Building Safe Visibility for Black Boys

THE INFLUENCE OF MASCULINITY, SHAME, AND TRAUMA

Learning Objectives

01

Review of stigma and service inequity connected to current trends in mental health, social health determinants, and life stability.

02

Examine media images perpetuating invisibility by highlighting the connection to traumatic stress, self-worth, shame, and the development of microaggressions.

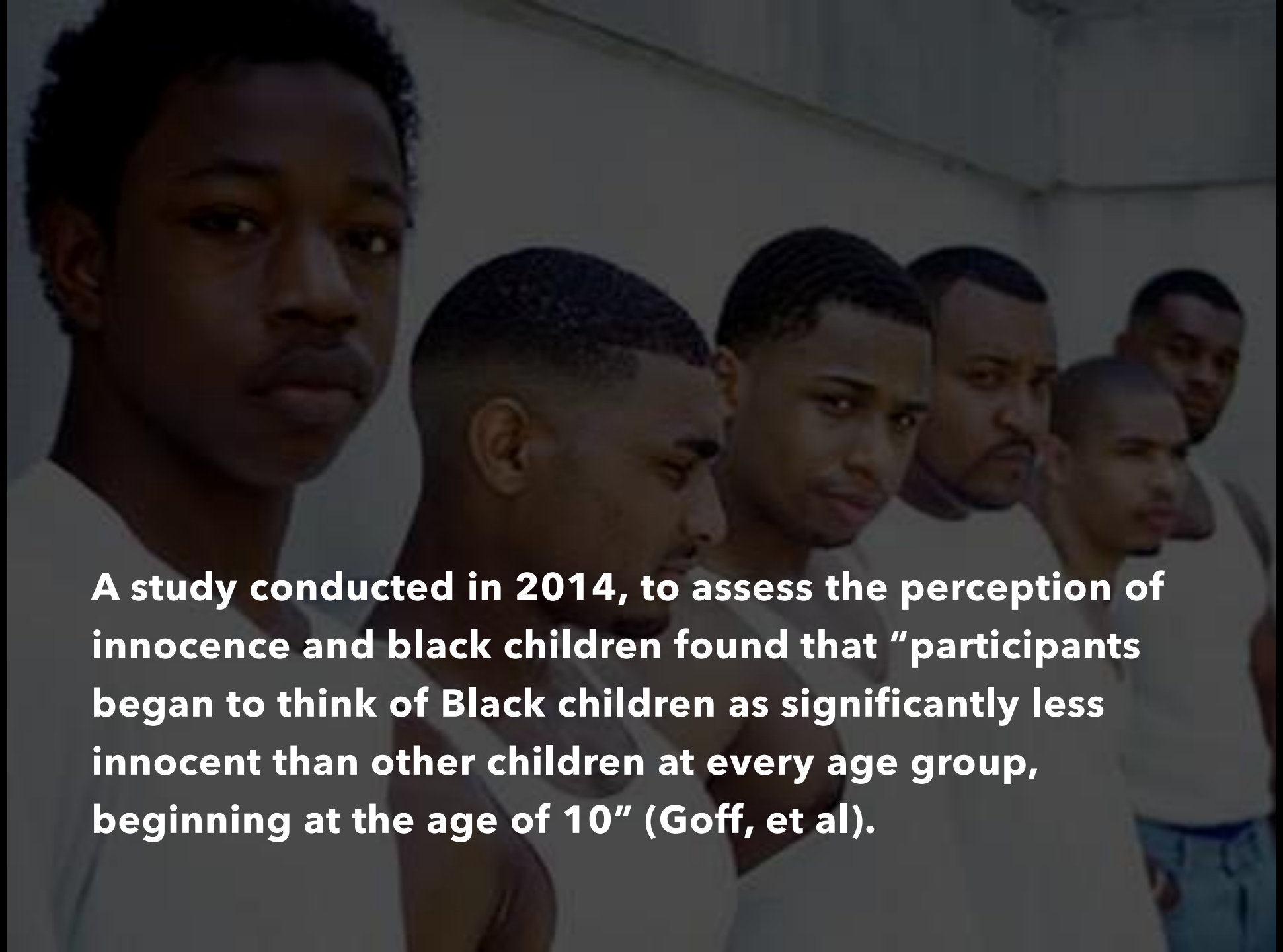
03

Identify effective strategies to create safety mentally, emotionally, physically, and environmentally utilizing protective and cultural factors.

Robert Sandifer “Yummy”

- Mom had over 30 arrests while prostituting
- Father in and out of incarceration
- Before **3**, DCFS was involved due to cigarette burns on his arms and neck &bruising consistent with physical beatings
- By **8**, quit attending school
- At **10**, arrested on charges of armed robbery. A psychological examiner reported: "**Robert is a child growing up without any encouragement and support," and that he "has a sense of failure that has infiltrated almost every aspect of his inner self."[8]**

Stigma, Culture & Access



A study conducted in 2014, to assess the perception of innocence and black children found that "participants began to think of Black children as significantly less innocent than other children at every age group, beginning at the age of 10" (Goff, et al).

