#### Welcome!

We are so glad you are here!

We will get started shortly. In the meantime, we invite you to intentionally enter this space.



Silence your cell phone



Stretch



Close the door



Take a few deep breaths



Close browser windows



Emotionally release your to-do list



Check your audio and video



Take a bio break











THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2022 2-3:30 PM ET

THE HEALTHY START TA & SUPPORT CENTER IS OPERATED BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH QUALITY (NICHQ). THIS PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY THE HEALTH RESOURCES AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (HRSA) OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS) UNDER GRANT NUMBER I UF5MC327500100 TITLED SUPPORTING HEALTHY START PERFORMANCE PROJECT.









## Agenda

Housekeeping

**Sharon Gutu** 

HEALTHY START TA & SUPPORT CENTER (TASC)

**Welcome & Introduction** 

**Kenn Harris** TASC

**Dr. Stacy Scott** 

The Impact of Infant Loss:
Recognizing the Uniqueness
of Black Grief

GLOBAL INFANT SAFE SIEEP (GISS)
CENTER

VP OF HEALTHY EQUITY INNOVATION, NICHQ

**Questions/Discussion** 

**Dr. Stacy Scott** 

Wrap-up

**Sharon Gutu** 





THIS SESSION IS BEING RECORDED.



ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE MUTED UPON ENTRY. WE ASK THAT YOU REMAIN MUTED TO LIMIT BACKGROUND NOISE.



PARTICIPANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO SHARE COMMENTS AND ASK QUESTIONS USING THE CHAT BOX.













#### Our Website





The Global Infant Safe Sleep Center supports vulnerable and marginalized global communities working to reduce Sudden Unexpected Infant Death.



## Baby 1<sup>st</sup> Network

## Baby 1st Network is committed to providing the tools necessary to empower and engage communities to keep their infants safe

#### **PROFESSIONALS**

A leading resource for information and training; a valued collaborator in community efforts to reduce infant mortality

- Education and Training
- Nurses and Social Workers
- Child Care Providers
- Clergy
- EMT/Paramedics
- Funeral Directors
- Facts and Figures

#### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

We strive to inform the community on the disparate statistics and the impact infant mortality has on the nation, state and community as a whole

- Community Health Forums
- Community Mini-Grants
- Community Resource Toolkit
- Infant Safe Sleep Advocacy Training

#### LOSS SUPPORT

The Baby 1st Network provides bereavement support services through volunteer contacts throughout the state, referral resources and a library of grief materials for families, free of charge



Community focused

Our Webpage

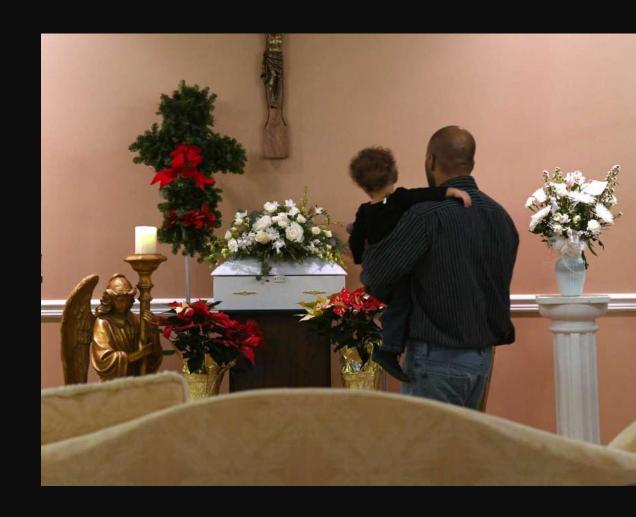


www.baby1stnetwork.org



## **Our Objectives for Today**

- Increase knowledge on the impact of systemic racism and its influence on how a person reacts to loss
- Increase knowledge on how to support communities of color that are disproportionately affected by infant death
- Increase knowledge on how some women of color deal with compounded loss and trauma

