



# Black Lives Are Beautiful: Strategies for Supporting Positive Racial Identity Development Among Black K-12 Students

Thursday, May 9, 2024  
11am - 1pm ET

**Live Zoom Webinar**

Featuring:  
Drs. Janeé Steele and Char Newton



# Janeé Steele, PhD

Dr. Janeé Steele is a licensed professional counselor, licensed school counselor, counselor educator, and diplomate of the Academy of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies. She owns Kalamazoo Cognitive and Behavioral Therapy, PLLC, where she provides therapy, supervision, and training in CBT. Dr. Steele is also author of the book, *Racism and African American Mental Health: Using Cognitive Behavior Therapy to Empower Healing* with foreword by Judith Beck, and co-author of the book, *Black Lives Are Beautiful: 50 Tools to Heal from Trauma and Promote Positive Racial Identity*, both published through Routledge. She additionally serves as an Associate Editor for the *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, and Secretary for the Academy of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies.



# Charmeka Newton, PhD

Dr. Charmeka Newton is the co-author of the book *Black Lives Are Beautiful: 50 Tools to Heal from Trauma and Promote Positive Racial Identity*. She is also a Clinical Assistant Professor in the school counseling track of the College of Education & Human Development at the University of North Dakota, a fully licensed psychologist, and owner of Legacy Mental Health Services, PLLC. In addition, Dr. Newton is a member of the Michigan Board of Psychology, appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer, and was honored with the Distinguished Psychologist award by the Michigan Psychological Association. Dr. Newton is also an Appointed APA Advocacy Coordinating Committee member, and an Elected Member-at-Large Community Engagement Representative for Division 45 of APA.



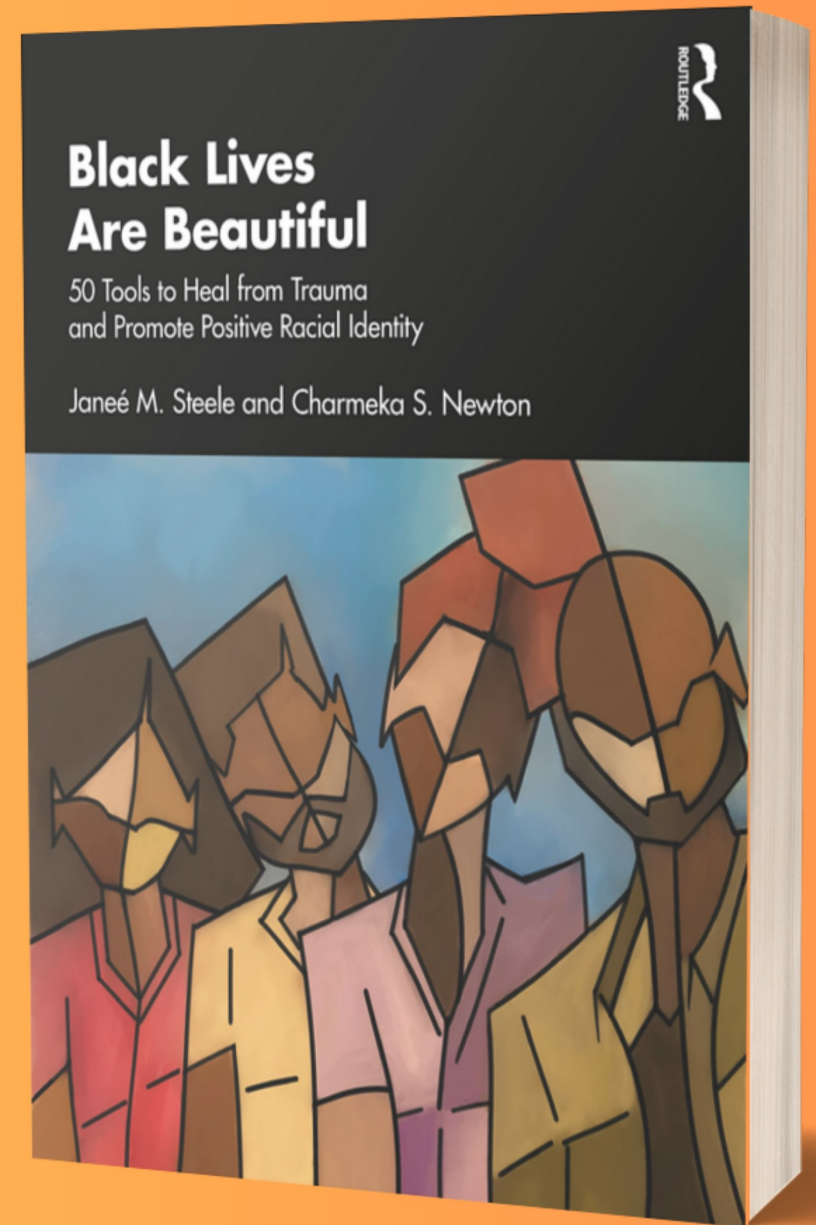


# NOW AVAILABLE

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Grounded in the Black experience and evidence-based practice, *Black Lives Are Beautiful* is a workbook explicitly designed to help members of the Black community counter the impacts of racialized trauma while also cultivating self-esteem, building resilience, fostering community, and promoting Black empowerment.





# Learning Objectives

- Conceptualize the role of positive racial identity development in the academic achievement of Black children
- Learn culturally sensitive interventions that facilitate positive racial identity development through healing, self-esteem, resilience, empowerment, and community





# Key Terms

- **Racial identity:** an individual's sense of belonging to a particular racial group (American Psychological Association, n.d.)
- **Racial identity development:** the process through which individuals develop a healthy view of: (a) themselves, (b) members within their racial group, and (c) members of other racial groups (Constantine et al., 1998)
- **Racial centrality:** the extent to which race is significant to one's self-concept across situations (Sellers et al., 1998)
- **Regard:** feelings of positivity and negativity toward being Black (Sellers et al., 1998)



# Introduction

- School settings have been described as a microcosm of society, through which the education system perpetuates systemic racism by maintaining racial disparities (LaForett & DeMarco, 2020)
- Researchers and governing bodies contend that school counselors are an integral part of combating racism (American School Counselor Association, 2021b; Mason et al., 2021)
- Because of the central role that school counselors play in establishing a support system for academic, social-emotional, and postsecondary development, they are pivotal in mitigating racist practices, promoting positive racial identity development, and ensuring equitable outcomes, success and opportunities for all students



# Why Focus on Racial Identity?

- Research supports the idea that positive racial identity development in Black youth relates to better academic and behavioral performance in students (Kyere et al., 2020) and it can serve as a protective factor in schools where students experience discrimination (Leath, 2019)
- Positive racial identity development is also positively linked with better mental health outcomes in Black youth (Llyod, 2024)





# Racial Identity Development Storytelling Circle



# Factors That Impact Racial Identity Development In Black Children

- McAdoo (2002) conducted a foundational study that highlighted the crucial role of parents as primary agents in shaping children's ethnic-racial identity
- Specifically, parents' teaching about racial history and strategies for addressing discrimination significantly influenced children's racial attitudes and preferences
- These practices, collectively known as *racial socialization*, play a vital role in developing a positive racial identity and mitigating the psychological harm caused by continuous negative messages related to one's race (Hughes, 2003; Murry et al., 2001)





# Parental Racial Identity Matters

- Previous research has shown that a strong sense of ethnic-racial identity (ERI), such as private regard, is associated with two types of parental messages in Black families
- These messages include (1) cultural socialization, which involves communicating ethnic and racial pride, and (2) preparation for bias, which entails alerting children to the possibility of encountering discrimination. Umaña-Taylor and Hill (2020) have explored these connections
- The content of these parental messages generally fall into four themes: (a) cultural messages (pride, history); (b) egalitarian messages that emphasize equality among ethnic-racial groups; (c) mistrust messages that encourage intra-racial rather than cross-racial relationships; and (d) preparation for bias and discrimination (Hughes et al., 2006)
- Parents who have stronger racial identity development are more like to equip these kids with these messages



