

THE CHURCHES' ROLE IN HEALING & RESTORING OUR WOUNDED & HURTING AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN (IN OUR CONGREGATIONS)



LIVING LIFE COMPLETELY

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“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.”

~ Maya Angelou

OUR WOUNDED AND HURTING AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

The Problem: too many of our African-American women (AAW) are left to suffer in silence

The Cause: varied unique experiences

A Solution: the church

The statistics say:

- In 2014, 16.3% of adults aged 18 and older with mental illness were African American (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015)
- **African Americans are 20% more likely to experience more serious/severe mental health conditions** than the general population due to unmet needs and other barriers such as racism, socioeconomics, access to care etc. [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 2014; (DHHS, 2001; DHHS, 2014)
- **AAW** are often identified as a group at greater risk for depression, being twice as likely as men to suffer from it (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015); only 7.6% sought treatment for depression compared to 13.6% of the general population in 2011 (SAMHSA), 2012]
- **Studies...find that depression in African American women is often invisible, misdiagnosed or underdiagnosed, & ineptly treated** (Rickert, Wiemann, & Berenson, 2000; Bailey et al., 2011)

The statistics say:

- Black women are vulnerable to depression due to **chronic environmental stressors of racism, discrimination, sexism, poverty, cultural socialization practices, and social health difficulties** (Schneider, Hitlan, & Radhakrishnan, 2000).
- Perceptions of contributing factors to AAW's experience of depression: **lack of control in life, difficulties with personal relationships, multiple & demanding social roles, chronic stressors, & poor personal well-being.** (Holden, Belton, & Hall 2015)
- **Higher rates of PTSD** among AAW may be explained by **significant rates of trauma exposure**, especially among those that are economically disadvantaged (Breslau et al., 1998; Alim, Charney, & Mellman, 2006; Carr et al., 2012). Types of violence commonly impacting African American women **include childhood sexual abuse, dating violence/intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment** (West, 2014)
- A 2010 study, found that many women in their study did not identify stigma as a barrier and although these women endorsed treatment-seeking, they also **identified faith, prayer, and informal support from friends and family as important preferred coping mechanisms.**

This is what we often see:

The powerful oppress the less powerful who, in turn oppress those even less powerful than they. These cycles of oppression leave scars on the victims and victors alike, scars that embed themselves in our collective psyches and are passed down through generations, robbing us of our humanity.

~Dr. Joy DeGruy
Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome



“Melancholy” (Empty Man) by Albert György (Romania born sculptor) can be found in Geneva in a small park on the promenade (Quai du Mont Blanc) along the shore of Lake Geneva.

RESEARCH REVEALS...

Scholars address the impact of race, gender, and the unique experiences of African-American women asserting that without examining prejudices, race, and experiences of discrimination, it is virtually impossible to fathom the mental health of African-American women. Furthermore, the unique cultural factors that are generational, chronic, and gender based that cause severe stress and impact the behavior of this segment of the population must be examined.

~Vanessa Lynn Hunn and Carlton David Craig, "Depression, Sociocultural Factors, and African American Women." *Journal of Multicultural Counseling And Development*

RESEARCH REVEALS...

- Black women are poorly understood in treatment circles.
- Only recently have researchers begun to explore the need for different clinical strategies that take into account cultural and social differences of African American women (Amankwaa, 2003)
- Post-slavery issues of racism, oppression, & discrimination contribute to the differences in life experiences & mental health of African Americans. **African American women** experience higher levels of economic strain than do African American men & Caucasians of both genders (D. Brown & Keith, 2003).
- African Americans. . .are hesitant to seek traditional residential treatment; . . .African Americans' history of separation of family & community because of slavery continues to affect African Americans regarding their attitude toward residential treatment. (Kruzich, Friesen,- Williams-Murphy, and Longley 2002

Historical and present-day role of the church. . .

- Historically, the African American church has been a primary source of spirituality, social support, and connectedness for African American women (Frame, Williams, & Green, 1999; Holt, Lewellyn, & Jo Rathweg, 2005).
- The African American church continues to be paramount in the spiritual, social, political, economic, and psychological preservation of African Americans.
- The role of the church as support & treatment for African American women experiencing depression & other mental illnesses is understudied, *but the African American church is a major mental health resource for minorities* in the United States (Ellison, 1995; Morlock, Matlin, Barksdale, Puri, & Lyles, 2008; Neighbors, Musick, & Williams, 1998).