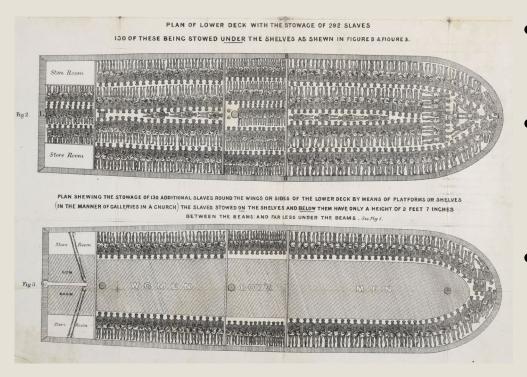








## A History of Inequities



- Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the largest movement of people in history
- From 1560 to 1850, between 10 and 15 million Africans were forcibly transported across the Atlantic
- But this figure grossly understates the actual number of Africans enslaved, killed, or displaced as a result of the slave trade

https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/05/30/death-by-racism-part-of-americas-dna-from-the-start









### A History of Inequities



- 403 years after the first enslaved person arrived on America's soil
- 157 years after Emancipation
- More than five decades after the Voting Rights Act's passage

#### A Disproportionate Number of Black Communities

- ✓ Still redlined into densely packed, crime-ridden urban areas
- ✓ Stuck in underfinanced, substandard schools
- ✓ Fall prey to silent environmental catastrophes: Lead hidden in pipes/walls, contaminated drinking water

https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/05/30/death-by-racism-part-of-americas-dna-from-the-start







### Black Communities are Impacted by Inequities

- Maternal Health
- Food Security
- Educational Attainment
- Health Care
- Justice System
- Voting Access
- Wealth building
- Homeownership
- Retirement
- Life Expectancy









#### Social Determinants of Health

- Income level
- Educational opportunities
- Occupation, employment status, and workplace safety
- Gender inequity
- Racial segregation
- Food insecurity and inaccessibility of nutritious food choices
- Access to housing and utility services

- Early childhood experiences and development
- Social support and community inclusivity
- Crime rates and exposure to violent behavior
- Availability of transportation
- Neighborhood conditions and physical environment
- Access to safe drinking water, clean air, and toxin-free environments
- Recreational and leisure opportunities



# Social Determinants of Grief





## Social Determinants of Grief

- Income level
- Educational opportunities
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- Recreational and leisure opportunities









## A Time of Grief









## **Defining Grief**

 Keen mental suffering or distress over affliction or loss; sharp sorrow; painful regret; a cause or occasion of keen distress or sorrow.

(www.dictionary.com)

 Deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement; a cause of such suffering (<a href="https://www.merriam-webster.com">https://www.merriam-webster.com</a>)









## Types of Grief

- Anticipatory grief
- Normal grief
- Delayed grief
- Complicated grief (traumatic or prolonged)
- Disenfranchised grief (ambiguous)
- Chronic grief
- Cumulative grief
- Masked grief
- Distorted grief



- Exaggerated grief
- Inhibited grief
- Secondary losses in grief
- Collective grief
- Abbreviated grief
- Absent grief



## Black Grief









## Why is Black Grief so Evasive?

"One way to think about it is that many who write about grief may assume that African American grief is no different from that of Euro-American grief."

"African American grief may be aversive for some whites to study, because understanding African American grief could draw whites into understanding the pain and the premature deaths caused by white oppression and indifference to that oppression."

Rosenblatt, Paul C., Wallace, Beverly R, African American Grief, (2005). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group













## Black Grief: A Direct Impact of Racism

According to Global Health Professor Dr. Roberta K. Timothy

"The cyclical realities of the impact of racism, anti-Black racism, and other forms of intersectional violence on our health make breathing seem like a luxury at times."

"Grief is a direct result of racism and intersectional violence, and it affects us physically, emotionally, financially, spiritually, transnationally, and trans-generationally. More importantly, not being able to fully engage in our grief is a direct outcome of chronic experiences of racist violence."

