

A group of four Black people (two women and two men) are laughing and smiling together outdoors. They are sitting on a stone ledge or wall. The background is a light-colored stone wall. The overall mood is joyful and positive.

# Black Lives Are Beautiful: Strategies for Promoting Positive Racial Identity in Black American Clients

Thursday, May 11, 2023  
12pm - 1pm ET

**Live Zoom Webinar**

Featuring:  
Drs. Janeé Steele and Char Newton

*Janeé Steele, PhD*

**Licensed Professional Counselor**

Dr. Janeé Steele is a licensed professional counselor, counselor educator, and diplomate of the Academy of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies. Dr. Steele is also the owner and clinical director of Kalamazoo Cognitive and Behavioral Therapy, PLLC, where she provides therapy, supervision, and training in CBT. In addition to her clinical work, Dr. Steele is an Associate Editor of the Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development.



*Char Newton, PhD*

**Licensed Psychologist**

Dr. Char Newton is a fully licensed psychologist and in practice at Legacy Mental Health Services, PLLC. Dr. Newton also has over 10 years of experience in clinical, academic, and community settings, including teaching experience at both undergraduate and graduate levels of higher education and is a member of the Michigan Board of Psychology, appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer. She was recently awarded the 2022 Distinguished Psychologist Award from the Michigan Psychological Association.



# Learning Objectives

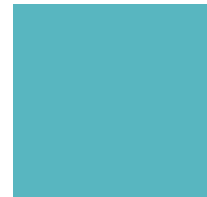
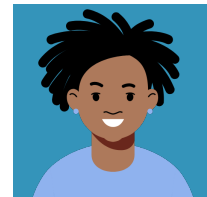
During our time today, we'll talk about how to:

- Support healing from the negative psychological effects of racial trauma
- Affirm clients' personal and cultural strengths
- Help clients develop the resilience needed to cope with adversities
- Cultivate increased critical consciousness and commitment to social action
- Strengthen community engagement



# Something to think about...

- Conversations about race and culture can be difficult, please take care of yourself!
- If you are a target of racism:
  - Be aware of anything that might be triggering or overwhelming
  - Use mindfulness and breathing skills when you need to
  - Take a break if necessary
- If you are an ally or a learner:
  - Work toward maintaining a non-judgmental stance
  - Recognize defensiveness
  - Seek to understand



A stylized, abstract illustration of a crowd of people. The figures are composed of geometric shapes and bold black outlines, rendered in a palette of earthy tones including browns, oranges, yellows, and muted blues. The composition is dense and layered, suggesting a group of individuals. An orange rectangular box is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image, containing white text.

# Icebreaker

## “OUR WHY...”

# What is racial trauma?

- Racial trauma refers to mental and emotional injury caused by repeated encounters with racial bias, hostility, discrimination, or harassment (Carter, 2007)
- Common ways people are exposed to racialized trauma include small, everyday slights such as a store owner following a person of color around the store, racial slurs, denied opportunities, racial profiling, and hate crimes
- These encounters, known as *race-based events*, may occur directly between individuals or groups of people, or they may happen indirectly, for example, as a result of watching a video of police brutality (Carter et al., 2020)

# What are the mental health effects of racial trauma?

- Race-based trauma results in symptoms that are like other trauma disorders such as PTSD
  - These symptoms include primary trauma reactions, such as intrusion, avoidance, and arousal/reactivity
  - Other symptoms that can develop in response to RBTS include dissociation, anxiety, depression, sexual problems, sleep disturbance, low self-esteem, substance misuse, and anger



# What are the mental health effects of racial trauma?

- Despite the similar symptomatology between RBTS reactions and PTSD, racial trauma does not always meet diagnostic criteria for PTSD diagnosis when there is not a precipitating event in the form of actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence
  - Some race-based events including racially motivated threats of violence, physical assaults or threats from law enforcement, community violence, medical mistreatment, assault while in prison, and deportation can meet criteria for PTSD
  - Many other race-related experiences such as repeated microaggressions, discrimination, being denied services, verbal assaults, being ignored or stereotyped, and being racially profiled, do not meet the DSM-5 definition of a traumatic stressor (Williams et al., 2018)
- Responses to experiences with racism may not always be recognized by the treating clinician, which may limit access to potentially helpful mental health care for many BIPOC individuals experiencing RBTS (<https://www.abct.org/fact-sheets/race-based-traumatic-stress-rbts/>)

# What is racial identity?

- *Racial identity* refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a particular racial group (American Psychological Association, n.d.)
- Beginning in childhood, individuals are exposed to various messages that influence the development of their racial identity
- Without positive racial socialization, individuals often internalize anti-Black messages or heavily assimilate into dominant cultural norms
- Various encounters typically shift race out of the background and launches individuals into active racial identity development

