Victimization and Fetishization of Black Bodies

20th Annual
MASOC/MATSA Joint Conference
Preventing Sexual Violence Through Assessment, Treatment and Safe Management

Robert S. Wright. MSW, RSW – April 13, 2018

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Who is Robert Wright?

- A RSW Private Practitioner - direct practice and forensics
- Former MH Counsellor, Washington State Penn.
- Member ATSA
- Expert in PCA & CIA
- Former member NSBS Racial Equity Committee

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Objectives

- Explore the history and impact of sexual victimization and fetishization of black bodies.
- Introduce and discuss cultural pain, racial identity development, gender, sex, trauma, and healing.
- Suggest implications for treatment.

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Logistics, Warnings, Self-Care

- 12:45-2:15PM
- 1/2hr Break when done
- Trigger and trauma warnings
- Racism – North America's Original Sin
  - Race and diversity are extremely sensitive issues
  - We are at different stages and levels of our understanding
  - Productive conversations require a "circle of safety"

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Indigenous Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the people of the Nipmuc Nation, who are the traditional custodians of the Land on which we hold these meetings.

I would like to pay my respects to their Elders and to other Indigenous persons who are in attendance.

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Your Questions as we Begin

- What must you take from this session in order for it to be of value to you?

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Why This Workshop?

- Understanding the social, cultural, and historical reality of the people we serve is essential to providing them with competent treatment.
- The historical treatment of Black bodies is complex and tragic. It must be understood by persons who would treat victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse.
- This workshop will review that complex history and discuss concepts that will help practitioners better serve Black clients in the field of sexual violence

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Why This Workshop?

- Some persons or groups may face additional health risks due to a socio-economic environment, which is largely determined by dominant cultural values that contribute to the perpetuation of conditions such as marginalization, stigmatization, loss or devaluation of language and culture and lack of access to culturally appropriate health care and services. (Gov. of Canada, What makes Canadians Healthy . . . Social Determinants of Health)
- Emerging research is making links between acculturation and health. Socialization and integration into a functional culture promotes belonging, safety, social attachment.

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Black Male Sexual Victimization

- Higher incidence of child abuse
- Higher incidence of being in care and incarceration (youth and adult)
- Ubiquity of abuse in oppressive institutions
- Hip hop framing of male sexual victimization cf. L'il Wayne's story

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Black Female Sexual Victimization

- Tanya is a 43 year old African Canadian woman who is currently on leave from work due to sexual and racial harassment on her job. She has a significant history of loss and trauma having lost an infant child from a rare medical condition, having been physically and sexually abused as a child, and having survived an abusive marriage. She is significantly debilitated. She becomes emotionally overwhelmed easily. I have been encouraging her to behave like a brain injury survivor – restricting exposure to 4-5 hours a day. Her treatment has been compromised by the inability to find a therapist who "gets" her.

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Reflections of Bronfenbrenner

Consistent with Definition of Cultural Competence

- Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures:
  A. Understand our own cultural positions and how they differ from others
  B. **Understand the different social and cultural realities we work in**
  C. Cultivate appropriate attitudes towards cultural difference
  D. Generate and interpret a variety of verbal and non-verbal responses
  E. **Understand structural oppression and the nature of white privilege, and demonstrate a commitment to social justice**

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Consistent with DeGruy's PTSS

- Post-traumatic Slave Syndrome - explains the origin of mal-adaptive survival behaviors in African American communities throughout the Diaspora.
- Caused by multi-generational oppression **and** a lack of resources and opportunities to heal: psycho-social and epigenetic mechanisms
- Primary symptoms include:
  - Vacant Esteem – hopelessness, depression, self-destruction
  - Marked Propensity for Anger and Violence
  - Racist Socialization and (internalized racism)

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Black Body Scholarship

- Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty. By Dorothy Roberts
- Policing Black Bodies: How Black Lives Are Surveilled and How to Work for Change. By Angela J. Hattery and Earl Smith
- Beyond the Rope: The Impact of Lynching on Black Culture and Memory. By Karlos K. Hill
- Black Bodies, White Spaces: Understanding the Construction of White Identity through the Objectification and Lynching of Black Bodies. Book reviews by Adeyemi Doss
  - Raising Racists: The Socialization of White Children in the Jim Crow South. By Kristina DuRocher. Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011. 248 pp.
  - Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism. By Lewis R. Gordon. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995. 222 pp.