 $\underline{https://theconversation.com/grief-is-a-direct-impact-of-racism-eight-ways-to-support-yourself-91750}$ 









## Understanding Black Grief

- Taking a long look at the historical and contemporary experience around the issue of death
- Recognizing a troubling fact:

There's very little research on Black grief and its connection to racism and the social injustices



## **Historical Perspective**

**1619** Slavery

1865

**Emancipation** 

1870

Jim Crow Laws/ Segregation Civil Rights Era

1960s

"African Americans have experienced compounded loss and trauma beginning with slavery in this country 400 years ago... and may play a significant role in how some cope with further loss and trauma."

(Pinderhughes, 2004)

#### 1970 to present

- Racism (Individual/Systems)
- Implicit/Explicit Bias
- Inequities in Health Care
- High Infant Mortality Rates
- High Prematurity Rates
- High Maternal Morbidity.

"...present-day realities of high rates of poverty, single parent families, incarceration, educational disadvantage, and health disparities have been part of the experience of African Americans in the United States."

Boyden, J. Y., Kavanaugh, K., Issel, L. M., Eldeirawi, K., & Meert, K. L. (2014). Experiences of african american parents following perinatal or pediatric death: a literature review. *Death studies*, *38*(6-10), 374–380. https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2013.766656



#### The Atlantic

IDEAS

#### The Relentlessness of Black Grief

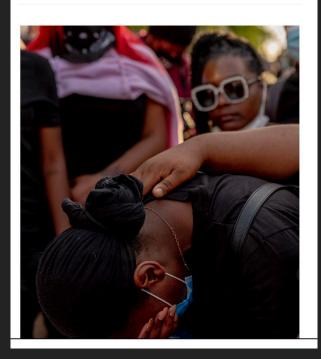
We are in the middle of a Black bereavement crisis, and we do not have the privilege or time to grieve.

By Marissa Evans

SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

SHARE V

About the author: Marissa Evans is a journalist with the Star Tribune in Minneapolis.



- The grief we feel today also echoes back through time, to our ancestors, enslaved people who mourned long before I existed, and to those who endured the indignities of the Jim Crow era.
- Our traumas are handed down through the generations and intensify with each new death and realization that American systems were never designed to work in our favor. We know, too, what the inequities mean for our future.
- Our pain comes not just from those we've already lost, but from those, we stand to lose over time. A specific sadness emerges when you realize that someone may be denied the chance to be their ancestors' wildest dreams.

Marissa Evans



#### The Atlantic

IDEAS

#### The Relentlessness of Black Grief

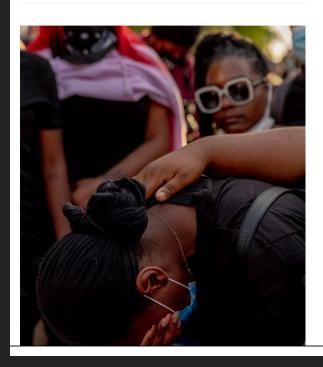
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SEPTEMBER 27, 202

SHARE >

About the author: Marissa Evans is a journalist with the Star Tribune in Minneapolis.



- We've had to overcome insurmountable losses for the sake of self-preservation. And while resiliency has long been crucial to our emotional survival, enduring is not easy.
- Black stress and trauma are difficult to acknowledge, even to ourselves.
- Only one in three Black people who need mental-health care finds help, according to the American Psychiatric Association. And when we do, we receive poorer quality of care and lack access to culturally competent practitioners. We retreat into ourselves, into our community, and we take comfort in not having to explain our grief—the dreams deferred, the lost potential of Black legends—to anyone on the outside.

