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# Exploring Strategies School Systems can Utilize to Support Black Students who Encounter Racial Stress and Trauma



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# Black Mental Wellness, Corp.

- **Dr. Nicole L. Cammack:**  
President & CEO
- **Dr. Danielle R. Busby:**  
Professional Relations & Liaison
- **Dr. Dana L. Cunningham:**  
Community Outreach & Engagement
- **Dr. Jessica S. Henry:**  
Program Development & Evaluation





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# Black Mental Wellness, Corp.

## The Mission of Black Mental Wellness

- To provide information and resources about mental health and behavioral health topics from a Black perspective
- To highlight and increase the diversity of mental health professionals
- To decrease the mental health stigma in the Black community

[www.BlackMentalWellness.com](http://www.BlackMentalWellness.com)





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# OVERVIEW

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## Objectives:

Define racial stress and trauma and provide at least 3 examples of how racial stress and trauma can occur in schools

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Identify the systems & policies within schools that impact student health and wellness

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Understanding the role of implicit bias in school systems & policies

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# Take Care of Yourself



- STOP when you notice heightened emotions
  - **S**low Down
  - **T**ake some deep breaths
  - **O**bserve what you are feeling in your body
  - **P**rocess and proceed





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# Racial Discrimination Among Youth



- Children as early as preschool age are able to identify their race, but perceptions associated with race often sharpen beginning in early adolescence
- Several studies indicate that more than two-thirds of African American and Latinx youth report exposure to racial discrimination as young as age 8
- One factor that may explain higher rates of trauma exposure for youth is racial stress and trauma (Williams et al., 2018)

# When Racism is Easy to See...

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**Overt racist actions** are the easiest to identify, unlike the less obvious or more hidden forms of racism

*Examples include:*

- Hate speech
- Discrimination or treating people differently based on their race
- Racial slurs
- A teacher using the N-word in class
- Hate crimes
- Racial teasing



# When Racism is Hidden...

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**Covert racism** is not as easy to identify when it happens, so it is more difficult to recognize.

- Because of the subtle ways that covert racism occurs, the person committing the act may deny that the behavior or act was racist
- You may find yourself replaying the event and questioning yourself or others about the experience

*Examples include:*

- Racial profiling
- School policies that unfairly ban students from wearing their hair in its natural state
- Systemic racism





# When You are Unsure it is Racism...

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**Microaggressions** are verbal statements, behaviors, or environmental factors directed towards members of a marginalized group and feels hurtful or insulting.

*Examples include:*

- Someone saying, “You’re pretty for a Black girl,” as a compliment
- Perceiving behaviors as aggressive or hostile by a Black student and not a White student



# When You are Unsure it is Racism...

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**Implicit biases** are attitudes and beliefs that affect our behaviors. We are not always consciously aware they exist, but they:

- Negatively impact people and systems (e.g., legal system, college admissions, or hiring)
- Are expressed in subconscious stereotypes (automatic responses you may have without thinking about them)
- Impact expectations and interactions with people
- Include judgments based on race, ability, gender, culture, language, etc.





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# Institutional Racism vs Structural Racism

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## Institutional Racism

- Discriminatory policies and practices within organizations and institutions
- Creates advantages for Whites
- Creates discrimination, oppression, and disadvantage for people from targeted racial groups
- **EXAMPLES:** discriminatory loan and housing practices, criminal justice sentences and consequences, educational acceptance requirements)

## Structural Racism

- Ongoing racial inequalities maintained by society
- Causes Black Americans to experience life in the US differently from their White counterparts
- **EXAMPLES:** higher unemployment rate for minorities, Black Americans underrepresented in high-paying jobs; income and salary gap; household wealth)



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Discussion: How does racial stressors and trauma impact the youth and families you work with?

NATIONAL

# A Black Texas student sues after he was suspended over his hairstyle

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 23, 2023 · 2:42 PM ET ⓘ



Jonathan Franklin



Darryl George, a 17-year-old junior at Barbers Hill High School in Mont Belvieu, Texas, has been suspended for not cutting his hair.