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History of Black Bodies

- For the purposes of this workshop I am going to describe the history of Black Bodies in several different periods:
  - Colonial (1490's-1619)
  - Chattel Slavery (1619-1863)
  - Emancipation & Reconstruction (1863-1877)
  - Jim Crow (1877-1950s)
  - Civil Rights Era (1954-1965)
  - Blaxploitation/Black Power (1970-1980's)
  - Hip Hop/Hollywood/Contemporary Era (1980's-Present)

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Colonial (1490's-1619)

- Corresponds to Renaissance Period in Europe
- Characterized by noble images of black nobility and soldiers
- Lack of exaggeration of "African" features
- Few depictions of "peasant" life
- Theories of intermarrying with European noble houses abound

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Portrait of an African Slave Woman by Annibale Carraci, ca. 1580

CLOSE

Portrait of an African Man by Jan Mostaert (ca. 1520-1530)

Source: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Netherlands

Chattel Slavery (1619-1863)

- Images begin to depict enslaved state, stereotypes, exaggerated features and images of the ravaged body.
- People were sold at auction
- Trade in sexual slavery, both sexes for male consumption
- Sometimes orgies were staged for viewing pleasure
- Minstrelsy begins 1830's

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©1961, PARKE-DAVIS

J. MARION SIMS: GYNECOLOGIC SURGEON

SLAVES AT SALE,

WITHOUT RESERVE.

BY BEARD, CALHOUN & CO.

J. A. BEARD, Auctioneer.

WILL BE SOLD AT AUCTION ON

Tuesday, Jan. 16th,

AT 12 O'CLOCK, AT BANKS' ARCADE, THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED NEGROES:

1. **ROSIN**, 13 years of age a griffe, good house boy, fine temper, fully guarantied, and speaks German and English.

2. **JORDAN**, 23 years of age, a likely negro, house servant and trusty waiter—fully guarantied.

3. **JANE**, aged 24 years, a very superior washer, ironer, good American cook and house woman—fully guarantied.

4. **MARY**, aged 24 years and child 1 year old, a trusty woman, good washer, ironer and American cook—fully guarantied.

5. **EDWIN**, aged 27 years, a griffe man, an excellent waiter, steward, and trusty servant—fully guarantied.

6. **ESTHER**, aged 40 years, a smart intelligent and cleanly cook, washer and ironer—title only guarantied.

7. **ANNE**, aged 24 years, an excellent house servant, washer, ironer, and good cook, with her three children, one aged 5, another 2 and the last 1 year; they are fully guarantied, but will be sold to go into the country, by her owners instructions.

8. **SAM**, aged 28 years, a field hand; title only guarantied.

9. **AGNES**, aged 24 years, a good cook, washer and ironer—fully guarantied.

10. **HENRY**, aged about 26 years, a field hand, and a stout man, sold as having ran away from the plantation.

11. **JOHN**, aged 15 years, a smart waiting boy—fully guarantied.

12. **JANE**, aged 17 years, a fine house girl and field hand—fully guarantied.

13. **MARY**, aged 35 years, a superior nurse and house woman—fully guarantied.

ALSO:

14. **PATRICK**, aged 28 years, a likely man, good barber, body and house servant. Sold under a good character, and fully guarantied against the vices and maladies prescribed by law.

TERMS CASH. Acts of sale before J. R. BEARD, Notary Public at the expense of the purchasers.

ALSO,

The following described Slaves sold for account of Mr. Henry Deacon, who failed to comply with the terms of sale made for the account of the Succession of C. H. L. ELWYN, deceased, to wit:

The Negress MATHILDA, aged about 29 years and her son PAUL, 7 years--a good washer, Ironer and Cook.

TERMS CASH. Act of Sale before H. B. CENAS, Notary Public, at the expense of the Purchasers.

Ten's Power Press, 88 Magazine St.

Mr T. RICE

as

THE ORIGINAL JIM CROW

New York Pub. by E. RILEY No. 29 Chatham St.