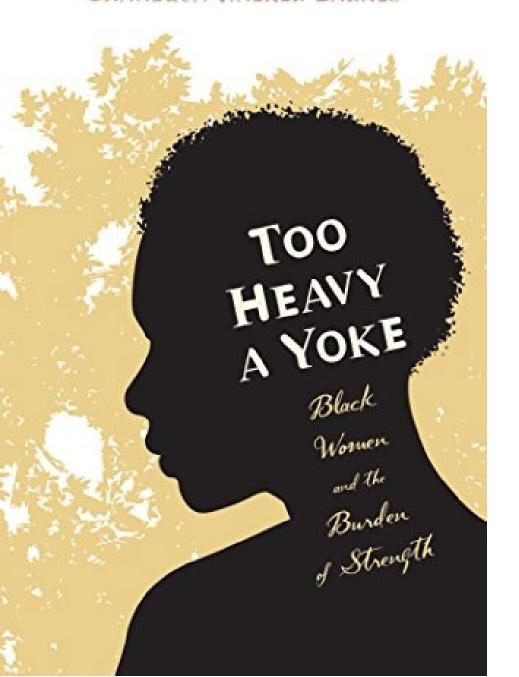
Marissa Evans



## I've Been Down So Long That Down Don't Bother Me



#### CHANEQUA WALKER-BARNES



## The Myth of Strength

"While both Black men's and Black women's identities have been bound by cultural mandates to be strong, the manifestation of strength that has become normative for Black women is uniquely racialized and gendered."

"Strong is a racial-gender codeword. It is the verbal and mental shorthand for the three core features of the **StrongBlackWoman** – caregiving, independence, and emotional strength/regulation"

Walker-Barnes, Chanequa, Too Heavy A Yoke: Black Women and the burden of strength, Eugene, Cascades Books (2014)







## Strong and Dangerous

"Whereas being a Black woman who is strong may be commendable, being a StrongBlackWoman may be dangerous. The mythological strength of Black women often masks the very real vulnerabilities of their lives. There is a largely ignored health crisis confronting Black women in America."

"During and since slavery, the "strength" of Black women has been a backhanded compliment, a convenient rationalization for the oppressive circumstances under which Black women lived and labored."

Walker-Barnes, C, 2014



## Who are these StrongBlackWomen?

- Diverse backgrounds
- All ages
- Students from HBCUs to Ivy League schools
- Minimum wage workers who struggle to make ends meet
- Corporate employees
- Management level professionals
- Married, single, with or without children

Despite the great social-economic diversity, they are similar in many respects. Regardless of their station in life, each has a high sense of responsibility and consequently serves as a load bearer.

Walker-Barnes, C, 2014



#### Characteristics of a StrongBlackWoman

- Constantly extends herself to others
- Driven by a deeply ingrained desire to be seen as helpful and caring
- Incapable of saying no to requests without experiencing feelings of guilt and worthlessness
- Incapable of asking for "help" as she is saying no
- Since childhood, she has been taught that a good black woman is independent, a giver of help, including emotional, financial, or instrumental support
- Dealing with Stressful Life Events
- Racism
- Receiving Unfair Treatment
- Experiencing other's serious illnesses or untimely deaths







#### Health Consequences of Grief

#### Two different perspectives:

 One study found no association between level of grief and perception of general health (Patterson, 2000), which the researcher attributed to the women defining health solely within the context of physical symptoms and functioning.

Boyden et al.

 Paradoxically, in another study, the better mothers perceived their health to be, the higher their level of depression (Page Edwards, 1998), which the researcher interpreted as because African Americans may view mental illness as a sign of weakness, not as a part of overall health. Consequently, many denied needing professional support. (Page Edwards, 1998)







#### **Infant Mortality**



#### **Infant Death Rates Vary by Race** Mortality rate by age of infant's death, 2017 Less than 7 days 7-27 days 28 days-under 1 year Overall White Black 5.85 3.82 Asian Hispanic American Indian/Alaska 3.91 4.41 Native The infant mortality rate measures the number of deaths per 1,000 live births Chart: Gaby Galvin for USN&WR • Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention • Get the data Created with Datawrapper









To examine the experience of low-income, African American parents surrounding perinatal loss and to describe how other life stressors influenced the parents' responses and caring needs.

> Kavanaugh, K, Hershberger, P,. Perinatal loss in low-income African American parents. Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing, 2005; 34(5):595-605.10.1177/2884217505280000







#### Perinatal Loss in Low-Income African American Parents

Karen Kavanaugh and Patricia Hershberger **Objective:** To examine the experience of low-income, African American parents surrounding perinatal loss and to describe how other life stressors influenced the parents' responses and caring needs.

**Design:** Descriptive, using a phenomenological approach.

**Setting:** All data were collected in person. Interviews were held in parents' homes or, at the request of three parents, in an office in the university between 5 and 21 weeks after the loss.

