

988 DIASPORA CAMPAIGN

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NEWS RELEASE

A conversation with the Black community on mental health Breaking the Stigma & Healing the Trauma

PHILADELPHIA, November 19, 2023 – Stress, depression and grief, is on the increase during the holiday season, especially among people in African Diaspora communities, who are already affected by generational trauma. People need someone to talk to, but don't know where to turn. That's why the **988 African Diaspora Campaign**, in partnership with **State Sen. Sharif Street**, is sponsoring a “**Conversation with the Black Community: Breaking the Stigma & Healing the Trauma**,” **Saturday, Dec. 9 from 10:00AM to 1:00PM** at the **Temple Liacouras Center, 1776 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia**. This event is the culmination of the campaign that was launched in May to promote awareness and use of the federal **988 Mental Health Lifeline**, and access to treatment for African Diaspora (African, African American, Caribbean and Afro-Latino) communities in the Philadelphia Region.

Stigmas and other barriers often prevent people of African descent from seeking treatment in order to maintain good mental health. One of the primary barriers is a lack of Black mental health professionals. This fact spurred the campaign to develop a [listing](#) of local, independent, culturally-competent mental healthcare providers. This free event is an opportunity for people to engage some of the mental health professionals on the list and gain access to resources.

The list includes 30 independent, Black mental health providers that focus on a wide-range of issues and specifically provide safe spaces and holistic care for the African Diaspora, including therapy for racial trauma/justice using a variety of approaches. Most provide virtual and in-person sessions. Some provide free phone consultations.

“I'm proud to partner with the 988 Diaspora Campaign to promote a critical resource - the 988 Mental Health Lifeline – and access to culturally-competent mental health professionals to African Diaspora communities in the Philadelphia Region,” stated Sen. Street. “The disparities in health equity and access to healthcare and mental health treatment especially, for diaspora communities, are well known. Promoting and investing in resources like this is how we help fill the gap to enhance the quality of life for the communities we serve. “

The event includes a **community discussion** including Q & A with Black therapists, moderated by **NAACP Philadelphia Branch President Catherine Hicks**, on how to begin healing. The discussion will be followed by a **healing circle** for those who want to participate. People will also be able to network with providers about their services.

Participating providers include Jacqui Johnson of **Sankofa Healing Studio** that offers social justice informed therapy for marginalized youth and adults who are trauma-impacted and system-involved; Wesley Harris of **Black Men Heal** that provides mental health service to Black men; Holly Sawyer, PhD of **Life First Therapy, LLC**, that offers a special focus on Black women; Okichie Davis of **Endeavoring Wellness Clinical Therapy & Consultation**, that provides immigration evaluations, trans experience and gender expansiveness therapy; Farida Boyer of the **Black Brain Campaign**, Nzingha Ma'at of **Ma'at Therapeutic Services** that emphasizes the mind/body/spirit connection and more.

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The **U.S. Preventive Services Task Force**, a group of 16 independent medical experts, released a report which found that Black people have a higher risk of anxiety disorders due to social factors including racism, rather than genetics. **Mental Health America**, the nation's leading national nonprofit dedicated to the promotion of mental health agreed. Its annual [State of Mental Health in America](#) report said the Black experience in America continues to be characterized by generational trauma and violence more often than for their counterparts and impacts the emotional and mental health of both youth and adults.

“The descendants of the enslaved Africans who were transported to the Caribbean, Central, South and North America especially, suffer from generational trauma that has been passed down subconsciously since the enslavement, through Reconstruction when the KKK was formed, through Jim Crow racism to the school to prison pipeline of today as described by [Dr. Joy DeGruy](#),” explained Marilyn Kai Jewett, campaign consultant. “Being stressed and depressed are often the result of being oppressed. Our brethren from the Motherland also suffer from trauma due to the European oppression and colonization of their nations. We shouldn’t have to explain our culture to a therapist in order to get the proper help. Black therapists provide a safer, more welcoming space for Black people seeking therapy.”