Michael Wyke/AP

# The Impact Of Racism On Mental Health:

Thoughts

Feeling disconnected / lonely

Increase risk of  
depression and anxiety

Second-guessing things

Decreased hope  
(in the future, justice,  
the government etc.)

Trauma  
(both from the present and  
triggering past instances /  
generational trauma)

Increased  
"Survival Mode"

Existential  
questioning  
"How can the world  
be so cruel?"

Decreased trust



Behaviors

Worry

Feelings of powerlessness  
(You can do the right thing and still  
end up with a horrific outcome)

Panic

Feelings

Relationships

**#BlackLivesMatter**

@RealDepressionProject



# Implicit Bias

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- Subtle
- Subconscious stereotypes
- Impact our expectations and interactions with people
- Judgments based on race, ability, gender, culture, language, etc.
- Impact how teachers perceive and respond to students





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# Why is this Important

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- Biases can worsen achievement gap in education
- Racial disparities in school discipline
  - At Illinois' largest high school district, Black and Latino students were suspended more often than white students, disciplined more often for subjective reasons like dress code violations, and referred more frequently to the local police, who in many cases then issued costly tickets for misbehavior
  - 55%. of all expulsions in Michigan involve students of color
- School to prison pipeline
  - Increases probability of school drop out rates
  - Increases probability of incarceration





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# School-to-Prison Pipeline



- A cycle where students are funneled out of schools into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.
- Students of color are especially vulnerable to push-out trends due to discriminatory discipline practices
  - Black students represent 31% of school-related arrests
  - Black students are suspended and expelled 3 times more than white students
  - Students suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation are nearly 3 times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year.
- A study in 2009 found that white students were more likely to be disciplined for provable, documentable offenses — smoking, vandalism, and obscene language — while black students were more likely to be disciplined for more subjective reasons at the discretion of adult decision makers, such as disrespect or defiance (Skiba, Eckes, & Brown, 2009)

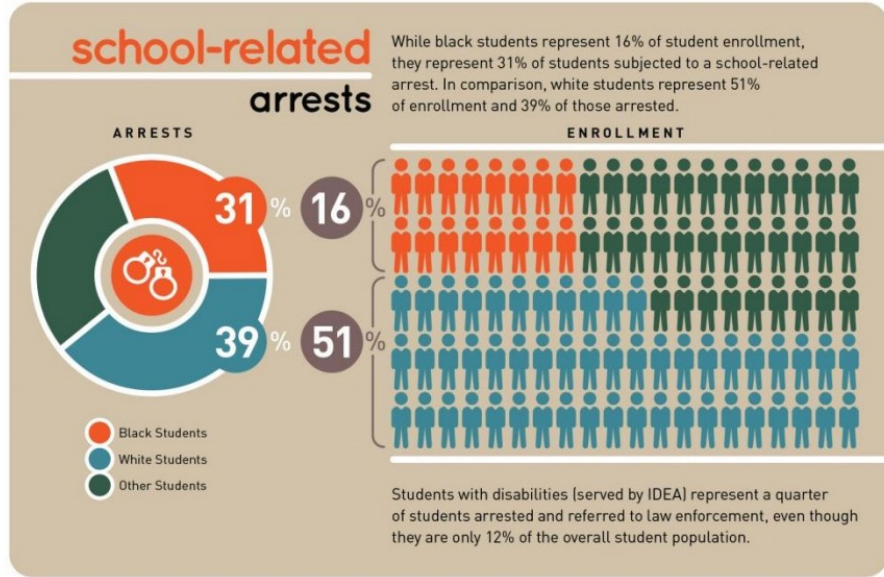
# BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION 60 YEARS LATER

1954-2014



## SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPE LINE

**three times the suspensions and expulsions** **3x** Black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than their white peers.



**more than 25% out-of-school suspension** More than 25% of boys of color with disabilities receive an out-of-school suspension.



