform competent social practice within an adequate context, avoid pre-disposed assumptions, guide informed dialogue, and focus on transformational change (Oritz & Jani, 2010). It can also assist social workers in critically analyzing the racial oppressions in our history and subsequent conceptual frameworks, theories, and realities (Razack & Jeffry, 2002). The emphasis on narratives and storytelling in CRT provides an empowerment tool for social workers to impact

change for marginalized people. CRT can inspire social workers to challenge institutional structures that promote social injustice and racial oppression.

CRT, whether employed as a supplemental theory or a replacement for current cultural practice models, benefits social work practitioners. It provides a lens for social work practitioners to analyze oppressive structures in society and within the profession critically. CRT is an empowerment tool that encourages minority involvement in social work practice methods, research, and development. CRT promotes client empowerment in the therapeutic process using narratives and awareness of racism, dominant privilege, and power constructs (Ortiz & Jani, 2010).

In social work, CRT can empower clients. In assessing minority client systems through a CRT lens, social workers can determine the factors, social conditions, and institutions that form racial identity (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Social workers can utilize the therapeutic relationship to mitigate micro-aggressions by fostering empathy, trust, communication, and understanding (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino et al., 2007). It is through the therapeutic relationship that acts of micro-aggressions can be validated and clashes in racial realities discussed (Sue et al., 2007). The therapeutic relationship is the medium used to solve problems and process racial dilemmas in responding to racial aggression (Sue et al., 2007). The political and socioeconomic barriers to resources and services can be identified to further support clients and their goals. Furthermore, knowledge of micro-aggressions can help the social worker use reflexivity to avoid inflicting further harm on clients (Sue et al., 2007). Social workers can be aware of their power position and its implications for transference and counter-transference issues (Sue et al., 2007). Ortiz and Jani (2010) suggest that social work research can improve client outcomes by

advancing the voice of the marginalized. In addition, social justice research can portray the realities and adverse outcomes due to racial oppression and discrimination (Ortiz & Jani, 2010).

Implications for Black Mothers

Historically, the "business of birthing" and the medical care of African American women are aligned with the institution of slavery (Owens & Fett, 2019). Black women were often seen as mass producers of bodies to support the Southern economy (Owens & Fett, 2019). They had no individual rights and could not voice any concerns or fears about their bodies or pregnancies (Owens & Fett, 2019). Within this context, African Americans were not viewed as human beings or mothers but more like vessels for breeding. Consequently, the institution of slavery emphasized profits and disregarded the health and safety of Black women. Today, it is evident that maternal mortality in the U.S. stems from the foundation of slavery, perpetuating stereotypes, racism, health disparities, poverty, and poor-quality healthcare. Like slavery, the U.S. healthcare system generates tremendous revenue for institutions. Conceptualizing maternal mortality utilizing CRT furthers the understanding of the mistreatment of Black mothers. It highlights the crucial need to develop policies and practices to protect Black mothers, improve overall healthcare, and address these preventable deaths.

The implication of race permeates maternal healthcare for African American women. CRT is a theoretical lens that can be adapted to critique maternal healthcare practices. The lens of CRT can be applied to the current oppressive healthcare systems and morbid outcomes for African American women. This is due to the brutal birthing experiences that Black women endured and the connection these experiences have to slavery. It is overdue for social workers to challenge the social injustices and racially oppressive healthcare systems resulting in high maternal mortality rates.

CRT can serve as a remedy for social work in promoting awareness of oppressive healthcare structures, policies, and practices. The contribution of CRT to social work practice is to promote social justice. Practice standards for African-Americans' maternal health need to be improved, and advocacy targeting poor medical treatment and the death of Black mothers in healthcare systems is overdue. Furthermore, social workers need to assess their practice settings to discern if they are perpetuating and supporting the oppressive healthcare structure that they are meant to ameliorate.

Recommendations/Implications

Critical race theory emphasizes the impact of race in maternal healthcare and provides an explanation for the poor outcomes and maternal deaths experienced by African American women. It is recommended that racial concordance be used as a tool to measure infant mortality outcomes among African Americans (Oguz, 2018). Racial concordance within the healthcare system is the notion that patients will communicate better with a provider who shares the same racial characteristics (Oguz, 2018). Healthcare policies can support workforce diversity among healthcare providers, including advocates who can help Black mothers (Cooper-Owens, 2021). Social workers can ensure that the voice of Black mothers is incorporated throughout the patient care experience. Social work practitioners are encouraged to use narratives to deconstruct, construct, and re-construct ideologies that emphasize dominant discourse while simultaneously uplifting marginalized voices. The concepts of narratives and storytelling in CRT empower social workers to impact change for Black mothers.

Critical race theory also directs focus toward social determinants of health, such as housing, education, and poverty. These areas also result in poor health outcomes and are embedded in discriminatory and racist systems. Though healthcare funding has increased across

the nation (Fenton et al., 2019), it is important to keep healthcare costs affordable, especially for low-income, Medicaid-eligible women who have higher incidences of morbidity and mortality (Dubay, Hill, Garrett et al., 2020). Maternal healthcare policies must target African American women who come from underserved communities. These policies must improve the access, quality, and cost of comprehensive maternal healthcare services. Policies impacting the health of Black mothers need to be examined through the lens of CRT to combat racialized adverse outcomes.

Conclusion

Challenges and growing threats to women's reproductive rights continue to exist, demonstrating the need for social justice. However, the position of critical race theorists is that these threats are greater for Black women; therefore, the outcomes are far worse. The "business" of healthcare cannot continue to view and treat Black women as breeders. Our Black mothers are dying in the healthcare systems. This article calls out maternity care and the need to address race and racism, its history, and its systemic impact on our healthcare system. It is long overdue to treat our Black mothers with dignity and respect and provide equitable, safe, quality maternity care.

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Mobilizing Black Men as Allies in Ending Violence against Women: A Critical Race Theory Approach

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Abstract

Men play an instrumental role in ending violence against women. Recent initiatives have emerged to mobilize men for domestic violence prevention and intervention. In Black communities, it is critical that domestic violence programs recognize the race and gender dimensions of domestic violence. Yet, there is a paucity of ally programs for Black men with a dual-lens on race and gender. The purpose of this article is to advance the literature base. We share insight from a series of town hall meetings for Black men on domestic violence. The town hall meetings reveal the ways in which race and gender intersect to make domestic violence qualitatively distinct in Black communities. We demonstrate how this information informs the development of a novel domestic violence ally program for Black men grounded in critical race theory. The program expands on feminist views to recognize how gender inequality and racism converge. It provides an important contribution to the literature.

Author Note

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Mobilizing Black Men as Allies in Ending Violence Against Women: A Critical Race Theory Approach

Samaritan House, Inc. (2023) is "committed to fostering personal safety, growth, and self-sufficiency in adults and their children through freedom from sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking and homelessness" (About Us section, para 1). They are "dedicated to identifying and eliminating the root causes of homelessness and violence in any form, wherever possible, through education, advocacy, community outreach, and intervention" (Our History section, para. 2). They established the Black and African American Advisory Committee to address the disproportionate representation of Black women in their client population. Communities in Power (2023) is a culturally-specific organization "committed to enlightening, enriching, and empowering Black communities through transformative information, education, and resources." They specialize in community education, community outreach, and community development. They tailor services to be culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of Black communities. The partnership between Samaritan House and Communities in Power arose from a shared interest in addressing reduced rates of domestic violence in Black communities. In our discussions, we identified the value of mobilizing Black men for domestic violence work.

Men play an instrumental role in ending violence against women. Recent initiatives have emerged to mobilize men in domestic violence prevention and intervention (for examples, see Casey, 2010; Casey, Tolman, Carlson et al., 2017; Wells, Lorenzetti, Carolo et al., 2013). In Black communities, it is critical that domestic violence programs recognize the race and gender dimensions of domestic violence (Crenshaw, 1990; 2011; Howard & Arbaugh, 2019; Mizock & Page, 2016). Yet, there is a paucity of ally programs for Black men with a dual-lens on race and gender (Mizock & Page, 2016). We aim to fill this gap in the literature. This article shares insight

from a series of town hall meetings for Black men on domestic violence. The town hall meetings reveal how race and gender intersect to make domestic violence qualitatively distinct in Black communities. We demonstrate how this information informs the development of a novel domestic violence ally program for Black men grounded in critical race theory (Daftary, 2020). The program expands on feminist views to recognize how gender inequality and racism converge. It provides an important contribution to the literature.

Conceptual Definitions

Black

Our definition of *Black* follows the U.S. Census Bureau (2022): "A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa" (para. 3). We recognize the vast diversity of Black communities and make no assumption of homogeneity.

Domestic Violence

Samaritan House defines *domestic violence* as a pattern of abusive behaviors that one person uses in a relationship to maintain power and control over another person. Notably, the discussion in this article is gendered, as men perpetrate the preponderance of violence against women (Virginia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 2018). This discussion is also limited to heterosexual relationships. We do not deny or minimize the experience of domestic violence in same-sex relationships. The men who participated in our town hall sessions identified as heterosexual. We hope to engage more diverse populations in the near future.

Allies

The scope of this article is limited to allies in ending domestic violence. Similar to leading ally models, our core goals are to change gender stereotypes and attitudes that perpetuate violence against women; increase their awareness of domestic violence; equip them with the

skills to hold other men accountable for violence against women; and nurture their ability to promote non-violence and gender equity in their families, peer groups, communities, and social policies (Tolman, Casey, Allen et al., 2019).

Domestic Violence in Black Communities

Domestic violence is a serious problem in Black communities. While people of all races and ethnicities experience domestic violence, Black women are 9% more likely to be raped, physically assaulted, or stalked by an intimate partner, as compared to White women, 7% more likely than Hispanic women, and 24% more likely than Asian women (Black, Basile, Breiding et al., 2011). An estimated 45.1% of Black women experience contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011). They have the second highest rate of intimate partner violence, coming in behind American Indians and Alaskan natives. Even more alarming, Black women were murdered by an intimate partner at a rate more than twice as high as their White female counterparts and had the highest fatality rate of all racial groups (Virginia Department of Health, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 2018). Collectively, these statistics indicate that Black women experience elevated rates of intimate partner violence and abuse that are more lethal.

The disproportionate rates of domestic violence in Black communities should not imply that people of color are inherently more violent than other racial groups. Bent-Goodley (2001) asserts that systemic factors influence the prevalence rates of domestic violence in Black communities. Bent-Goodley advises that disparities in rates of domestic violence between racial groups diminish when sociodemographic factors are controlled. This research implicates social factors such as high poverty rates, greater unemployment and under-employment, a lack of affordable housing, and unequal educational opportunities in Black communities in the

prevalence of domestic violence. In addition, Bent-Goodley reports that there are historical and cultural factors as well as structural barriers that influence rates of domestic violence in Black communities.

Theoretical Framework

Our definition of *domestic violence* has intellectual roots in feminist thought. We believe that men use domestic violence as a means to maintain power and control over their female partners (Bohall, Bautista, & Musson, 2016). These intimate partner dynamics occur within the context of a broader social structure that privileges men over women. Feminist theory helps us to appreciate the influence of cultural and social factors on domestic violence victimization. For further nuance and cultural sensitivity, we integrated critical race theory (CRT) with feminist theory to guide our program development.

Critical race theory is a group of dynamically constituted propositions that explain and articulate racial power (Crenshaw, 2011). Daftary (2020) describes it as a "transformational movement focused on the relationships among power, race, racism, and society" (p. 441). It originated as a body of legal scholarship and now serves as a critical lens for research and a conceptual framework for teaching about diversity and working with diverse populations (Daftary, 2020). Applied to domestic violence, CRT importantly imparts an intersectional lens that critically considers the ways in which race and gender interact to shape the structural, political, and representational dimensions of violence against Black women (Crenshaw, 1990). Crenshaw (1990) suggests that CRT perspectives on domestic violence counter feminist perspectives that assume issues of race and sex to be mutually exclusive. CRT allows us to hold Black men accountable for perpetrating violence against Black women while recognizing that Black men occupy culturally marginalized spaces in the dominant society. It also emphasizes the

influence of racial factors on the experience of gender-based violence among Black women. CRT allows us to hold space for the impact of racism on both Black men and Black women.

Methods

To develop a culturally sensitive program that recognized the intersections of race and gender, we sought a better understanding of the community perspective on domestic violence (Moss & Crewe, 2020). To this end, we conducted two town hall events for Black men on domestic violence. The intended benefits of the sessions were primarily for the community to be served by the prospective ally program. The generalizability of the findings is limited to this population.

The first town hall meeting followed a small group format, in which the participants were divided into groups of four or five. The second session followed a round-table format. We collected the data needed to improve the cultural sensitivity of the anticipated program. No personally identifiable information was collected. During the planning stages, the community outreach coordinator from Governor Northam's Office of the Attorney General provided strategic support. He helped to represent the male perspective in planning the town hall sessions. Early in the planning stages, other male community leaders participated but did not maintain commitment.

Interview Questions

We used a semi-structured interview format for both town hall sessions. We asked predetermined questions and explored questions that arose spontaneously in a free-flowing conversation (APA, 2020). Questions centered on: (1) identification of the intervention expectations of the client community; (2) content knowledge and beliefs of the client community being served; and (3) assessment of the strengths of the community (Moss & Crewe, 202). The

small group session lasted one hour. We extended the second session to two hours to correct the need for additional time. We facilitated each session and recorded responses in writing without the respondents' identifying information.

Recruitment Methods

We used purposive and snowball sampling to assemble a group of informal and formal Black male community leaders for the town hall meetings. We handpicked Black male community leaders who would best know the needs and experiences of Black men to participate in the town hall meetings. It was not deemed necessary for participants to have a history of domestic violence perpetration or prior training in domestic violence prevention.

Description of Participants

We had a pre-existing relationship with most of the participants. The others were invited to attend by those participants. The participants were from the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area. The first group included 13 men with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The second group consisted of eight men, with six being new to the town halls. All participants identified as Black males. Barbers, military personnel, church leaders, and community organizers were represented in both groups. Some participants reported having prior domestic violence training with the Navy Fleet and Family Support Center. Others reported no previous training in domestic violence awareness or intervention. It should be noted that the facilitators identify as Black women.

Analysis

Following each session, we critically discussed the recorded responses and observations to identify the key issues from the town hall meetings. We reflected on how the issues related to the questions and developed themes based on the emerging patterns. Below is a description and discussion of the themes.

Themes

Interest in Mentoring Youth and Promoting Healthy Relationship Behaviors

Overwhelming, the men in both sessions indicated they were eager to mentor young males and promote healthy relationship behaviors. Some of the participants reported that they are already operating in this capacity. They described intervening in inappropriate behaviors and efforts to teach young males essential life skills. These activities predominantly took place on basketball courts. They also noted sporting events and the shooting range as optimal spaces to mentor and redirect young males. Some expressed wanting to mentor young males to provide them with the models they did not have growing up. Others indicated that the male figures in their lives had failed to recognize the challenges of manhood, and they wanted to help equip young boys with the tools they needed to meet the demands. They expressed interest in learning about healthy relationship dynamics and domestic violence allyship as an addition to their knowledge base.

Fear of Negative Consequences or Repercussions for Intervening in Altercations

The men identified fear of negative consequences or repercussions as a barrier to intervening in domestic violence altercations. They related prior experiences where they put themselves in the middle of an altercation, and the victim retaliated against them or returned to the perpetrator shortly thereafter. They indicated feeling regret and frustration in these instances and questioned why women stay in violent relationships. They also expressed fear that they may be assaulted or victimized by the perpetrator. This was particularly deterring when they considered the possibility that the victim might remain in the relationship or return to the perpetrator. The men also disclosed concerns that their character would be assassinated if they presented themselves as leaders in Black communities. They bemoaned the treatment of Black

male celebrities by the public. They lamented, “No one protects” Black men. They feared being targeted for speaking out or standing up against social issues.

Understanding of Domestic Violence Limited to Physical Violence and Aggression

The overarching theme of the men’s town hall sessions was that participants defined *domestic violence* as some form of physical harm. The perception was that domestic violence only includes physical damage. The men described past experiences they labeled as domestic violence. One participant described seeing people fighting as domestic violence. Another one described an altercation he witnessed in which knives were used. The men continued to share past domestic violence incidents, all of which included physical violence. When discussing non-physical violence, only one man provided an example, which involved verbal aggression and name-calling.

Desire for Safe Space

During the first town hall, vulnerability was a topic of discussion. Many men expressed their desire for a safe space to heal and be uplifted. This was particularly connected to intimate relationships. They were interested in convening with other men to express their feelings, discuss their challenges, and provide mutual aid to support healthy relationships. The town hall participants’ desire for a safe space includes using the time to uplift one another to support other men in their sphere of influence. One participant shared that he desired to provide a safe space and model holistic manhood for young men. Their ability to provide an example comes from examples they have seen, many not with their own families. They want to be the “father figures” they did not have during their childhood and adolescence. One participant described the town hall meeting as a safe space and stated, “This time meeting together is very uplifting.” They had

difficulties identifying other safe spaces where they could come together, express themselves, and support one another.

History of Counseling or Spiritual Direction

All participants in the second town hall meeting reported that they had received counseling or spiritual direction. Their help-seeking behaviors were driven by childhood maltreatment. These experiences were instrumental in providing them with insight into their emotional and mental processes as well as the underlying needs driving their interpersonal behaviors. Transformative experiences in counseling and spiritual direction enabled them to be supports or resources for others with similar backgrounds. Many participants noted that their growth around issues of vulnerability, self-awareness, and gaining community respect is directly based on their spiritual or faith community.

