



Kasserian Ingera: And How Are the Children? *Suicidal Ideation among Black Children*

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The Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi), Inc.

Sees its mission and destiny as the...

- Liberation of the African Mind,
- Empowerment of the African Character, and
- Enlivenment and illumination of the African Spirit.

Purpose of the Association

The Association is organized to operate exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, including but not limited to...

- promoting and advancing the profession of African Psychology
- influencing and affecting social change; and
- developing programs whereby psychologists of African {ancestry} (hereafter known as Black Psychologists) can assist in solving problems of Black communities and other ethnic groups.

**If it Takes a Village to Raise a Child..
What happens if the Village is Hurting?**



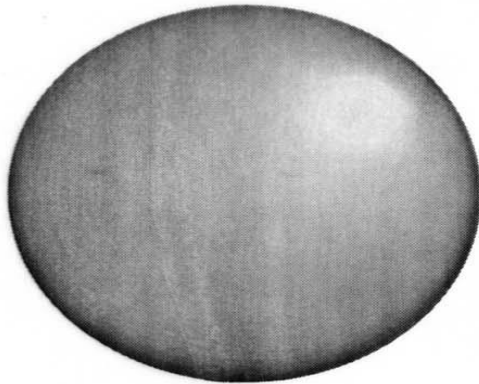
Afrikan Trauma Cycle

"Kasserian Ingera"

"And How Are the Children?"



MAAT



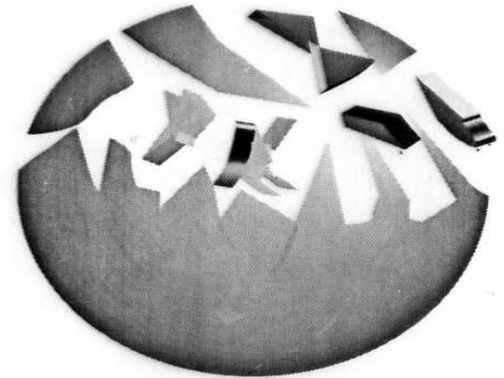
WHOLENESS

MAAFA



**FRACTURING
SPLINTERING
SHATTERING**

SANKOFA



**MENDING
RETURNING TO OUR
OWN FORMS
REDEFINING CIVILIZATION**

Psychospiritual Woundedness



- The sense of human integrity was ruptured by the violation of African American psyche's relation to space, time, energy, mobility, bonding and identity.
- Violence and terror, as instruments of oppression and exploitation, reinforced the depersonalization, desocialization, dislocation and deculturalization of the African spirit.



*NATIONAL CARES
NATIONAL CARES
MENTORING MOVEMENT

BLACK CHILD SUICIDE

*A REPORT

- A focus that ignores the broader social, historical and structural forces at play perpetuates a focus on the individual when it is the context that should occupy equal if not greater attention.
- Suicide can also be understood as a *“solitary answer to a set of collective and institutional questions about the conditions of a dignified human existence that we (i.e., most political societies) have not confronted in a meaningful or sustained way”* (Button, 2016, p. 270).
- Suicide must also be understood in the context of resource inequities, political and ethical problems, and conditions that do not support a dignified human existence.



Shift the Paradigm Precede with Caution



- While the rise in death by suicide among Black children constitutes a public health crisis (Couto et al 2018), the explanations remain speculative, the Black specific research is sparse, and the mental health services are culturally and contextually deficient.
- Developmental differences must be taken into consideration both for understanding this crisis and to develop meaningful prevention, early intervention, and treatment strategies.
- While data on “completed” suicides is informative, it presents a skewed and incomplete picture.



Shift the Paradigm

Precede with Caution (cont.)

- While data on “completed” suicides is informative, it presents a skewed and incomplete picture.
- Despite the rise in the Black child suicide rates, very little is known about causality—especially for elementary school-aged children
- This must be an interdisciplinary and community-wide “All Hands on Deck” Response where we engage All of the Healers---not just psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers....and we must develop strategies that are community defined with genuine community input.



Engaging All Healers

- **Community.** Under the weight of racial trauma and oppression, pivotal questions arise: How can families be first responders when they need a first responder? How can Black children be first responders for one another and supported by adults? How can communities be a first responder when they, too, need a first responder?
- **Family.** Caring for the Caregivers. The importance of supporting parents/guardians in the challenging work of raising a Black child in a hostile socio-political climate cannot be stressed enough.
- **Peers.** Support Peer Support. To expand community reach and increase village enrichment, training children's peers on how to recognize and respond when presented with suicidality and safety concerns is imperative
- **Professionals.** Must convey a sense of respect and compassion regardless of the child's life circumstance (such as involvement in foster care or the juvenile justice system). Radical transformative healing for Black children is based upon the ability of first responders to understand, accept and convey the sense that "I see you," "I hear you," and "I am here for you."



Interruption Pathways Forward



- **PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES.** Interventions that are sensitive to different developmental stages have the potential for greater effectiveness in reducing suicidal behavior (Daniel and Goldston, 2009).
- **TRIUNE BRAIN MODEL.** Use the triune brain model to teach children (and adults) about a hierarchical set of brain structures, how they influence responses to stress, and how to engage the thinking brain to manage stress.
- **TRAINING.** It is imperative that professional training progresses from cultural competence to social justice accountability through the inclusion of cultural humility
- **COURAGEOUS HEARTFELT LISTENING.** First responders are strongly encouraged to actively listen, resist the temptation to teach or correct, and instead, validate and affirm them.
- **EMPATHETICALLY UNMASKING SECRETS.** Black children and adolescents may not reveal their thoughts about death and dying by suicide



Interruption Pathways Forward



- **REDUCING THE OVERUSE OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES (EBP).** The failure to critically examine and question the appropriateness and effectiveness of using long-established mental health approaches and services with Black youth interferes with meeting their complex needs.
- **INCREASING THE USE OF CULTURALLY DEFINED AND PRACTICE-BASED EVIDENCE APPROACHES.** Western therapeutic approaches are predicated upon independent or individual approaches, whereas people of African ancestry value more collective or communal approaches (Grills, Nobles, & Hill, 2018).
- **INCREASE AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK WORKFORCE.** It is imperative to move beyond cultural competencies and cultural humility to more cultural equity by increasing the Black workforce of mental health providers.
- **CROSS-TRAINING BETWEEN FAITH LEADERS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS.** There is a plethora of data that spirituality or religiosity may be protective factors against suicide (Molock et al., 2006). However, the typical separation of religious or spiritual and mental health services may be counter-productive for Black children and communities



Cultural Competence to Activating Cultural Humility Framework

...as a commitment and active engagement in a **lifelong process** that individuals enter on an **ongoing basis** with patients, communities, colleagues, and with themselves...a process that requires humility in how we bring into check the power imbalances that exist in the dynamics of communication. Trevalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998

- Lifelong Learning
- Self-Reflection
- Self-Critique



Cultural Humility



Acknowledging our innate way to ‘know’ our clients despite time constraints of practice.

- “An acknowledgement of one’s own barriers to true intercultural understanding” *Acad Med* 2008; 83:625-626
- The “difference between intellectually knowing another culture and being able to truly relate to it”
 - http://www.uniteforsight.org/cultural-competency/module10#_ftn4
- Examining & suspending assumptions & beliefs
 - Requires self-reflection, awareness & critique

Healing the Village that Raises the Child




Closing Reflections

Kasserian Ingera: And How Are the Children?

**"The child who is
not embraced by
the village will
burn it down to
feel its warmth."**

- African Proverb



*History will judge us
by the difference
we make in the everyday lives
of children.
Nelson Mandela*