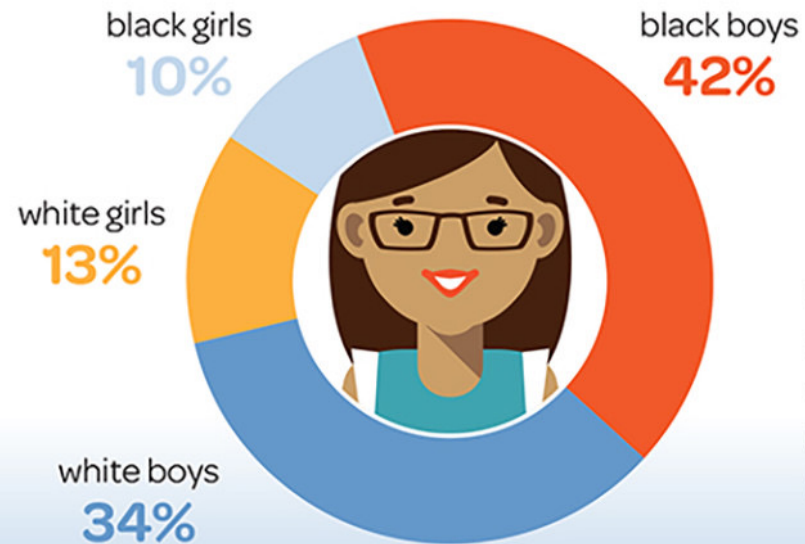
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## Discussion:

What are common examples of implicit bias that you are aware of in the work you do?

We are interested in learning about how teachers detect challenging behavior in the classroom. Sometimes this involves seeing behavior before it becomes problematic. The video segments you are about to view are of preschoolers engaging in various activities. Some clips may or may not contain challenging behaviors. Your job is to press the enter key on the external keypad every time you see a behavior that could become a potential challenge.

### Track the eyes: Which students are teachers watching?



Preschool teachers tend to more closely observe blacks than whites, especially black boys, when challenging behaviors are expected.



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rspZv2a0Pp8&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rspZv2a0Pp8&feature=emb_logo)



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# The Bias in Me



- Before you can help your students, you must first acknowledge, understand, and address your own personal biases
- This can help you to effectively show up for your students and assist them in navigating their emotions
- Biases are more likely to show up in the classroom:
  - When they have vague or incomplete information about a topic or student
  - When they're acting under time constraints
  - When they're tired, burned out, or have a lot on their plate

Staats, C. *Understanding Implicit Bias: What Educators Should Know*. American Educator, 2015, 39(4), pp. 29-33.[9]



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# Reflection: What can you do?

# Project Implicit

Project Implicit offers free online tests to help individuals better understand their implicit biases related to a range of factors including:

- Race or ethnicity
  - Disability
  - Age
  - Gender or sexual orientation
  - Religion
  - Skin tone
- 
- **Test:** <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
  - **More information:** <https://www.projectimplicit.net>





# Self-Reflection

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- How is my perspective different from my colleagues?  
Students and families?
- What assumptions am I making about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Where do I have room to grow in my cultural understanding of my students and families?
- How can I develop a better understanding of those who have different identities than me?

# ACTIVITY

## IDENTITIES

- Race
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity
- Class
- Biological Sex
- National Origin
- Immigration Status

### *Statements*

1) The part of my identity that I am most aware of on a daily basis is

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2) The part of my identity that I am the least aware of on a daily basis is

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3) The part of my identity that I wish I knew more about is

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4) The part of my identity that provides me the most privilege is

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5) The part of my identity that I believe is the most misunderstood by others is

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6) The part of my identity that I feel is difficult to discuss with others who identify differently is \_\_\_\_\_

7) The part of my identity that makes me feel discriminated against is

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# Helping Students in the Classroom



- Educators and school staff are in a unique and critical position
- Assess your personal understanding related to addressing race, racial discrimination, and other race-related stressors
- Identify your personal biases and privilege
- Consult with colleagues, read relevant books, and attend trainings to increase your cultural awareness