# Neighborhood Factors

- The greater the extent to which parents encounter racial discrimination, the more likely they are to convey cultural socialization messages to boys, especially if they perceive low neighborhood cohesion
- Families living in less cohesive neighborhoods, where community members have limited knowledge of each other, may heighten mothers' concerns about how African American boys are perceived
- These heightened concerns, particularly within their local community, impact mothers' efforts to instill socialization messages that challenge negative stereotypes associated with African American boys





# School Factors

- Collins (1991, 2016) contends that institutions such as schools harbor a system of dominant ideologies rooted in both racism and sexism. These ideologies serve to legitimize inequalities based on race, gender, and class, particularly between White and Black women and girls
- Within this system, socially constructed images—often characterized as “stereotypical” and “controlling”—dehumanize and invalidate the lived experiences of marginalized individuals, with a particular impact on Black youth



# It's what's not taught...

- A nationwide survey of 525 elementary, middle, and high school teachers revealed that only one to two classes, approximately 8% to 9% of the total class time, are dedicated to Black history (King, 2017)
- Additionally, a study conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC, 2018) surveyed 1,000 high school seniors, 1,786 social studies teachers, 10 state standards, and 12 popular textbooks. The findings indicated that high school seniors lack a basic understanding of American enslavement, teachers face challenges in effectively teaching this subject, and textbooks often fail to provide comprehensive and meaningful discussions of this critical history



# Something to ponder...

- “If your racial history and heritage are not taught, does your existence still hold significance?”





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Results slide

# Name a positive White family American TV show.

RESULTS SLIDE





##/##

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Question slide

**Name a positive Black family American TV show.**



##/##

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Results slide

# Name a positive Black family American TV show.

RESULTS SLIDE

# Media Impacts on Racial Identity Development

- Previous research has highlighted that Black women are often portrayed as hypersexual objects in music videos and are cast as the “Jezebel” or the “Angry Black Woman” in reality TV shows
- Additionally, they are depicted as the hyper-resilient “Strong Black Woman” (SBW) in political figures (such as Michelle Obama) and athletes (like Serena Williams). While the positive valence of the SBW counters negative stereotypes of Black women, its narrow constraints can still have unfavorable implications (Jared, 2017; Tryee, 2011)
- Colorism in media

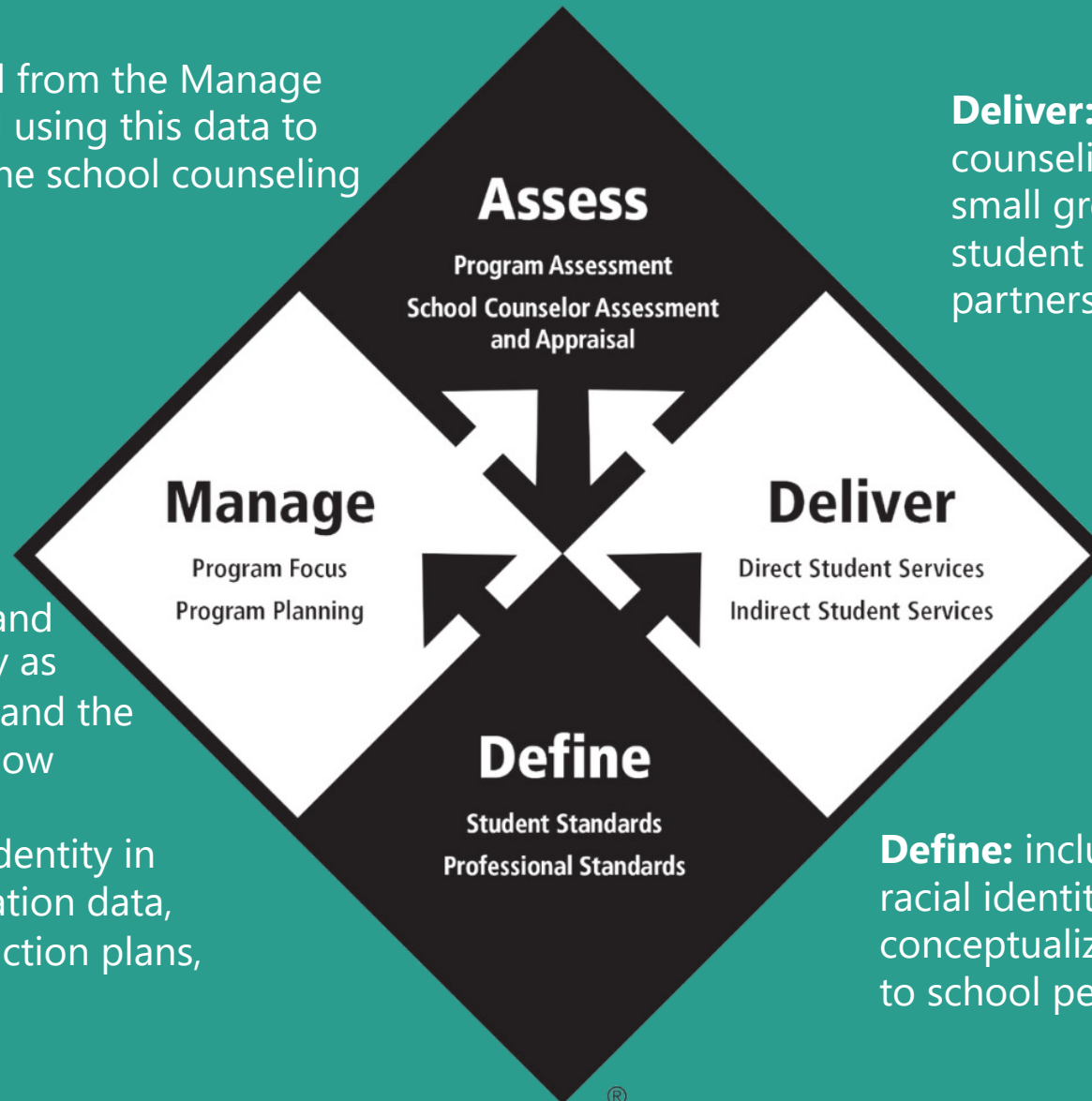


# The Role of School Counseling

**Assess:** including data obtained from the Manage domain into annual reports and using this data to inform future development of the school counseling program.

**Manage:** aspects of the school counseling program such as articulated belief, mission, and vision statements; program planning that identifies racism and threats to positive racial identity as barriers to school achievement; and the inclusion of data that assesses how supported students feel in the development of positive racial identity in school climate surveys, participation data, SMART goals, closing-the-gap action plans, and lesson plans.

**Deliver:** direct student services such as counseling and classroom, large group, and small group instruction, as well as indirect student services such as community partnerships and parent workshops



**Define:** including efforts to support positive racial identity development into the conceptualization of noncognitive factors related to school performance.



