

Our Movement. Our Moment.

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**2019 NAMI
National
Convention**
JUNE 19–22 • SEATTLE

Welcome to 2019 NAMI National Convention

**A New Approach to Communicating and Breaking
Barriers to Mental Health in Black Communities**

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Dr. Napoleon Higgins, CEO

Global Health Psychiatry, LLC



Disclosures

Dr. Ericka Goodwin

None

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Shire, Speaker

Otsuka, Speaker

Lundbeck, Speaker

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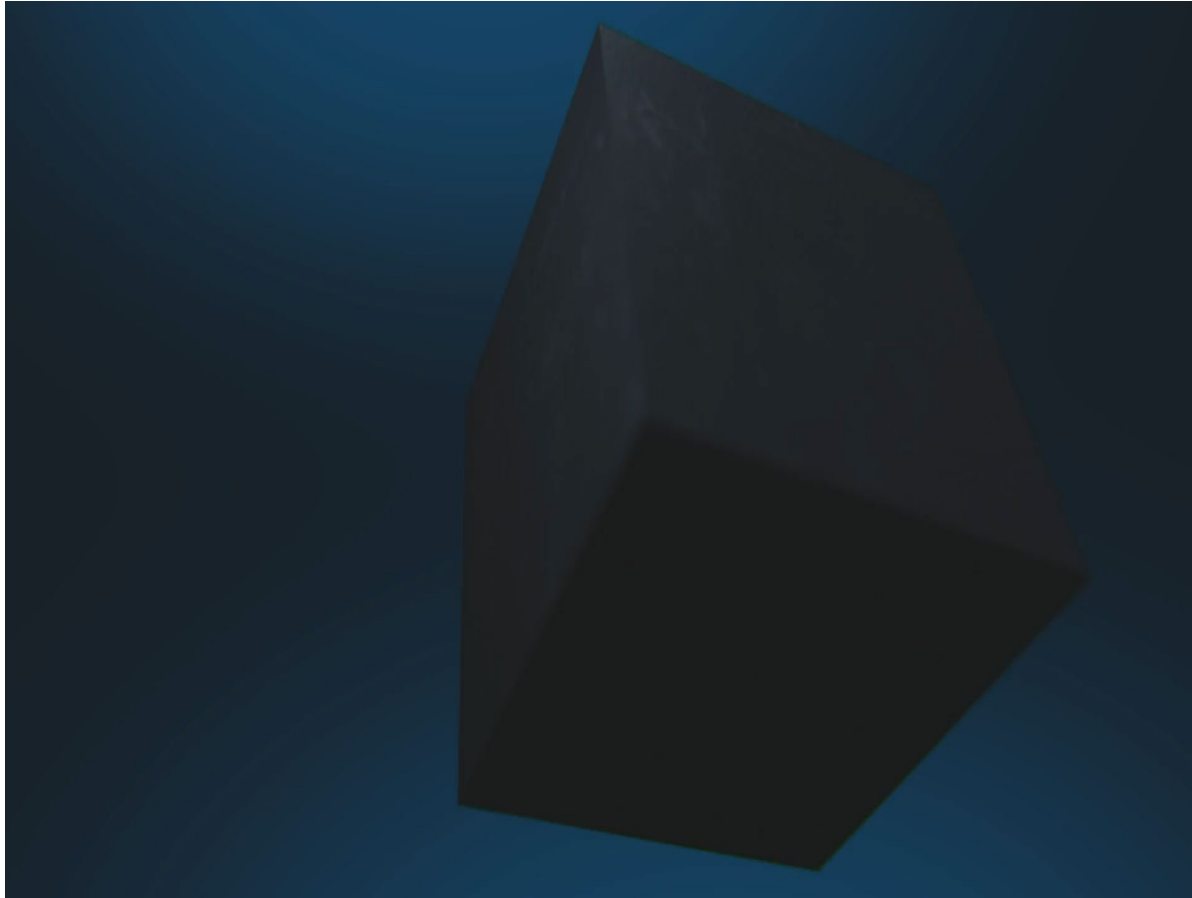
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Why this talk and why now?

- This is an age of change
- Proactive approaches are needed to deal with
 - Barriers to mental health care
 - Cultural differences that need to be considered to adequately reach the Black Community
 - The need for a customized approach (the traditional approach may not be the best one)
- *Bad things happen to our people and we need to do something about it.*



Prevalence in African-American Community

- 20% more likely to have a mental health issue
 - Poverty
 - Lower income
 - Racism
 - Slavery
 - Intergenerational Violence
 - Homelessness
 - Violence exposure, high crime
 - Hazard waste landfills





Mental Illness and Taboo

- **“It’s not just you”**
- Mental illness is seen in all communities
 - We don’t talk about it
- Understanding and coping can be different
- Culture of ignoring or avoidance





What causes mental health problems?

- “Why did I get this?”
- Many factors...
 - Biological
 - Family history
 - Stress
 - Substance abuse
 - Illness
 - Parental smoking, alcohol use
 - Environmental exposure
 - Food deserts
 - Racism



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Why does treatment matter?