In the second town hall, each participant spoke directly about the effects of spiritual direction as a positive aspect of their lives. One aspect was the age at which they encountered spiritual guidance and counseling. Even in seeking support from spiritual leaders, many participants shared that taking the step was difficult and noted their maturity in age and support from their partners in making this step. Most men do not seek this type of support until their late 20s or early 30s. The participants spoke about some barriers in the Black and African American communities to seeking support. Many participants in the second town hall had current or prior military experience. They indicated that seeking mental health support while in the military was generally not recommended and could negatively affect their employment. As the discussion continued in the second town hall meeting, many participants indicated that being in a community with other men seeking spiritual direction created an opportunity to seek support.

Difficulties Verbalizing Their Needs to Their Partner

We observed that it was difficult for the men to articulate their needs to their partners. They were silent when asked how they relate to their partners when they feel vulnerable or have an emotional need. They subsequently shared that it was difficult to put their needs into words for their partners. They recognized times when they felt safe and could be consoled and comforted by their partners. In these instances, they described their partners as intuiting their needs and meeting them with understanding and sensitivity. However, they were unable to share how they communicated their needs to their partners. In fact, in some instances, they described trying to conceal their emotions from their partners. Some described practicing conflict management techniques such as walking away to prevent having angry outbursts. They indicated discomfort with their vulnerability and aversion to being viewed by others in an emotional state.

Masking Their Vulnerability

In the first town hall meeting, the participants noted that the inability of Black men to be vulnerable contributes to domestic violence in Black communities. We define *vulnerability* as one's capability to be physically or emotionally wounded and open to attack or damage. One participant discussed not knowing how to be vulnerable. He shared that when he showed vulnerability in the past, it was used against him by his intimate partner. Many men expressed not feeling like they could be vulnerable and seeking safety. Most men stated that they are just coming to an understanding of the importance of vulnerability and creating and seeking out spaces where they can discuss their vulnerability issues. Most participants could only recall a few times where they genuinely entered invulnerability, which was limited to times with their partners or close male friend(s). One participant described "writing things down in a notebook" as an outlet and being vigilant about keeping it hidden from his shipmates while on deployment.

He wrote about aspects of his life as a young man in his early 20s and all the frustration, sorrow, and hurt that he was currently experiencing. Notably, even 20 years later, he carefully avoided referring to it as journaling or writing in a diary. He stressed that he kept his notebook private and told no one about it. Many town hall participants discussed a lack of Black models of vulnerability, with a limited few from the media.

Discussion

Similar to past studies, we had difficulties recruiting and retaining Black men in town hall meetings to discuss domestic violence (Peretz, 2014, 2017). On the one hand, they likely expected to be admonished for the actions of their fellow men who perpetrate acts of domestic violence; on the other hand, they may take the perspective that domestic violence is a woman's problem (Peretz, 2014). These perceptions influence their willingness to participate in domestic violence prevention activities. We recognize the need to address these concerns upfront and explicitly. It is also essential to build rapport and establish an alliance with prospective participants at the onset of services. In addition, we should emphasize a strengths-based approach (Casey, 2010). Participants responded favorably to these approaches and demonstrated active engagement in the sessions. Still, we need to identify additional strategies to recruit and retain Black men in the work to end violence against women.

It is reasonable that the men identified fear as a barrier to intervening in domestic violence disputes. Research shows that men represent the majority of intimate partner-associated homicides (Virginia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, 2018). We should seriously consider strategies to minimize their risk of harm in ally programs. Critical attention should be given to safety measures men should take before intervening and assessing risk. We should emphasize maintaining the safety of all parties involved.

In contrast to the male/female co-facilitation promoted in AIP (Morrison, Cluss, Miller et al., 2017), female-led groups may be more appropriate for ally programs with Black men (Morrison, Cluss, Hawker et al., 2019). Given the explicit connection between early maternal neglect (Lloyd, 2018) and abuse and men's motives to end domestic violence, there may be healing qualities in a group led by women. Additionally, having women present may help to avoid the pitfalls of homosocial groups (Peretz, 2014). Future studies should seek to evaluate the value of female-led ally groups for Black men.

Because many participants had a history of therapy, mental health clinics that serve men may be promising recruitment sites for ally programs. Those with prior counseling could be ideal candidates because their self-awareness and introspection might insulate the participants against adverse changes in self-concept that may arise from increased awareness of their male privilege and the prevalence and impact of sexism (Bailey, Buchbinder, & Eisikovits, 2011; Peretz, 2014). Thus, we may strive to target this population. That is not to say that participants should be unscathed, but there may be risk involved in engaging men unprepared to take on this work.

Prior research shows that men who are unprepared may question their masculinity or sexuality, struggle with their self-worth as men, or project blame onto victims (Peretz, 2014). There may also be value in entrance surveys or pre-training readings to ensure that participants are ready to engage in the complex material. In the future, we will seek to explore the benefits and costs of such gatekeeping measures. Alternatively, we may tailor ally programs to match the assessment of men's current beliefs and attitudes (Casey, 2010; Casey & Smith, 2010). We will take measures to identify and evaluate how to effectively individualize ally programs to meet the needs of diverse perspectives.

We should also bear in mind possible linkages with counselors and/or religious and spiritual leaders. Research supports such collaborations, indicating that modern pastoral counseling is moving in promising directions (Wicks, Parsons, & Capps, 1992). While it has historically been a resource for those in need, recent advances have helped to correct religious beliefs that run counter to domestic violence efforts. These collaborations may be useful because Black men tend to use formal helping services less than informal ones, preferring help in barbershops and churches, religion, or talking to family members (DeAngelis, 2021). We may be able to partner and collaborate with religious, spiritual, and mental health counselors as well as informal community leaders to identify possible candidates, recruit, and lay the groundwork for ally work.

Given the prevalence of childhood trauma and the risk of adverse changes in oneself, our program should have a therapeutic component. Vulnerability is intricately related to domestic violence. Black feminist scholar Bell Hooks (1999) states: “Many men never want to feel helpless or vulnerable. They will, at times, choose to silence a partner with violence rather than witness emotional vulnerability” (p. 20). It is important to facilitate opportunities for Black men to be vulnerable as a means of reducing domestic violence. In addition, Black allies can benefit from a safe space to be fortified in their function of ending violence toward Black women. As noted by Peretz (2014), ally programs should seek to provide a safe space where Black men can speak their truth, be vulnerable, and receive support.

The term “safe space” can be traced back decades, though it is unclear exactly when it was first used. Vaughan Bell, a neuroscientist and lecturer at University College London, suggested that safe spaces initially cropped up in the late 1940s and gained traction in the 1960s and 1970s among queer, feminist, and anti-racist communities (as cited by Graham, 2021).

Graham (2021) asserts that the concept of safe spaces is now common in conversations among oppressed and marginalized groups. Safe spaces often include separation so a group of people can speak freely, move, and create for themselves a space in which they feel safe. Safe spaces provide opportunities for individuals to share with one another and create an uplifting and healing atmosphere (Brown & Mangan, 2016). As such, we recognize the need for the ally program to be a safe space that is culturally homogenous, respectful, and non-violent.

In addition to being a safe space, the town hall meetings revealed new insight that participants gain new information they can implement in their own relationships from the ally programs. The town hall meetings identified potential opportunities for growth, such as asserting one's needs in intimate partner relationships. Because the participants share the same gender as the perpetrators of abuse, it is likely that curricula can be developed to benefit the participants and the broader community directly.

The men's definition of *domestic violence* was limited to physical and verbal violence. We define *domestic violence* as a pattern in a relationship between power and control. It is physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and verbal. Historically, the power and control wheel have been foundational within the anti-violence/intimate partner violence movement. It is critical that our program help to shift the narrative to include more forms of abuse (Tonry, 1998). Education is needed about the dynamics of domestic violence. Toward this goal, the Duluth Model's power and control wheel may be a helpful tool (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 2017). It is based on research with survivors of abuse and lists common tactics used by domestic violence perpetrators to control and disempower their intimate partner. The wheel is divided into eight types of non-physical tactics: using coercion and threats, using intimidation, using emotional abuse, using isolation, minimizing, denying, and blaming, using children, using male privilege,

and using economic abuse (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 2017). Physical and sexual abuse circle the wheel in recognition that there is a reciprocal relationship between non-physical and physical abuse. We believe there is value in educating allies about the power and control wheel to enhance their understanding of domestic violence.

Conclusion

Following the importance of disseminating practice findings, this article shares insight from field innovation (Moss & Crewe, 2020). It presents information gleaned from a series of town hall meetings for Black men on domestic violence and provides the foundations of a novel community-based domestic violence program. The generalizations are limited in scope. The usefulness of the findings to other communities requires local adaptation. The hope is that it will spur agencies to replicate these steps to develop similar programs. In addition, research is needed to evaluate the outcomes of ally programs and their effect on rates of domestic violence (Coker, 2018). This article has also demonstrated the value of using CRT as a critical lens in practice and program development. Critical race theory allowed us to recognize the salient race-based factors and to account for the intersection of multiple dimensions of identity. It makes for a holistic and nuanced approach to domestic violence intervention and prevention.

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The Black Perspective Monograph 4: Critical Race Theory: Perspectives and Reflections

The Convergence of Critical Race Theory and Autism in the U.S.: Commentary

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Abstract

Persons who are racialized as Black and on the autism spectrum have converging identities that can lead to cumulative disadvantages across the life course. The principles of critical race theory can guide the understanding of barriers to racialized Black autistic persons achieving a high quality of life in a larger context of race-disability interactions. This article introduces critical race theory and provides a synopsis of CRT applications with Black autistic persons. In conclusion, the author considers what structural changes can reduce the vulnerability of neurodiverse Black individuals.

Introduction

Race and disability are both social and political identities. Black autistic people in the U.S. have unique lived experiences reflective of being neurodivergent in a society that is predominantly neurotypical but also a highly racialized nation. Racializing individuals in the U.S. has created a racial hierarchy in which darker-melanated individuals disproportionately experience structural disadvantages (Moore, Williams, & Baird, 2021; Wilkerson, 2021). Racialized Black individuals also experience elevated stress levels due to negative racial encounters across the life course that can have the addictive effect of leading to racial traumatization (Hargons, Malone, Montique et al., 2022; Hawkins, 2022; Maxie-Moreman & Tynes, 2022).

In acknowledgment that Black America is not a monolith, there are unique intersectional experiences of racialized Black persons that must be recognized. The unfortunate death of 23-year-old Elijah McClain in 2020 is a cautionary tale of the vulnerability faced by Black autistic people in the U.S. This article aims to elevate the profile of the Black autistic community in the context of critical race theory and to begin to consider ways to reduce the vulnerability of Black autistic individuals on a structural level.

Critical Race Theory Tenets

Critical race theory was developed in the late 1980s, with its genesis in legal studies. Critical race theory has increasingly gained traction as a grand theory for understanding race as a by-product of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 1999). The five core tenets of CRT raise consciousness among legal and social science scholars. These tenets include: race is a social construct, not biological; racism is the ordinary experience of persons of color in the U.S.,

not aberrational; interest convergence/material determinism; differential racialization; intersectionality; and storytelling/counter-storytelling.

Critical Race Examination of Race-Autism Interactions and Consequences

Scholars who focus on autism have scarcely given attention to intersectionality. Recently, there has been a greater acknowledgment that intersectionality is a glaring issue for minoritized individuals within the larger autistic demographic (Broder-Fingert, Mateo & Zuckerman, 2020; Davis, Solomon & Belcher, 2022; Jones & Mandell, 2020). A more significant push to include African Americans and other minoritized groups in autism research studies can be viewed as an interest convergence in academic research institutions. As a result of the national reckoning with the killing of George Floyd in 2020, researchers, including in the field of autism, are deepening their understanding of how to engage in respectful and culturally sensitive practices and how to recruit diverse samples as the status quo of a paltry number of racially diverse participants is less acceptable (Jones & Mandell, 2020; Maye, Boyd, Martinez-Pedraza et al., 2022).

Neurodivergent individuals who are Black/African American can face an added layer of persecution and hardship across their life trajectories (Giwa-Onaiwu, 2020), which can be linked to the CRT tenet of racism as an everyday experience for persons of color. Critical race theory lends itself early in the context of the developmental timeline of Black autistic infants and children. First, it is not uncommon for the concerns of Black parents to be ignored by pediatricians when, in fact, the voiced concerns were early signs of autism (Dababnah, Shaia, Campion et al., 2018). Parents cite pediatrician dismissal of concern as a key issue and one contributing factor to the racial gap in autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis. Another factor is Black children are at risk of multiple provider engagements when seeking an ASD diagnosis,

leading to a delay in diagnosis upwards of three years later (Constantino, Abbacchi, Saulnier et al., 2020).

The CRT tenet of intersectionality can be associated with Black families' troubles receiving an initial diagnosis, as autism diagnostic services are not always accessible in the U.S. Due to structural racism and redlining practices, communities with higher concentrations of African Americans often lack resources to increase the chance of receiving an early ASD diagnosis and commensurate linkage to autism care (Kaiser, Villalobos, Locke et al., 2022). Intersectionality continues to affect the care of Black autistic children as biases in providers affect treatment outcomes (Miller, Thomi, Patterson et al., 2022). Anti-Black racism perpetrated by autism clinicians is an issue several scholars are bringing attention to (Straiton & Sridhar, 2022).

During the adolescence/transition to adulthood years, Black autistic youth can face greater risk for criminal justice involvement and also be at greater risk for police brutality. Intersectionality and differential racialization converge for Black youth, who are often perceived negatively in society, with risk compounding for the autistic demographic. There is a growing concern that a disproportionate number of vulnerable Black autistic youth are funneled into the criminal justice system and at risk for homelessness. The intersectionality of race, autism, and poverty adds to the vulnerability of emerging into adulthood (Davis & Gourdine, 2022). Little research exists on the status of Black autistic adults nor aging Black autistic persons; however, the author speculates that the cycle of marginalization of Black autistic persons continues and that advocacy and self-advocacy are especially crucial for the Black autistic community throughout life.

Structural Change to Address the Vulnerability of Black Autistic Individuals

Until there is massive structural change, Black autistic people will face social injustices and undue difficulty in society. Change begins with an ongoing acknowledgment of structural racism and structural ableism and the colliding effects of intersectionality. As greater awareness and consensus are built that the harm resulting from intersectionality is too great for Black autistic individuals, their family systems, and the cost to the broader society, rightful change can be stimulated. Assessments of quality of care, including metrics for gauging whether care is culturally sensitive, are essential. The degree to which Black families are satisfied with any and all services provided to their autistic child is critical for accountability on the organizational level. It is hopeful that society will get to a place of honoring the dignity and worth of Black autistic persons wholly.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH REFLECTIONS

Where's the beef? Comments on the Attack on Critical Race Theory

Annie Woodley Brown

Okay, that phrase is somewhat dated. But the fragmented, toxic diatribe we are hearing on the teaching of history as related to race and White supremacy at this time seems dated. It is as if we are going back to the period after Reconstruction and the beginning of Jim Crowism. I did not think in 2023 that I would be penning a reflection against an attack on Black history! But this is where we find ourselves.

You cannot imagine my surprise when I awoke one morning to find that an academic theory—one I had used as a theoretical basis for a journal article I wrote—*Racism and the Church in America: Caught between the Knowledge of Good and Evil*—had been appropriated and thrust into the front lines in the battle of the culture wars. How had this idea, a practical theory for explaining systemic racism in our society, migrated from academia to become a hand grenade in the arsenal of hate and disinformation from the political right? Maybe we should start by establishing just what a theory is.

Basically, "a theory is a supposition or system of ideas intended to explain something." For example, Darwin's theory of evolution—controversial for some people—is a set of systematic observations that seek to explain how life forms came to be and who they are over millions of years to the present. Or consider Freudian psychology, a set of theoretical formulations used to explain and understand human behavior and ultimately to develop interventions to treat behavior disorders. Well, critical race theory (CRT) is basically a proposition that attempts to explain how it is in this country that Blacks and other people of color

are consistently and disproportionately represented on negative social indicators such as poverty, incarceration, homelessness, poor educational outcomes, etc. Using the tenets of CRT, it is because racism is embedded in the institutions of our society.

The currently manufactured hysteria over CRT is really a veiled attack against the teaching of Black (American) history. For you see, now, when any teacher attempts to teach American history that includes the truth about Black's and other people of color's experiences and contributions in the building of this nation, those who are invested in "making America Great Again" will use the misguided, uninformed arguments against CRT to galvanize opposition to such efforts.

Black people and other people of color have lived the terror and horror of racialized trauma and systematic discrimination; they have lived with broken treaties, racial violence, and trails of tears. And they have not turned against this country. Instead, they have embraced its ideals and sacrificed their lives to improve it. Why should Whites be upset about learning this history and their children being taught it? The purveyors of fear, afraid of true equality, grasp at anything to maintain the perceived status quo of White supremacy. Today, it is an organized propaganda rant against CRT. Tomorrow, it may be a deliberate disinformation campaign against the affirmation.

Our country is in peril! Take care that this outrage against critical race theory, this anti-intellectual nothingburger is not the last supper of our democracy.

"Anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present."

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The Evolution of Gentrification in Washington, D.C., Using Critical Race Theory

Robert Cosby

This information is offered to Social Workers and those in helping professions to help elucidate and better understand how gentrification has evolved using critical race theory. The use of terms *Black* and *African American* are used interchangeably. Gentrification worldwide has evolved but continues, at its core, to expose implicit and explicit bias, and inequities in power that include government sanctions and private biases. These biases have coalesced to form systemic racism that has played a role in gentrification in Washington, D.C. Critical race theory is one lens that is used to consider how systemic racism has played a major role in the maintenance of the power of one group over others.

