BLACK MALE GRIEF AT THE CROSSROADS

Northwest Conference on Childhood Grief
3/2/2018
Kevin Carter, MSW
Tyran Hill, MSSA
CREATING SAFE SPACES

• Check in with PIES (Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual Connectors)

• Watch for your own triggers of fight, flight or freeze

• Setting a table for today and beyond

• Ours is not a smooth linear journey

• Pause and recognize our ancestors
WHAT DO YOU SEE?
### EARLY LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT LOSS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kevin</th>
<th>Tyran</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotions are for individual consumption</td>
<td>No clarity from men</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adults are distressed by death but they don’t discuss it with children</td>
<td>Night terrors/Hiding with my brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death makes everyone feel bad even if they don’t say so</td>
<td>Liquor &amp; slow jams surround all aspects of death</td>
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<td>Death, fear and hate of Black people is ever present</td>
<td>Fear of being beat</td>
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<td>Death creates silence</td>
<td>Why did they have to die?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death hurts my stomach and makes me ache</td>
<td>Confusion and lack of answers are just a part of the process</td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t like death</td>
<td>Us men have to be strong for the women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men gather around the trunk of the car after a funeral</td>
<td>Crying is for the weak</td>
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MOANING, MOURNING AND MORNING FRAMEWORK
MOANING

• Acknowledging the Loss
• Defining the problem
• Understanding the things which cause our greatest pain
• Developing ways of disclosure that people are comfortable with
MOURNING

- Engaging in the problem solving process - emotional, physical, economics, spiritual and practical day to day living
- Determining who needs to be helped
- Overcoming growing mistrust in the community - concealment
- Regaining ability to mourn
- Identifying suffering, then depicting the process of healing through collective empathy, hope and support
MORNING

- Achieving the goal of “strengthening” individuals to face loss
- Taking action to face the challenges of grief
- Finding collective voices and approaches for social justice, empowerment and self realization

Where do the families who are not in front of the cameras find support for their boys and men who remain?
WHAT AFRICAN AMERICAN BOYS NEED

• Support from friends, family, loved ones
• Vehicles for expression of thoughts, feelings and reactions
• Ability to step in and out of the pain
• Privacy, space and time to do the work
• Paying attention to physical health
• Opportunities to feel and define your own terms of grief and mourning
• Acknowledge possible triggers - anniversaries, holidays, milestone
• Safety
• Seeking professional help if depression is present and suicidal thoughts begin surface
CULTURAL TOOLS FILLING THE VOID

• Music-spirituals and the blues as a means of articulating suffering, joy, wisdom across generations—expressions of philosophy, emotions and social striving

• Religious and Spiritual Institutions

• Proliferation of African American authors filling the space

• Currently hip hop has begun to emerge in that space
JOYNER LUCAS – I’M SORRY
BARRIERS IN THE GRIEVING PROCESS

• Dehumanization
• Disenfranchised Grief
• Masculinity and Grief
• The Death Gap and Time
• Trauma and Grief
• Access to Quality Services
DEHUMANIZATION (GOFF AND ET AL, 2014)

- Black boys can be misperceived as older than they actually are and prematurely perceived as responsible for their actions during a developmental period where their peers receive the beneficial assumption of childlike innocence – ex: classrooms and communities

- Anti-Black dehumanization may have a flip side – a kind of pro-White “humanization” – ex: Charlottesville riots vs Tamir Rice protests
MEDIA COVERAGE

ARMED 18 YEAR OLD SHOOTS AND KILLS 13 PEOPLE:

VS.

UNARMED 18 YEAR OLD IS SHOT 6 TIMES AND KILLED:

“MISUNDERSTOOD TEENAGER”

BLACK CHILDREN ARE DENIED THEIR INNOCENCE AND CHILDHOOD EVEN IN DEATH.

“MAN ACCUSED OF THEFT”

Dylan Klebold

Mike Brown

9/25/14
DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF

- Grief that is deemed *inappropriate*
- Is *not publicly acknowledged and mourned*
- **Seminal question of our times—Do Black Lives Matter??????**
  - Sandra Bland, Miriam Carey, Tanisha Anderson, Yvette Smith, Darnisha Harris, Malissa Williams…
  - Kalief Browder, Tamir Rice, Roshad McIntosh, Laquan McDonald….
- **Concern for the future: Has the silence, denial and trauma taken us too far?**
  - Desensitization
  - Black bodies are displayed with no consequence
Kenneth Doka

'We do a strange thing with grieving styles. I always say we disenfranchise instrumental grievers early in the process. "What's wrong with this person? Why isn't he crying?"