# Define

- Noncognitive factors related to school performance are defined within the ASCA National Model by the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success and support enhancing competencies in students' academic, career, and social/emotional development (ASCA, 2019)

| Mindset   | Supporting Black Racial Identity Development Research  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>M 1.</b> Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/ emotional, and physical well-being</p> | <p>Positive association between private regard and academic persistence, which suggests private regard allows students to constructively contend with negative stereotypes about African American underachievement (Butler-Barnes et al., 2018)</p> <p>Students engaged in planned action to actively address race-related stressors, also report more mastering of academic material (Griffin et al., 2022)</p> |
| <p><b>M 2.</b> Self-confidence in ability to succeed</p>  | <p>Racial identity and Africentric values are positively correlated with academic self-efficacy, and Africentric values are predictive of academic self-efficacy (Shin, 2011)</p>  |
| <p><b>M 3.</b> Sense of belonging in the school environment</p>   | <p>Racial centrality and positive regard are positively correlated with school belonging and school valuing (Griffin et al., 2022)</p>   |
| Behavior  |  |
| <p><b>B-SS 2.</b> Create positive and supportive relationships with other students</p>  | <p>Racial identity is correlated with teacher ratings of child behavior, including social relations (Thomas et al., 2003)</p>  |
| <p><b>B-LS 4.</b> Apply self-motivation and self-direction to learning</p>  | <p>Private regard, racial centrality, and ideology beliefs are associated with higher achievement motivation beliefs over time (Butler-Barnes et al., 2018)</p>  |
| <p><b>B-SMS 2.</b> Demonstrate self-discipline and self-control</p>   | <p>Self-worth socialization is positively related to self-control for African American youth who have positive perceptions about being Black (Smalls, 2007)</p>  |

# Example Learning Objectives

- In consideration of extant racial identity development research, examples of specific learning objectives that may operationalize the mindsets and behaviors include:
  - Mindset 1: Students will articulate racial stressors in their school environment and identify at least two coping strategies.
  - Behavior Learning Management Skill 4: Students will articulate how personal and cultural strengths may support their academic achievement and long-term career goals.

# Delivery

- Direct student services include activities such as:
  - Individual counseling
  - Classroom
  - Group instruction
- Indirect student services include activities such as:
  - Referrals
  - Consultation
  - Collaboration through community partnerships, parent workshops, committees, etc.
- Delivery of direct and indirect student services should focus on tasks such as promoting positive racial/ethnic pride, as well as addressing racism and other experiences that hinder school success



# Direct Student Services

- Within group example: Accusations of acting White
  - “Arises when a Black adolescent’s ethnic/racial identity (ERI) is perceived as being not Black enough by another Black adolescent or group of adolescents” (Davis et al., 2018, p. 23)
  - These accusations are painful
  - For African American students at earlier stages of racial identity development, these accusations may lead to deliberate underachievement to avoid peer pressure, or camouflaging of their abilities to be accepted socially by their peers
  - Conversely, students identified as “gifted” tend to have higher scores at the highest level of racial identity development
  - Black male underachievers tend to have significantly lower scores at the higher level of racial identity development (Ford & Harris, 1997)

# Direct Student Services

- Direct student services:
  - Post-secondary visits to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (the psychosocial impacts of which can be processed using appropriate modifications to Activity 40 in *Black Lives Are Beautiful*, Cultural Institutions)
  - Classroom guidance or small groups focused on increasing critical consciousness surrounding the academic achievements of African Americans (Activity 28, Stories that Inspire)
  - Individual counseling focused on helping students challenge and reframe negative thinking or self-talk (Activity 3, Identifying Internalized Racism)

# Direct Student Services

- Outgroup example: Negative stereotypes about the intelligence of African Americans
  - Stereotype threat, defined as the fear of conforming to negative perceptions of one's racial group, worsens the academic performance of Black children as early as elementary school grades (Wasserberg, 2017)
  - In some instances of stereotype threat, being at a higher level of racial identity development may lessen the impact of stereotype threat on performance (Davis et al., 2006)
  - A self-affirming intervention to buffer racial and ethnic minority students from identity threats reduced the growing achievement gap by 50% per year between 7th and 12th grade
  - The achievement gap between white/Asian and African American/Latino students decreased by 42% at the end of 12th grade
  - On-time graduation rates for treated minority students by 10 percentage points

# Direct Student Services

- Direct student services:
  - Individual counseling, classroom guidance, or group counseling to guide students in the creation of self-affirmations (Activity 17, Create Your Catchphrase)
  - Individual or small group counseling to help students more directly identify and challenge negative discourses about African Americans through storytelling, creative writing, or art (Activity 22, Rewrite the Narrative)

# Indirect Student Services

- African American students who perceived a more positive racial climate, more teacher support, more interracial interactions, and a stronger sense of school belonging have higher academic curiosity and academic persistence (Butler et al., 2018)
- School counselors should support the racial identity developing of Black children by creating community, being sure Black students are integrated into the school environment
- Many of the organizations have youth programs schools could form partnerships with to increase the presence of Black mentors at the school and to communicate that the history, traditions, and cultural experiences of the Black community are valued at the school (Activity 45, Black Greek Life)

\* As a caveat, effective delivery of these services requires intentional broaching of race/ethnicity and culture on the school counselor's part. School counselors should ideally embrace an **integrated/congruent broaching style**, characterized by accepting the risks involved in broaching and utilizing culturally responsive interventions, or an **infusing style**, wherein school counselors intentionally incorporate broaching into counseling efforts and maintain a commitment to social justice (Day-Vines et al., 2007)





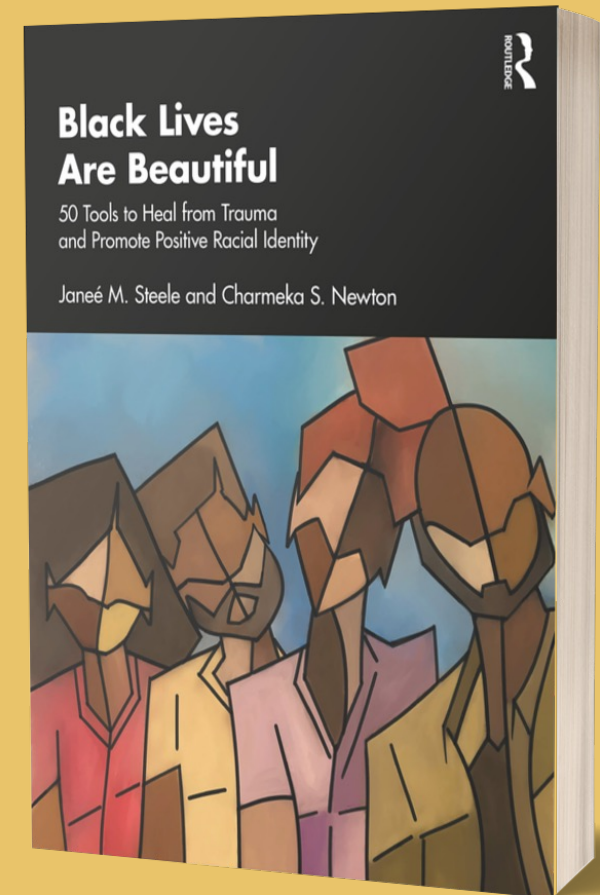
# Stages of Black Racial Identity Development

The Nigrescence model of Black racial identity development (Cross, 1991):

- **Pre-encounter:** When the individual's worldview is dominated by Eurocentric values and ideologies and race holds little importance or is viewed negatively. At this stage, children are socialized in ways that lead to assimilation, self-hatred, or miseducation attitudes.
- **Encounter:** When an event or a series of events leads to increased awareness of the significance of being Black and a change in Pre-encounter identities. These events take place within the context of personal experiences and observations, education, or activism (Neville & Cross, 2017).
- **Immersion-Emersion:** When the individual begins to embrace Black culture and seek to learn more about Africa and African Americans.
- **Internalization:** When the individual views their Blackness with positivity and have an overall sense of comfort with themselves as racial beings (Vandiver et al., 2001).