- Lead with humility and openness
- Be willing to learn from others who may have different experiences and worldviews
- Continue to educate yourself about the experiences of others and to learn more about what you can do to support them.
- Initiate and engage in conversations, even when there are risks of embarrassment, suspicion or discomfort
- Avoid using the words “You,” “But,” “Everyone,” and “Should” in response to an individual expressing concerns
- Listen and provide an opportunity to clarify the meaning and intention of what others are saying
- Notice what triggers your assumptions and work to reduce your biases
- Engage in ongoing self-awareness and reflection



- Fill the classroom with culturally diverse books, pictures, and discussions
- Lead discussions on current events related to race and racial stress
- Review curriculum for evidence of dominant culture and bias
- Invite community speakers to classrooms to enhance student exposure and collective knowledge and understanding
- Provide resources specific to coping with related to race-related stress to students if needed
- Name the thoughts and feelings you may be having related to race-related current events.



- Examine how to engage in culturally responsive and anti-racist teaching
- Build real relationships
- Set community agreements for respectful discussions
- Call “in” when necessary and name discomfort
- Be prepared to respond to strong emotions
- Identify social justice activities/projects

# 6

## Things School Staff Can Do to Interrupt Unconscious Bias

*“Bias is a universal human condition that must be recognized and managed, not a personal defect. We all carry biases from swimming in the waters of a racialized, inequitable society.”*

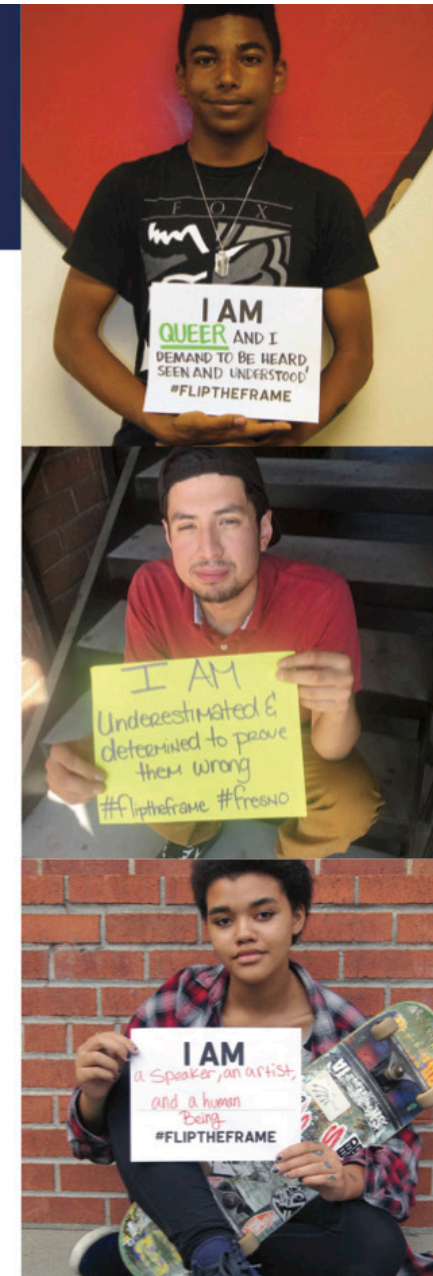
- Shane Safir, educator and author of *The Listening Leader*

*“Biases are the stories we make up about people before we know who they actually are.”*

