

Black Men and Sexual Trauma

Trauma Informed Practice: A Lens on the African Canadian Community. ANSMHAI Conference, October 1 & 2, 2015
Robert S. Wright, MSW, RSW

Who is Robert Wright?

- Social Work Private Practitioner (direct practice and forensics)
- Former:
 - Frontline C.W. Worker
 - Race Relations Co-ord. DDSB
 - Mental Health Worker ,WSP
 - Ex. Dir. FCS Cumberland
 - Ex. Dir. Child & Youth Strategy
- Facilitator, ManTalk



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History of Work with Boys and Men

- Early Work in Poverty and Homelessness – Turning Point Outreach
- Student Support Worker - “At-Risk”, Inner-city Youth
- Child Protection
- Race Relations – Growing up Black and Proud
- Correctional Mental Health - WSP
- Child Protection Clinician/Administrator
- Child & Youth Strategy
- Private Practice

Key Concepts

- Sexual Assault – unwanted touching of a person in a sexual way, unwanted touching for sexual gratification, forcing a person to watch material of a sexual nature or to perform sexual acts, exposing oneself to another, threat to commit any of the above
- Sexual Abuse – connotes abuse of a power differential
- Sexuality Abuse – refers to acts perpetrated against a person for the purpose of harming their healthy sexual development

History of Work with ANS

- “At-Risk”, Inner-city Youth – Code language for Black Youth
- Co-author of The Nia Centre – Africentric Substance Abuse Prevention Programme 1993-1997
- Race Relations – Growing up Black and Proud
- Racial Equity Committee NSBS
 - Cultural Competence in the Law
 - Judicial Diversity Advocate
- Lead author ANSMHAI
- Founding member ACPAC
- Cultural Competence Educator

What is ManTalk

- Established in Fall of 2011
- Professionally supported, educational, and emotionally supportive group for male victims of sexual abuse
- A pro-bono service of my private practice
- Meets twice a month on the first and third Wednesdays
- Received some funding from DOHW*



ManTalk's greatest accomplishments

- Established a pro-bono service to male victims
- Has been continuous since 2012 except for storm interruptions
- Has contributed male voice to current provincial SA discourse
- Has created a non-misogynist space for men
- Open acceptance by other SA service providers
- Has served a diversity of men: ANS, trans persons, diverse SES, queer and straight
- Training ground for interns and associates

ManTalk's Greatest Challenges

- Restricted by lack of funding and integration into SA network*
- **Racial diversity is insufficient**
- Sexual orientation diversity is insufficient
- Based in a private practice

Recognizing the Power of Victimization . . .

The measure of victimization experience and
trauma symptomatology among protective custody inmates at
Washington State Penitentiary:
Implications for returning persons to general population

Robert S. Wright

(Last updated on 5/28/97)

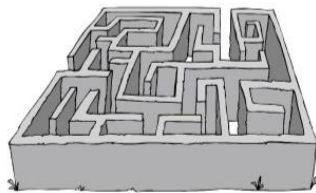
The Nia Centre

- Africentric Substance Abuse Programme
 - Youth Development
 - Africentric Curriculum – Growing up Black and Proud (Bell, 1992)
 - **Strong emphasis on providing accurate history of ANS culture and experience**
 - Inter-active Small Group Work
 - Gender-segregated Groups
 - Skills-based
 - Formally Recognized by Systems (course credit in school)
 - Community Involvement (youth public service, Black men's/women's groups established)

The Invisible Boy

 Health Canada Santé Canada

The Invisible Boy: Revising the Victimization of Male Children and Teens



Canada 



- Fred Matthews, Sparrow Lake Alliance
- Strongest advocate for acknowledging male victimization

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What Does “Male-Inclusion” Look Like?

- Matthews’ Four Propositions
 - Articulate **diverse** male-centred points of view
 - Support male victims as they search for balance in their struggle to heal
 - Honour and protect female victims’ gains and women’s leadership in breaking the silence about violence and abuse
 - Envision the empowerment of all stories into a coherent and inclusive perspective that we can collectively and respectfully own and use in the struggle to reduce and eliminate interpersonal violence.

History of Black Male Sexual Victimization

■ In Slavery

- Black women's sexual abuse in slavery is well documented
- Male bodies similarly eroticized and fetishized
- Male genital torture and mutilation well documented
- Males forced, powerless spectators of Black women's rape
- Males forced to rape Black women while white men watched
- Forced "slave breeding"
- Males sexually assaulted by male slave owners (>with proximity)
- Males sexually assaulted by female slave owners

(Foster. T. (2011). The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery. Journal of the History of Sexuality 20, 2. pp. 445-464)

History of Black Male Sexual Victimization

- After Slavery
 - Literature is limited
 - Similar patterns continue to exist
 - Brutal attack on Black men involve genital torture and mutilation
 - Emasculation of Black males under constant threat
 - Increased opportunities for sexual exploitation



History of Black Male Sexual Victimization

- More modern times
 - Black bodies eroticized and fetishized
- Do the math
 - Black children have higher incidence of abuse
 - Black children have higher incidence of being in care
 - Black children have higher incidence of being in institutional care
 - Black youth have higher incidence of being incarcerated
 - Black men have higher incidence of being incarcerated
 - Sexual abuse is ubiquitous in oppressive institutions

Consequences of Sexual/Sexuality Abuse

- Disturbing patterns of Black male criminal engagement
 - Hyper-masculine bravado in Black male criminality
 - Human trafficking and pimping (disturbing patterns despite the exaggeration of incidence due to disproportionate policing. cf. legacy of pimping and prostitution taskforce of 1990's; cf. Smith, T. (2000). Pimping and Prostitution in Halifax in the Early 1990's: The Evolution of a Moral Panic)
- Disturbing patterns of Black male misogyny
 - Depiction of women in hip hop culture
- Disturbing patterns of Black male substance use and trafficking
- Disturbing patterns of Black male violence
 - Greatest offense is “dissing” or “punking”

Towards Greater Engagement of Black Men

- **Acknowledge and accurately picture black male victimization**
- Acknowledge living legacy of harm
- Overcome ANS homophobia
- Screen for Black male sexual victimization
- Support male victims as they search for balance in their struggle to heal
- Honour and protect female victims' gains and **Black** women's leadership in breaking the silence about violence and abuse
- Envision the empowerment of all stories into a coherent and inclusive perspective that we can collectively and respectfully own and use in the struggle to reduce and eliminate interpersonal violence.
- Acknowledge systemic abuse of Black males by white patriarchy

Acknowledgements

- My mother
 - For providing the safety net of her sofa, though I haven't needed it yet
- My daughter and my son
 - For the sacrifices they make that enables me to do this work
- My pantheon of mentors and models
- My sisters
 - For their constant love and care (though they threaten to work me to death!)
- My lovers, including my ex-wife
 - For walking with me on my own journey of healing from sexuality abuse

Q & A



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END

Is Feminism Still Relevant?

- Feminism is an emancipatory theory that seeks to right injustice and promote social inclusion. It is feminism, with its inclusive lens of intersectionality, that has been responsible for much of the progress made in the SA field.
- As male stories begin to be voiced more centrally in the SA discourse we will see that male victimization is fueled in our society by the same forces that are at the root of the oppression of other peoples.
- A male-centric, emancipatory theory, with a powerful analysis, model of practice and critical mass of practitioners does not yet exist.
- What we have seen from the Men's Rights movement is not a progressive, male-centric, emancipatory voice. The men's liberation movement (whether feminism informed or masculinism informed) has yet to show up as a legitimate foundation for this work.
- Feminism is still relevant