Initiated by [Fun Times Magazine](#), the campaign was funded by the **Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund**.

“I want to thank our media partners -- *WURD Black Talk Radio, iHeart Radio, Philadelphia Sunday Sun, Ark Republic.com, On the Scene Magazine.com* and *Scoop USA* for recognizing the importance of this issue and working collectively to bring the message to the community.” said *FunTimes* publisher Eric Nzeribe “I am grateful to **Senator Street** for co-sponsoring this event, and **City Councilmember Jamie Gauthier** and **PA House Speaker [JoAnna McClinton](#)** for being a part of the **988 African Diaspora Coalition** of supporters that helped promote the message to diaspora communities by distributing information at events, to its membership and in the media.”

The coalition includes : *WURD Black Talk Radio, iHeartRadio, Philadelphia Sunday Sun, Ark Republic.com, Scoop USA, Greater Philadelphia Health Action, Ethio-Philly Mental Health Council, Bourne ANEW LLC, Sankofa Healing Studio, Life First Therapy LLC, Mayors Commission on African & Caribbean Immigrant Affairs* and the **NAACP Philadelphia Branch**.

The campaign also promotes awareness and use of the federal **988 Mental Health Lifeline** as an alternative to calling 911 when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis, which often has negative results for Black people when the police arrive. If you or a loved one is going through an emergency mental health crisis, don’t call the police. Call, chat or text 988 instead, then access one of the culturally-competent mental health providers on the campaign’s list for further care.

“Much of the violence we see in our communities is the result of never being healed from the hurt and trauma we’ve experienced for generations,” Jewett reminded. “Emotional, physical, sexual and domestic abuse; low self- and race-esteem; anger at the racism and inequities we face daily; grief from losing a loved one to violence or illness; dysfunctional families with no fathers; PTSD; the stress of trying to keep a roof over your head and feeding your children; all of that and more are reasons we need healing. This conversation with the Black community on mental health is for you, it’s for me – it’s for the entire African Diaspora. We, as a people, must heal before we can take our rightful place in the world. The mental health professionals participating have dedicated their lives to healing our people. You don’t have to suffer in silence any longer. Come let’s talk! We’ve got you.”

To register for this free event, email info@funtimesmagazine.com or call 215-227-6161.

U.S. MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

- Black people are more likely to use emergency rooms or primary care physicians rather than mental health specialists.
- Only one-in-three Black people who need mental healthcare receive it.
- Black people living below the poverty level are twice as likely to report serious psychological distress than those living over the poverty level.
- Research indicates that Black people believe that mild depression or anxiety would be considered “crazy” in their social circles and discussions about mental illness are not appropriate.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people ages 10-14.
- Black people are less likely than whites to die from suicide at all ages. However, Black teenagers are more likely to attempt suicide than white teenagers (9.8% versus 6.1%).
- In 2020, suicide was the third leading cause of death for Black people ages 15 to 24.
- The death rate from suicide for Black men was four times greater than for Black women in 2018.
- The suicide rate among Black people increased by 19.2% between 2018 and 2020. The largest increase was among those ages 10 to 24 with the suicide rate among Black youth rising by 36.6%.
- Black patients are more frequently diagnosed with schizophrenia and less frequently diagnosed with mood disorders compared to whites with the same symptoms.
- Black patients are less likely to receive guideline-consistent care compared to whites.
- One in six youth ages 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year.
- Fifty percent of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% by age 24.
- Among people under age 18, depressive disorders are the most common cause of hospitalization.
- People with depression have a 40% higher risk of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases than the general population.
- High school students with significant symptoms of depression are more than twice as likely to drop out compared to their peers.
- Students ages 6-17 with mental, emotional or behavioral issues are more likely to repeat a grade.
- Seventy percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health condition.
- 500,000 veterans are incarcerated in local jails with 55% reporting experiencing a mental illness.
- Among incarcerated people with a mental health condition, people of color are more likely to be put in solitary confinement, be injured and stay incarcerated longer.