**Participants:** A total of 23 parents (17 mothers and 6 of their partners) were interviewed after a perinatal loss (16 weeks gestation or later) or a neonatal death (first 28 days of life). Follow-up interviews were held with 21 of these parents.

**Results:** Four themes were revealed: (a) recognizing problems and responding to the loss, (b) dealing with stressful life events, (c) creating and cherishing memories of the baby, and (d) living with the loss.

**Conclusions:** The results of this study reveal experiences not previously reported and provide initial insight on the loss experience in this group of parents. Health care professionals should be aware of the presence of additional stressful events that parents may be experiencing and intervene appropriately to provide culturally competent care in a sensitive manner.

Kavanaugh, K, Hershberger, P,. Perinatal loss in low-income African American parents. Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing, 2005; 34(5):595-605.10.1177/2884217505280000



# Recognizing Problems and Responding to the Loss

- Misreading symptoms of pregnancy complications.
  - One father said, "Not even with the water being broken, I guess for a week prior, you know, we thought the baby was just sitting on her bladder and that she had no control of that, but, you know, that's the kind of stuff that comes with being first-time parents and really not knowing what happens."
- Maintaining hope during medical treatment.
  - One mother recalled, "I held her, and I kissed her, and I was just praying for a miracle. 'Please open your eyes. Please open your eyes.'"
- Feeling intense emotions after the death.
  - Both mothers and fathers recognized the "special attention" that
    most nurses gave them regarding their physical, emotional, and
    spiritual needs, and they found this attention very helpful. One
    mother shared that she was moved when she found out that one
    physician came in from home to tell her of her baby's death.
  - Several mothers also described themselves as being very irritable and "ready to fight" with others, especially with those health care professionals whom mothers perceived as uncaring.
  - One mother recalled how she felt when she heard of her baby's in-utero death. She said, "Its like my heart stopped and I kept saying, 'I killed my baby. I killed my baby.'" These mothers questioned whether they should have sought health care in a timelier manner.

Kavanaugh, K, Hershberger, P,. Perinatal loss in low-income African American parents. Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing, 2005; 34(5):595-605.10.1177/2884217505280000







#### Dealing With Stressful Life Events

- Feeling abandoned or unsupported.
- Suffering economic hardship.
- Experiencing others' serious illnesses or untimely deaths.
- Receiving unfair treatment.

Kavanaugh, K, Hershberger, P,. Perinatal loss in low-income African American parents. Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing, 2005; 34(5):595-605.10.1177/2884217505280000



## Feeling Abandoned or Unsupported

- Some mothers described feelings of abandonment or not being supported by family, which caused them stress. For several mothers, arguing with their family members was so intense that the mothers relocated to other housing.
- Several other mothers felt abandoned by their own parents who had been separated from them because of the parents' substance abuse or incarceration. As a result, their own parents were not there for them during the pregnancy.



#### Suffering Economic Hardship

- Parents described economic factors that caused them stress; for mothers, the stress was especially prevalent during their pregnancy.
- Many mothers expressed concerns about their housing or living arrangements, either because they were unhappily living in another relative's home, or they were concerned about the safety of their neighborhood.
- Many parents also described the stress of either not having a job or being employed under adverse working conditions, which the mothers felt contributed to their poor pregnancy outcome.



#### Suffering economic hardship

#### *Mom said:*

"I was still stressed out. I wasn't getting any rest. It was eight long laboring hours. When I would go to the clinic, they were like you are doing too much. You have to stop. You aren't giving the baby enough rest.... I didn't really say to them what I was really going through, I had to have this job. It was the only way to support the kids and keep eating. ... The money I was getting from public aid was barely enough just to pay the rent... So it would be two or three days I went without eating, just drinking water and eating crackers. One of them days I felt the baby move. I said, "Oh, you still surviving in there?"



## Receiving Unfair Treatment

- Parents perceived they received unfair medical treatment
- One mother reported unfair treatment by a funeral director who buried her son sooner than she was told and without her presence
- According to the mother, the funeral director said that he did not know she wanted to be present for the burial.