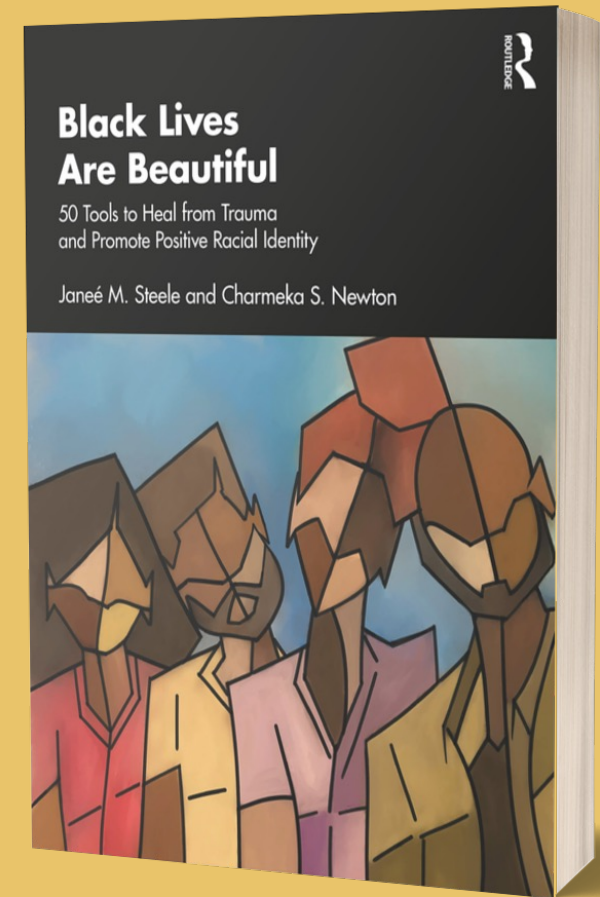
# Black Lives Are Beautiful

- Facilitating positive racial identity development can be accomplished through racial socialization practices that encourage cultural pride, preparation for bias, egalitarianism, self-worth, and responding appropriately to negative messages.
- Black Lives Are Beautiful explores these aspects of growth by providing tools to promote:
  - Healing from racial trauma
  - Self-esteem
  - Resilience
  - Empowerment
  - Community



# Healing

Activities to mend the wounds of racial oppression



# Activity 3: Identifying Internalized Racism

- Help students challenge and reframe negative thinking or self-talk:
  - Teach students cognitive restructuring strategies that help them identify and modify negative thinking and behavioral patterns
  - Include psychoeducation and consciousness-raising material appropriate for their stage of development

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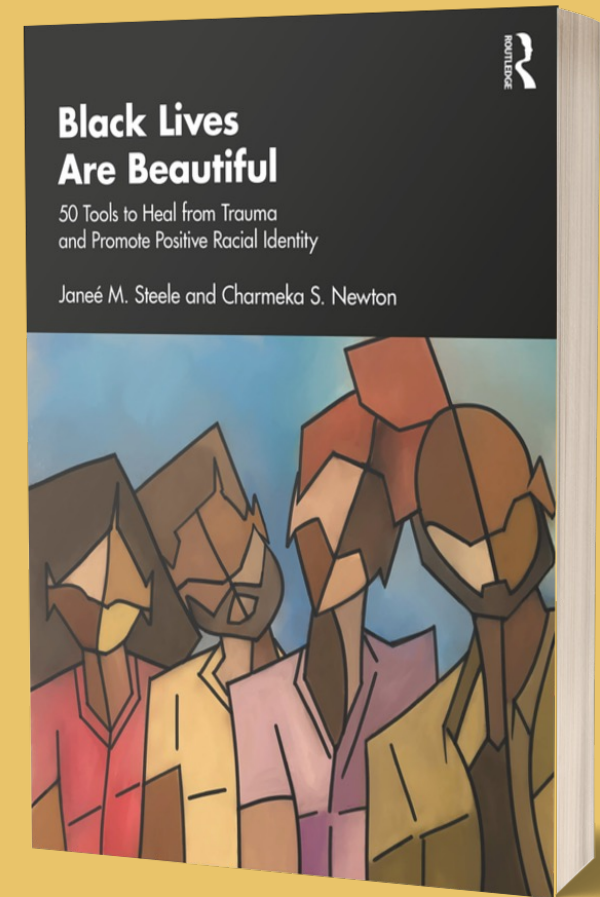
**TABLE 3.1**  
Naming Internalized Racism in My Own Life

**Naming Internalized Racism in My Own Life**  
Think back over your life and try to identify times in which you may have been affected by internalized racism. Perhaps you felt embarrassed about certain aspects of your identity that were associated with being Black, or maybe you felt angry toward other Black people for behaving in stereotypical ways. Explore these situations in this chart, identifying the stereotypes, negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with each situation. The first two rows are completed using information from the scenarios with Kyra and Jason.

| Situation  | Stereotype  | Thoughts   | Feelings  | Behavior  |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Thinking about my own physical attractiveness and what I want in a partner | People with lighter skin are more beautiful           | Even though I am pretty, I am less beautiful than people with lighter skin | Sad, less than (inferior)   | Avoid getting darker from the sun; seek a romantic partner with lighter skin  |
| Teaching Black youth how to be successful in the workplace                 | Black hairstyles and ways of being are unprofessional | In order to be successful, Black people must conform to White standards    | Resigned to the fact that this is the way the world works, powerless to create change | Adjust personal looks and behavior to be similar to those of White colleagues |
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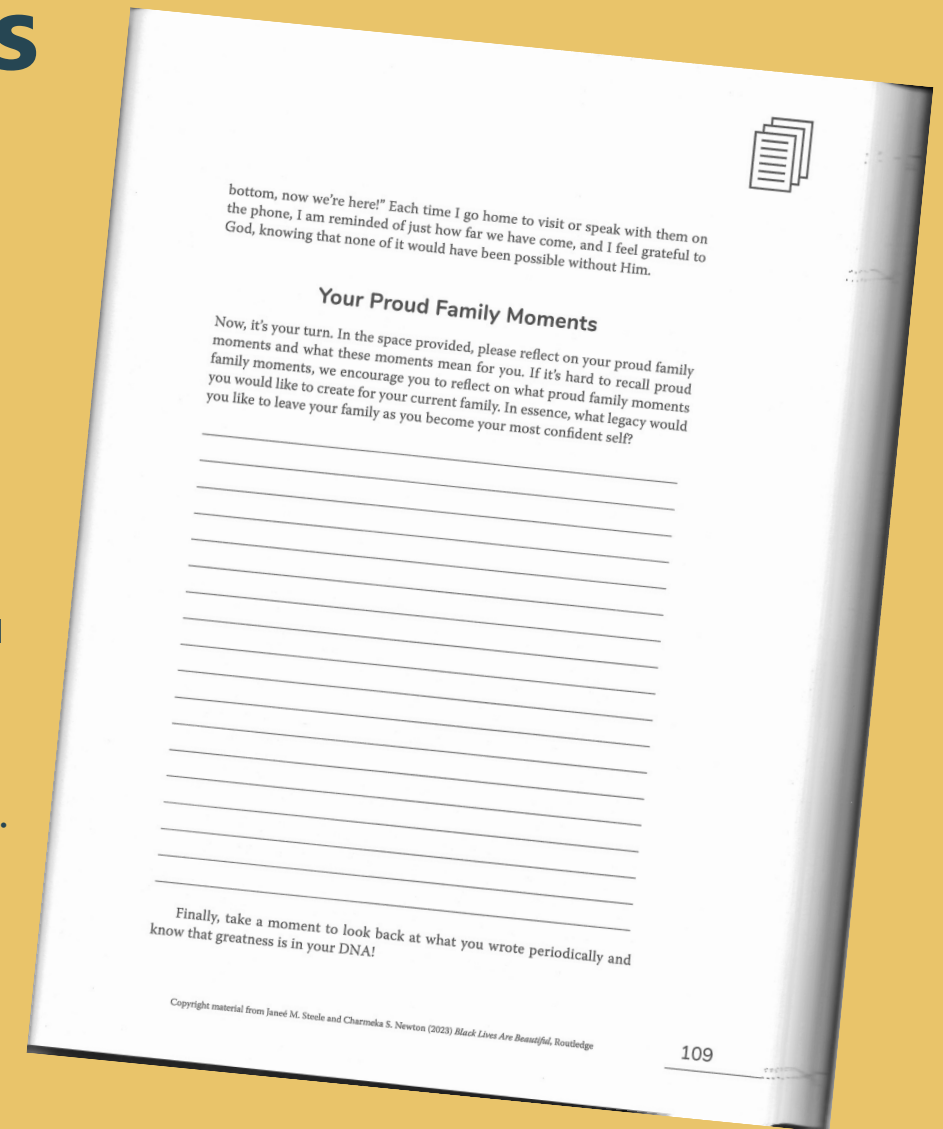
# Self-esteem