Examining How Systemic Racism Has Impacted Gentrification in Washington, DC

Critical race theory (CRT), as defined by Civil Rights and Legal Scholars Karen Crenshaw (2011) and Richard Delgado (2017), suggests that race as a social construct is present in much of the world. Because of race's presence, racism exists and has been active throughout the entire history of the United States. CRT, as a verb, takes critical thinking and examines racism and its impact on people of color in the U.S. across at least the past 200 years. The result of this examination reveals a level of systemic and personal bias that has directly and disproportionately benefited one segment of society based on the color of their skin. Racism's incarnation in the U.S. legal systems and policies of the 19th- and 20th-century at the federal and local levels in Washington, D.C, shows that systemic racism exists across a wide cross-section of the U.S. Washington, DC, is singled out as an example of bias across housing, employment, and inheritance. This bias has exposed a direct relationship between benefits for one group and not for others. This is particularly present with inheritance or generational wealth. Generational

wealth has shown a direct and indirect effect and benefit for Whites while discriminating against and impeding Blacks and other people of color. One direct result of this discrimination has created greater opportunities, which can be compounded with gentrification. In using CRT to examine gentrification, one must consider that the evidence points to many benefits for one group. This is not circumstantial or by accident; rather, it has existed by design.

This article discusses how critical race theory has illuminated the evidence and the process by which generational wealth is accumulated and passed along. This process directly aids individuals in the purchase of properties. Gentrification benefits those with resources, who can then purchase properties. CRT is used in this Washington, DC, example to show how this can and does happen in other locations across the nation using a similar focus and model.

It should be noted that critical race theory, because of its use in exposing evidence of racism in the U.S., has become a lightning rod for criticism. The oppositional result has been individual and group criticism of how CRT has twisted what is right and wrong within our legal system and placed U.S. laws and practices under a bright light. This, in turn, has suggested U.S. moral values be placed under scrutiny as history has shown a pattern and practice of discrimination perpetrated by one group over another. To borrow from a biblical New Testament passage, Matthew 7:3-5 (McEleney, 1994), CRT has exposed the log in some people's eyes. Yet, the criticism of CRT by some who dispute its theoretical rigor pointed out by those using CRT reveals the disproportionate numbers of those who benefit from biased laws and disparate treatment of Blacks. This is particularly egregious when we see that we cannot be dispassionate about maltreatment in the same way as we cannot ignore laws that are amended to provide even more opportunities to those that already have excess. We cannot look the other way from those that have access to the highest levels of power in our country, in our states, and in our local

municipalities—to know who did what to whom, who looked us in the face and said there were no job openings, declined their mortgage requests based on color, ignored job skills, and downplayed education and history of work qualifications. These examples show that oppressors in positions of power and decision otherwise stacked the deck, giving preference to the whiteness of their skin. Words like privilege, superiority, and conservative values all appear to take on a different level of meaning when one provides the overlay of the color of our skin.

Individuals with less melanin in their skin may criticize CRT and point to more socio-economic studies that would indicate a biased history of conflict among people of color while denying many of the reasons for conflict, namely, conflict because of oppression. CRT suggests that critical thinking and a review of the laws and practices in the U.S. have created situations promoting conflictual relationships. In these settings, socio-economic status with a sociological class and status foundation, people of color appear at the bottom and Whites at the top. One cannot help but consider drawing a two-dimensional pyramid of generational wealth, such as on the U.S. dollar bill. Success in the U.S. appears to always have Whites at the top of the pyramid, with Black and Brown people at the bottom.

What is more alarming is the routine manner in which this realization is accepted as normal in the U.S. Consider whether this case showed that the pyramid was three-dimensional. If it were turned upside down based on proportionate populations and representation in positions of power and legal authority. It might show some differences. What cannot be escaped or minimized is that Whites remain in control of the laws, the resources, and the opportunities for future success throughout the U.S. This is especially true in Washington, DC. Thus, when discussing the lightning rod of critical race theory, one cannot deny the enlightenment of White "privilege" when looking at the laws, resources and power that are maintained by one group as

oppressive or exclusionary. Gentrification in Washington, DC, helps to show how this maintenance of power and oppression continues to occur.

Shapiro (2004) offered what is at the crux of the antecedents of gentrification's history. Gentrification is a history intertwined with racism and economic opportunity, perpetuating wealth, privilege, and power. Oliver (2013) suggests a different story be told in the U.S. when we discuss the implications of race and bias. The process of gentrification exists in many states, primarily in urban settings across the United States. To understand gentrification, one must understand the history of oppression and power that have systematically controlled the playing field (Prince, 2016). This chapter provides information on how gentrification developed and has expanded in Washington, DC, mainly because of a history of oppression and power.

The record and the law have historically shown that housing inequalities perpetuate through economic inequities (Freemark, Noble, & Hariharan, 2022; Hyra, Moulden, Weted et al., 2019; Rothstein, 2017). The inability to generate wealth with housing has recently been recognized as an old and persistent challenge. Due to gentrification, Blacks are priced out of the housing market, as are many Black and Brown people in Washington, DC (Prince, 2016). Some of these racism-related inequalities and inequities were hidden from the larger community. However, it has not been hidden from Black people, who are being oppressed and pushed out. Race and racism are social constructs that have shaped people's lives (Smedley, 2005).

Opportunities for people of color to acquire housing and become homeowners and business owners in Washington, DC, were primarily fueled by Black government workers' incomes (Weems & Weems, 1998; Yellin, 2013). However, President Woodrow Wilson's new administration's mandates included discriminatory policies such as segregation. Black people

were again held back as opportunities for them diminished, and life in Washington, DC, reflected more challenging economic times even though the country was seeing significant improvements. Purchasing a home has consistently been important for Black Washingtonians, like many for Americans because buying a house is tied to the American dream of success. Federal programs were introduced for mortgages and social programs for relief and support for White and Black federal workers. “Early social benefits established powerful norms about who deserved aid, what form of aid should be given, and which public and private agencies should provide aid and why” (Jensen, 2005, p. 43). Hayward (2013) explains how these policies and actions led to “racialized spaces” for Blacks. One example of this transfer is a picture of a Black woman who owned a fashionable brownstone home on 131 Adams Street, NW, in the Shaw community of Washington, DC, near Howard University. She is forced into a foreclosure sale. In the early 1940s, her house is auctioned off as children play in front of the house and onlookers gather. A small group of White men appear to caucus, waiting to bid on the property.

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration (VA)—beginning in the 1930s and continuing far into the 20th century—codified these practices as a continuation of policies built on the FHA’s *Underwriters Handbook for Banks, Real Estate Brokers, and Real Estate Agents* in 1937. In effect, this Underwriter’s Handbook provided incentives and channeled wealth and the accumulation of wealth towards Whites and away from Blacks (Hayward, 2013). During the Great Depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Administration campaigned on a platform to get Americans working again with its ‘New Deal’ programs. Federal policies were adopted or adapted at the state and local levels, from the Civil Conservation Corps, and the Works Progress Administration, to Social Security, to the mortgage lending market of banks, real estate agents, and brokers, along with community development

designed to help communities recover (Taylor, 2013). Such was the case for White Washingtonians. However, Black Washingtonians were told to stand in line behind Whites. The policies did help both Whites and Blacks. However, as implemented in some parts of the U.S., the policies continued to be designed to create generational wealth for Whites while preventing Blacks from homeownership and generational wealth (Feagin, 2013; Hawkins, 2020).

Figure 1 shows redlined areas where Blacks lived in Washington, DC, where mortgages and construction in Black neighborhoods were forbidden.

After the passage of the Housing Act of 1937, low-income public housing projects mushroomed in inner cities, replacing slums and consolidating minority neighborhoods. Major road construction and suburbanization further segregated American cities. At the same time,

Black Americans, as well as other citizens of color, found it extremely hard to qualify for home loans, as the FHA and the Veterans Administration's mortgage programs largely served only White applicants. Those discriminatory practices prevented people of color from accumulating wealth through homeownership.

According to Rothstein (2017), "the FHA legally fostered segregation and discrimination in our society and its public policy. The impact was so great that by 1950, the FHA and VA were insuring half of all new mortgages nationwide" (p. 70). DC Racial Covenants were also used as another way to exclude Blacks from White neighborhoods (Rose, 2016). Furthermore, these programs made it such that African Americans were significantly restricted from purchasing homes earmarked for Whites (Rothstein, 2017).

The historical record of homeownership for Black people is complex when you add the countless historical impediments from 1791 at the incorporation of Washington, DC, through the 20th and 21st centuries. When coupled with fewer opportunities for Black homeownership, the opportunity to pass on prosperity through generational wealth and inheritance is greatly diminished. Thus, it should not be surprising that the primary path for Black families to the middle class is becoming narrower and rockier.

A few recent statistics echo the impact of these government policies and practices' long-term historical and economic outcomes, either explicitly or implicitly condoned at the federal, state, and local levels (Thompson, 2022). Homeownership rates in Washington, DC, for Whites are 50.3% vs. 35.2% for Blacks, but White people's homes are seven times the value of Black people's homes (Thompson, 2022). Black people remain twice as likely to be denied a housing loan. Homeownership rates for Black people remain the lowest of all racial groups in the U.S. (Snowden, 2022). This information suggests that there is little generational wealth for Black

families. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the rate of African American homeownership nationally was 44.1% at the close of 2020, while the rate of White homeownership was 74.5%, proof of the widening gap (Thompson, 2022). Weller, Maxwell, and Solomon (2021) note that the historical path to the gentrification of generational wealth is fueled by resources that one group has, and the other does not, i.e, the Black-White wealth gap. Gentrification removes affordable housing in places like Washington, DC, and affordable housing stock diminishes over time as higher-priced private renters and homeowners replace it.

Thurber et al. (2021) compare small-scale neighborhood geographies in the United States and make a case for more research into understanding the participation and involvement of vulnerable, low-income residents in gentrifying neighborhoods. Social workers typically work in the community for local non-profit organizations or government agencies. Social workers in Washington, DC, work with clients from the youngest to the oldest, work with communities, develop or are assigned caseloads, and work these cases within the community. Often, social workers must network or explore ways to help clients achieve needed goals or otherwise work to meet the needs of their clients, such as working with older adults to address advocacy and group issues or broader community, organization, planning, or policy. In Washington, DC, one must look at the history of the residents, who possessed a rich history, indicating that the neighborhoods were more than the plank and stick-built wood houses or brick-and-mortar houses from which they were displaced. One aspect of systemic racism is the argument presented by Whites who dismiss that the foundation of oppression and the apparent economic incentives for one group and disincentives for another are created by government programs such as FHA. These individuals suggest that there is nothing wrong with systemic racism that does not affect

them and try to cloud the issues of racism in housing as simply a personal preference of many to self-segregate (Seicshnaydre, 2015).

Left out of that myth of Fair Housing are the policies that excluded Blacks from housing locations and choices. Such choice programs are skewed toward groups with more resources, such that inclusion in a program is based on amounts of money required for down payments. Real estate agents steer groups of Whites to higher-income neighborhoods where housing will appreciate more rapidly and be worth more than segregated and/or lower-income non-whites, largely Blacks. This is where the different housing communities can be clearly seen as benefiting or not based on FHA and VA mandates.

Figure 2. This David Moffat Myers photograph of Southwest D.C. was taken in 1939 prior to the

clearance of the neighborhood. This image, courtesy of the Library of Congress, is in the public domain.

The Federal Government established the Redevelopment Land Agency and the National Capital Planning Commission to design, monitor, and complete the redevelopment of Southwest D.C. under the District of Columbia Redevelopment Act of 1950, where the population was more than 70% Black. Urban Renewal and Redevelopment completed the Southwest DC project more than 10 years after the removal of Blacks. The population in the same area of owners and renters converted from 70% Black to over 70% White.

Housing for Blacks was further impacted by the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (Massey, 2015). Although the Fair Housing Regulation was mandated, the wealth associated with home ownership from previous policies was skewed in favor of Whites. More recent discussions about the inequity associated with these types of housing policies have been dismissed or discounted by people who say this had nothing to do with FHA policies; however, it was only due to market forces (Rothstein, 2017). Many go on to suggest that despite their gains, neither they nor the government are racist (Hannah-Jones, 2021). However, older African Americans have seen firsthand in many cases, how resource-rich individuals and families differs significantly from resource-poor individuals and families (Dickerson, 2020). When one group has systematically benefited from generational wealth, one can see more clearly how communities that are gentrifying are able to do so. This is because resources made possible by wealth disproportionately and negatively affect one group and advantage another. Due to the Veterans Administration using the same FDR cabinet policies of the New Deal, and decisions as identified with FHA in 1934 and after, Whites were able to move out of poorer housing with VA loans for

White GIs. Blacks were denied many of these same opportunities in Washington, D.C., and in many communities in the U.S. (Castagnola, 2015).

Black families have been afforded little to no ability to gain back the housing advantages lost by FHA and VA policies and procedures over decades. (Kimble, 2007). In true social justice fashion, a group working with lawyers suggested the formation of an Affordable Housing Administration Truth and Reconciliation Commission similar to that developed in South Africa after Apartheid officially ended (Gilmore, 2010). The proposed Commission would address the racism perpetrated by a Federal Government agency over decades that continues to have a dramatic impact on Black and White people. This request stalled within the U.S. Congress. Congresswoman Barbara Lee, also a Social Worker, introduced House Concurrent Resolution H.Con.Res.19—urging the establishment of a United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation. The bill was referred on April 28, 2021, to the House Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties (Congress.gov, 2022). In December 2020, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department sued the local housing authority on behalf of a mother and her child in Lone Wolf, Oklahoma. The prosecuting Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband of the Civil Rights Division stated:

> Denying people housing opportunities because of their race or color is an egregious violation of the Fair Housing Act,"… "Discrimination by those who receive federal taxpayer dollars to provide housing to lower-income applicants is particularly odious. The Justice Department will not tolerate illegal housing discrimination in any form, and we will continue to fight to protect the rights of all Americans to rent and own their homes without regard to their race or color (U.S. Justice Department, 2020; 2022).

The *Kelo v. New London*, Supreme Court of Connecticut (2005) decision involved eminent domain but did not address persons based on race or ethnicity. So, there have not been eminent domain lawsuits brought forward that have legal precedent that have been presented in a court of law on behalf of disenfranchised Blacks.

The wealth gap has shown stark contrasts in Black and White people's earnings, generational wealth, and opportunities (Anguelovski, Ranganathan, & Hyra, 2021). Those benefiting from oppression are at best indifferent to the pain and, at worse, blame African Americans solely for their plight of pain of displacement, loss of homeownership, or being relegated to continual rental housing (Carpenter, 2009). Opportunities for a lack of improved education and employment are contrasted with the by-products of this gentrification-related pain (Hannah-Jones, 2021). Gentrification can be beneficial to neighborhoods by increasing the tax base, school expectations, property values, attracting upscale businesses, landscaping amenities, and property development. With gentrification, there are often additional costs to city governments for attracting businesses, stores, etc. Local governments must and do provide more resources to these communities in terms of city services, road improvements, public safety, anchor stores, and boutique stores. However, the downside of gentrification is that these new residents that have gentrified the community and brought benefits that change the neighborhood have a disproportionately negative impact on typically less wealthy homeowners and renters (often Black). Gentrification causes underclass, poor groups, and Black people to relocate, which often reveals that race and class are impacted by the process (Glass, 1964; Fullilove, 2016).
A recent case study reveals changes in areas of Washington, D.C., once storied as the historically Black neighborhood surrounding "the Mecca" Howard University. This neighborhood, called

Shaw-Le Droit Park has changed. This strongly suggests that racism is historically significant and a serious social problem that continues globally and in Washington, D.C., today. This narrative of property values increasing, as well as rents, has made affordable housing harder to find. In Washington, D.C., the average urban median home is $712,046, up almost 3% in 2020, and even with COVID, increased to almost 6% in 2021 (Zillow, 2022). It should be noted that Washington, D.C, property values have increased every year since 2013, when the average home was $396,000 (Zillow, 2022). White and affluent families are returning to cities. Climbing from 28% of Washington, D.C.'s population at its all-time low, the White population today is nearly half the city's total. The Black population stands at 46%, down from 71% in 1970 (Gale, 2021). People unable to afford higher rents or property taxes have been forced to move. Many of these individuals are on fixed incomes. African Americans have had to work hard to locate alternative housing and seek out non-profit organizations or government agencies to find homes in Washington, D.C, and increasingly outside of Washington, D.C., in suburban Maryland, Northern Virginia, or wherever they could find housing, e.g., with family and friends, until more permanent housing could be procured. Social workers have typically found jobs that enable them to work as employees of non-profit housing coalitions, house-finding networks, and housing program associates, among others, to assist poor and disenfranchised individuals who have either lost rental housing or lost formerly owned homes. This includes the relocation or eviction of many older African Americans on fixed incomes. Historically, many of these impacted individuals are African Americans and older heads of households with younger family members.

Grand families (grandparents raising grandchildren) represent a growing number of families who were homeowners or long-term renters when housing was less expensive (Simpson, Pressley, Carthron et al., 2017). Now, with gentrification, higher property values and property

taxes have made housing too difficult to afford. They either lose the house due to taxes, are forced to sell due to missed mortgage payments, rent has been dramatically increased, or leases have been terminated because the owner is selling for a profit (Howell, Mueller, & Wilson, 2019). This makes gentrification the elephant in the room for moderate-to low-income households.