#### Receiving unfair treatment

#### Mom said:

"I was mad with them because they buried my son without me being there .... How did he not know that I wanted to go.... My heart just dropped. ... Like I didn't even get a chance to say goodbye to him."



#### Receiving unfair treatment

One mother whose baby died after being in the neonatal intensive care unit said:

"I feel they didn't do the best that they could. I think it was because of financial reasons. I was on public aid and so much that certain doctors will only do so much for people on a medical card. ... But if I had a better insurance, they would have put their heart and soul into it and I feel they didn't."



#### Receiving unfair treatment

One father said:

"I know she (his wife) was not in a private room and was not a VIP patient, but, to me she was a VIP patient." This father also perceived unfair treatment with regards to paternity establishment. He shared that his name did not appear on his son's birth certificate even though he provided the requested documentation that he was married to the mother of his son."



# Experiencing Other's Serious Illness or Untimely Deaths

- Many mothers had close relatives who were seriously ill and/or hospitalized during their pregnancy
- Parents experienced deaths of other close family members or friends
- Also included untimely deaths of infants, nieces and nephews, siblings, parents, grandparents, and young male cousins or friends
- One father, a substitute high school teacher, experienced the deaths of three students in one year. Even if the death had not been recent, the current loss triggered painful memories of the other deaths



# Creating and Cherishing Memories of Their Baby

Parents created memories of their infant by:

- Being physically close
- Observing family resemblances
- Collecting keepsakes of their infant
- Making decisions on infant burial, including a memorial or prayer service

Kavanaugh, K, Hershberger, P,. Perinatal loss in low-income African American parents. Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing, 2005; 34(5):595-605.10.1177/2884217505280000



#### Being with their Infant

#### One mother recalled:

"And I held him until about four hours. I said I loved him. I don't want him to go, but God knows best. Maybe I'm struggling so much that it would be just another burden and He knows best. Well I was just holding him and crying. I said, somewhere you get a chance to see your grandma. I tell him when you get there when you get old enough you think about me."



### Living with the Loss

Kavanaugh, K, Hershberger, P,. Perinatal loss in low-income African American parents. Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing, 2005; 34(5):595-605.10.1177/2884217505280000

- Encountering difficult situations.
  - Holidays, baby showers, completing job applications (Dads)
- Relying on their spirituality.
  - One mother said, "If I hadn't started back praying and had the faith and keeping the faith, I don't think I would have been able to do it."
- Seeking diversions and support.
  - Parents sought support from family and friends and described a number of ways that family and friends supported them.
- Making sense of the loss.
  - Many mothers could not understand why the loss occurred, especially because they believed they had done everything to ensure a healthy pregnancy and had known others who abused drugs and had healthy babies.









## Contemplating Future Pregnancies

Kavanaugh, K, Hershberger, P,. Perinatal loss in low-income African American parents. Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing, 2005; 34(5):595-605.10.1177/2884217505280000

- Parents talked about their plans for a future pregnancy, and several mothers shared that they were possibly pregnant at the time of the second interview.
- Most parents planned on a future pregnancy, yet those with more than one perinatal loss were very reluctant to plan for another pregnancy.
- Planning for a subsequent pregnancy included delaying pregnancy until there was less stress in their lives and planning on having one consistent primary care provider.



#### Contemplating future pregnancies

One father explained how a healthy subsequent pregnancy would be part of the healing.

"And once it is all right, that will even take away some of the sorrow and pain from the previous times."