Black children were perceived to be adults by the age of 13 and participants “deemed Black targets more culpable for their actions than Whites or Latino targets”
(Goff, et al, 2014).

“…teachers are more likely to attribute classroom inattentiveness and restlessness in African American adolescent males as disruptive and aggressive…”

The perception of aggression in African American males was often based on how they "walked, classroom posture, and specifically the way they dressed"

(Clark, 2007)

Critical Issues

Disproportionately represented in:

- School suspensions/expulsions
- Court Involvement over treatment
- Arrests
- Prison (harsher sentencing)
- Zero Tolerance Policies

Black and African American people are more often diagnosed with schizophrenia and less often diagnosed with mood disorders compared to white people with the same symptoms. Additionally, they are offered medication or therapy at the lower rates than the general population.

Mental Health Disorders Undiagnosed/Underdiagnosed

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

“We have to be aware that when we talk about depression it’s not just about sleep issues, appetite issues, being sad all the time. Depression can manifest itself in so many ways, including anger, slow suicide and very destructive behaviors.”

Dr. Jeff Gardere

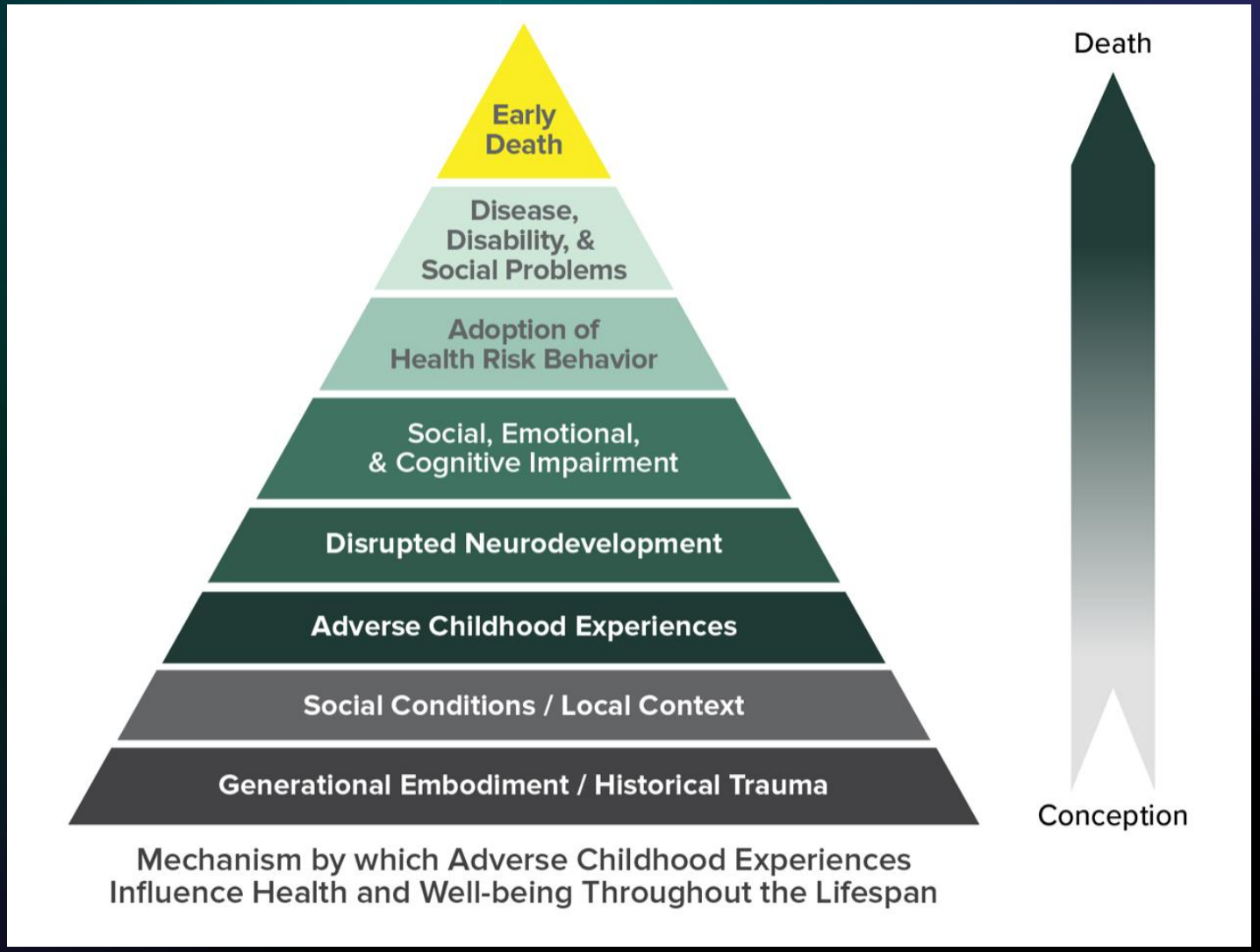
Mental Health Disorders Over Diagnosed

- Anger Problems
- Psychosis
- Conduct Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder

Trauma & Invisibility

THE ROLE OF MEDIA & SYSTEMS

Trauma coping has been passed down as TRADITION and ultimately becomes CULTURE.



Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

SHARED TRAUMA

- Racism
- Impoverished Communities
- Police Brutality
- Discrimination
- Disassembled Communities
- Overincarceration
- Unrealistic Expectations
- Undeveloped Identity

Common Experiences

Urban context often accelerates adolescent development

Being considered a "good kid" could be dangerous

Seek to control their emotions and environment by intimidating those viewed as more vulnerable

Denial of appropriate emotional responses such as self-reflection and grieving, stunts emotional development

Functional skills are much higher than typical adolescents

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Access Resources

Secure Safety

Problem-solve

Adaptable

Observant

Resilient

Education & Criminality

41% dropped out of high school in 2012-2013

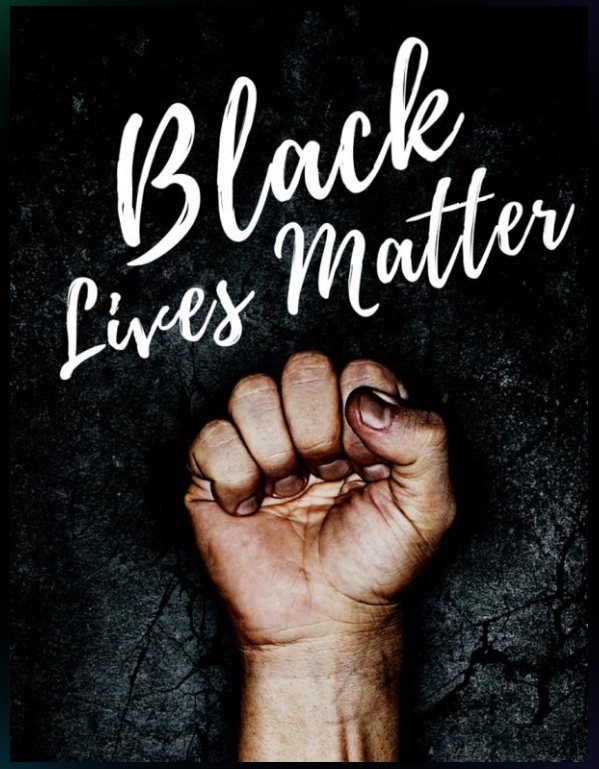
60.5% of all admissions to ODYS

Average age, 16 (25.1%) and 17 (39.5%)

34% of all working-age – ex-offenders

Causes of Death

- Homicide is the #1 cause of death 15-34
- Unintentional Injuries are the #2 cause of death 15-34
- Suicide is the #2 cause of death 0-19 and #3 for 19 - 24
- Cancer, Heart Disease & Stroke is the #1 cause – interchangeably for the over 50



Health Outcomes of Racial Trauma

- Irregular Sleep Patterns
- Over or Under Consumption of Food
- Increase in Stress Hormone Release
- Anxiety, Hypervigilance, Depression
- Toxic Stress
- Genetic Stress

Wilson, Jilian. (2020) This Is What Racial Trauma Does To The Body And Brain: Racism, injustice and brutality — experienced directly and indirectly — can have a lasting effect on a person's mental health. Huffpost.com July 1, 2020

Invisibility Syndrome

DR. ANDERSON FRANKLIN AND
DR. NANCY BOYD-FRANKLIN

“I am an invisible man…I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me…When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.”

RALPH ELLISON’S
INVISIBLE MAN

INVISIBILITY

Creates inner conflict

Requires choice – how to be visible vs. acceptance

Visibility is often determined by stereotypes

Paradox of invisibility

Recognition and treatment are based on stereotypes

Helpless

Powerless

Hopeless

Beyond Adolescence : Depression Defined Study of 18-25 conducted by Kendrick, Anderson & Moore 2007