These experiences reveal changed housing policies from the 1990s, when rundown and abandoned properties were increasing and crime was also increasing such that some neighborhoods were no longer the tightknit and cozy communites that they once were. The families' stories of African Americans being oppressed and impacted by gentrification have existed for many decades. To illustrate these points, oral histories have been taken by Social Workers who identified the disparities through client interactions with older African Americans sharing their stories.

Defining Gentrification in the Latter 20th Century

Ruth Glass (1964) coined the term *gentrification.* She defined the phenomenon in London, England, stating:

> One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle class—upper and lower. Shabby modest Mews and Cottages…have been taken over when their leases expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses downgraded in an earlier or recent period—which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupations—have been upgraded once again. Once this process of "gentrification" starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers

> are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed (Glass, 1964, xviii).

Glass's *gentrification* definition is recognized as one of the first, if not the first definition of gentrification. In short, the definition involves the housing displacement of one group by another, more prosperous group. Glass argues that gentrification involves the process of an area that being adapted for the refurbishment and revitalization of an urban space that results in the displacement of low-income people who previously lived there. Another more modern definition of *gentrification* includes the United Nations *UN–Habitat's Leading Change: Delivering the New Urban Agenda through Urban and Territorial Planning*. In defining "gentrification," it is "The process of social change that takes place in a neighborhood, often previously occupied by low-income residents, as more affluent people move in" (UN-Habitat 2018, p. 5).

Understanding the History of Gentrification in Washington, D.C.

Through much of the U.S., arguably until the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s (Gates, 2020), even in Washington, gentrification has been a growing economic, racial, policy, and social work issue. Yet, little has been written about this by social workers (Thurber et al., 2021). Social work practice, group work, community organizing, and advocacy have been parts of communities in Washington, D.C. As social workers explore solutions to the gentrification equation, there is more that can be done with planning, research, and finding alternatives to gentrification that promote affordable housing for all groups, particularly older adults. There must be more changes for Social Work because it has not been visibly recorded, much the same way that Black people who positively contributed to the fabric of this United States have not been visible, been ignored, and their history overlooked.

Housing remains an important and necessary issue for survival and is often taught from Maslow's hierarchy of needs to issues of racial struggle amidst racism. The impact of gentrification on housing and communities has caused untenable situations for many Black families and individuals living in Washington, D.C. Historically, Whites have received support from the government at the local, state, and federal levels at disproportionate rates. This is not typically support for the homeless or support for public housing, even though many receive some form of support. This sheds light on the issue of racism over time and the economic and policy implications that continue exacerbating the Black and White wealth gap that contributes to gentrification (Koma, 2020; Thurber et al., 2021).

As fair housing advocate Charles Abrams wrote, "from its inception, FHA set itself up as the protector of the all-white neighborhood. It sent its agents into the field to keep negroes and other minorities from buying houses in white neighborhoods" (Schwartz, 2021, p. 75). The FHA fostered embedded segregation and discrimination into our society and its public policy. Richard Rothstein, author of *The Color of Law*, further notes that the Veteran's Administration adopted all of the FHA's racial exclusion programs (Rothstein, 2017), and together these programs segregated White communities that received this federal support from Black communities that did not receive such support. Thus, this historical trend of FHA systemic racism was copied by the VA, which systematically denying GIs of color from obtaining favorable financing through VA, mortgage loans. These denials have had a cumulative effect on generational wealth.

This *du jure* (the law) process of gentrification has both an official and an unofficial side. This means, from the government regulator position in the Federal Government, the commercial developer permit and tax assessment processes have been revised in the D.C. Office of Tax and

Revenue (OTR) and are now easier to work through. The D.C.- OTR, like in many jurisdictions, now has coded electronic applications online (https://otr.cfo.D.C..gov/) and is often being further refined, making it easier for real estate developers to do business, including purchase properties, pay taxes, and obtain permits to begin the process of building new or rehabbing existing properties.

In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, poor communication between the government, contractors, and the D.C. community (Urban Renewal staff) using systemic processes like eminent domain negatively impacted Black families. One outcome is that individuals and families were segregated into more dense areas than before, not as homeowners but as renters (Leigh, 2021). They could not find adequate housing in good neighborhoods as White realtors and residents made it impossible to move past certain boundary markers. When you add the countless numbers of historical impediments from 1791 through the 20th and 21st centuries, the historical record of homeownership for Black people has been challenging. This is a huge issue. When coupled with fewer opportunities to have wealth, much less share that wealth through inheritance, as with generational wealth, it should not be surprising that the primary path to the middle class has been difficult. “Poverty in the past has been basically the result of the fact that there was not enough to go around,” wrote Ball. “By contrast, today it can be taken as a fact that the abolition of want in the United States is no longer a problem of economic capacity” (Longman, 2015).

Affordable housing diminishes over time. Gentrification is an economic and political restructuring impacting urban communities nationally. The process of gentrification is deeply rooted in social dynamics and economic trends. The effects and the associated trajectories are, to a large degree, determined by each community’s local context. In Washington, D.C., this context

requires that we review the historical layers of oppression, specifically, the physical and social characteristics of the neighborhoods and communities where gentrification has occurred.

Helbrecht (2017) speaks to the economic-induced displacement, consequential loss of place, and rising resistance (by people being displaced) in reaction to what is imposed by gentrification. Critical race theory is used to "contextualize the continued role that race plays in the lives of African Americans and other people of color who are not often privileged by mainstream educational, cultural, political, and economic opportunities" (Lawson-Borders, 2019). This was historically the case and continues.

As Crewe (2017) notes, "…urban communities have undergone major displacement of longtime residents, thus placing older persons at particular risk of social isolation and the loss of social networks" (p. 53). This process, according to Fullilove (2016), is tearing up city neighborhoods and hurting African Americans, creating a psychological condition that Fullilove refers to as "root shock." This condition manifests symptomatology, such as depression, anxiety, anger, and social isolation. These symptoms are directly related to the losses associated with gentrification.

African American adults living in Washington, D.C., are particularly challenged by the trends associated with gentrification (Gillette, 1995; Shinault & Seltzer, 2019). There is evidence to suggest that they experience intensified discrimination and exclusion in gentrified neighborhoods (Wyly & Hammel, 2004). This gentrification appears and re-appears over many decades in Washington, D.C. The effects of this gentrification lend themselves to the saddening influence of social isolation on Black families caught in this divide. As the neighborhoods change and the number of people displaced by gentrification increases, older adults are faced with a depletion of their social ties and the resources inherent in these relationships. Lives are

significantly changed, and the experience of social isolation is marked. There is a connection between social ties and the settings in which they are produced. It is well documented in the literature that where one lives can determine the character and availability of social resources. A hypothesis that may be identified but is often accepted by inference is that with gentrification, we can expect social isolation to be exacerbated as social ties are depleted.

Role of the Multidisciplinary Gerontology Center

The Multidisciplinary Gerontology Center (MGC) at Howard University, School of Social Work, has a history of serving as a conduit for establishing interdisciplinary scientific pursuits that enhance the understanding of gentrification and its impact on older African Americans. Faculty from the Howard University Multidisciplinary Gerontology Center (HUMGC) have observed how gentrification has had a lasting impact on Washingtonians. There is a paucity of data that explores the specific impact of gentrification on social isolation among older African Americans. Crewe (2017), in her article on *Aging and Gentrification*, has addressed issues of social isolation, and the growing impact of gentrification on older African Americans, and the impact on their families and caregivers. The study speaks to the displacement of families and family structures because of the rising economic and community trend toward gentrification.

Smith, Lehning, and Kyeongmo (2018) examine the increasing phenomenon of gentrification. Most studies on the impact of gentrification on older residents have focused on those who relocate from the affected communities. This chapter focuses on gentrification in Washington, D.C., as an example of historical oppression, and the result forces social workers to examine the effects of the gentrification on the lives of disenfranchised African Americans,

many of whom, now older, have spoken about the mental health strains upon the economically vulnerable.

To add fuel to the gentrification issue, between 2013 and 2015, there were over 26,000 Black low-income renters in Washington, D.C., who were spending over 50% of their income on rent (Gillette, 2020). The social worker's role continues to be one of examining the neighborhood residents before and after gentrification and looking at the relationships. This is where one can see where oppression has removed the communities of one group and helped promote and sustain another group. Typically, social workers meet the client where they are, listening to their story and examining their needs. In so doing, social workers look for positive interaction with the client and identify and work to develop interventions that will be sustained at least long enough to help the client meet their basic needs. But what if those needs were met previously until oppressors wrestled them from individuals and families?

Critical race theory helps one see that the legal and policy biases directly affect the balance of power and wealth in the United States. In Washington, DC, sharing one small piece of the wealth puzzle and the impact of disparate treatment upon poor people would indicate that historically the intersection of social isolation and gentrification can be found in residential settings that are pushing out poorer groups who are disproportionately Black. The practice continues today. In these settings, older adults are sandwiched between their health and aging and have to care for children and, increasingly, grandchildren. The issues of social isolation among older grandparents and the complexities of gentrification in local communities require more research into why, as Ruth Glass noted in 1964, there is a tipping point that results in whole communities changing.

The change of community due to gentrification can dramatically affect older adults who have lived their whole adult lives, often with generations of families, in a community that seemingly changes overnight. These changes include living where they do not know the newer neighbors who have moved into their neighborhood. The newer residents moving in do not know the older adults, their families, or the history of the community. In many cases, the new neighbors have brought with them, in rapid succession, their friends and more potential new neighbors, totally changing the character and culture of the community. Some older adults note that these new developments remind them of previous days of segregation but without community cohesion (Robinson, 2022). In Washington, DC, in addition to the responsibilities of caring for grandchildren during what should be their golden years, seniors over the age of 60 are vulnerable to social isolation because their resources are squeezed. These challenges can profoundly impact their quality of life (Baernholdt, Hinton, Yan, et al., 2012).

Conclusion

Crewe (2017) identifies gentrification as a global issue with adverse health effects, social isolation, and the loss of social networks. The gentrification phenomenon is growing as it did in the late 20th century and the 21st century. Now, in the 2020 decade, the lens is more transparent. Observations show that gentrification affects poorer communities and transforms them globally into more palatable residences for the resourced middle and upper classes. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic also negatively impacted African Americans by accelerating gentrification as families lost jobs, particularly in the service sector. Historically, when the U.S. economy rebounds from a crisis, the racial gaps in income, home equity, and wealth do not shrink (Neal & McCargo, 2020).

The wealth gap has shown stark contrasts in Black and White earnings, generational wealth, and opportunities (Anguelovski et al., 2021). Those benefiting from oppression are indifferent to the pain and, at worse, blame African Americans solely for their plight. The pain of displacement, loss of homeownership, or being relegated to continual rental housing is supposed to be wholly African Americans' fault (Carpenter, 2009). The historical data shows this has much more to do with systemic racism (Oliver, 2013).

In the United States, the result of gentrification is that some groups, such as working-class or out-of-work African Americans in Washington, D.C., cannot afford to stay in their communities (Hannah-Jones, 2020). Some may have lived on the same block for generations. The new gentrified residents provide significant initial investments and demand that the government provides additional resources such as walkable communities with safer and improved streets, better access to public works, improved sanitation, schools, parks (for animals and people), restaurants/bars, and grocery stores (Rice, 2020). Most people want these types of assets, but the opportunities are not equivalent. In turn, the gentrified newer community members enjoy safer, more scenic, refurbished neighborhoods, and increased property values.

For most families in the U.S., the house and home are their single most significant investments in generational wealth, so when they lose them, they receive no return on that investment (Longman, 2015). In other settings, the primary reason for the loss of wealth has been government policies that disproportionately helped one group and hurt another (Rothstein, 2017). Systemic racism has dramatically added to this gentrification scenario nationwide and in Washington, DC. Legislators in Washington are now working harder on this issue (Bowser, 2022). It is not too late, but generations have been negatively affected by racism in housing. In short, the horse has already left the barn. Increasingly, more Americans, particularly older

African Americans, can lose out because, even though they may have worked hard to become house rich, they can also quickly lose that asset.

People of color have historically had less access to liquid assets like available money in the bank. This lack of cash and liquid assets is a big problem for older adults, as grandparents deal with the problematic conditions associated with the stress of having to move and the concomitant stresses of family relationships pushed by gentrification. More and more Black families have to weigh the best of some poor options, often accepting a deal to get out of debt but losing their homeownership. Blacks without ownership, like renters, must often seek the services of an agency or government social workers. From the days of slavery to the days of Civil Rights, the road to gentrification has been well marked. Critical race theory has demonstrated how this occurred in Washington, D.C., and can and does occur in communities of haves and have-nots across the United States.

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Framing Gang Membership on the Cape Flats in South Africa:

A Critical Race Theory Perspective

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Abstract

In this article, we reflect on the socio-political aspects of research findings on youth in gangs and use key tenets of the critical race theory to consider the significance of the role of race and subjugation in the continued allure of gang membership on the Cape Flats. As such, we frame youth gang membership focusing on race, racism, class, gender, and citizenship (for example, forced removals, relocation, exclusion, community, environmental influences, and living conditions) and challenge the dominant narrative on gangsterism in South Africa, aiming to re-center marginalized perspectives on the issue.

We draw on our experiential knowledge as Black South Africans who experienced apartheid, as social workers who have worked on the Cape Flats during and post-apartheid, and as academics who have conducted research in these communities. Aside from our own experiences, we also relied on multiple perspectives, not only interdisciplinary but also from different cohorts of participants, i.e., youth, caregivers, and service providers who formed part of this 3-year study. The themes focus on socio-political causes and effects, the substantial and enduring effects on careers, family, and community, and particularly the kinds of survival and resilience shown. In accordance with the key tenets of CRT, the significance of using CRT is the following: the importance of reflecting the intersectionality of race with other forms of subjugation or oppression; to place the experiences of marginalized communities front and center of discussions, decisions and planning; valuing experiential knowledge and wisdom; as well as endorsing interdisciplinary and multiple perspectives.

Keywords: apartheid, Cape Flats, critical race theory, gang membership, racism

Introduction

Generally, people have an opinion of what race is or what race means from their standpoint. Milner (2017) brings to our attention the components inherent in the meanings of race, for example, physical, contextual, social, legal, and historical. People interact and engage with others, and these engagements help to determine the social construction of race. Race is not only an encoded system of biological or genetic laws; these components are interwoven into what we ultimately consider as race. In isolation, race can be interpreted as being physically determined, but in interactions with other people, meanings, communication, perspectives, and outcomes have differing interpretations and implications for determining race. Race is also historically formed in terms of how a particular group has been regarded or disregarded in society over a significant period of time (Milner, 2017).

Critical race theory (CRT) emerged in the mid-1970s from within the legal academy, initially focused on interrogating the racial preconceptions and prejudices entrenched in legal processes, regulations, judgements, and law associations (Bracey, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Wesp, Scheer, Ruiz et al., 2018). American legal scholars, including Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Cheryl Harris, Charles R. Lawrence III, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams, amongst others, are noted in this regard. These scholars came to the realization that the gains that had been made in civil rights in the United States context since the 1960s had halted and even diminished (Haskins & Singh, 2015; Martinez, 2020; Milner, 2017).

Critical race theory is understood to be an over-arching structure to integrate key scholarly viewpoints that interrogates the current interpretations of race and law. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) emphasize that CRT consist of the contributions of academics and revolutionaries who focus on the scholarship and reconstruction of the linkages between race, racism and power within the spheres of social society, such as history, economics, group/individual interests, and interestingly in

feelings and awareness levels. Kochanek and Erickson (2020) clarify that CRT philosophy situates race as foundational to a person's life experiences that are entrenched in social processes and power formations.

The CRT original theorists, notes Martinez (2020), focused on the approach used by Bell, Delgado, and Williams, who contended that discounting racial differences only serves to maintain the racial divisions already in existence and thus leaves the myriad inequalities as is, underscoring the lived experiences of a vast majority of people. Thus, Haskins and Singh (2015) aver that the main outcome of CRT is to deal with racism and White dominance that openly or obliquely subjugate the opinions of other marginalized racial groups. These authors view CRT as a deconstruction tool for examining issues relating to race, racism, and power (Haskins & Singh, 2015).

Focusing on the post-apartheid period in South Africa, Conradie (2016) used the CRT to distinguish between two persistent themes from South African literature that are enduring systemic inequalities along racial lines and the different forms of common-place racism and antagonism which are hard to situate within a legal framework. The latter is increasingly made more difficult to discern because of its furtive nature and claims of denial and lack of meaningful engagement and conversation regarding race.

Conradie (2016) also cautioned against the easy acceptance of an essentialist view of race purporting that race is mostly stable characteristics (rather than an adaptable social construction) which implies then that race is used as the default lens of perceiving similarities and differences amongst people. Importantly, Conradie (2016) argued that this basic way of discerning what are complicated social processes depicts race as a biological rather than a social formation. In South Africa, it is still important to interrogate differing notions of what race means for common-place

engagements and its various effects on the social fabric of life and on our interpretations of events as these unfold.

Milner (2017) argues that though scholars and activists will make headway in tackling racism, it will not be completely eradicated, and therefore advises that sustained engagement with race and racism are crucial. Critical race theory provides a conceptual framework for analyzing how race and racism have become embedded in mainstream policies, processes, and infrastructure and how these continue (Sleeter, 2017). It is worth noting, therefore, that a fundamental assumption of CRT is that racism is not an anomaly but is a way in which society has been arranged.