# What is racial identity?

- *Racial identity development* refers to 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)
- Studies show a statistically significant relationship between racial identity and mental health:
  - High levels of Internalization attitudes reflect greater psychological well-being and moderate the effects of cultural racism, while Pre-encounter attitudes are related to higher levels of psychological distress and less awareness of cultural racism (Franklin-Jackson & Carter, 2007)
  - People with high levels of Internalization attitudes experience less race-based stress, while individuals with Immersion-Emersion attitudes experienced more stress (Carter et al., 2017)

# What are the stages of racial identity development?

- The Nigrescence model of Black racial identity development (Cross, 1971):
  - **Pre-encounter:** When the individual's worldview is dominated by Eurocentric values and ideologies and race holds little importance or is viewed negatively
  - **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 (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)

# How do we heal trauma and promote positive racial identity?

- Healing racial trauma requires addressing maladaptive cognitions and heightened physiological threat responses that develop as a result of race-based stress
- From an African-centered and liberatory perspective, it also includes the:
  - Integration of values grounded in the Black perspective
  - Development of *critical consciousness*, which is defined as “the capacity of oppressed or marginalized people to critically analyze their social and political conditions, endorsement of societal equality, and action to change perceived inequities” (Diemer et al., 2017, p. 461)

# How do we heal trauma and promote positive racial identity?

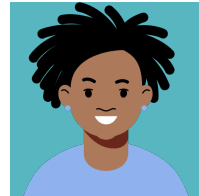
- Facilitating positive racial identity development can be accomplished through racial socialization practices that encourage cultural pride, preparation for bias, egalitarianism, self-worth, and responding appropriately to negative messages
- Black Lives Are Beautiful explores these aspects of growth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



01



# Tools to Heal Racial Trauma



# Activity 1: Racialized Trauma Self-Assessment Checklist

Question	Yes	No
1. I have been physically assaulted because of my race.		
2. I have been verbally assaulted because of my race.		
3. I have been denied access to resources such as loans, mentorship opportunities, promotions, etc. because of my race.		
4. I have been racially profiled by the police, store security, etc.		
5. I feel panic when I see the police.		
6. My work environment is hostile due to race-related issues.		
7. I have been mistreated on the basis of stereotypes.		
8. I have seen Black or other people of color mistreated because of their race.		
9. I feel guarded when around White people.		
10. I avoid being around Whites for fear of how the interaction might go.		
11. I feel sad about things connected to race/racism.		
12. I feel anxious or worried when around White people.		
13. I sometimes re-live negative encounters with race (e.g., have nightmares or daydreams about the event, ruminate about what happened)		
14. I experience a negative mood connected to race-based issues (e.g., anger, anxiety, or depression).		
15. I have physical complaints when I think about my experiences with race (e.g., stomachaches, muscle pain, rapid heart rate, difficulty breathing)		
16. I have negative thoughts about White people.		
17. I feel inferior when I compare myself to White people.		
18. I feel hopeless about the future at times because of race.		



# Activity 5: Your Body Can Help

When experiencing racialized trauma, experimenting with various sensory inputs can help you to positively cope by soothing intense, overly stimulated emotions. Touch and movement are especially effective in calming a hyper-aroused nervous system. This activity allows the client to use their five senses to soothe and incorporates uses of their culture.

## My Favorite Sensory Activities



# Activity 3: Identifying Internalized Racism

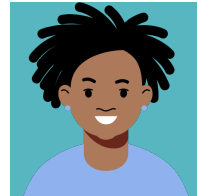
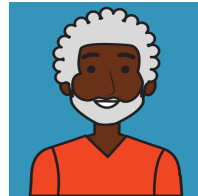
<b>Naming Internalized Racism in My Own Life</b> Think back over your life and try to identify times in which you may have been affected by internalized racism. Perhaps you felt embarrassed about certain aspects of your identity that were associated with being Black, or maybe you felt angry toward other Black people for behaving in stereotypical ways. Explore these situations in the chart below, 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



02



## Tools to Promote Self-Esteem



# Tools to Promote Self-Esteem Introduction

## **Don't Forget Your Crown**

Famous poet Maya Angelou once said, "Your crown has been bought and paid for. Put it on your head and wear it."

Depending on your perspective, this quote may have different meanings. When some people hear this quote, they think of the ancestors who died during slavery and the Civil Rights Era so that we could have a better life. Other people are reminded of Africa's history of great civilizations and that as a people, we are descendants of kings and queens. Still others with Christian beliefs are reminded that because of Jesus's sacrifice on the cross, we are now joint heirs with Christ, children of the King of all kings.