Activities to emphasize and affirm personal strengths, increase positive self-talk, and growth in racial and ethnic pride



# Activity 14: Proud Moments

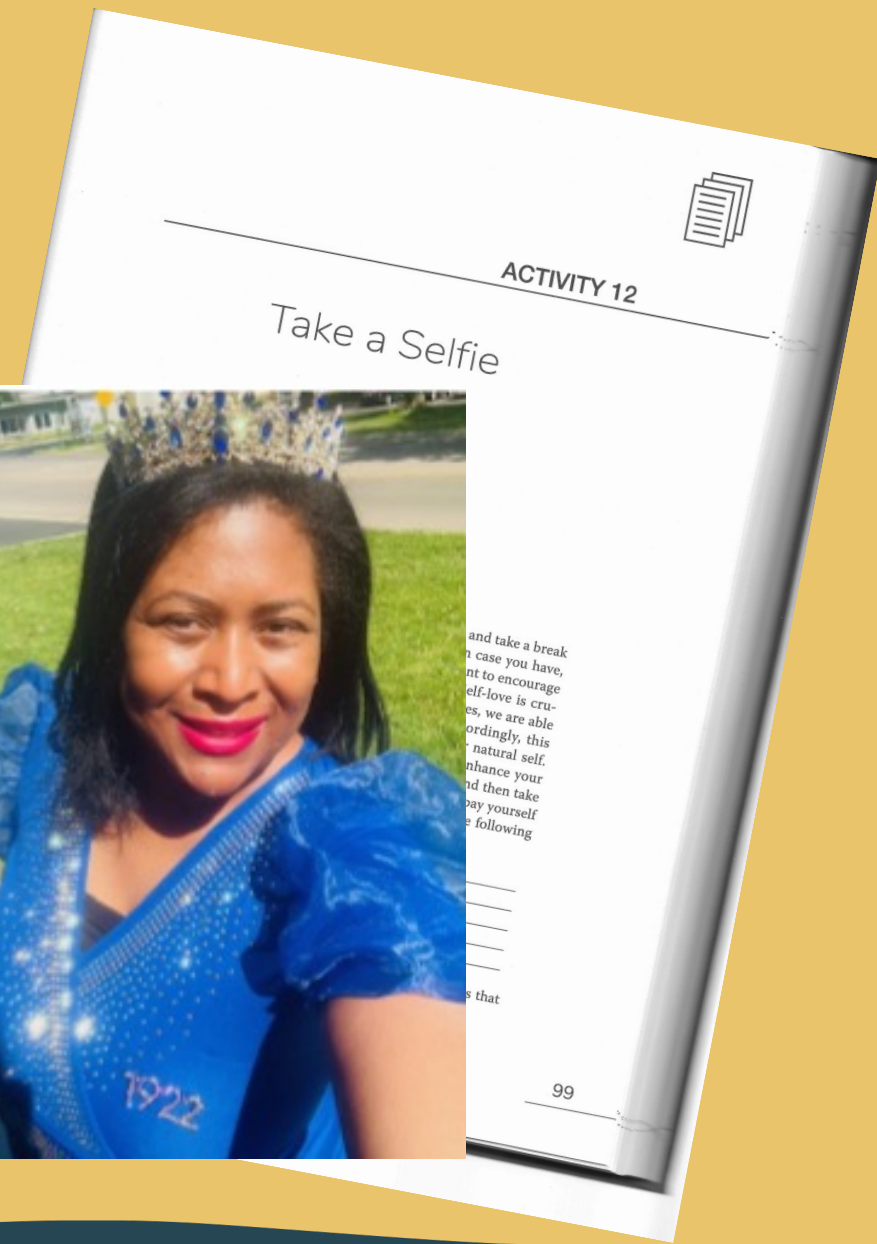
- Create a time capsule that highlights the proud family moments. Include:
  - Family Artifacts: Gather artifacts that represent your racial heritage and those proud family moments . These could include traditional clothing, jewelry, or handmade crafts.
  - Photographs: Include family photos that represent those proud family moments.
  - Letters and Documents: Include paper documents that you can save that represent these moments.
  - Music and Songs: Record or write down songs, chants, or musical pieces that hold significance about these moments.
  - Add symbols that highlight these experiences





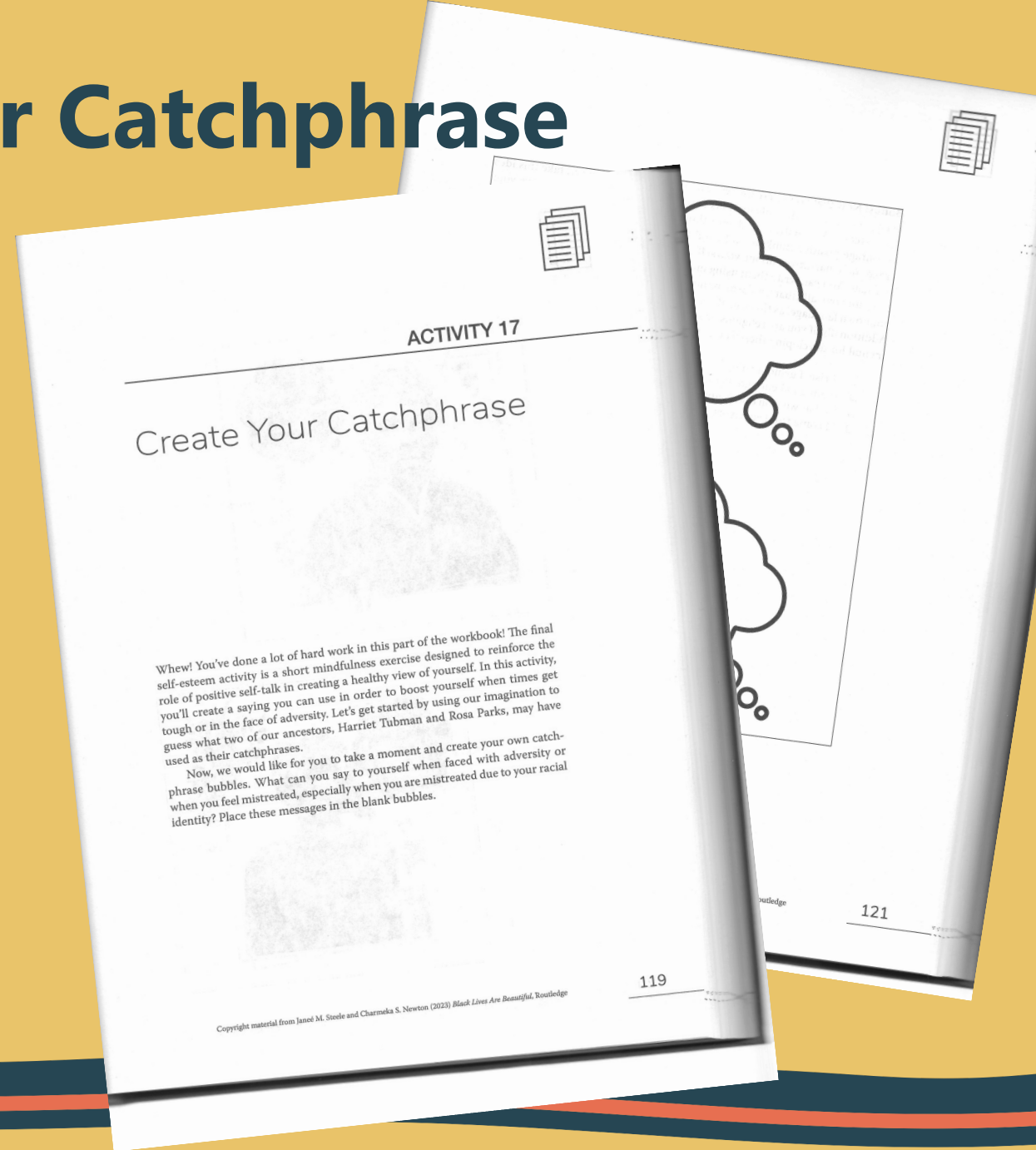
# Activity 12: Take a Selfie

- Help youth develop their social media feeds by:
  - Following accounts that promote positive self-image, diversity, and representation. Seeing people who look like them in a positive light can boost their confidence and positive racial identity
  - Sharing their own selfies and stories online. Social media platforms can be spaces for celebrating racial pride and connecting with others who share similar backgrounds