The Context of Gang Membership in Cape Town, South Africa

The origins of gang formation and membership in South Africa are an interesting phenomenon, albeit ironic, since the establishment of the first gang, called the Globe gang, was initially formed in District Six to combat crime in the area (Jensen, 2010; Wegner, Behardien, Loubser et al., 2016). District Six is a well-known area on the slopes of Table Mountain traditionally inhabited by people of color. In District Six, the mix of cultures became its trademark, with people from various rural and urban areas with indigenous and freed slaves (from Malaysia and Indonesia) merging into one vibrant neighbourhood. The area though became characterized by overcrowding and increasing joblessness, and the resultant poverty rendered households without the resources and means to make a decent living. The Globe Gang arose from these circumstances, consisting of family members of the shop owners and small businesses in the area around the Globe Furniture Store, and who took it upon themselves to ‘police’ the area around their businesses and properties (Pinnock, 2016).

The Group Areas Act disrupted this social order and dispersed families and communities to the isolated areas on the Cape Flats—a flat, inhospitable terrain about 30 kilometers in diameter.

With it began the flourishing of gang activities and criminal behavior now found widespread in these areas (Bowers du Toit, 2014; Salo, 2006). Social workers and other helping professions, policymakers, government departments, community members, and parents are concerned about the continuous surge and uptake of adolescents involved in gangs (Petrus & Kinnes, 2019).

In Cape Town, primarily colored[1] people were removed from their ancestral land to make way for housing for White people. Bowers du Toit (2014) argued that gang-joining and gang activities are a significant 'social cost' of forced removals of established communities. Compelling reasons for the continued existence and, indeed, the proliferation of gangs on the Cape Flats have to do, according to Pinnock (2017), with local and international economics, high levels of corruption and maladministration, poor education and skills training, and the socio-political neglect of specific communities. These conditions have pushed more than 100,000 people into becoming members of about 130 gangs on the Cape Flats (Dziewanski, 2020).

Gang members account for most crimes in a given area in which they operate (Augustyn, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2014). Gangs are ever-present in the greater Cape Town area, specifically on the Cape Flats. Dolley (2018) called gangsterism on the Cape Flats 'a serial killer'. Crime statistics bear out this analogy. According to the Western Cape Government (2019a), in 2017-2018, most (83%) gang-related murders in South Africa occurred in the Western Cape. In the 2018-2019 crime reporting period, the Cape Flats recorded the highest gang violence (Western Cape Government, 2019b).

The Tenets of Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory has a multi-disciplinary ethos, but there are tenets to the theory that serve as binding principles (Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Martinez, 2020). These tenets also serve as epistemological and ontological foundations for CRT, as these provide the ways that knowledge and

values are discussed and interrogated within the tenets (Martinez, 2020). In this article, the authors use the five tenets of CRT proffered by Howard and Navarro (2016) as a framework for our reflections on youth in gangs.

Centrality of Race and Racism

Race is "an arbitrary, socially constructed classification of individuals…" (Hays & Erford, 2014, p. 8), and racism is "culturally sanctioned beliefs that, regardless of the intentions involved, defend the advantages Whites have because of the subordinated positions of racial minorities" (Wellman, 1977, p. 42). Based on these definitions, we can conclude that both race and racism are socially constructed and are difficult to eradicate because they are viewed as normal, permanent features of society and are part of people's daily experiences of social, political, and economic control (Hiraldo, 2010; Howard & Navarro, 2016).

Like in many other societies, history plays a vital role in the creation and entrenchment of systemic racism in South African society. The racist philosophy of the apartheid government effectively promoted and guaranteed "Afrikaner nationalist historiography" (Kallaway, 1995, p. 12). This historiography promoted racial segregation. It advocated the myth that the Afrikaners were chosen by God to lead and civilize Africans. As such, an "Afrikaner-centred European perspective" was the preferred narrative to justify institutionalized racism, completely denying the history of Africans from an African/indigenous perspective (Engelbrecht, 2008, p. 519). Thus, the Afrikaner-centered European perspective of race contributed to the creation of the notion of White supremacy in South Africa during apartheid, which is still entrenched in the social, political, and economic spheres of our society today. This misrepresentation of race and racism systematically denied indigenous South Africans citizenship rights, a sense of identity, and belonging in their own country. This White supremacist historiography, from a distinctly pro-Boer[2] version, is contrary to the

versions through oral history purported by indigenous elders and has no resemblance to the perspectives of European scholars (Stolten, 2003, p. 3).

In our 3-year study on school gangs on the Cape Flats—although conducted more than 20 years after the abolishment of apartheid—the influence of race and the impact of racism in relation to social, political, and economic oppression are reminiscent of the current infrastructural and systemic causes of the allure of youth into gangs. The participants (school youth, caregivers, and service providers) in our study described their perceptions and experiences in relation to social, political, and economic oppression and the adversarial role of the police in dealing with people of color as stemming from apartheid, which was experienced by indigenous people as oppressive and denigrating. As such, participants in our study described experiences of being stereotyped along with apartheid notions of being of an inferior race, which have indoctrinated and inculcated a sense of inferiority and a lack of belonging. Our findings concur with Howard and Navarro's (2016) assertions that race and racism are indeed difficult to eradicate because it is so entrenched in the fabric of society, and are part of people's daily experiences in terms of their social and political status, and the lack of resources, and economic oppression, and exclusion further exacerbate subjugation and oppression of people of color. What's more, this state of affairs persists despite our current democratic rules of law and our people-centered and progressive Constitution.

In the social sciences, converging and overlapping identities have come to be known as *intersectionality*, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a law professor in the U.S. Atewologun (2018) explains that an intersection means the coming together at a juncture or point between and amongst two or more social characteristics that we possess or through processes of power, governance, tyranny, or subjugation.

The intersection between race, gender, ethnicity, and class as forms of subordination in CRT cannot be ignored. As such, we explored this intersection by examining the role of these forms of subordination in relation to our study focusing on school gangs. We found that gender, in terms of the role of the father, directly influences youths' choices in gang membership, which is linked to absent fathers and second and third-generation youth (males and females) joining gangs as a form of rite of passage. While there was anecdotal evidence of ethnic oppression, this aspect was not a key feature in our study; however, we did find that some participants' perception of colored "skollie" is linked to their identity as a person of color and is inculcated through objectification and stereotypical social constructs by the dominant narrative constructed under apartheid.

Jensen (2010) notes that the perception of a colored man was denoted in the term *skollie* (Dutch 'schoelje') to mean "the scavenger, the urban menace, lurking in dark alleys and backstreets" (p. 80). This notion is tied to the dominant narrative that colored males on the Cape Flats, in particular, have a disposition for gangsterism and associated challenges such as drug and alcohol abuse and incarceration. Unfortunately, this dominant perspective is far too often engrained in the minds of many people of color too, as participants in our study explained that youth often join gangs due to economic and peer pressure because gangs offer financial stability and physical and territorial protection, providing a sense of belonging and role models, albeit negative role models in the sense that gang members have to be initiated into gangs by committing acts of crime and often acts of violent crimes. The use of CRT in our study is appropriate as it examines the centrality of race and racism alongside other forms of subordination that had a profound impact and influence on the participants in our study.

Challenging the Dominant Perspective

According to Howard and Navarro (2016), the dominant perspective in CRT refers to a particular set of narratives emerging from the subjective experience of the dominant group, (generally White supremist) who informs institutions responsible for the creation, maintenance, and exchange of knowledge (i.e., government institutions, schools, law enforcement agencies, institutions of higher education, etc.), thereby creating social reality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) while at the same time informing society's understanding of that reality (Cook, 2013). The CRT challenges this dominant perspective and any claims of objectivity, meritocracy, or color blindness by interrogating such notions and bringing into question practices that negate the true lived experiences of marginalized populations who are subjected to a structurally-oppressive society (Lemmons & Johnson, 2019).

In applying CRT, we were able to explore and describe the social, political, and economic factors that have disrupted the lives of people of color on the Cape Flats and intruded on their involvement in the social, political, and economic sphere, reinforced mainly by a misguided White minority that formed the dominant class under Apartheid South Africa whereby indigenous people were socialized to remain in positions of subordination (Wassermann, 2015; 2017). This perspective is void of objectivity, meritocracy and color-blindness as it indicates that indigenous people were meant to remain impoverished without adequate resources and infrastructure, resulting in most indigenous people being susceptible to economic oppression and exploitation, of which these are still prevalent on the Cape Flats and continues to be a contributing factor in the allure of youth into gangs. We found that interventions aimed at community and youth development were plagued by challenges as apartheid created qualitative and quantitative disparities between White and colored communities in that the resources required to provide such developments on the Cape Flats were not

nearly sufficient to address the high prevalence of poverty and unemployment among colored youth making them susceptible to gangsterism.

By confronting these dominant perspectives that people of color are *skollies*, lazy, lack motivation, and have low levels of intelligence, we assert that studying youth in gangs from a dominant lens utilizing a framework that neglects to take into account their own narratives and that of the people close to them, are counter-productive and reinforce the dominant misguided narratives of colored youth on the Cape Flats. We hold that self-reports and dominant culture portrayals emphasize the importance of counter-narratives to understand and accurately portray the lived experiences of marginalized populations.

We concur with Solórzano and Yosso (2002) that critical race methodology "generates knowledge by looking to those who have been epistemologically marginalized, silenced and disempowered" (p. 162). As such, we explored and described the voices of the participants in our study—youth, caregivers, and service providers—to challenge the ways that the dominant culture examines them and to provide agency and counter-narratives to understand and accurately portray their stories. Thus "voice scholarship provides a 'counter-story' to counteract or challenge the dominant story" and, in so doing, organizes the words of marginalized populations into communities of resistance, thereby confronting dominant ideology and being intentional about deconstructing the notions of objectivity, meritocracy, and color blindness (Bell, 1992; Christie & Collins, 1982; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2000).

The consequences of suffering through the brutality of colonialism in its many forms have severely affected people of color on the Cape Flats and have remained neglected and ignored. We found that very few welfare organizations view social issues through the lens of colonization. Therefore very few interventions are directly linked to deconstructing the dominant negative

narratives perpetuated by apartheid. We admit that the participants' experiences in our study are context-specific, as in the Western Cape; for example, we could think of gang membership as symptomatic of the violence of colonialism and apartheid.

We concur that an interdisciplinary approach is required, inclusive of marginalized populations who must establish measures to support, secure, and build resilience in such populations, thereby providing the counter-narratives. This will help marginalized populations fulfill their obligations, and they can develop optimally. Social workers and other similar professions (as well as religious organizations) cannot do it alone—taking full responsibility for addressing the socio-political structural oppression that is necessary for human development. It is essential that social work intervention with gangs and youths and that knowledge and experience to work with the phenomenon are regularly offered through continuous introspection of who drives the dominant narratives and confronting such resistance to social justice, inclusion and empowerment.

Structural inequality contributes to the dominant discourse of the allure of youth to gangs. Communities and scholars must be equipped to function in the midst of the discourse until solutions are found, and economic recovery, inclusion, and the counter-narrative is promoted instead. It is, therefore, clear that a critical race approach is needed, which should include several sectors, such as social services, education, other government institutions, and the private sector, in order to address this complex phenomenon of youth in gangs on the Cape Flats.

Commitment to Social Justice

Critical race theory places a strong emphasis on social justice and thus emphasizes the importance of understanding the root causes and perpetuating systems that entrench injustices from the perspectives of the oppressed themselves. In so doing, CRT prioritizes social justice through transformational approaches in its methodology. Collaboration is one of the fundamental

components of CRT. Therefore, when critical race practitioners partner with marginalized populations, it allows for more meaningful and in-depth exploration of the meaning of people's lived experiences and their positionality concerning such experiences, and in so doing, getting to the root causes rather than superficial accounts of their experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT prioritizes voices of color speaking to their experiences of race and racism, and White supremacy, and their stories represent resistance to the dominant narratives and also emphasize the need for social justice (Zuberi, 2011).

Drawing on our experience as social workers during and post-apartheid, we have first-hand experience emerging from the dominant narrative that apartheid has long been abolished and that it is not accurate to blame the current adversities of people of color on apartheid. This would be inaccurate and a denial of the power of historical and contemporary racism. This way of reasoning holds marginalized populations responsible for their oppressive status and what Ryan (1976) refers to as blaming the victim. The abolishment of apartheid in 1994 by no means leveled the playing field for people of color in South Africa because they do not have equal potential compared with their White counterparts as resources continue to be qualitatively and quantitatively skewed along racial lines. We, therefore, agree with Zamudio, Russell, Rios, and Bridgeman (2011):

> Meritocracy assumes a level playing field where all individuals in society have an equal opportunity to succeed. Meritocracy also assumes that one's work ethic, values, drive, and individual attributes, such as aptitude and intelligence, determine success or failure. In a society where education is considered the great equalizer, the myth of meritocracy has more than just ideological connotations. If natural ability and hard work (i.e., merit) are the keys for success, then those who fail to achieve, it is believed, have only themselves, their families, or, at best, a

> random fateful turn of luck to blame. Thus, despite the existing inequalities in society, it is believed that universal education in a free society provides every child with the equal opportunity to achieve his or her potential (Zamudio et al., 2011, pp. 11-12).

In our study, we found that access is vital to ensuring social justice. We found that there was a high school dropout rate among people of color on the Cape Flats and that there are gaps in the schooling system in as far as alternatives to mainstream schooling is concerned. This exacerbated the lack of skills and low literacy levels thereby perpetuating social inequality and is in essence an infringement on social justice. As academics, we thought it necessary to highlight such injustices by disseminating the findings of our study on various platforms in media, conferences, seminars, and through publications as a means to demystify the misconceptions of the allure of youth in gangs because we maintain that the issue is much more complex than what the dominate narratives promote, i.e., that youth merely join gangs because they are misfits and have a predisposition for gangsterism, substance abuse and incarceration by virtue of their race and ethnicity. Our study highlights the need to address and advocate for this marginalized population. As such, we emphasize the importance of understanding the root causes and perpetuating institutionalized systems that entrench injustices. We address these through transformational approaches, by including social work students from marginalized populations, youth, caregivers and service users in marginalized communities to be part of the study.

As female and colored academics in social work, we take pride in our ethical commitment to social justice and address oppression through diversity awareness and a cultural competency lens. However, the cultural competency framework is not sufficient as it singles out culture and ethnicity and under-estimates the significance of race and racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Social Work Policy

Institute, 2014). Since we wanted to examine how categories of race result in differential social power and racism, which contributes to inequality and injustice, we contextualize the allure of youth to gangs from a critical race perspective. Thus, we chose to address social justice as a key tenant in CRT to unmask the historical legacy of Apartheid in South Africa, and we hold that more comprehensive and historically-centered approaches are used to understand the lived experiences of people of color in terms of exclusion and marginalization. In using a critical race perspective in our study, we hope to prioritize social justice as a means to educate and bring about awareness and movement toward equality in South African society.

Valuing Experiential Knowledge

Howard and Navarro (2016) point out that CRT research and discussions revolve around the narratives and stories of people of color as a means to better understand social inequality and injustices (also see Yosso, 2005). In this way, using narratives and storytelling is founded on the oral history traditions of indigenous peoples. Conradie (2016) also asserts that CRT encourages research that focuses on the connotations of race through the day-to-day activities of people by using narrative data in qualitative research methods, for example. Elevating the mode of storytelling allows researchers, scholars, and activists to use the method of counter-storytelling to provide indigenous peoples a way to contest declarations of meritocracy and color blindness (Haskins & Singh, 2015; Martinez, 2020). Stories and narratives provide a platform for people to reveal and label their life experiences with cathartic and restorative effects.

In contexts of subjugation and oppression, it is especially necessary for researchers to be ever mindful of taking time to focus on listening and being attentive to the voice and narratives of those who have been oppressed because the nuances of their experiences are valuable. In our qualitative study on youth in gangs, we explored the perceptions and experiences of youth, their primary

caregivers, and service providers through storytelling using participatory methods such as photovoice, problem tree, and the river of life as examples (Dykes, Brey, Carelse et al., 2021).

The power of storytelling is also embedded in the premise that it is rare for White people to recognize and accept the life experiences of people of color (Martinez, 2020). Martinez (2020) stresses that storytelling and counter-storytelling are valuable ways people of color can contest untruths masquerading as truths. The aforementioned studies advanced the socio-historical reasons for the establishment of gangs and the continued allure of youth to belong to gangs as a negation of the usual explanations of the pathology of colored youth and males in particular. For example, in the study of 2017 with caregivers, findings revealed the role of apartheid, marginalization, powerlessness, and poverty. The following quote from a caregiver participant encapsulates this point:

> It's because of Apartheid and previous segregation laws that we are living the way we are currently living. I think colored people might have been more successful if no one was forcefully removed from their homes. The removal of the people just caused a lot of social issues because our people were deprived and at a disadvantage. Our communities just began to deteriorate ever since.

This participant confirms that the aftermath of colonialism and apartheid are still to be seen in the current socio-economic disparities premeditated along racial lines (Jensen, 2010; Pillay, 2008; Salo, 2006). However, according to Jensen (2010), through prejudice and discrimination, colored men, in particular, were viewed as being predisposed to criminal behavior, being drunkards, insubstantial, unreliable, and reckless (also see Petrus, 2013). This perception of a colored man as a 'skollie' must be situated within a political and cultural context but also linked to the enduring

search for a socio-political and cultural identity and belonging by colored youth in particular, an innate yearning from the past, according to Petrus (2013).

