

KOFI SERVICES

CULTURALLY INFORMED
SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH:
A 23 YEAR ARCHIVE AND PERSPECTIVE ON
HONORING THE LIVES OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS AND
FAMILIES IN SAINT PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2015

Outline of our time together

- **Introductions:** Kofi History and program design (5 minutes)
- Developing **counter-narratives** that promote cultural resiliency (10 minutes)
- **Culturally affirming and informed strategies** that strengthen our effectiveness (10 minutes)
- **Q&A** (5 minutes)



“As an educator in a system of oppression, you are either a revolutionary or an oppressor.” —Lerone Bennett, Jr.

Kofi Services: History & Program Design

□ History

- ▣ Program Origins; Context: racial disparities, 1990's MN

□ Current Program Design

- ▣ Psychotherapy by licensed (or licensure-track) clinicians
 - Individual, family or group
- ▣ Culturally- and trauma-informed consultation with school staff

□ Effectiveness

- ▣ 95-100% of parents feel their cultural background was respected throughout service
- ▣ For more information (i.e. evaluation results), please e-mail rudy.rousseau@wilder.org

Mission of Kofi Services



- Honoring Ancestral Strength: We provide culturally-affirming, holistic therapeutic services and consultation for children and families in school, home, and community.

Kofi's Core Values

- Cultural Affirmation and Awareness
 - We infuse culturally rich material into our services and events.
 - We consistently acknowledge how history affects the present and integrate themes of social justice into our practice.
 - We increase awareness of cultural strengths through consultation, modeling, and reflection.

- Excellence in Mental Health
 - We deliver mental health services with an emphasis on attachment, self-regulation, trauma-informed, person-centered, culturally affirming, and strength-based therapy.
 - We model, teach, and coach healthy ways of being with children and families.
 - We embrace innovative approaches to deliver high quality care through continual professional development.

- Strong, Meaningful Relationships
 - We invest in building relationships with school staff and other stakeholders through education and reflective consultation.
 - We model healthy, safe relationships and different ways of being to increase positive community connections.
 - We acknowledge that positive social connections are life-sustaining.

Counter-Narratives

That celebrate and promote resiliency in the African American community

Definitions

- **Narratives:**
 - ▣ Stories, messages, tools for meaning-making
 - ▣ “We tell ourselves stories in order to live.” –Joan Didion
 - ▣ **Stories are the threads of our lives and weave together to form the fabric of human cultures.**



Definitions (continued)

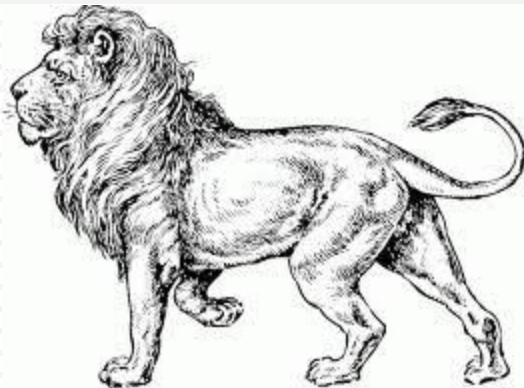
- **Master Narrative:** The Master Narrative is generally described as the colonially-derived story of events, emphasizing European perspectives.
- Identifying Master Narratives:
 - ▣ What are some common Master Narratives about African American youth?

Definitions (continued)

- **Counter-Narrative:** A narrative that goes against another narrative...an argument that disputes a commonly held belief.
 - ▣ The Counter Narrative offers accounts of history from diverse perspectives, with a **critical examination** of the widely accepted, colonially-derived story.
 - ▣ Developing counter-narratives → **process of de-colonizing**

“Until the story of the hunt is told
by the lion,

*the tale of the hunt will
always glorify the hunter.”*



–African Proverb

Frameworks for Developing Counter-Narratives: Historical Trauma

- Definition: Historical trauma is **cumulative emotional and psychological wounding** over the lifespan and **across generations**, emanating from **massive group trauma**.

(Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart, <http://www.historicaltrauma.com/>)

- U of MN, CFYC, **“What is Historical Trauma?”**:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWmK314NVrs&list=PLyfdph9z-mJxSOI_qbBhe_LurrCQ6VQvQ&index=1

Frameworks for Developing Counter-Narratives: Cultural Resiliency Skills

- Dr. JuanCarlos Arauz, E3
 - One cannot have Educational Excellence without Equity.
 - CULTURAL RESILIENCY SKILLS:
 - Innovation
 - Adaptability
 - Cross-cultural communication
 - Critical Analysis
 - Teamwork
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBEI6ilDv0&list=PLZV3AWH7cqQhk1zkzDjCjKSjAgENd_Nc



Counter-Narratives: making new meaning

□ Samples:

□ Oppositional → _____

□ “Can’t speak proper English” → _____

□ Hostile/abusive parent → _____

Master Narrative

□ Oppositional



"To be a Negro in this country
and to be relatively conscious
is to be in a rage
almost all the time."