How does the church assist in healing and restoration?

1) Pastors/clergy must:

- Realize they are considered caregivers
- Remember the important role the African-American/black church plays in their communities (historically & currently)
- Remember they are charged to “care for His sheep”
- Remember their calling and what that entails
- Assist the hurting and wounded AAW in their congregations by demonstrating the care, compassion, and love that Christ did and does
- Equip themselves and lay leaders to be able to address the issues of AAW

How does the church assist in healing and restoration?

NEEDS	DEFICIENCIES
Church leaders must be well-informed	Not adequately prepared to assist AAW that suffer intimate partner violence (IPV)
Church leaders must be well-trained	Lack of knowledge can potentially place these battered women in greater danger
The need for pastors and church leaders to be aware of the problems AAW face daily	Tendency to minimize AAW issues
Church leaders must provide a safe and caring environment where healing & restoration can take place for these AAW	AAW report not being heard or casually dismissed
Church leaders must not judge, condemn, or ignore this segment of their congregation	Ability not to place blame on AAW for her situation or tell her she can manage because “she’s a <i>Strong Black Woman</i> ”
Timothy Keller, <i>Ministries of Mercy: The Call Of The Jericho Road</i> notes that the church “Must be a ‘full-service’ body”	Unfortunately, many churches are not equipped to be a “full-service body,” not able to care for the emotional, mental/psychological needs of the congregants

How does the church assist in healing and restoration?

2) WE MUST LEARN TO MANAGE OUR MINDS (Pastors included)

(Prov 23:7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. . .)

(Rom 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind.)

- Overcome stereotypes associated with mental illness
- Address issues of anxiety, depression, discrimination, grief, economic inequities, racism, sexism, shame, suicide etc.
- Understand anything unmanaged is damaging to the brain & body
- Not brush off, denigrate, disregard, play down/trivialize emotional and psychological issues
- DO NOT BE AFRAID TO ADDRESS THE REAL DAILY ISSUES AAW FACE

How does the church assist in healing and restoration?

3) Provide a safe and compassionate space for healing and forgiveness:

- Forgiveness: Church leaders must know how to forgive and teach forgiveness
Matt 18:21-22 Matt 18:21-22 (Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.)

Col 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Pastors/church leaders must understand:

- Forgiveness is a process for all humans
- God is the only one able to forgive instantly
- Forgiveness never gets ahead of healing the trauma (pain)

Adrian Hickmon, Ph.D.: "The Transforming Power of Trauma and Addiction,"

- ## 4) **Receive training and identify members that are able to** facilitate workshops or small groups on the various real life, daily issues including domestic violence and suicide

How does the church assist in healing and restoration?

5) RECOGNIZE AND CONFIRM FOR THE HURTING AND WOUNDED AAW IN THEIR CONGREGATIONS THAT HEALING IS NOT DONE IN ISOLATION

WE ARE TO CARRY EACH OTHER AND COMFORT ONE ANOTHER with COMPASSION

- John 21:15-17 (His sheep)
- Matthew 25:34-40 (Least of these)
- Galatians 6:2 (“Carry each others burdens. . .”)
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (Comfort)
- Luke 15:20 (His father had compassion)
- Ephesians 4:32 (Compassion; forgive)