Salo (2006) also argued that the gang membership of colored (and Black) men, and their gendered identities, are inextricably linked to the history of forced removals and socio-economic deprivation of people on the Cape Flats, and that gang formation reflects the struggle against the prevailing political and economic systems. Gangs seem to fill the socio-emotional gaps and needs of individuals, groups, and communities (Luyt & Foster, 2001). Similarly, Pinnock (1997, cited in Luyt & Foster, 2001) argued that gangs could be viewed as mutated social groupings in the face of significant social difficulties that fulfill the needs of youth whose families were not able to do. According to Salo (2006), these gangs were key role players in the development of cultural language and the forging of neighborhood and identity in a marginalized community. Thus, Jensen (2010) concluded that gangs were the consequences of "history, identity, and necessity" (p. 80).

The storyteller and voice of the storyteller/narrator provide a conduit to reveal the life experiences of the narrator and from which interpretations ensue. Therefore, as Martinez (2020) contends, a counter-story is an opposing account of a situation from another viewpoint. Counter-stories emerge from the life experiences of people about racial subjugation and inequality and are thus recognized as experiential knowledge (Martinez, 2020; Sleeter, 2017). Sleeter (2017) asserts that CRT scholars have as a basic premise that the best people to know about racism are not the culprits but the oppressed. In its focus on the lived experiences of people of color especially, Yosso (2005) confirmed that CRT storytelling and counter-storytelling use creative means of extracting people's stories such as family histories, biographies, recounts, diaries, testimonies, moral stories, and allegories.

Being Interdisciplinary

The worldview of critical race theorists consists of the belief that we live in a multifaceted and complex world, and thus, dialogues and research should encompass these multiple viewpoints (Howard & Navarro, 2016). For an authentic picture to emerge of a construct or topic, CRT uses multiple perspectives derived from other social and human sciences such as law, gender, culture, literature, history, anthropology and sociology, theatre, amongst others (Conradie, 2016; Yosso, 2005). These studies and scholarly works provide a more believable story from many different perspectives on a given topic.

In her discussions of the intersections of CRT and gender studies, Ashour (2021) stresses the significance of viewing social issues through the frames of intersecting identities and creating social reality. Crenshaw (2011) emphasized the use of these frames as a counter to the way that the academy has controlled the knowledge and study of race. A further means to counter the conventions upon which the social sciences have traditionally written about race, Crenshaw (2011) argued that it would necessitate a grasp of the broader social setting and a continued contestation with the traditional social sciences. Using multiple lenses and the principle of intersectionality (American Psychological Association, 2017) reveals the need not to be restricted by current knowledge, but that multiple perspectives provide a more thorough awareness of social inequality. Ultimately, it would advance scholarly works and dialogues on power and power relations so that the current thinking can shift from viewing inequality as individual pathology or inconsistencies to broad-based systemic and social issues (Ashour, 2021).

As noted earlier, collaborations and partnerships were a key finding from service providers who, though they recognized the controversial role of the South African police services, thought that the police was a necessary role player in addressing the issue of gangs. Another finding was the role

and function of schools that young people attended in their communities, especially concerning attentiveness to perceived disinterest from learners, early school dropouts, and the significant pressure and bullying from their peers. The analysis of social reality through intersecting identities discussed by Ashour (2021) reveals the complexities of living with and living through oppression, out of which have emerged multiple areas that require attention. Consequently, collaboration and partnerships are key principles upon which to base ways to intervene and open dialogues and communication with those who experience these issues directly with balancing insider/outsider perspectives.

Conclusion

Critical race theory was an appropriate theoretical lens through which to view the socio-political events that had unfolded in South Africa as a direct consequence of colonization, coloniality, and apartheid. These political events had wrought untold damage to people's lives, and livelihoods and forever destroyed their sense of self and belonging through racist policies and forced removals. The issue of gang membership can be directly linked to these apartheid policies and laws and how these made people feel about themselves and their place in the world. The first tenet of CRT, namely placing race and racism front and center in our evaluations and deliberations, allows people to situate their experiences and the enduring effects in their appropriate context. This tenet addressed the pathologizing of people's experiences as self-blame and damaging how they viewed themselves. This links with the tenet—challenging the dominant perspective—to advocate for and claim one's place, space, context, and history. Although this might not be an easy feat, and people will be overwhelmed by the enormity of it, these can take place in small and big ways to achieve a groundswell of resistance. The commitment to social justice (third tenet) is a key value for social work and is included in the international definition of social work. It is, therefore, a significant focus

of our professional practice. Valuing experiential knowledge (fourth tenet) is fundamental to decoloniality work, which provides the opportunity for indigenous peoples to tell their stories about the ways that they experience their world and past or current events. In addition to using their voice and narratives, it is also vital for others to listen and to value and confirm the experiences of others without judgment and prejudice. For social work, interdisciplinarity (fifth tenet) is critical as it emphasizes multiple viewpoints that will help to deepen the recognition of social inequalities, power differentials, and intersecting identities. These five tenets of critical race theory map how citizens and social work as a profession can start to have meaningful conversations about the future to benefit all who live in South Africa.

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The Black Perspective Monograph 4

Applying Critical Race Theory to Examine Anti-Asian Racism

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Introduction

The murder of George Floyd forced the masses to recognize that Blacks being brutally killed was not an aberration, nor was deserved. Many watched on video for 8 minutes and 46 seconds how a Black man's life was taken by choking him with a knee to his neck for what potentially was a misdemeanor, non-violent crime. The recognition of too many deaths like that of George Floyd became a tipping point for many and gave further recognition that Black Lives Must Matter. Some might suggest that this post-Floyd era was a time of racial reckoning in the United States, with particular focus on racism perpetrated against Blacks. Emphasis has been placed upon individuals and organizations wanting to do better and a proliferation of concerned persons wanting to do something. Since March 2020, we continue to see the pernicious loss of Black lives to violence related to racism. More present racist actions are linked to the past and so are not new. Racism is not new in the United States. The U.S. has many Civil Rights and Social Justice successes but also many blind spots.

Historically, there have been significant numbers of racist attacks and more increases in racism against other racial and ethnic groups. Recently, there has been more attention given to a marked rise in anti-Asian racism. Some of these forms of racism have been recognized as hate crimes against Asian Americans due to White nationalism. The reason for the racism varies. Some of the reasons emanate from the false and hurtful allegations, such as with former U.S. President Donald J. Trump, blaming the country of China for manufacturing the COVID-19 virus. This article addresses, using critical race theory (CRT), a discussion of racism against Asian Americans. First, it presents the evolution of CRT, and second, applies CRT to help understand the development of racism against Asian Americans. This article concludes with both policy and advocacy recommendations to address anti-Asian racism.

The Origins and Application of CRT

The critical race theory first emerged in the mid-1970s with the early work of the legal scholars Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Alan Freeman, Mari Matsuda and Patricia Williams, all of whom felt distressed over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States. In Bell's (1992) publication, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, *t*he major premise is that racism is a permanent fixture of American life. CRT then builds upon this understanding and encourages a strategy of unmasking and exposing racism in its various permutations (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Before long, the use of the theory proliferated as other minority scholars aimed to expose the ineffectuality of Civil Rights laws in the U.S., and challenge the claims of "legal neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self-interest of dominant groups in American society" (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). In doing so, these scholars have helped to explicate how racism is not just a series of isolated acts, but an endemic feature of American society, with significant legal, cultural and psychological implications.

Following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, there was a recognition that Blacks being brutally killed was not an aberration nor was the death of Mr. Floyd deserved. Many around the world watched on video for 8 minutes and 46 seconds how a Black man's life in the United States was taken by choking him with a knee to his neck. The crime of knowingly passing counterfeit currency at its worst could receive a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, and/or a maximum of $100,000 fine. However, the point is that a life should be worth more than a twenty-dollar possible counterfeit note. As a U.S. citizen, each citizen, regardless of their race or ethnicity, should receive due process and be considered innocent until found guilty and convicted and sentenced in a court of law. Why might the sentence for counterfeiting be so harsh, for what was potentially, if convicted, a non-violent crime. In 2020, the recognition of too many deaths like that of George Floyd became a tipping point for the recognition that Black Lives Matter. In 2013, Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi, three Black women, created the Black Lives Matter Network. According to the Black Lives Matter website (2022), they were "founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. The Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc is a global organization in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives." Some might suggest that the death of George Floyd was the domino that fell leading to a cascade of dominos of reaction to the deaths of so many. One might suggest that this has spawned a time of racial reckoning for all minorities in the U.S., with particular focus on racism perpetrated against Blacks.

Critical race theory developed as both an outgrowth and a separate entity from the earlier legal movement used in critical legal studies (CLS). Historically, a leftist legal movement, CLS challenged traditional legal scholarship by focusing on the specificity of individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts. However, CLS left important gaps for CRT to fill because CLS presented less information that was simple and insightful but did not help persons to better understand the systems that were developed to perpetrate racism. There was more to say about class than race, and CLS did not offer pragmatic strategies for material social transformation. Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (2013) helped to fill these gaps and contribute one of the best-known elements of CRT in 1989 with the publication of her article in the *University of Chicago Legal Forum* titled "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." In the article, Crenshaw introduced the concept of "intersectionality" to describe the way in which people who belong to more than one marginalized community, such as Black women, have been overlooked in the development and history of anti-discrimination laws. The concept of intersectionality is used to help people understand where a legal blind spot has previously been. Now, intersectionality is regularly cited in analyses of public policy, literature, sociology, and history (Cobb, 2021).

Critical race theory also marks a departure from mainstream legal scholarship in that CRT provides critical context by explaining, sometimes utilizing storytelling and first-person accounts to help explicate the perspectives of those minorities victimized by racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Another central characteristic of CRT is tied to civil rights and the assertion that racism in America requires sweeping systematic changes. CRT argues that White women rightfully recognized as earning less than White males have been successful in using their

minority status through Affirmative Action and policies that emanate from the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This has been demonstrated and documented in the U.S., where numbers of White women have benefited through employment, wage growth, and education opportunities formerly denied them (Massie, 2016). Many Whites chose to ignore these important gains, largely made possible by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Crenshaw (1989, 2013) introduced the concept of interest convergence, which is the idea that small gains in racial justice have only been possible when they overlap with the interests of whites (Garcia, López & Vélez, 2018). Indeed, there is variation in terms of the doctrines and methodologies of CRT scholars (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017). Two common interests unify them: (1) "to understand how a 'regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America," and (2) to "change the bond that exists between law and racial power" (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Despite the rise of CRT in legal scholarship, CRT was not formally introduced into the realm of educational research until 1995. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV (1995) published Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education. In this article, Ladson-Billings and Tate IV examine social inequity, and school inequity, by offering three central propositions:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.
2. U.S. society is based on property rights.
3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity.

Ladson-Billings and Tate IV assert that although the interpretation of science has proven race to be biologically meaningless, the incorrect interpretation of science continues to play a significant

role in determining inequity in the U.S., as evidenced by statistical and demographic data on high school dropout rates, suspension rates, and incarceration rates. As Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison (2007) puts it, “Race has become metaphorical—a way of referring to and disguising forces, events, classes, and expressions of social decay and economic division far more threatening to the body politic than biological ‘race’ ever was.” Still, at the time of Ladson-Billings and Tate IV’s (1995) publication, race, unlike gender and class, remained without theory in the analysis of educational inequality.

The work of Ladson-Billings and Tate IV builds upon an intellectual foundation established by Cater G. Woodson and W.E.B. Du Bois, both of whom presented persuasive arguments for considering race as the central construct for understanding inequality. Woodson (1916; 2006) began to establish race as a legitimate scholarly inquiry as early as 1916. His most notable publication, The Miseducation of the Negro, identified the role of school in structuring inequality, and helped shift the focus of the discourse on African Americans from that of pathology and inferiority, to a more multi-textured analysis of the community and their unique situation within the United States. Woodson (2006) argued that the same educational process affirms the oppressor’s belief that the oppressor, the White man is everything and has accomplished everything worthy of accomplishing while simultaneously de-motivating the Negro’s accomplishments and negatively demoting the Negro so that he will never achieve what other peoples’ achieve nor meet their standards.

Du Bois (1904; 2019) profoundly impacted public discourse on the subject by naming a “double consciousness”—“It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois, 2019, p. 2), which causes the

African American to ever feel “his two-ness—an American, a negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995).

With their application of CRT, Ladson Billings and Tate IV have unsettled racelessness in education while providing one of the strongest critiques of the education system overall. In the years following their publication of Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education, other scholars have used CRT. They have used CRT to assess educational research, urban schooling, parental involvement, teacher education and preparation, critical race praxis and CRT’s trajectory within educational research. While much of the early CRT scholarship on educational inequity has focused on K-12 schooling, scholars have begun to incorporate the theory to expose inequities within higher education as well (Patton, 2016).

In more recent times, CRT has come under attack from conservative activists and lawmakers who have attempted to ban the teaching of CRT in schools. Critics of CRT have characterized the theory as Black-supremacist racism, false history and have adopted and co-opted the terms used in Black culture of ‘being woke’ to turn the language into a negative and destructive term which was not its genesis nor its meaning. Conservative and White supremacists have called CRT a terrible apotheosis of wokeness. These conservative and racist critiques have helped incite a fear among Whites, in particular White parents. The rhetoric used strongly suggest that White parents must act because their children will otherwise be indoctrinated and made to feel ashamed of themselves and other White people if CRT is allowed to be taught in their schools.

In June 2021, Republican lawmakers capitalized on this fear and the increased public attention by passing legislation to ban the teaching of CRT in eight states—Arizona, Idaho, Iowa, Oklahoma, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas—using this false

language and framework (Cobb, 2021). It should be noted that much of the critique from the Far Right, and conservative policy and advocacy leaders, rely on falsehoods and half-truths repeated often and loudly that cannot be substantiated within the body of scholarship on CRT. Namely, the conservative's arguments conflate 'whiteness' and 'white people,' and fail to acknowledge that critical scholarship on or about whiteness is not an assault on white people, but on the "socially constructed and constantly reinforced power of white identifications and interests" (Gillborn, 2007).

This same conflation underlies the belief that the Black Lives Matter Movement somehow suggests White lives do not matter, or matter less than Black lives. The argument is specious. Of course, White and Black racial identities have been institutionally imposed as diametric opposites since the creation of the two categories. The conservative White Right supremacist argument begins, with the codification into law designating White identity as superior and Black as subordinate. It is no surprise that most of the CRT scholarship, as with scholarship on race in the United States in general, has focused its lens on a Black and White binary. This lens is important but no less important is the way in which other forms of racism continue to be constructed and are well fed in the 21st century.

Critical race theory has also been helpful in analyzing the way in which Asian Americans have been discriminated against. Asian American CRT scholars have been instrumental in shaping CRT studies since its inception. In addition, the body of scholarship on Asian American CRT has expanded in recent years. Asian American CRT is one of the group-specific CRT movements that has emerged to address the complex racialization of people of Asian descent in the United States.

The Origins and Application of Asian American CRT

Asian American CRT analyzes historical and contemporary anti-Asian racism. In the historical analysis, the categorization of Asian Americans as model minorities is false. This depiction is one of several myths associated with many racial and ethnic groups. CRT combats these falsehoods and uplifts experiential narratives to affirm the complexity and material impact of racism on Asian American individuals and communities. It includes "scholarship that uses CRT theoretical constructs to examine Asian American experiences, which include studies that are guided by the tenets of CRT" (Curammeng, Buenavista & Cariaga, 2017).

Asian Americans now comprise about 7% of the total United States population, but the real number is higher, given that they also represent 10% of the undocumented population (Curammeng et al., 2017). The Asian community is very heterogeneous, representing people from many countries and geographic locations worldwide. The Asian community is also actively growing. Between 2000 and 2019, Asian Americans recorded the fastest population growth rate among racial and ethnic minorities in the United States (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Because of the heterogeneity, there is also a considerable amount of diversity within the Asian communities. Individuals racialized as Asian Americans come from more than 40 different ethnic groups, each with a distinct migration history, languages, religious affiliations, and cultural practices (Curammeng et al., 2017).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a dramatic uptick in racial violence and discrimination directed towards Asian Americans (Jeung, Kulkarni & Choi, 2020). Analysis reveals that this increase in discrimination and violence towards Asian Americans has at its root falsehoods and hatred about Asians. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), hate crimes against Asian Americans increased by 77% from 2019 to 2020. During the following

year, the first of the COVID-19 pandemic, Stop Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Hate, a non-profit that records hate crimes, reported 9,000 self-reported hate crimes against Asian Americans, suggesting the actual number is even higher when including unreported crimes (Findling et al., 2022). The deadliest of the anti-Asian COVID pandemic hate crimes occurred on March 16, 2021 when a White male gunman opened fire in an Atlanta, Georgia area massage parlor, murdering six Asian Americans (Peiser, 2021) This spike in racial violence was likely motivated, at least in part, by former U.S. President Trump's characterization of the coronavirus as the "Chinese Virus." Within a week of the former president's racist tweet on his official Twitter account, the number of anti-Asian hashtags rose by 797% for #covid19 and 17,400% for #chinesevirus (Hswen et al., 2021).