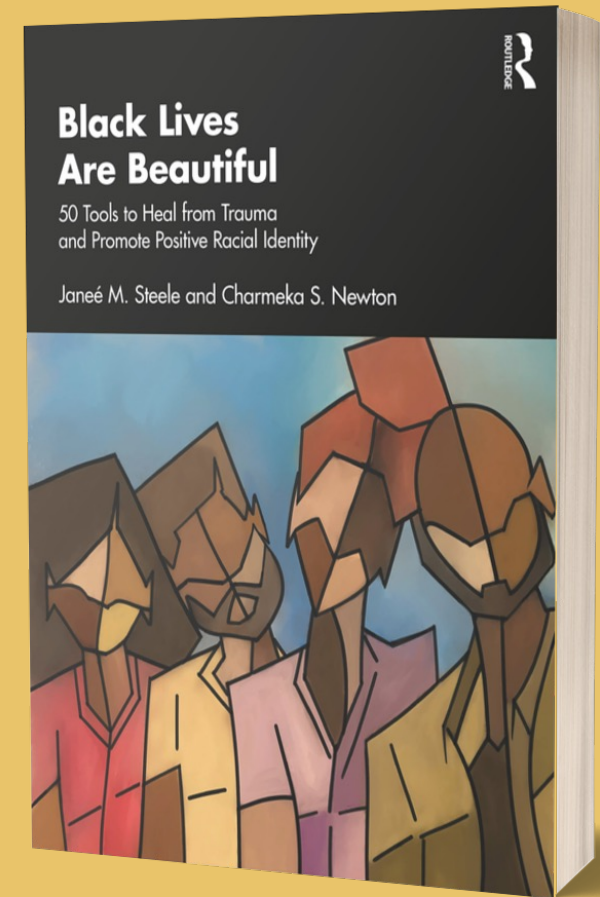
# Activity 17: Create Your Catchphrase

- Guide students in the creation of self-affirmations:
  - Use classroom, group, or individual instruction to help students create thoughtful first-person statements that encourage positive thinking and good self-esteem
  - Encourage use of authentic language and cultural references



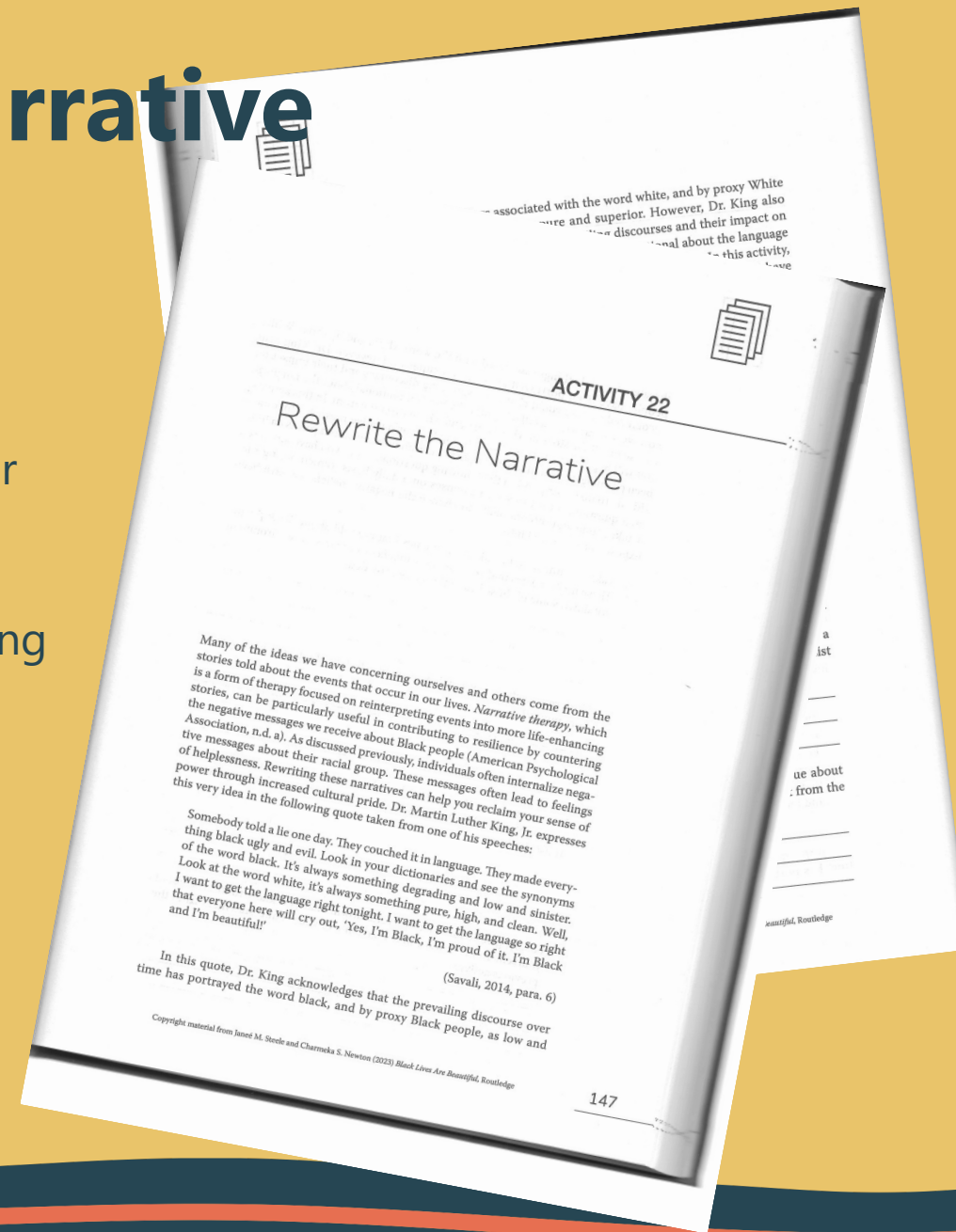
# Resilience

Activities to help develop skills needed to cope with adversities in life, including use of your personal strengths, family, faith, and ancestor background to bounce back from obstacles



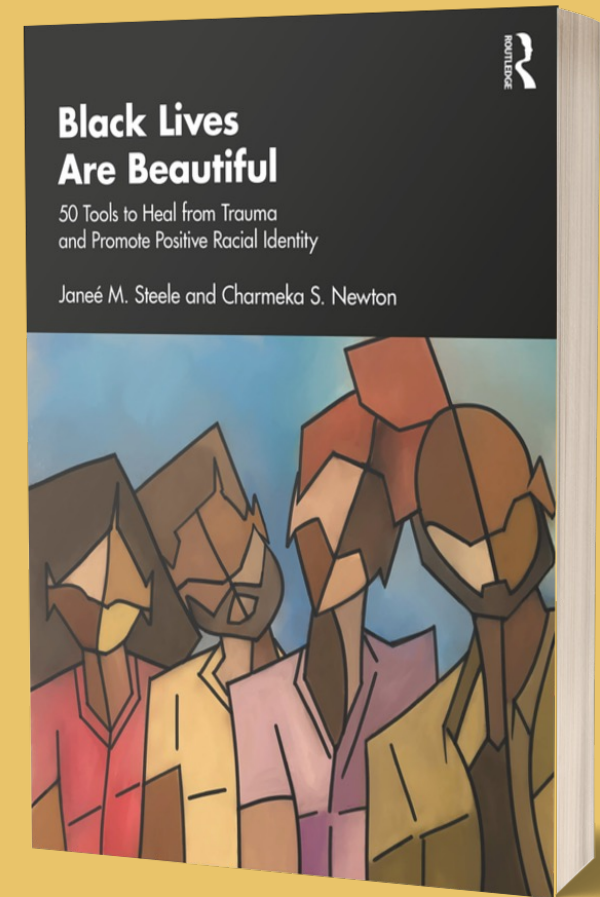
# Activity 22: Rewrite the Narrative

- Help students more directly identify and challenge negative discourses about African Americans and feelings of helplessness:
  - Use classroom, group, or individual instruction to help students use storytelling, creative writing, or art to counter anti-Black messages
  - Focus on increasing critical consciousness by helping students articulate and counter stereotypes and legitimizing myths