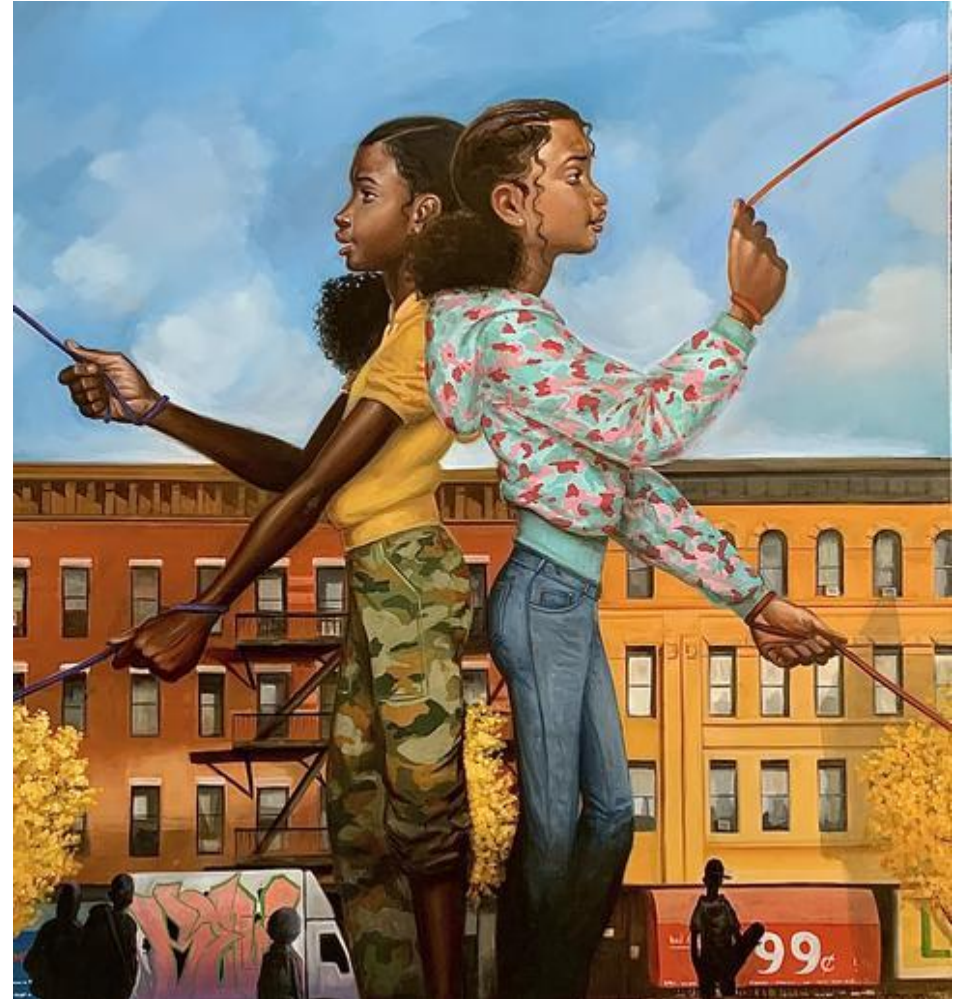
6) Build relationships with Christian psychologists, therapists, life coaches, etc.
Numbers 11:17 (Moses; sharing the burden)

7) Have a list of community resources available (e.g. shelters, battered women, financial resources, support groups etc.)

How does the church assist in healing and restoration?

7) EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A SUPPORT SYSTEM. . .

- Mother
- Father
- Sibling(s)
- Friend
- Pastor
- Counselor/therapist/ life coach
- Mentor
- Know where to go for resources
- Co-workers
- Extended family
- Active prayer life
- Church



Back to Back

Artist: Frank Morrison

And finally, the pastor, church leaders, and lay leaders **MUST demonstrate and live out the greatest commandment--*LOVE***

Love others = Love self

- **Ephesians 5:29**

“After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church. . .”

- **Matthew 19:19** “. . .love your neighbor as yourself.”

Matthew 22:37-39

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

- **1 Corinthians 13:4-6**

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

- **Philippians 2:3-4**

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, ***in humility value others above yourselves***, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Remember: The Charge of the pastor and church

We, pastors and the church, are to imitate Jesus. We are not to merely pontificate but, show Christ's care, compassion, and love to our African-American women who are silently suffering in our churches (and others as well).

*When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, **"Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"** "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."*

*Jesus said, **"Feed my lambs."** Again Jesus said, **"Simon son of John, do you love me?"** He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, **"Take care of my sheep."***

*The third time he said to him, **"Simon son of John, do you love me?"** Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, **"Feed my sheep."** **John 21:15-17***

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING

It is my hope that you found this informative and beneficial.



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