- Vernā Myers, inclusion strategist and author of *Moving Diversity Forward*

- 1 **Notice:** In order to interrupt our racial and other biases we must first become aware of them. If you find yourself struggling with a particular student, parent, or colleague, take a 10-second pause to ask yourself: “What are my biases toward this person? How can I disrupt my autopilot thoughts so that I can genuinely see and listen to them?”<sup>1</sup>
- 2 **Listen:** Slow down your interactions and deeply listen, not to solve, correct, or fix, but to take in someone’s story. Notice what’s said and unsaid—tone, body language, and emotions. “Listening helps us take in a person’s multiple stories and disrupts biased thinking.”<sup>2</sup>
- 3 **Reflect:** Read, discuss, journal—ask yourself: “Where do I see implicit biases playing out in our school? What fear or apprehension do I have about addressing this issue?”<sup>3</sup>
- 4 **Connect:** Build in time for dialogue in classroom and staff spaces through circles, small groups, or one on ones that create openings for students and staff to talk about race and identity. “How am I getting to know students as complex individuals? How are we building trust?”<sup>4</sup>
- 5 **Affirm:** Intentionally embrace and affirm students’ identities around race, class, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, etc. to counter stereotypes and bias. Ensure students see themselves reflected in the diversity of staff, culturally relevant curriculum, and visual landscape of the school and classroom.
- 6 **Act:** 1) Practice slowing down, noticing your biases, and looking for options to interrupt your patterns.  
2) Call on colleagues to listen, reflect, and learn about their own biases.  
3) Choose an equity challenge in your classroom or school and work with students of color and those most impacted as co-creators, trainers, or evaluators.

<sup>1-4</sup> Safir, Shane. (2016, March 14). 5 Keys to Challenging Implicit Bias. Retrieved March 28, 2019, from <https://www.edutopia.org>







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# Create Safe Classrooms



## **Diversify Learning Material and Environment**

- Teach curriculums that promotes tolerance of people from all backgrounds and ability levels
- Embrace teaching about culture from a strengths-based approach
- For example, instead of teaching on the enslavement of Africans explore pre-colonial history, Black historical figures beyond slavery, etc.

## **Variety in featured content**

- Incorporate authors of color into course content to not only showcase scholars that reflect students, but to expand your own scope as well.



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# Create Safe Classrooms



## Give Students a Voice

- Allow students to express how they feel and share personal experiences
- Help students to connect life experiences to learning
- Honor beliefs of all students and culture
- Highlight and incorporate student interests
- If you encounter issues regarding race welcome an open discussion to tackle the issue.
- Allow students to decide if they will talk and do not spotlight them to share their experiences, this is known as being the “Black spokesperson” which often causes discomfort.



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# Improving School Policies & Procedures

# New 'Culturally Responsive Teaching' standards approved for Illinois

A legislative committee approved a set of standards that are changing the way educators are trained to teach students in Illinois.



Ad

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# L.A. Schools Cut Police Force and Reallocate Funds to Help Black Students

"BLACK STUDENTS, PARENTS, TEACHERS AND ALLIES HAVE DEMANDED THAT WE INTERRUPT THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE." -MÓNICA GARCÍA, SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER



A bold redesign with family fun in mind.

The newly redesigned Hyundai SANTA FE.

[Learn more](#)

Prep reduced cost model with optional features shown.

READ MORE



# Denver pledged to improve education for Black students. But exactly how is up to each school.

By Melanie Asmar | Feb 18, 2021, 4:35pm MST





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# School Policies & Procedures



- Assess current policy and procedures for potential biases
- Develop clear policies against any forms of racism
- Consult with other appropriate professionals regarding best strategies for culturally inclusive teaching and school structure
- Continue to educate yourself about the experiences of others and to learn more about what you can do to support them.
- Questions to consider
  - Does the school have clear procedures around how the school will respond to reported incidents of racism?
  - Process for students to safely report racial experiences either directly experienced or witnessed
  - Are students aware of the process for reporting events?



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# School Policies & Procedures

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- Examine and address individual and systemic biases
- Restorative circles include listening, affective communication, and curiosity questioning
- Build systems that address misbehavior and harm in a way that strengthens relationships
- Engage in collaborative problem-solving
- Provide a curriculum that encourages discussion on race and racism
- Increase teacher training to foster competent classroom practices
- Offer safe and supportive opportunities for growth for teachers, parents, and students
- Form equity teams that facilitate conversations about these disparities
- Develop an equitable code of conduct that is inclusive and safe for all students

AN INSTANT HELP SOCIAL JUSTICE BOOK FOR TEENS


# HEALING RACIAL STRESS WORKBOOK FOR BLACK TEENS

Skills to Help You Manage Emotions, Resist Racism & Feel Empowered



Respond to racial stress & trauma • Deal with microaggressions • Build resistance & resilience