# Empowerment

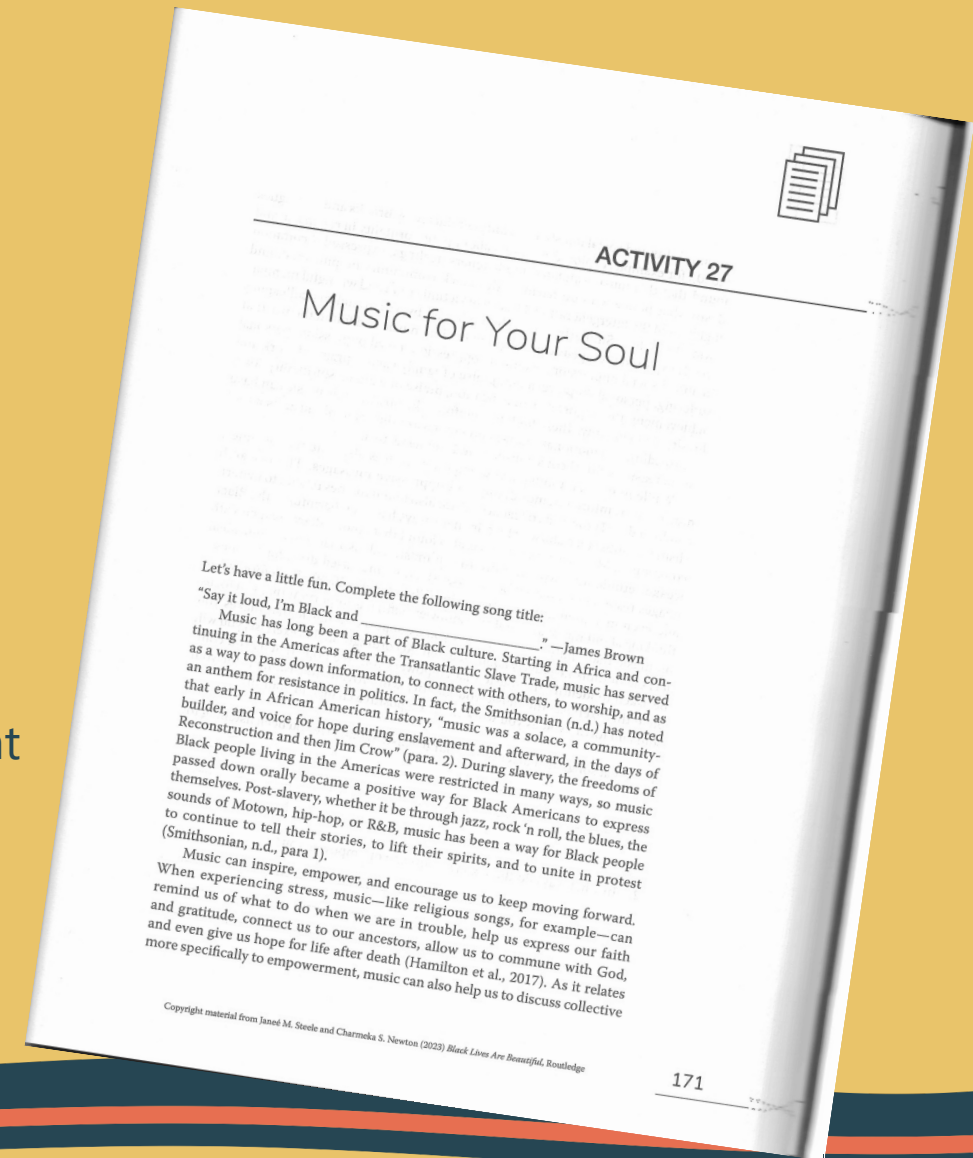
Activities that focus on facilitating a sense of control through consciousness, self-determination, leadership, goal setting, and sociopolitical involvement