- Men who manage grief by working through it with projects, helping others, and so on is ignored.
- A man who emotes openly is criticized
- Doka points out that more emotive grievers are penalized
- “I dream of a world where grief is not gendered and where masculinity is not marked by solitary sorrow.”
WELL MEANING MEN: BREAKING OUT OF THE MAN BOX
ANTHONY PORTER (2006)

- Don’t cry or openly express emotions
- Do not show weakness or fear
- Demonstrate power and control
- Aggression-Dominance
- Protector
- Do not be “like a woman”
- Heterosexual
- Do not be “like a gay man”
- Tough-Athletic-Strength-Courage
- Makes decisions and Does not need help
- Women as property/objects/subjects

Mr. Clarence Porter,
Babysitter
IMPORTANCE OF TIME

- Self assessment of grief journey
- Client assessment of grief journey
- Historical, social and economic contexts
- Loss, grief and trauma impact memory
YOUR LIFE TIMELINE AND YOUR GRIEF
Choose a male African American client that you worked with in this timeframe. List their significant losses and the effects.
What themes emerged?
What if any influences emerged from the larger society?
Kevin Randall Carter’s Grief Timeline

Birth of Kevin Carter 2/6/1962

1962
1964
1966
1968
1970
1972
1974
1976
1978
1980
1981

11/22/1963 Assassination of John F. Kennedy, Jr
2/21/1965 Assassination of Malcolm X
6/5/1968 Assassination of Robert Kennedy
4/4/1968 Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr

10/1/1967 Started Head Start
10/1/1968 First Grade
5/1/1968 Granddaddy Dies in Nursing Home
2/28/1969 Cousin Allen Dies in Go-Kart Accident
1/1/1970 Neighbor Junior Towns Dies While Changing Tire
1/1/1974 Caregiver Clarence Porter Hit and Killed By Car
1/1/1975 Male Friend From School Drowned in Lake Orange
1/1/1976 Viewed Exhumation of Grandmother
1/1/1977 Male Family Friend Stabbed and Murdered By Wife
1/1/1978 Run Over By Tractor
2/6/1980 Turned 18

2/6/1962
10/1/1967
5/1/1968
10/1/1968
9/17/1970
1/1/1972
1/1/1974
1/1/1975
1/1/1976
1/1/1977
1/1/1978
2/6/1980
Tyran Dyeshon Hill’s Grief Timeline

- Birth of Tyran: 4/16/1992
- Great Grandmother Dies: 1998
- September 11: 9/11/2001
- Columbine Mass Shooting: 4/20/1999
- 4/16/2007
- Virginia Tech Mass Shooting
- 6/25/2009
- Death of Michael Jackson
- 5/4/2014
- Uncle Tommy Dies
- 5/5/2014
- Uncle Has Heart Attack
- 7/17/2014
- Eric Garner
- 8/9/2014
- Michael Brown
- 11/23/2014
- Tamir Rice
- 4/19/2015
- Freddie Gray
- 4/20/2017
- Aurora Mass Shooting
- 12/14/2012
- Sandy Hook Mass Shooting
- 12/14/2012
- Today

- 2018

- 2017
- 2013
- 2011
- 2009
- 2007
- 2005
- 2003
- 2001
- 1992

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TRAUMA AND GRIEF


Bereavement Overload: competency in coping can be overwhelmed and weakened in groups that have experienced accumulated losses and are still dealing with unresolved past traumas

• Grief accompanies violence

Complicated mourning: (1) sudden, unexpected, traumatic death, (2) lengthy illness, (3) loss of a child, (4) death seen as preventable, (5) angry, ambivalent relationship with deceased, (6) other losses, stressors or mental health problems and (7) lack of social support
THE DEATH GAP

  - Nationwide epidemic premature death for African American
  - 35 year difference in life expectancy between wealthiest and poorest and sickest American neighborhoods
  - Structural violence-racism, economic exploitation and discrimination
  - Disparities in health care, policing, schooling, housing and overall resource gaps
ACCESS TO SERVICES


- Kreitzman and McKnight

- 3 elements of the asset based community development model
  - It is asset based and therefore starts by assessing what is present, not what is absent
  - It is internally focused and depends upon ‘agenda building and problem solving capacities of local residents”
  - It is relationship driven and focused on building relationships within a community which may increase the likelihood that a community will be prepared to fight against unjust practices
HISTORICAL TRAUMA

- Recognizing the presence, reality and impact of trauma on certain populations
- Removal of physical spaces, places and identity thru racism, oppression, war, genocide, slavery etc.
- Accepting that for many the trauma continue...
- Following current research on the mental, physical and material transmissions across generations
GRIEF THEMES TRANSCEND RACE

Tha Native vs. Joyner Lucas

- Recognition and acknowledgement of a higher power controlling the different situation
- Suffering through depression and drug addiction as a coping mechanism
- Lack of acknowledgement and communication among immediate family members to address issues faced by the younger generation
- Anger and frustration with the unexpected loss and whirlwind of emotions created as a result
- Feeling judged by the perception and perspective of others as a result of insecurity
WRITING

• Lipscomb, A. (2016) Black male grief reactions to trauma.

FILMS

• Fruitvale Station (2014)
• The Whole Gritty City (2014)
• 4 Little Girls (1998)
• Homegoings (2013)
• Big Mama (2000)
• Creed (2016)
• I Am Not Your Negro (2017)
• The Kalief Browder Story (2017)
Self-Care is a priority and necessity - not a luxury - in the work that we do.