- Changes in behavior
- Unable to adapt to your environment
- Causes significant issues in your daily living
- Decreased quality of life
- Interruption of dreams and goals



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Mental Health is a matter of LIFE and DEATH

- Shortened life expectancy
 - Depression, 5-10 years
 - Bipolar Disorder, 15 years
 - Schizophrenia, 25-30 years
- Most common cause of death
 - 10-24: Suicide 2nd cause of death
 - 25-44: Suicide 3rd cause of death



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Truth to the Mistrust

- Lower quality of care
- Less likely to be diagnosed correctly



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The value of a therapist that looks like them

- Finding a Black mental health professional
- Questioning the ability of the therapist to understand
- Cultural norms and expectations





Our misconceptions

- Not discussing mental health
- Belief that mental illness doesn't happen to us
- Faith and healing vs. lack of faith
- Not seeking mental health care until it is critical
 - Emergency services
 - Juvenile or Incarceration
 - School trouble





How do I know if I have a mental illness? (Practical signs)

- Changes in behavior
- Unable to adapt to your environment
- Causes significant issues in your daily living
- Inability to grow



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“What can I do outside of taking medication?”

- Spirituality, religion
- Therapy
- Decreasing stress
- Hobbies, activities
- Friends
- Sleep
- Eating habits
- Getting away
- Prayer and Meditation



Barriers and Stigma

- Lack of information
- Mistrust of the medical model of mental health treatment
- Different presentation
 - More likely to describe physical versus mental health symptoms
 - More likely to use different descriptions and communication styles
 - Dependent on education and use of words



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Connecting on the Right Level?!

- Communicating in their language
- Bringing yourself to the patient and community
- If you don't know...ask questions
- Be an authority, but be respectful of the individuals wishes
- Discussing options and giving answers
- Integrate family and community supports into treatment
- Finding creative ways to do this



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The Need to Connect to the Masses

- Decoding Mental Health
- Explaining mental health to the people who need it
- Something useful to our people that connects at another level
- Demystifying mental health
- Useful for patients, families, caregivers, clergy, law enforcement and the general community
- Empowerment of entire communities





MINU MATTERS



A Resource Guide to Psychiatry
for Black Communities

Otis Anderson III, MD • Timothy G. Benson, MD • Malaka Berkeley, MD • Delane Casiano, MD
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**HOW AMARI LEARNED
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Multiple Ended Approach

- Directly providing care in a culturally sensitive way that involves and takes into account personal and community supports
- Educating the community to enhance and provide empowerment

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MIND MATTERS



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Resources

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Myths of “STRENGTH” and Slavery

- Psychological distress
 - Racism
 - Socioeconomic pressures
 - Discrimination
- The “STRONG” Black Woman
- Defining masculinity
 - Not to talk about feelings
 - Not supposed to cry
 - Not able to feel hurt or shame
 - Accepting anger as an emotion?





Generational Trauma and Secrecy

- Pains of slavery
 - Shaming
 - Slavery, Jim Crow, Voting Rights Act, #MAGA, Terrorism
 - Hiding the pain
- Post Slavery Syndrome
 - Internal destruction
 - Promotion of our own distress
- Recurrent reminders (media)
 - Not being able to speak and/or hiding “YOUR TRUTH”
- Perpetual LIES OF HISTORY...

“Just forget about it”





Barriers and Stigma

- Mistrust
 - Wait and see
 - Discuss alternatives with family, church, pastor, elder, etc...
 - Seeing the doctor as the last alternative
- History of discrimination
 - More likely to face more invasive treatments
 - Less likely to receive alternatives
 - Lack of physician trusting the patient to make needed changes
 - Assumptive thoughts and stereotypes



Our Spiritual Misconceptions

- Suffering is seen as an sign of strength
- Fatalistic thinking
 - Believing of being punished by sins
 - “If it’s God’s will”
- Shame
 - Spiritual battle
 - What did I do wrong?





Difficulties between the Blacks, Psychiatrists and the Religion

- Psychiatrists are less religious than the general population
- Least likely of medical professions to “BELIEVE”
- Lack of comfort due to a lack of knowledge
- Widespread prejudice against religion
- Inability to integrate into care
- Heavy biological basis of illness and treatment models
- Freud – “neurosis”





Benefit of a Church Home/Community

- Churches provide:
 - Mentoring
 - Developing self-regulatory abilities
 - Fostering identity development
 - Providing a supportive and stable community
 - Offering a relationship with a loving and powerful God





Future role of Psychiatry and the Church

- Open dialogue
- The invitation to treatment
- Mutual dialogue
- Increase training for psychiatry students and resident
- Increase training of the church membership and clergy
- Move from **EITHER/OR** to **AND/AND**





Resiliency factors

- Church
 - Prayer, belief and scriptural study
 - Dance, crying, shouting, singing
 - Group therapy
- Family
- Supportive community
- Ability to walk between communities
- Cognitive abilities
- Education
- Positive role models/mentors





Breaking Barriers

- Mental health education
 - Education and socio-economic status
- Dispelling ignorance and lies about mental illness
 - ADHD and black boys
 - Emotion is a sign of weakness
- Culturally competent physicians and providers
 - Understanding beliefs, culture
 - Need for more African-American providers





What does “Psych-iatry” mean

- Psychiatry
- psyche (soul)
- iatros, iatric
(doctor, treatment of)





Breaking Barriers

- Understanding there is a problem
- Information
 - TODAY!!!!
 - Dialogue
- Delivery
 - Community groups
 - Churches
 - Having honest conversations



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