History of Marginalization

Unfortunately, the violence experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic is only the most recent chapter in a long history of marginalization, racism, and xenophobia inflicted upon Asian Americans. Applying CRT, one can discern that Asian Americans have been impacted, both on the interpersonal and institutional levels since the first Asian immigrants arrived in the U.S. in the late 1700s. The first major wave of Asian immigrations to the U.S. occurred in the 1850s when young Chinese men were recruited to come and provide cheap labor during the country's industrialization period. During this time, the Chinese represented as much as 20% of California's labor force (Asia Society, 2022). Chinese laborers worked in the fishing and mining industries, held factory jobs, and made some of the most significant contributions to the construction of the transcontinental railroad in the United States from the East Coast to the West Coast. The falsehoods perpetrated against Asian immigrants build upon the same types of racist hyperbole used with other minorities. One of these falsehoods was "minorities are coming to

steal white jobs." This falsehood changed to fit the group to be disparaged to include stealing white jobs, taking White women, taking white property, taking White people's money, telling lies about White people, etc. Historically, these falsehoods or lies take hold, and this sentiment has served as a motivating factor for the proliferation of anti-Asian racism and violence in the U.S. For example, in 1854, the California Supreme Court provided legal cover and institutional reinforcement for anti-Asian violence in its ruling on *People vs. Hall*, which mirrored earlier anti-Black racist legislation. The 1854 decision prevented people of Asian descent from testifying against a White person in court (Brockell, 2021). This same legal justification had been used against Blacks in many states, particularly in the southern states and the midwest. Such language was also used against American Indians (Berger, 2009; Cosby & Grant, 2018).

On October 24, 1871, in Los Angeles' Chinatown, a mob of approximately 500 people attacked Chinese residents and lynched 17 Chinese men and boys (Dorland, 1894). The ongoing violent racist attacks upon Asian Americans have many similarities to the attacks upon Blacks or African Americans—as has been often the case, the rationale for the attacks was illegitimate and based upon false narratives. It is CRT that has helped to expose the historical pattern and practice of these violent acts. Because the pattern and practice of racism legitimized Whites' actions, legislation was enacted at State and Federal court levels that sanctioned the interpersonal violence legitimizing the violence and not punishing the perpetrators, even those that committed murder. These codified actions further institutionalized the marginalization of Asian Americans and hardened the actions of White Americans as oppressors. The United States Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, marking the first time in U.S. history that a specific group of immigrants could be barred from entry into the U.S. based on their race and nationality (Lee, 2002). The similarities of oppression among Blacks and Chinese people should be noted.

On the one hand, the Chinese people were denied the opportunity to become U.S. citizens by being excluded by law from immigrating to the U.S., and those in the U.S. were denied their civil rights as a people for more than 60 years. This is contrasted with oppression perpetrated against Blacks. The United States Supreme Court's Dred Scot decision in 1857 denied Blacks citizenship and relegated all Blacks who were descendants of slaves from ever being free or being U.S. citizens. This language became a plank in the abolitionist fire and served as part of the lead-up to the U.S. Civil War. The Civil War, which included eleven southern states, disbanded from the Union of the United States of America. These states that opposed the Presidency of President Abraham Lincoln were Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia. These rogue states had sympathizer state leaders, and their states were called border states. These border states were Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri. The similarities between the 2020 U.S. National election and the 1860 U.S. election when looking at racism are interesting. In the facts of the Dred Scott case, Dr. John Sandford, a U.S. Army Surgeon and Officer, claimed ownership of a slave, Dred Scott, his wife Harriet, and their two children. The Scotts sought legal help in St. Louis, Missouri Court, stating that their rights as Missouri citizens were violated. They had lived on a military base (on federal land) and in a free state (Illinois) but were still slaves and should be freed.

Dr. Sandford, over 11 years, sought to argue in court to enforce his position stating that as a slave owner, despite living on federal land and in free states, the Scotts were purchased in a slave state. As such, Scott could never be free from bondage as an indentured servant or freed person. The U.S. Supreme Court decided with Sandford and against Dred Scott. The decision denied Blacks who were offspring or descendants of enslaved people from ever being free

citizens. In effect, once a slave, their offspring must also always be slaves. In the Dred Scott decision, the offspring of enslaved people were not given citizenship rights and, therefore, could NEVER be citizens of the United States (Allen, 2010; National Archives, 2022). This Dred Scott decision, long recognized as one of the most egregious decisions of the Supreme Court was largely made moot with the passage of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery and 14th Amendments, which guaranteed U.S. citizenship and due process for any U.S. citizen.

Specifically, the 14th Amendment should protect any citizen regardless of the race or ethnicity. The 14th Amendment mandates that "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws of the U.S. Constitution (National Archives, 2022). This constitutional right remained the law of the land until the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision in 1896, which undermined equal protection for African Americans under Jim Crow laws at the state level and established a new form of institutionalized segregation (National Archives, 2022).

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 proved to be highly effective in systematically denying entry to Chinese immigrants and excluding Chinese Americans from exercising civil rights for more than 60 years until it was finally repealed in 1943 (Calavita, 2000). The most egregious example of federally-enforced anti-Asian racism came during this same decade, when the U.S. Government moved to imprison over 120,000 Japanese Americans, many of whom were U.S. citizens, in concentration camps throughout the country.

The point with the comparisons is to reiterate that racism is not a new phenomenon. Critical race theory provides a lens by which the historical narratives can be more closely explored and the construction of the legal precedents can be more closely examined.

The anti-Asian racist stereotype shared earlier suggests that public perception is easily swayed by myth and, more specifically, the public perception of the myth of the model minority. In the 1966 *New York Times Magazine* article, "Success Story Japanese American Style," Japanese Americans were exalted as the ultimate validation of American meritocracy (Pettersen, 1966). The model minority myth has since been weaponized to deny the existence of structural racism. This falsehood is another way that those in power perpetrate a myth for the masses to mask the economic and cultural oppression used to leverage the story of the relative financial success of top-earning Asian American individuals and families to delegitimize other Japanese people that may not be doing as well or the other groups struggling to overcome racial oppression (Museus, 2013). Moreover, the characterization of Asian Americans as homogeneous model minorities has alienated the group from other communities of color who have been positioned as inferior to the white supremacist racial hierarchy. This divide-and-conquer strategy is a classic tool of the white supremacist and part of their playbook or agenda. This strategy has been used throughout history in the U.S. to divide poor whites from poor people of color (who may have more commonalities than differences of skin color) yet degrade the potential for the kind of multi-racial working-class coalitions needed to dismantle the white supremacist power structure and create a more equitable society for all. Of course, while some Asian Americans have been able to accumulate financial resources, many families continue to struggle. The model minority myth both erases the stories of the millions of Asian Americans who have been unable

to escape the vicious cycle of poverty and obscures the fact that the top 10% of households have ten times the income of the bottom ten percent (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021).

If compared as a group, Asian Americans can also serve as another reminder that not all costs of racism and white supremacy can be measured in financial terms. The costs of racism run deep and span across education, income, and culture. In twelve national polls (Findling et al., 2022), Asian Americans report negative outcomes due to racism; 82% agree that Asian Americans have faced discrimination because of the COVID-19 pandemic; 64% say that racism is an extremely serious problem in the U.S.; 57% say they have felt unsafe in public because of their race or ethnicity; 81% believe violence against the Asian American community is increasing. Another similar sentiment expressed by Blacks suggests that Asian Americans do not trust the police to keep them safe. Only 24% of Asian Americans believe that police in their area will treat them with respect; part of this distrust may be attributed to under-representation. While Asian Americans comprise 6% of the U.S. labor force, they constitute just 2% of police officers nationwide (Findling et al., 2022).

Living under white supremacy and the threat of racial violence has taken a toll psychologically as well. A meta-analysis of 23 different studies revealed that racism and discrimination are associated with increased levels of depression, anxiety, and even suicidal ideation for Asian Americans (Lee & Ahn, 2011). Anti-Asian racism has also created a stereotype of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners, which may contribute to a limited sense of belonging to American culture, lower levels of hope for the future, and decreased satisfaction with life in general (Huynh, Devos & Smalarz, 2011). Mental health issues have also been exacerbated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 35% of Asian Americans reporting worsening mental health conditions, including increased anxiety, depression, and symptoms

associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (Findling et al., 2022). A 2021 nationwide survey found that only 49% of Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) felt comfortable going out, 65% were worried about the safety of family members and elders, and 32% of AAPI parents were concerned about their child being victimized by anti-AAPI hate or discrimination in unsupervised spaces and on the way to school (Yellow Horse & Chen, 2022).

Policy & Advocacy Recommendations to Address Anti-Asian Racism

Increased violence targeting Asian Americans throughout the pandemic has motivated lawmakers at the local, state, and federal levels to act in providing increased protections against hate crimes. On May 20, 2021, U.S. President Joseph R. Biden signed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act into law and denounced hatred and racism, which he described as "the ugly poison that has long haunted and plagued our nation." The legislation, introduced by Representative Grace Meng, D-New York, and Senator Mazie Hirono, D-Hawaii, is designed to boost public outreach and make the reporting of hate crimes more accessible at the local and state levels by providing online reporting resources in multiple languages. The law also mandates the Department of Justice to designate a point person in charge of expediting the review of COVID-19-related hate crimes and designates grant funding for state and local governments to create hate crime reduction programs. The legislation passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, with the House of Representatives voting 364-62 (all 62 votes against the bill were from Republicans), and the U.S. Senate approved the measure unanimously, with Missouri Republican Josh Hawley, the lone dissenter. One potential pitfall of the Act is that it centers on criminal law enforcement agencies in its solution. There remains significant distrust and fear of law enforcement in the Asian American community. Moreover, the law will not be able to address most hate incidents that do not legally qualify as hate crimes. While the impact of the legislation

is still yet to be determined, it could represent a step toward providing increased protection for Asian Americans (Sprunt, 2021).

The passage of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act builds upon U.S. House Resolution 151 (2021), which specifically condemns all forms of anti-Asian sentiment related to COVID-19. This Resolution, introduced in the first session of the 117th Congress on February 23, 2021, makes a case for protecting Asian Americans, mainly because more than two million of them have served as front-line workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It argues that anti-Asian stigma has been perpetuated using anti-Asian terminology popularized by former President Trump, including the "Chinese Virus," "Wuhan Virus," and "Kung-flu." The Resolution calls on federal law enforcement officials to collaborate with state and local agencies to execute three important deliverables. The first deliverable is to "expeditiously investigate and document all credible reports of hate crimes, harassment, bullying, and threats against the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in the United States." The second is to "expand collection of data and public reporting to document the rise of incidents of hate crimes relating to COVID-19." The third is "to hold the perpetrators of those crimes, incidents, or threats accountable and bring such perpetrators to justice, including through investigation and prosecution." The Resolution also calls upon the U.S. Attorney General to work with state and local agencies and Asian American and Pacific Islander community-based organizations to prevent discrimination by expanding "culturally competent and linguistically appropriate education campaigns on public reporting of hate crimes." It calls on the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force and Asian American and Pacific Islander community-based organizations, to "issue guidance describing best practices to mitigate racially discriminatory language in describing the COVID-19 pandemic." Finally, the measure commits

the United States to serve as a global leader in building more inclusive, diverse, and tolerant societies by "prioritizing language access and inclusivity in communication practices; and by combating misinformation and discrimination that put Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders at risk" (U.S. House Resolution 151, 2021).

Additional measures to address anti-Asian racism include the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' allocation of $49.5 million from the American Rescue Plan to fund culturally specific, community-based services for AAPI survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. This initiative aims to address the needs of survivors who are particularly vulnerable due to language and cultural barriers to accessing services and safety. The FBI has also begun facilitating nationwide civil rights training events to promote state and local law enforcement reporting of hate crimes. The National Science Foundation is investing heavily in research to understand, address, and end bias and discrimination against AAPI communities. It currently supports more than 100 grants nationwide, valued over $33 million in total investments, aimed at revealing new and more effective strategies to combat anti-Asian racism (The White House, 2021).

Civil rights expansion at the state and local levels is increasing. In California, Stop AAPI Hate worked with elected officials to introduce the No Place for Hate California, which includes two bills, SB 1161 and AB 2448. SB 1161 requires the largest transit operators to address hate-based harassment experienced by riders. AB 2448 expands civil rights protections at large businesses, where 27% of reported hate incidents in the state occur. The legislation specifically targets street harassment in places where people shop and travel. Lawmakers intend to shift the burden away from victims and survivors and toward public agencies. California's Governor

Newsom signed both bills into law, and they are set to take effect on January 1, 2023 (Yellow Horse & Chen, 2022)

Besides addressing the rise in hate crimes, measures have been taken to address anti-Asian racism in education. On July 9, 2021, Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker signed the Teaching Equitable Asian American History Act (TEAACH) into law, making Illinois the first state in the nation to require public schools to teach an education unit on Asian American history. The legislation, which is set to take effect across elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the state beginning in the 2022–2023 school year, mandates instruction on Asian American contributions to the arts, sciences, and civil rights in the midwest region and beyond. Speaking on the erasure of Asian American contributions to U.S. history, Illinois State Representative Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz, who co-sponsored the legislation, offered that "Empathy comes from understanding. We cannot do better unless we know better. A lack of knowledge is the root cause of discrimination, and the best weapon against ignorance is education." One of the non-profits supporting the new legislation is The Asian American Education Project (AAEdu), which is offering free training and making more than 50 comprehensive lesson plans available online to support teachers in revising their course content. Lawmakers and activists alike are hopeful that the measure will help to create a more inclusive learning environment while reducing discrimination and empowering Asian American students. Research supports the notion that Ethnic Studies courses increase students of color's morale. In 2016, scholars from Stanford University found that enrollment in an Ethnic Studies class boosted attendance and academic performance, especially among high school students who were at high risk of dropping out. While the passage of this legislation represents a symbolic victory for combating Asian

American racism, the real impact is yet to be determined and will depend on how the policy is carried out on the ground and in the classrooms (Davis-Marks, 2021).

Other states have followed Illinois' lead in requiring the instruction of Asian American history in public schools. Connecticut, for example, became the first state with a funded mandate for the instruction of Asian American history in K-12 classrooms, and the law is set to take effect by the start of the 2025–2026 academic year. The provision includes $100,000 to fund a coordinator position within the State Department of Education to oversee research and alignment of curriculum. California, Washington, and Oregon have also mandated Ethnic Studies. Unfortunately, these modest gains have been met with significant backlash. Since the beginning of 2022, more than 100 state-level bills have been introduced to restrict the teaching of diversity and CRT in public schools. Currently, there are 18 states which include no content on Asians in their K-12 history curriculum standards (Liu, 2022). The passage of such laws has been possible because conservative lobbyists write the sample laws and disseminate the language and then contact the conservative lawmakers in each state, encouraging their adoption.

To be sure, critical work remains to address the pervasive anti-Asian racism in the United States. Implementing Asian American-focused studies into K-12 curricula is a good start, but we still need a policy that can help educate the rest of the public on the value, strengths, and contributions of the Asian American community. One recent nationwide survey (Findling et al., 2022) found that 42% of American adults of all racial backgrounds could not identify a single historical event involving Asian Americans, while 58% could not name a single prominent Asian American figure from American life. In response to this gap in knowledge, Stop AAPI Hate has successfully advocated for HR 3525, a Federal Bill to commission the study for a potential national museum focused on AAPI history (Yellow Horse & Chen, 2022). While a museum will

help educate those seeking knowledge, we must also find ways to bring education directly to the people in public spaces throughout the country. The month of May has been recognized as AAPI Heritage Month since 1992, but allocating more public funds at the federal, state, and local levels are needed. These funds could be used for all mandated reporting and enforcement of hate crime prevention and more education. These efforts could further assist in changing perceptions and encouraging positive actions to limit and eliminate racist ideology and bigotry. The funds could further help to pay for events that bring out people of all different identities to celebrate the diversity of Asian people and cultures and recognize the contributions that AAPIs have made throughout the history of the United States.

Additional policy measures must be taken to address the lack of representation of AAPI people in public service and civic leadership roles. Although Asian Americans constitute 7% of the U.S. population, they make up just 2% of police officers and 2% of teachers in public K-12 schools. Representation is essential in every field, particularly health, safety, and education. Policy initiatives may be needed to recruit more Asian Americans into fields such as teaching, policing, mental health counseling, and social work. Public funding should be made available to ensure cultural competency and implicit bias training in workplaces nationwide. At the community level, ensuring the safety of Asian Americans will require a comprehensive approach that can respond to harm done while simultaneously building trust and collaboration within and across communities. Centering on healing, prevention, and community care in all interventions must be a priority.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Asian American critical race theory can and will continue to be instrumental in addressing the impacts of anti-Asian racism in our country. First, we must

consider the central notion of CRT, that racism is an endemic feature of American society, one that has impacted Asian Americans in every aspect of daily life since the first arrival of Asian immigrants to the United States. A better understanding of racism and addressing the community's critical needs at the local, state and national levels will be vital in shaping the long-term, structural policy changes needed to create social transformation rather than relying on the slow and steady crusade for civil rights. This incremental approach within a legal system that has systematically enforced white supremacy since its inception has resulted in what is currently in place. Next, CRT reminds us to honor the diversity and intersectionality that exists in the AAPI community by tapping into firsthand accounts of those who have been victims of racism.

Uplifting the voices and stories of the most marginalized members of the community can serve to affirm the complexity and material impact of racism on AAPI individuals who have been overlooked for far too long. Stories, in part, with qualitative and quantitative data, help show the faces behind the numbers. CRT and what it has helped to reveal can, in turn, inform the policymakers about how to implement interventions and ensure that the resulting benefits are felt across the communities rather than just benefitting a subset of more privileged group members. By utilizing the critical race theory lens, we can begin to push back against the stereotypes and falsehoods of the model minority and perpetual foreigners for AAPI people. Together, these efforts can provide additional protection from racist violence, advance equity in education and public life, and shift the ways in which power can positively unite and bond people. United, many different group efforts can help to change and implement laws that protect and serve all and not create law and order and racial power for some.