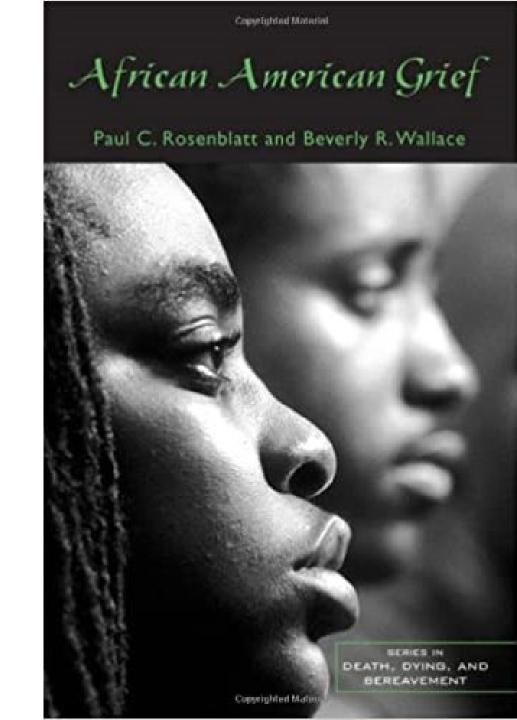
How to help bereaved African Americans



### Understanding African American Grief

- African American Grief is and not like white grief
- Cultural Grief and the Pileup of Losses
- Grief Therapy/Support for African Americans
- African American Diversity
- Revising How We Think about Grief

Rosenblatt, Paul C., Wallace, Beverly R, African American Grief, (2005). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group



## African American grief is and is not like white grief

- Be supportive and helpful to bereaved African American women and their families
- Be attuned to and knowledgeable about racism in the United States
- Become broadly familiar with and knowledgeable about African American culture



#### Cultural Grief and the Pileup of Losses

Explore the concept of cultural grief which goes beyond death, recognizing and addressing both
past and present losses that may contribute to the grieving process.

Understand African Americans may be impacted by losses related to centuries of racism, discrimination, and oppression.



#### **Grief Therapy/Support for African Americans**

- Counselors and support group facilitators need to be well grounded in dealing with racism and discrimination in African American lives
- Not being able to deal with sensitive issues could be unhelpful or even hurtful to grieving African Americans
- It is important to be able to move beyond the rudimentary level in dealing with issues such as race, class, racism, discrimination, and related matters
- It could mean having to confront one's own complicity in the racial system, and the way one benefits from that system



#### **African-American Diversity**

• Knowledgeable support of African Americans who are grieving will always require attention to the uniqueness of the individual, situation, and community.

Remember: African Americans differ in social class, religion, spirituality, cultural identification, or other ways.



#### Revising How We Think about Grief

• It is important that our country and communities be understood not as a homogenous society but a mixture of different cultures, with many different ways of understanding and dealing with dying, death, and grief.

We must not assume that everyone shares a common culture when it comes to loss.



#### **Always Remember**

One person's grief does not invalidate another person's grief.

All loss is relevant and impactful.





#### The Collective Repast

Grieve, Fellowship, Celebrate, Heal

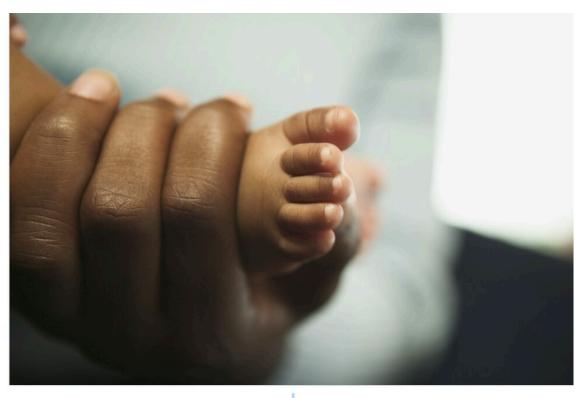
#### **Coming Back Soon**



- In the Black Community, the repast is a tradition, a time when family, friends, and close acquaintances sit down for a meal and conversation -- not of the death of a loved one, but of their life journey and a future full of faith and hope for the living.
- This virtual conversation includes everyday people, public health professionals, and academics -- all talking about their observations and experiences in the cycle of Black Grief.

### Thank You!!!! www.baby1stnetwork.org sscott@baby1stnetwork.org





The CDC calls the infant mortality rate "an important marker of the overall health of a society." [6] (GETTY IMAGES)









#### Evaluation

YOUR FEEDBACK IS EXTREMELY VALUABLE AND WILL HELP ENSURE FUTURE TRAININGS ADDRESS YOUR SUPPORT NEEDS!











