Is Anyone Listening?

The Silencing of African American Women and Girls with Mental Health Issues

Drs. Shemya Vaughn and Christie Cruise
Today, you will learn about:

1. Mental illness among African American women/girls.
2. Invisibility and silencing of African American women/girls.
4. Mental health resources for African American women/girls.
Perceptions of Black Women
Halle Berry
Michelle Williams
Alicia Keys
Jenifer Lewis
Lisa Nicole Carson
Creating a Safe Space

3-Minute Body Scan Guided Meditation

- Believe other people’s narratives.
- Listen more than talk.
- Avoid judging, criticizing, and shaming.
My Story: Self-Disclosure
Transgender Youth

Shemya Vaughn
Editor

Perceptions, Media Influences and Social Challenges

Human Sexuality

NOVA
Presentation Intention & Goals

• Be more aware.
• Participate in future conversations.
• Take action.
• Understand the negative effects.
Black Girls, Black Women and Mental Illness

Adultification

Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood

REBECCA EPESTEIN
JAMILA J. BLAKE
THALIA GONZÁLEZ

CENTER FOR JUSTICE AND INEQUALITY
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER
Black Girls and Adultification

- Includes the assignment of adult-like characteristics
- Culturally rooted fantasies of Black girls’ sexualization
- Commonly held stereotypes of Black girls as hypersexualized
- Leads to age compression, strips away childhood freedoms
- Makes Black childhood interchangeable with Black womanhood

Black Girls and Adultification

Compared to white girls of the same age:

- Black girls need less nurturing
- Black girls need less protection
- Black girls need to be supported less
- Black girls need to be comforted less
- Black girls are more independent
- Black girls know more about adult topics
- Black girls know more about sex

Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2017
Black Girls and Adultification

The most significant differences were found in ages 5 - 9 and 10 - 14.

Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2017
Black Girls and Suicide

• Rates doubled among black children 5 - 11 years old
• Rates tripled among black girls 10 - 14 years old


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, 2018
Black Girls and Suicide

Suicide Rates Spike Among Black Girls

Stormiyah, 12

McKenzie, 9

Naika (Nakia), 14
Black Women: Myths and Stereotypes

Three dominant paradigms of Black femininity

• Sapphire - emasculating, loud, aggressive, angry, stubborn, and unfeminine

• Jezebel - hypersexualized, seductive and exploiter of men’s weaknesses

• Mammy - self-sacrificing, nurturing, loving, asexual
The Myth of the Strong, Black Woman
The Myth of the Strong, Black Woman

Internal Myth
The Myth of the Strong, Black Woman

External Myth
Silencing by Mental Health Professionals

Issues Black women face when seeking help

- Provider Bias
- Misdiagnosis, Mistrust
- Socio-economic Factors
- Lack of Providers of Color
Adverse Childhood Events

How childhood trauma affects our health (2015)
A Call to Action

What can society do?

What can you do?
Please take a few minutes to give us your feedback about this session

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