What comes to mind for you when you hear this quote? Our hope is that you see yourself as royalty, someone who should be loved, honored, and cherished. Yet, we know sometimes life can get overwhelming and it can be hard to see yourself that way. If you've "forgotten your crown," here are a few things you can do to remember it:

- Focus on what makes you special
- Spend time taking care of yourself
- Help others

# Activity 14: Proud Moments

## **Your Proud Family Moments**

Now, it's your turn. In the space provided, please reflect on your proud family moments and what these moments mean for you. If it's hard to recall proud family moments, we encourage you to reflect on what proud family moments you would like to create for your current family. In essence, what legacy would you like to leave your family as you become your most confident self?

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# Activity 17: Create Your Catchphrase

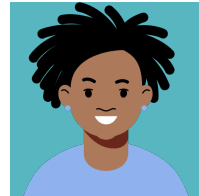




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# Tools to Build Resilience



## Activity 20: Your Family Story

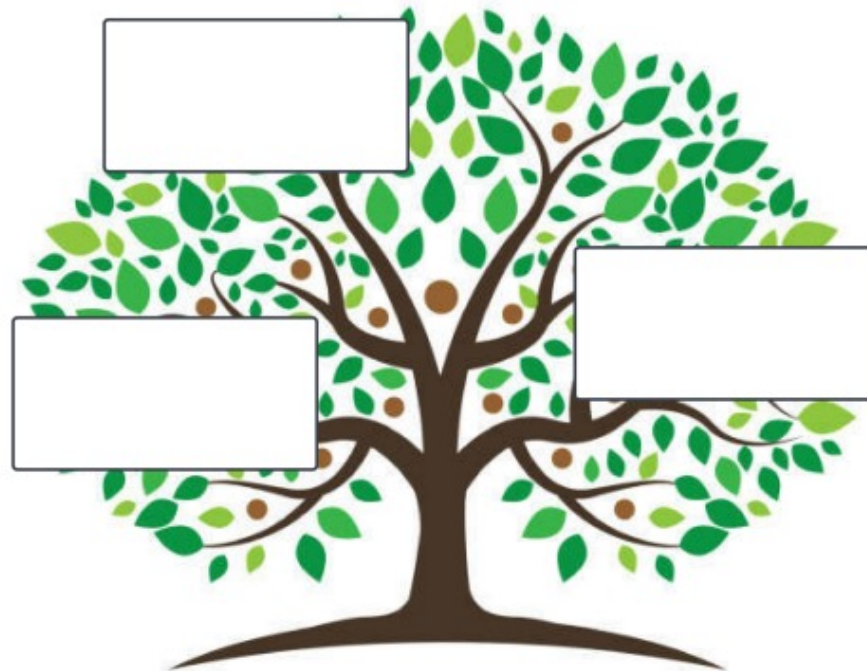
- When and where were you born?
- How did our family come to live there?
- What is your earliest childhood memory?
- How did our family deal with hard times and setbacks?



# Activity 24: Purpose and Resilience

## Identifying Your Purpose

In the tree branch bubbles provided below, write what you believe your purposes in life are.

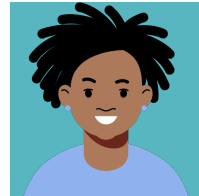




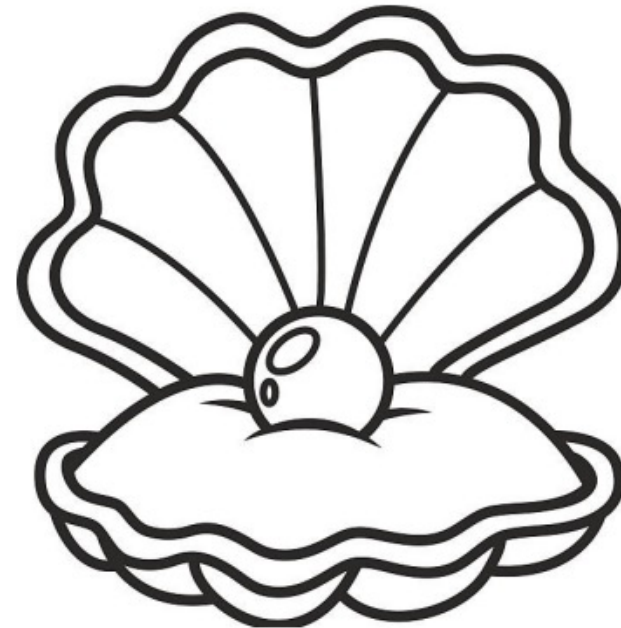
04



# Tools to Promote Empowerment



# Activity 30: Pearls of Wisdom



*My Pearls of Wisdom*

# Activity 31: Release and Let Go

<b>Thoughts I Release</b>	<b>Thoughts I Accept</b>
<b>Example:</b> "Things will never work out for me."	<b>Example:</b> "I accept the beautiful future God has planned for me and I let go of negativity."

