

Delaware State University's Trauma Academy

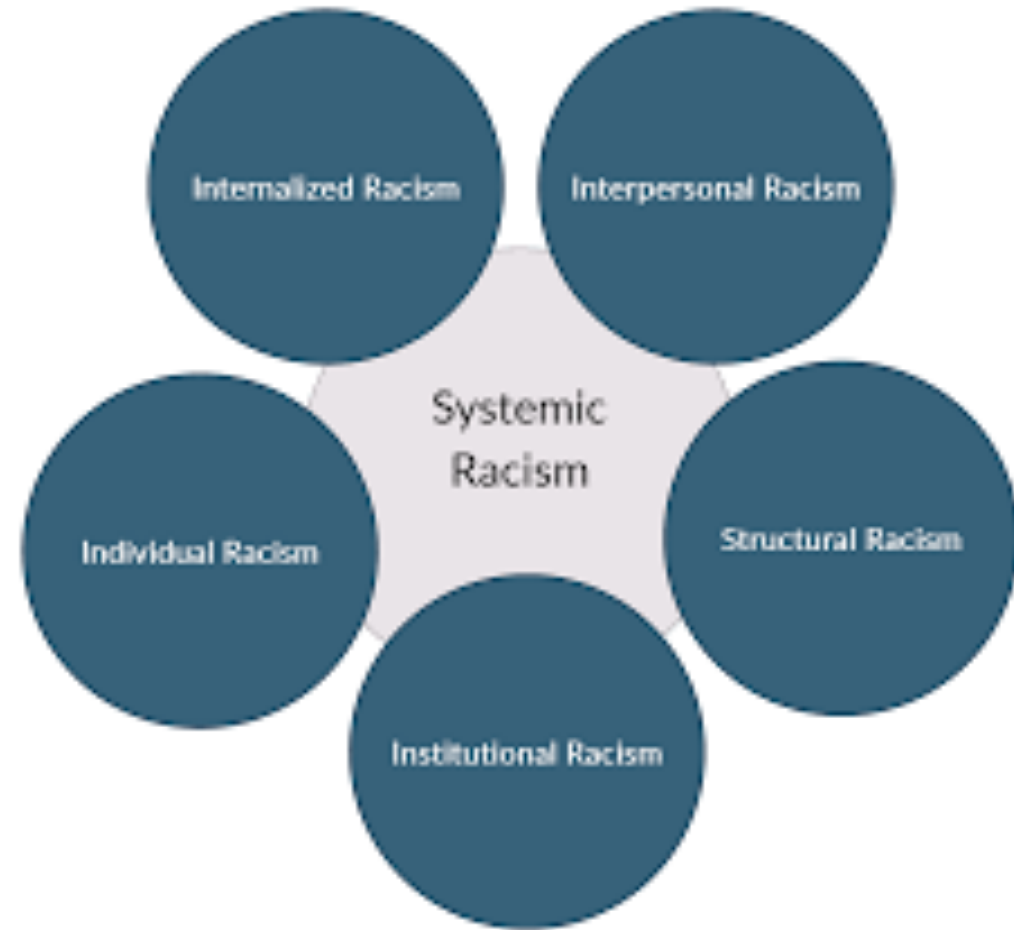
The Impact of Structural Racism on African- Americans' Mental Health

Dr. Gwendolyn Scott-Jones, WCHBS Dean

Ms. Kim Graham, DSU Trauma Academy Director

What is Structural Racism?

- **Structural racism** in the U.S. is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics that stem from historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal aspects that routinely advantage Caucasians while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color (Lawrence, K., & Kelecher, T. 2004).



Impact of Structural Racism on African-Americans' Mental Health

- The impacts of structural racism, can take a mental toll on African Americans. Mental health disparities based on minority racial status are well identified, including inequities in access, symptom severity, diagnosis, and treatment.
- Structural racism creates trauma.
- African Americans have a history of experiencing structural racism through economic disadvantages and segregation, which have been existent since slavery



What stands between
disrespected African
American and the source of
disrespect is almost four
hundred years of history,
four centuries of being the
targets of humiliation and
abuse. A history of racial
conflict, inequality, and
contempt culminates in a
moment that few people not
of the culture could
comprehend, let alone
predict.

- Joy DeGruy, PhD, Post Traumatic Slave
Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury
and Healing

Post-Traumatic Slavery Syndrome

- **PTSS** is a condition that exists as a consequence of multigenerational oppression of Africans and their descendants resulting from centuries of chattel slavery (DeGruy, J. 2017).
- *Chattel slavery* is predicated on the belief that African Americans are inherently/genetically inferior to their Caucasian counterparts.
- Dr. DeGruy (2017) identified three key patterns of PTSS behaviors that are exhibited by African Americans.
 1. **Vacant Esteem**
 2. **Marked Propensity for Anger and Violence**
 3. **Racist Socialization and (Internalized) Racism**

What Should Be Done to Address PTSS?



- Many medical providers, behavioral health practitioners, educators, and law enforcement officers seek to understand the African American culture and how they can provide equitable service delivery.
- To heal African Americans, service providers must first understand the overt systemic trauma, then examine the covert systemic and institutional aspects that continue to perpetuate racism in the United States.

(Scott-Jones & Kamara, 2020)

Culturally Responsive Trauma-Informed Care & Services



- Trauma-informed care and services could offer an important opportunity to African Americans who have been harmed and emotionally injured.
- Trauma-informed service providers should provide healing centered engagement in their approach to working with African Americans.

(Scott-Jones & Kamara, 2020)

Approaches That Work

Healing centered engagement is akin to the South African term “Ubuntu” meaning that humanness is found through our interdependence, collective engagement and service to others (Ginwright, S. 2018).

Healing centered engagement offers an asset driven approach aimed at the holistic restoration of African Americans and their well-being



NTU™

NTU psychotherapy is spiritually based and aims to assist people and systems to become authentic and balanced within a shared energy and essence that is in alignment with natural order. NTU therapy uses the principles of Kwanzaa as guidelines for harmonious living.

Progressive Life Center
Dr. Fredrick Phillips



Transforming Historical Harms Framework

The framework looks at historical injustices and their present manifestations through the lens of trauma and identifies the mechanisms for the transmission of historical trauma

David Anderson Hooker & Amy Potter Czajkowski

Delaware State University



Where Can
Service
Providers
Start?

HEALING TRAUMA

FROM AN AFRICAN-CENTERED HEALING APPROACH

ONLINE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Healing Trauma from an African-Centered Healing Approach is an online certificate program comprised of six courses with the goal to give students the opportunity to explore healing from an African-centered paradigm that is different than the mainstream world view and values that undergrid standard therapeutic approaches. This alternative healing paradigm is designed to build resilience in children, adults and communities exposed to trauma and toxic stress.