Emancipation & Reconstruction (1863-1877)

- A Brief Period
- Emancipation resulted in chaos in the racial order
- Mass migrations of Blacks from the southern rural locales to northern, western and urban centre
- Life worsened for many who remained
- Birth of the KKK

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Getty

Jim Crow (1877-1950s)

- Backlash to the civil war and emancipation
- Creation of Jim Crow laws that enforced the separation of the races
- Lynching
- Beginning of mass incarceration of Black men

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"Separate but equal"

Civil Rights Era (1954-1970)

- Short period
- Black bodies rise up but there is brutal reprisals
- Assassination of leaders
- Women and children placing their bodies on the front lines
- Men beaten by police, fire hoses, dogs

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Blaxploitation/Black Power (1970-1980's)

- Movie producers take advantage of awakening Black consciousness, produce string of Black movies
- Strong, hypersexual male and female characters are depicted
- Eroticized Black masculinity is performed for the "homoerotic gaze"

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She's the "GODMOTHER" of them all
...The baddest One-Chick Hit-Squad that ever hit town!
"Coffy"

BLACK PANTHER PARTY

WHATEVER YOU WANT THEY'VE GOT...
and Bucktown is where you'll find it!
BUCKTOWN
starring
FRED WILLIAMSON · PAM GRIER
THALMUS RASULALA · TONY KING
BERNIE HAMILTON • Music by JOHNNY PATE • Written by BOB ELLISON
Produced by BERNARD SCHWARTZ • Directed by ARTHUR MARKS
R RESTRICTED
An AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL Release

SHE CAME BACK NOT TO KILL JUST ONE, BUT TO KILL THEM ALL.
IF SHE SAYS "GET AWAY FROM HER, YOU BITCH!"
YOU BETTER DO WHAT SHE SAYS.
ALIENS
ALSO STARRING
GLORIA HENDRY AS "THE ACE IN THE HOLE"
JANET JACKSON AS "THE SURVIVOR"
CLARENCE WILLIAMS III AS "THE ANDROID"
AND RICHARD PRYOR AS "THE CORPORATE COWARD"
DIRECTED BY GORDON PARKS FILMED IN PANAVISION DISTRIBUTED BY GENERAL FILM CORP.

AGENT FOR DRAGON

Hip Hop/Hollywood/Contemporary Era (1980's-Present)

- Hip hop culture a "stand-in" for Black culture
- Hyper-sexual, gang and thug images
- Being "real" means not "serving the man", not loosing touch with your origin in the streets
- Incarceration a normalized part of Black male experience

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ANTM

Bell on Cultural Pain

- "Feelings of insecurity, confusion, uncertainty, and inadequacy are all examples of cultural pain. The history of slavery, racism, and segregation, added to today's conflicting expectations and pressure of being a(n) . . . African American, all combine to create cultural pain. By addressing self-identity issues, you can begin to develop new coping skills that enhance your own recovery." (From Hazelden.org's description of the Bell text)
- The added shame of emasculating un/under-employment, the increased stigma of homophobia in the AA community, the confusion and struggle to accept or reject "the hustle", perceptions of selling out when one "goes straight"

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Stage	Age	Critical Issue	Process for Resolution	Significant Relationship(s) & Resources
Pre-school	0-5yrs	comfort with visible racial differences	Adequate and enlightened physical care	primary physical caregiver
Early school	5-9yrs	understanding of personal equality & competence	Facilitated success in social and academic pursuits	extended family members/school personnel
Early adolescence	11-14yrs	ability to appropriately negotiate racial dynamics	Knowledge of history and politics of race	same race role models, culturally specific and anti-racist education
Later adolescence	15-18yrs	personal choices in context of race	family values re: race, sex, reproduction and vocation	role models, community censors and informal agents

Impediments to Disclosure and Treatment

- These phenomena are internal/clinical and cultural impediments to help seeking
- Our inability to see, acknowledge, substantiate and engage these phenomena result in poor client engagement and treatment outcomes

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Cultural Aspects of Presenting Problem

- Cultural competence requires the ability to comfortably and competently ask clients about cultural issues that may be a consideration in the context of your work with them. Consistent with expectation of CFI

Figure. Flow of Cultural Formulation Interview domains for cultural assessment

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Application to Tanya

- Tanya is a 43 year old African Canadian woman who is currently on leave from work due to sexual and racial harassment on her job. She has a significant history of loss and trauma having lost an infant child from a rare medical condition, having been physically and sexually abused as a child, and having survived an abusive marriage. She is significantly debilitated. She becomes emotionally overwhelmed easily. I have been encouraging her to behave like a brain injury survivor – restricting exposure to 4-5 hours a day. Her treatment has been compromised by the inability to find a therapist who "gets" her.

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Treatment Implications

- Assessing client's acculturation. How do they identify?
- Assessing client's family history of acculturation.
- Assessing acculturation and health of client's community.
- Explore with client their knowledge of history of Black victimization and fetishization. Provide some education. Reference literature, activisim, etc.
- Explore trauma and triggers in the context of the history. Look for resonances.

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Q & A

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