Depression was characterized as stress or pressure

Chilling or coping included hanging with peers or distraction tactics

Persistent feeling that they are being treated differently

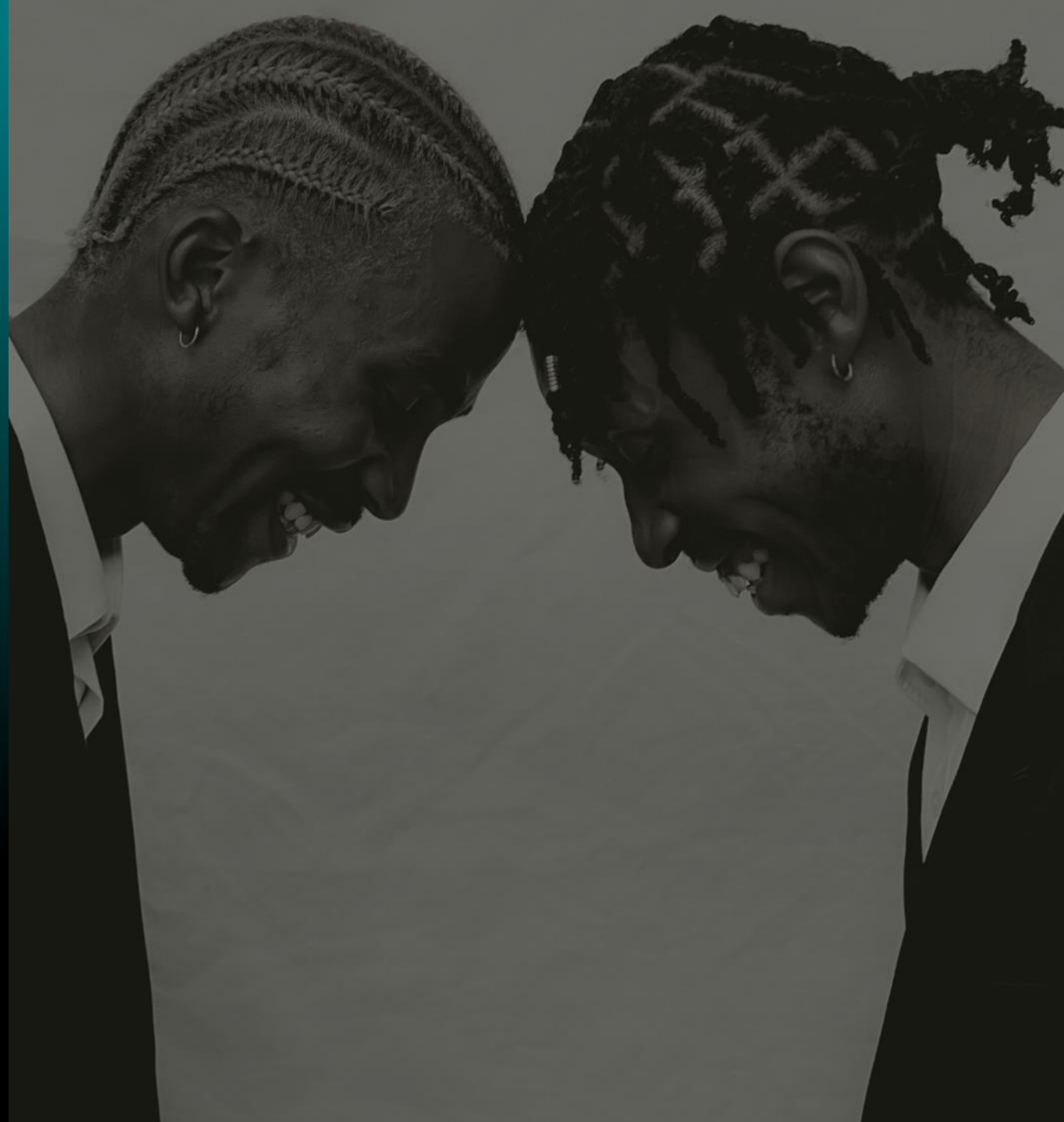
“tired of always making other people comfortable”

Rights violations by police

Fear observed in others

Strategies for Reconnection

CREATING INCLUSIVE, SAFE, & AFFIRMING ENVIRONMENTS



Nothing
for US,
without
US!

Social Justice-Informed Mental Health Literacy

"Mental health education framed in the social-historical context of inequality that aids in the skill building, healing and liberation of communities."

“By recognizing that the Black community has unique experiences when it comes to mental illness, we—as citizens of the world—are beginning to chip away at the stigma that permeates through culture,” Crawford said.

Difficult Conversations

1) Break the Silence – Challenge ourselves to avoid “safe” dialogue

2) Address Power – Reciprocal Exchange

3) Honor Pain & Healing – Defensiveness = Toxic Exchanges

Teach that grief and loss are an important part of mental wellness.

Avoid confrontations about values and friends –

Validate their anger

Under the anger is hurt, disappointment, betrayal

Under those emotions are fear, shame, and guilt

Don’t be a
dream killer!
Support their
interests and
goals.

Realistic Expectations

Connection is key to healing from dysfunction, loss, & trauma.

“Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within”

James Baldwin

Thank you!

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