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[1] In SA, “colored” means people of mixed race and ethnic heritage and relate to the ethnic origins of people that was entrenched in Apartheid legislation in 1948; but has become consumed with negative stereotypes (Petrus, 2013).

[2] Pro-Boer refers to the social construction of White supremacy as contextualized by European colonizers from the 1880s in South Africa (Kuitenbrouwer, 2012).

The Meaning of Recovery at the Intersections of Race and Gender for African and Caribbean Men in England

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Introduction

There is an extensive body of evidence showing that racial disparities in mental health persist in England (Memon, Taylor, Mobehatil et al., 2016; Synergi, 2018). This is despite policy initiatives to address these disparities. My work aims to understand these disparities utilizing Critical race theory (CRT) and intersectionality lenses. For example, in a previous study to explore what emotional well-being meant for men from racialized minorities, we found that men with lived experiences of mental illness reported being 'stuck' in the mental health system (Robinson, Keating & Robertson, 2011). We termed this a *stalled cycle of recovery*. It should also be noted that the concept of mental health recovery has now been enshrined in mental health policy in England (Department of Health, 2009). Still, a rapid review of recovery for Black men only yielded five papers. I became interested to find out what recovery means for Black men, in particular, African and Caribbean men, as they are the most disproportionately represented in mental health services in England. I secured funding to explore what supports recovery for men from a social perspective.

This article considers the meaning of recovery for African and Caribbean men who have experienced mental health issues in England by adopting a critical race theory and intersectionalities framework. It draws on findings from a qualitative study examining to what extent socially-oriented approaches to recovery can better support African and Caribbean men to break the stalled cycle of recovery. It sought to illuminate the lived experiences of service users, family, caregivers, and practitioners on recovery concerning race and culture; to describe the characteristics of activities that promote well-being for men; and to explore approaches to recovery for these men. This study was conducted in the context of the disparities these men face in mental health services in England, which is seen as a contravention of their human rights.

Methods

A qualitative design using a phenomenological approach to data analysis captured the dynamics of recovery processes and outcomes for African and Caribbean men across two study sites. Participants were recruited via community-based organizations that provided mental health services to African and Caribbean communities. Fifty-nine in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with African and Caribbean men with mental health experience (n=30), supporters/family carers (n=15), and service providers (n=14).

Data were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). At two co-creation events, service users co-analyzed the data (Southby, Keating & Joseph, 2021). Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee for Social Care.

Findings

Recovery for African and Caribbean men is a complex and dynamic concept. Adopting a CRT and an intersectionality framework enabled the research team to shed light on these complexities. One key tenet of CRT is to give a voice to the marginalized. Even though the focus

of this study was on mental health recovery, the participants reported that their present recovery was deeply linked to their early life experiences. Participants were keen to talk about their earlier life experiences before answering questions about mental health recovery. They spoke eloquently about how racism affected their mental health. The men discussed racialized trauma that derived from racial bullying, racial attacks, and violence in the family and how this led to experiencing mental health difficulties.

This is an example of how a CRT lens provided a safe space for men to talk about experiences of racism. It is also an example of how men were able to connect their racialized experiences with their experiences of mental (ill) health. These experiences also represent the notion of racial weathering (Geronimus, 1991), which suggests that the effects of racism are cumulative and are detrimental and damaging to health and well-being.

Many interconnected and often overlapping aspects collectively represent and contribute to the recovery process. These include recovery as a healing journey, leading a normal life, autonomy, and control, aspirations for the future, identity, and being free from health services. The discovery or recovery of agency was identified by the participants as possibly the most significant dimension of their recovery process. A further key finding was that social recovery is significantly facilitated by creating safe spaces where men can develop authentic relationships of interdependence based on mutual trust and shared life experiences. Within safe spaces, African and Caribbean men can build relationships of equality that enable them to develop the constructive personal and collective identities needed to acquire a sense of individual agency that is central to recovery and human rights.

The findings that similarities in the meaning of recovery has for African and Caribbean men and other populations groups is not to suggest that African and Caribbean men's experience

is not unique. In line with Tang (2018), I agree that various dimensions of recovery have diverse meanings and values across cultures and social groups. I have argued elsewhere (Southby et al., 2021) that these two dichotomous views could be reconciled by understanding that the individual or personal features of recovery (i.e., hope, self-management, identity, healing, reduced medical involvement) are universal, but the social context in which they are experienced is altered for different groups.

Through their recovery process, African and Caribbean men were trying to overcome the social suffering they experienced at the intersection of being a man (i.e., gender norms), being of African and Caribbean heritage (i.e., racial discrimination), and experiencing mental health difficulties in British society (i.e., stigma). This is qualitatively different from the experience of, for example, a White-British man in recovery. Again, these and other various social intersections—and the suffering experienced within—could be explored in greater detail in relation to mental health recovery.

Conclusion

Whilst previous research similarly highlights issues of autonomy, social inclusion, personalization, and identity as fundamental to recovery for all service users, this study finds that recovery for African and Caribbean men is underpinned by their lived experiences at the intersections of race, gender, and social inequality (Keating, 2020; Southby et al. 2021). Social workers should acknowledge the men's personal and collective understanding of recovery based on their unique life histories, which can be achieved by adopting a social justice and human rights perspective.

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The Necessity of Critical Race Theory for Social Work and Addressing Racism

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Social work is a profession that prides itself on acknowledging and confronting social problems, especially the structural barriers that are at their root and have adverse impacts on individuals, families, and communities. The charge of social work includes being knowledgeable about anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (Council on Social Work Education, 2022), being aware of and taking ethical action to protect Black people and communities (National Association of Black Social Workers, 2022), and challenge social injustice (National Association of Social Workers, 2022).

Initiated by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (AASWSW), the Grand Challenges for Social Work include eliminating racism, which involves a critical eye on the role of racism and White supremacy in society as well as within the profession (Teasley, McCarter, Woo et al., 2021). Given the interest in the goal for a more socially and racially just world, in part spurred on by the contemporary events of the ongoing dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism (Jones, 2021), social workers are seeking frameworks and perspectives that can lend insight into understanding these disparities as well as guidance on action toward a better world. Critical race theory (CRT) is one potential tool for social workers to be helpful in this.

Critical race theory is part of a broader movement that is “a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). The origins of CRT are in legal studies in the 1970s, post-Civil Rights era, when scholars, lawyers, and activists recognized that progress toward racial injustice was being impeded by more subtle and insidious forms of racism.

Social work scholars contend that CRT (e.g., Constance-Huggins, 2019) is a framework that can be beneficial in pushing social work to engage in uncomfortable but necessary work to shift discussions away from just cultural competence and more towards racial justice. It seems to have gained more popularity, recognition, and legitimacy in recent years within social workspaces. The applications of CRT to social work are many, including involvement in the child welfare system, receiving public assistance, and access to mental health services (Kolivoski, Weaver, & Constance-Huggins, 2014), as well as to specific populations, such as African American girls involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems (Kolivoski, 2022). There are applications in the social work classroom as well. In the author's encounters, students have found CRT tenets to provide a framework and structure to their experiences and observations in their own everyday lives as well as in their social work professional settings.

Fueled by general interests as well as specifically within the social work profession, the future of CRT in social work is one in which it could take a much more central role than even today. As Delgado and Stefancic put it, "CRT could become the new civil rights orthodoxy" (2017, p. 157), where instead of needing to explain it or clarifying what it is not, it becomes more integrated as our default way of approaching race, racism, and power in the U.S. and our social work education, practice, and research.

This comes with some implications to keep in mind. First, we need to ensure that the use of the term *CRT* is not just being used as another social work buzzword but is substantive in its usage and applications. Social workers need to ensure that it is not used in a performative manner but instead is action-based toward racial justice. In upholding the social work core value of competence, professionals can increase their knowledge of CRT and its tenets by reading original scholarship in the field more broadly and more recent scholarship within social work

publications. This can prevent others from misconstruing what CRT is or is not. We need space for self-reflection on an individual level and inwards toward the profession, and be careful and thoughtful when applying CRT tenets. Last, we need to make sure that as a profession social work is not making performative changes but substantive ones. Critical race theory is a tool, and like any tool, it is only helpful if we actually utilize it.

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Critical Race Theory: A Necessary Lens for Clinical Social Work Practice: The Black Perspective

Janice Berry Edwards

Racism is pervasive in our society. Critical race theory (CRT) is a framework that illuminates racial biases that can be woven into our clinical understandings of the clients seen in social work clinical practice. The theoretical framework can be used to enhance our understanding of how race as a social process assigns meaning and value to physical and cultural differences between people (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010). From a clinical social work practice perspective, acquiring a race consciousness about us as individuals and practitioners requires examination of what we take for granted about race and racism. Asking ourselves how race has shaped our individual and interpersonal interactions is critical to this process.

Incorporating the theoretical framework of CRT allows for thinking critically about the array of issues and concerns our clients bring with them to practice, particularly those clients that represent racial and ethnic minorities and are Black and Brown. Understanding CRT tenets can help clinicians conceptualize beyond the initial clinical picture and the diagnostic criteria for diagnosis to consider it as an explanation for the emotional and mental health challenges of the effects of psychosocial, environmental, political, and social forces on the client. Critical race theory also aids in understanding the structural forces that drive racial inequities in our society and the effect of these inequities. When forces are examined and considered, the process leads to a deeper understanding of the forces present in the individual's context.

The basic tenets of critical race theory are:

1) ***Endemic racism***. As the term implies, CRT asserts that we do live in a racist society and that it is an everyday experience for people of color. Consequently, racism is deeply embedded in the social fabric of American society, permeating our social structures and practices (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

2) ***Race is a social construction***. *Race* is not biologically *defined* but is *socially constructed.* CRT maintains that race is a contrived system of categorizing people according to observable physical attributes that have no correspondence to genetic or biological reality. As a construct, "it measures a societally imposed identity and consequent exposure to the societal constraints associated with that particular identity" (Jones, 2001, p. 300).

3) ***Differential racialization***. The dominant society racializes different groups of people in different ways at different times depending on historical, social, or economic needs (Ross, 2018).

4) ***Interest convergence/materialist determinism***. Racism and its outcomes are perpetuated in a society through social processes above and beyond individual actions, including through cultural norms, institutional rules, and laws and regulations (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

Critical race theory advocates for a re-writing of history to include the lived reality of oppressed groups from their perspectives and in their own words. Bringing these narratives into account challenges liberalist claims of neutrality, color blindness, and universal truths (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007). Thus, it is racism—not race—that drives and explains racial differences in almost every health and social outcome.

While racism is perpetuated at the structural/macro level in society, listening to and understanding the lived experiences of individuals is essential for understanding how racism works to create inequities in individual outcomes, including health. Critical race theory encourages the clinical social worker to go beyond the reductionistic models of health and mental health assessment and understanding and to sharpen the practitioner's interpretive lens to factor into their understanding of the individual, family, and community the social forces that contribute to race-based inequities. In addition, the social worker can better comprehend how racism affects the psychological well-being of clients who present for clinical social work treatment. The social work profession faces increasing calls to address racism and promote equity, diversity, and inclusion for the clients and communities they practice with. CRT is at the forefront of public discussion, as it represents a powerful lens that must be woven into the fabric of practice and how we practice with ethnicity and race. This increased knowledge offered by CRT can provide insights into how navigating a White-dominated behavioral and emotional, mental health care system can affect the care experiences and outcomes of racial-ethnic minorities.

As an essential analytic tool in the psychological and psychosocial clinical conceptualization and assessment, the CRT clinical lens will assist in comprehending how racism affects the psychological well-being of clients who present for clinical social work treatment. This essential lens will help the practitioner to appreciate the lived and historical treatment of culturally diverse clients. These experiences have psychological consequences and exist in the intrapsyche of the individual, family, and community that travels with them (Edwards, 2019). The impact of the lived experiences vicariously or secondarily can have a powerful influence on how life is navigated. Incorporating CRT as clinical social workers is

imperative and strengthens the practitioner's ability to orient toward equitable ethical practice when working with Black and Brown clients. This lens is important as it can illustrate the intercentricitiy of race. This framework helps practitioners to focus on racial and ethnic disparities, illuminating the inequalities and other oppressions impacting the client and their life opportunities.

Understanding the influence of racist practices on mental health, lifestyle, and the deleterious racial experiences affecting significant intersections of lived experiences, such as family, work, economic circumstances, and intimate relationships, is essential. These factors have costly and devastating effects on people of color, especially those living in marginalized and medically under-served communities. CRT sheds light on and clarifies the institutional and structural racism influences, such as discriminatory system policies and practices that result in exclusionary treatment and adverse social and mental health outcomes. Impoverished, medically under-served communities are challenged with long-standing complex health and mental health disparities exacerbated by the pandemics of racism.

Although the social work profession has used critical race theory as a framework to understand social and behavioral problems, there is a concern that the theory is not well incorporated in the field despite its alignment with social work goals and ethics (Pulliam, 2017). Incorporating CRT as a lens for clinical social work practice can be helpful by informing practitioners how racial differences can be understood in diagnostic and clinical practice.

A clinical case example illustrates how the use of CRT and its tenets can aid in understanding the client. The following case example is an illustration of how this framework can be considered when conducting clinical social work practice with Black and Brown clients.

Ufomi is a 46-year-old African American male from New Orleans, Louisiana (the Lower Ninth Ward). His trade is food preparation; specifically, he was a Chef in a federal building. Since 2005, Ufomi has had one quadruple heart bypass and has also been hospitalized for suicidal ideation twice since 2012. Given his health challenges and his displacement as a result of Hurricane Katrina, he has found himself in need of social service support for job placement. During his intake, he told his social worker that he feels like he is being shut down by the system that he helped to build. He said that in New Orleans, he escaped gun violence as a child and has buried a daughter and one grandchild from gun violence. He said he had "lived the life, so they didn't have to." He survived Katrina and moved to Utah after the storm and then chose to relocate to Washington, DC for the benefits. He shared that he has become isolated from his family because they do not understand that he feels stuck—even though he has been able to relocate. He believes, in contrast to his family members' opinion, he has witnessed disasters all of his life, and he is tired of being his "own rescuer." Adding to this, he told the intake worker that he could not find a good job even when he tried because "People don't want to call me by my name, Ufomi. Nor do they want to hire me because of my Adinrka symbol on my neck. They don't understand that I changed my name like the Panthers did in the 1960s because I felt like I was more than Jimmie Lee, Jr. I felt like Ufomi embodied where I wanted to push myself—past what I saw. I wanted to get away from the caged thoughts of the people in my neighborhood and do better. So, I went to trade school. I got a good government job and worked for 10 years. Then I retired, and Katrina happened. No, I have gone back to what I worked 10 years to escape. People don't want to see that. They

see the tattoo on my neck, my age…. I'm a Black man with locs, and they assume that I have always been broke. They don't know that I just feel broken!"

Questions for Analysis Through a Critical Race Theory Lens

1. How does CRT help to explain/understand Ufomi's lived experiences and inform his self-concept? How do CRT and Ufomi's demography situate how society views him? What is the praxis between his self-concept and the embedded narrative of trauma?
2. Given the historical context of trauma, how does CRT lead to an understanding of how race and poverty are embedded in his personal narrative?
3. What biological, psychological, physical, emotional, familial, environmental, and racial factors contribute to his help-seeking during the intake process?
4. In what ways, if any, does the discourse of resilience permeate through the lens of his inter psyche, or does his admission of brokenness exacerbate his former social practice (Edwards, 2019)?

Clinical social workers must use the lens of CRT in the conceptualization and delivery of clinical behavioral and mental health practice. Understanding the clients in their context and the cumulative effects of the systemic sociopolitical milieu that affects receiving equitable care is essential. The social injustices and emotional and mental health inequities stemming from the structural racist practices that marginalize oppressed populations serve as barriers that must be factored into our understanding of the client. It is essential that these issues be considered in treatment and the provision of services. The interweaving of the tenets of CRT is critical to paving a path to mental health equity in delivering essential accurate diagnostic understanding, psychotherapy, and casework services to clients in need. In this way, social work practitioners

can be pivotal in improving outcomes in behavioral and mental health for those diverse racial and ethnic populations that are most vulnerable and the most oppressed in society.

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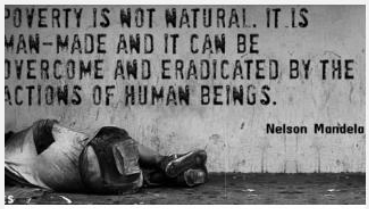

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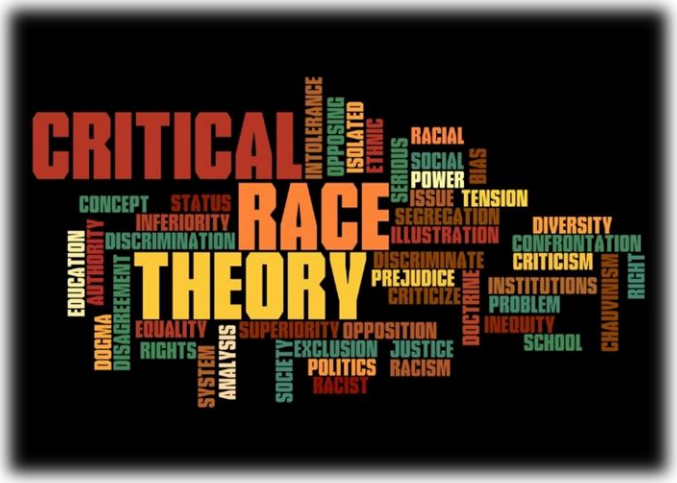

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