JESSICA S. HENRY, PHD | FARZANA T. SALEEM, PHD | DANA L. CUNNINGHAM, PHD  
NICOLE L. CAMMACK, PHD | DANIELLE R. BUSBY, PHD  
Foreword by Howard C. Stevenson, PhD



## My Grandmother's Hands

*Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*

RESMAA MENAKEM  
MSW, LICSW, SEP

A NEW HARBINGER SOCIAL JUSTICE HANDBOOK

# THE RACIAL HEALING HANDBOOK

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOU CHALLENGE PRIVILEGE, CONFRONT SYSTEMIC RACISM & ENGAGE IN COLLECTIVE HEALING

KNOW YOUR RACIAL IDENTITY • EXPLORE INTERNALIZED RACISM  
(RE)LEARN THE HISTORY OF RACISM  
UNDERSTAND RACISM IN RELATIONSHIPS • RAISE YOUR RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS  
CATCH YOURSELF IN THE FLOW OF RACISM • GRIEVE & NAME RACISM  
LEARN TO BE AN ALLY • RECLAIM YOUR WHOLE SELF

ANNELIESE A. SINGH, PhD, LPC  
FOREWORD BY TIM WISE | AFTERWORD BY DERALD WING SUE, PhD

# HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST

IBRAM X. KENDI

# THE UNAPOLOGETIC GUIDE TO BLACK MENTAL HEALTH

Navigate an Unequal System, Learn Tools for Emotional Wellness, and Get the Help You Deserve

RHEEDA WALKER, PhD  
FOREWORD BY HA'IM AKBAR, PhD

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

"An unusually sensitive work about the racial barriers that still divide us in so many areas of life." —Jonathan Kozal

# WHY ARE ALL THE BLACK KIDS SITTING TOGETHER IN THE CAFETERIA?

And Other Conversations About Race

Revised and Updated

BEVERLY DANIEL TATUM, PhD

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

A NEW HARBINGER SOCIAL JUSTICE HANDBOOK

RECLAIMING WHOLENESS  
DESPITE THE BURDENS OF SYSTEMIC, INTERGENERATIONAL & ATTACHMENT TRAUMA

# The Pain We Carry

Healing from Complex PTSD for People of Color

NATALIE Y. GUTIÉRREZ, LMFT  
Foreword by JENNIFER MULLAN, PSYD



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# Strategies and Resources

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## RESilience

- Uplifting youth through healthy communication about race. <https://www.apa.org/res>

## Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom

- A resource for educators from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network [https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/addressing\\_race\\_and\\_trauma\\_in\\_the\\_classroom\\_educators.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/addressing_race_and_trauma_in_the_classroom_educators.pdf)

## One Talk at a Time

- Providing support for Latinx American, Asian American, African American, and Black youth and their families to have conversations about race and ethnicity. <https://www.caminoslab.org/onetalk>

## Embrace Race

- A multiracial community of parents, teachers, experts, and other caring adults who support each other to meet the challenges that race poses to our children, families, and communities. <https://www.embracerace.org>





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# Strategies and Resources

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## **These Books Can Help You Explain Racism and Protest to Your Kids**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/parenting/kids-books-racism-protest.html>

## **Helping Kids Process Violence, Trauma, and Race in a World of Nonstop News**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhjMyOqu2G8>

## **I Am An Educator: I care about my students' racial consciousness and want to develop their racial awareness.**

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/audiences/educator>

## **First Encounters With Race and Racism: Teaching Ideas for Classroom Conversations**

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/27/learning/lesson-plans/first-encounters-with-race-and-racism-teaching-ideas-for-classroom-conversations.html>



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# For More Information

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## Black Mental Wellness Website

[www.BlackMentalWellness.com](http://www.BlackMentalWellness.com)

## Email

Dr. Nicole Cammack: [DrCammack@BlackMentalWellness.com](mailto:DrCammack@BlackMentalWellness.com)

Dr. Danielle Busby: [DrBusby@BlackMentalWellness.com](mailto:DrBusby@BlackMentalWellness.com)

## Social Media



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@BlackMentalWellness