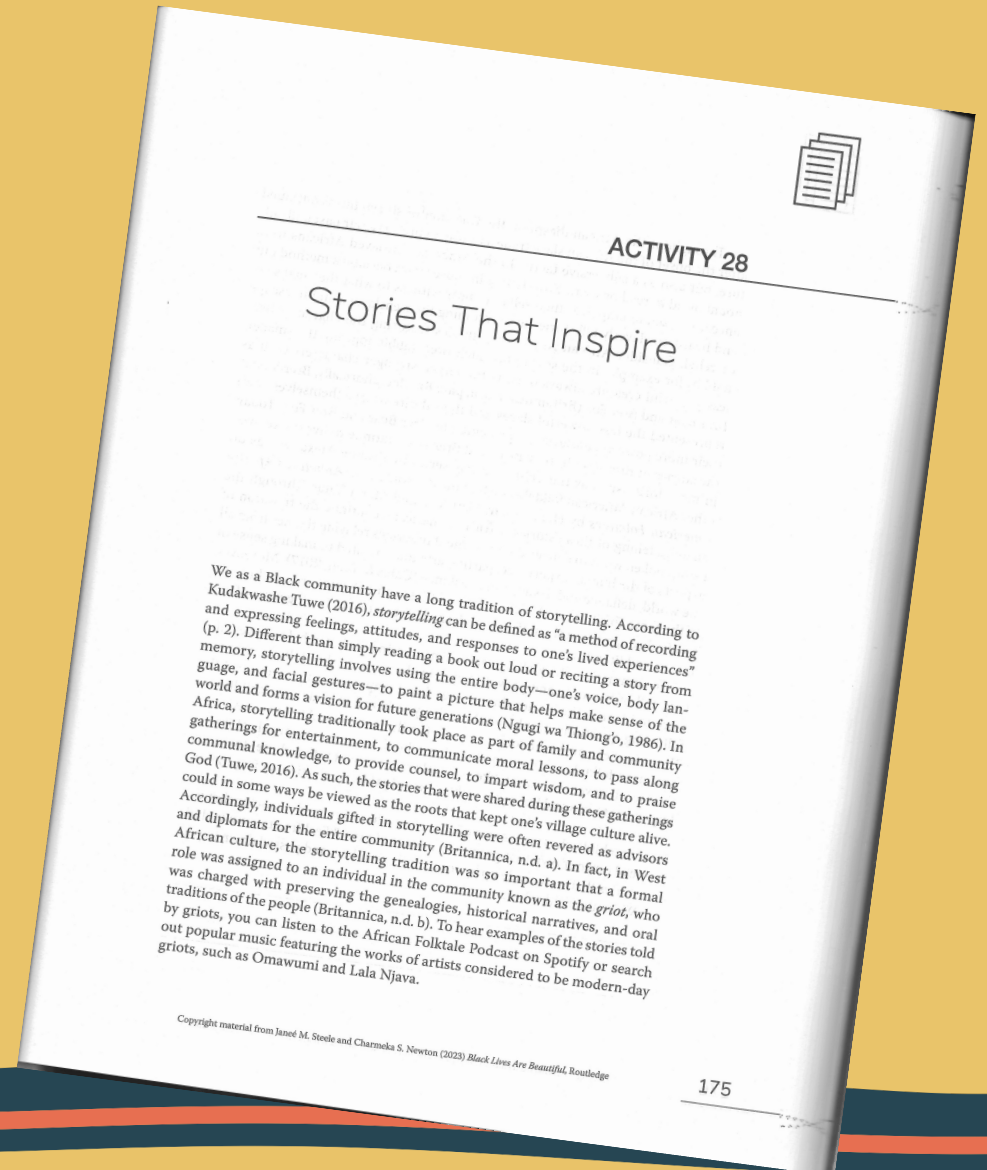
# Activity 27: Music For your Soul

- Visualize positive imagery:
  - Combine music with visualization. Encourage youth to imagine themselves in positive situations related to their racial identity while listening to their playlist music. This technique can enhance feelings of pleasure and happiness.
- Process questions such as:
  - What songs are currently on your playlist? What have you been listening to?
  - In what ways do these songs motivate or empower you?
  - If your songs are not empowering, what new songs can you add to your playlist? Try to think of songs that inspire or that encourage you to achieve your personal goals.
  - Lastly, how will you use these songs to positively cope? For example, if you're trying to change negative self-talk, think about beginning your morning with a song that has affirming words.



# Activity 28: Stories That Inspire

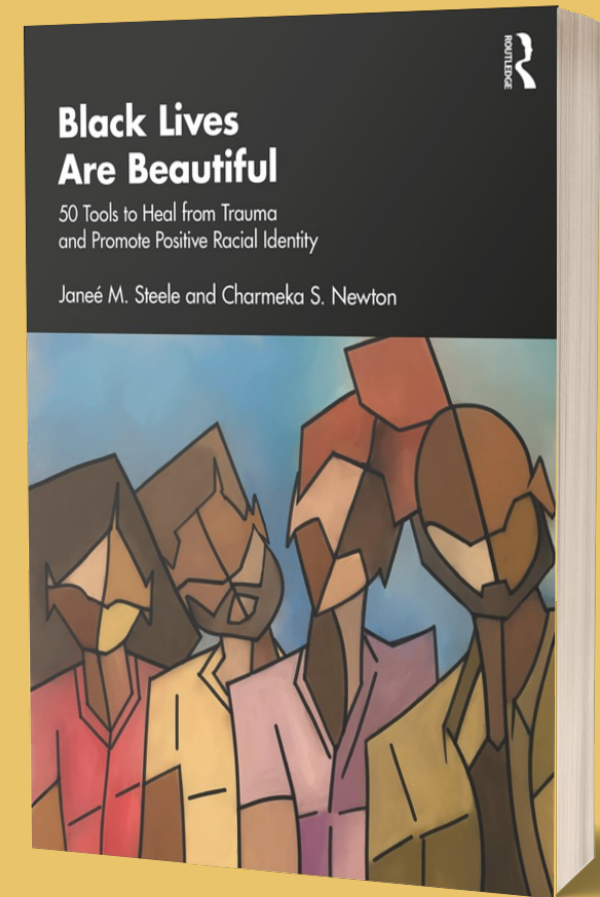
- Increase critical consciousness surrounding the academic achievements of African Americans:
  - Use bibliotherapy to introduce students to African Americans who have made academic accomplishments
  - Encourage students to investigate the educational journeys of successful individuals in their own lives
  - Help students process these stories by exploring how the individual's story encourages or inspires the young person to achieve their own goals





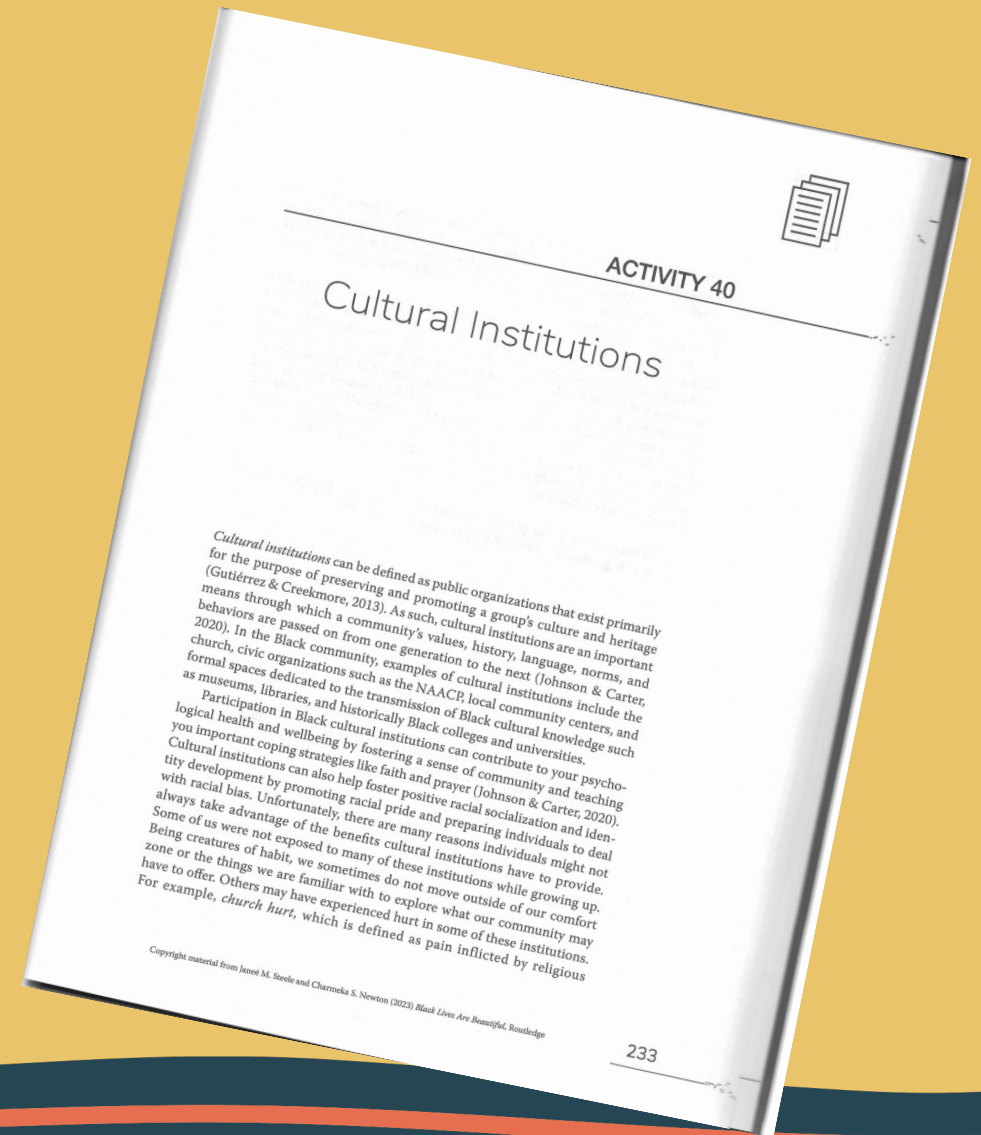
# Community

Activities that explore how to be in community by participating, asking for help and seeking support when needed, and giving back



# Activity 40: Cultural Institutions

- Plan activities that increase connections with the Black community and promote Black culture and heritage:
  - Plan virtual or in-person visits to Historically Black Colleges and University
  - Encourage students to participate in local cultural institutions
- Process activities using questions such as:
  - How does the information presented in this institution contribute to my sense of Black pride and community?
  - How does the information presented in this institution broaden my understanding of how we got to where we are today?
  - How can I use this understanding as inspiration or motivation?



# Activity 45: Black Greek Life

- Form partnerships with community organizations such as Black fraternities and sororities to uplift Black culture and heritage:
  - Increase the presence of Black mentors at the school
  - Be intentional about communicating the idea that the history, traditions, and cultural experiences of the Black community are valued at the school



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