# Activity 32: Safe Spaces

**People** (e.g., my spiritual leader or a group of friends)

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**Places** (e.g., my Zumba class or the barber shop)

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**Events** (e.g., a community concert that celebrates my race and culture)

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# Activity 36: Black Economic Empowerment

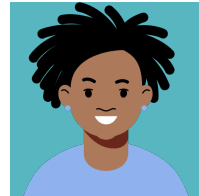
<b>Support Black-Owned Businesses</b> Community cooperation is essential to achieving economic empowerment within the Black community. By committing to patronizing businesses owned by Black entrepreneurs, you play a vital role in strengthening the Black economy and achieving Black economic agency.	
<b>Service/business</b>	<b>Places I could support</b>
Beauty supply stores	
Restaurants	
Mortgage or realtor company	
Groceries	
Auto-repair	
Clothing	
Home repair	
Family fun zones (e.g., bowling alleys, game centers)	
Craft supplies	
Jewelry	
Audio/videography/technology	



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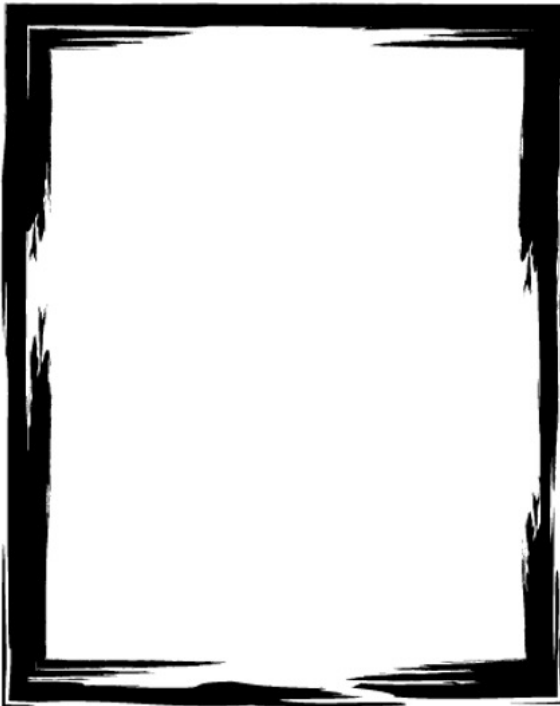


# Tools to Promote Community

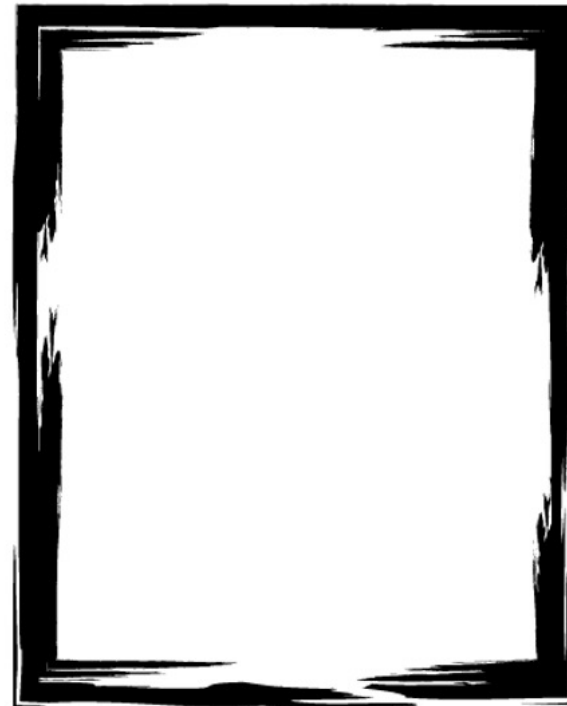


# Activity 41: The Hate They Give

**The Hate They Give**



**The Love We Have**





# If you found this webinar helpful, please

- Buy the book on Amazon or Barnes & Noble
- Share the book on your social media (Take a selfie with it) and feel free to tag us (Charmeka Newton or Janeé Steele on Facebook and LinkedIn)
- But most important apply the tools and engage in culturally responsive work in your daily practices

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