~James Baldwin

Deborah Cooper/AskHeartBeat.Com

Counter-Narrative

□ Oppositional → RIGHTEOUSLY
RAGEFUL

Master Narrative

□ “Doesn’t speak proper English”

- Steven Willis, “Ebonics 101”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CB8pBiUavtg>

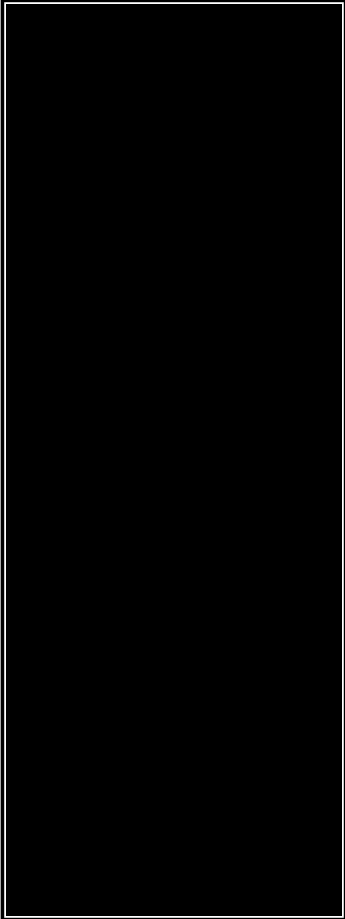


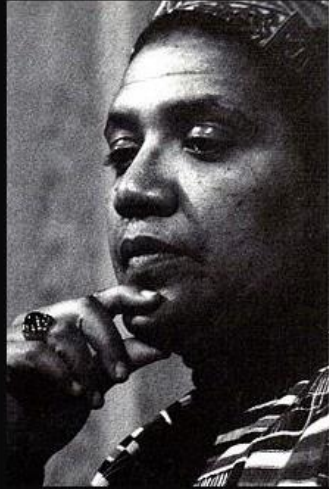
Counter-Narrative

□ “Doesn’t speak proper English” → **BILINGUAL**

Master Narrative

□ Hostile / Abusive parent





Your silence will not protect you.
(Audre Lorde)

izquotes.com

Counter-Narrative

- Hostile/abusive parent →
PROTECTING THEIR CHILD

Culturally-Affirming and Informed Strategies

“In an African-centered reality, we wish to advance the notion that therapists are really healers. Healers are individuals who participate with clients, not simply direct and control them. Healers help clients confront their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual debilitations.”

Parham T. A., Parham T. A.,; Parham W. D.. (2002). Understanding African American mental health. In Parham T. A. (Ed.), Counseling persons of African descent (pp. 25-37). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

African-Centered Psychology

- “The association of Black Psychologists defines African-centered psychology as:
 - ▣ ‘the dynamic manifestation of the unifying African principles, values and traditions. It is the self-conscious “centering” of psychological analysis and applications in African reality, culture and epistemology. African-Centered Psychology examines the process that allows for the illumination and liberation of the spirit. Relying on the principles of harmony within the universe as a natural order of existence, African-centered Psychology recognizes: the Spirit that permeates everything that is; the value that the collective is the most salient element of existence; and the idea that communal self-knowledge is the key to mental health.’ (Parham, White, & Ajamu, 1999, p. 95)”



(Grills, C. (2002). African-centered psychology: Basic principles. In T. Parham (Ed.), *Counseling persons of African descent: Raising the bar of practitioner competence*. (pp. 10-24))

African-Centered Psychology

- 5 Essential Features of African-centered psychology
 - ▣ 1.) Self-definition
 - ▣ 2.) Spirit
 - ▣ 3.) Nature
 - ▣ 4.) Metaphysical interconnectedness
 - ▣ 5.) Communal order and self-knowledge



(Grills, C. (2002). African-centered psychology: Basic principles. In T. Parham (Ed.), *Counseling persons of African descent: Raising the bar of practitioner competence*. (pp. 10-25))

Our Culturally Affirming Practices

- In our work within ourselves:
 - ▣ We are **mindful to not commit** Microaggressions
 - ▣ We create a **safe space** for children and families to talk about **lived experience** of Microaggressions.

- ▣ Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, N.J: Wiley.

Our Culturally Affirming Practices

- In our work with individuals:
 - We incorporate cultural strengths into regulation, integrating brain research with righteous indignation:



- *“You should be angry. You must not be bitter. Bitterness is like cancer. It eats upon the host. It doesn’t do anything to the object of its displeasure. So **use that anger.** You write it. You paint it. You dance it. You march it. You vote it. You do everything about it. You talk it. **Never stop talking it.**” –Maya Angelou*

Our Culturally Affirming Practices

- In our work with families:

- ▣ We deliver Family Therapy that:

- Is Nonjudgmental
 - Addresses Parenting styles



- ▣ We also provide some case management.

- ▣ Epstein, R.A., Fennesbeck, C., Potter, S., Rizzone, K.H., & McPheeters, M. (2015) Psychosocial Interventions for Child Disruptive Behaviors: A Meta-analysis. *Pediatrics*. 2015 Oct 19. pii: peds.2015-2577

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2015/10/13/peds.2015-2577.abstract>

Our Culturally Affirming Practices

- In our work with systems:
 - We consult with school staff to:
 - Inform on how trauma affects learning
 - Reinforce the need for relationships with kids and parents
 - Shine light on and counter Master narratives



Our Culturally Affirming Practices: RITES OF PASSAGE

- In our work with groups:
 - We start with identifying Master Narratives → Countering them with **healthy messages about who we are as a people.**
 - Teach HISTORY.
 - Involve FAMILIES.
 - Use ARTS. (i.e. regulation through drumming)
 - Promote self-awareness. (i.e. I Am From Poem)
 - Integrate SOCIAL JUSTICE. (i.e. inviting community activist)
 - Engage in SERVICE. (i.e. reading to younger children; packing food)

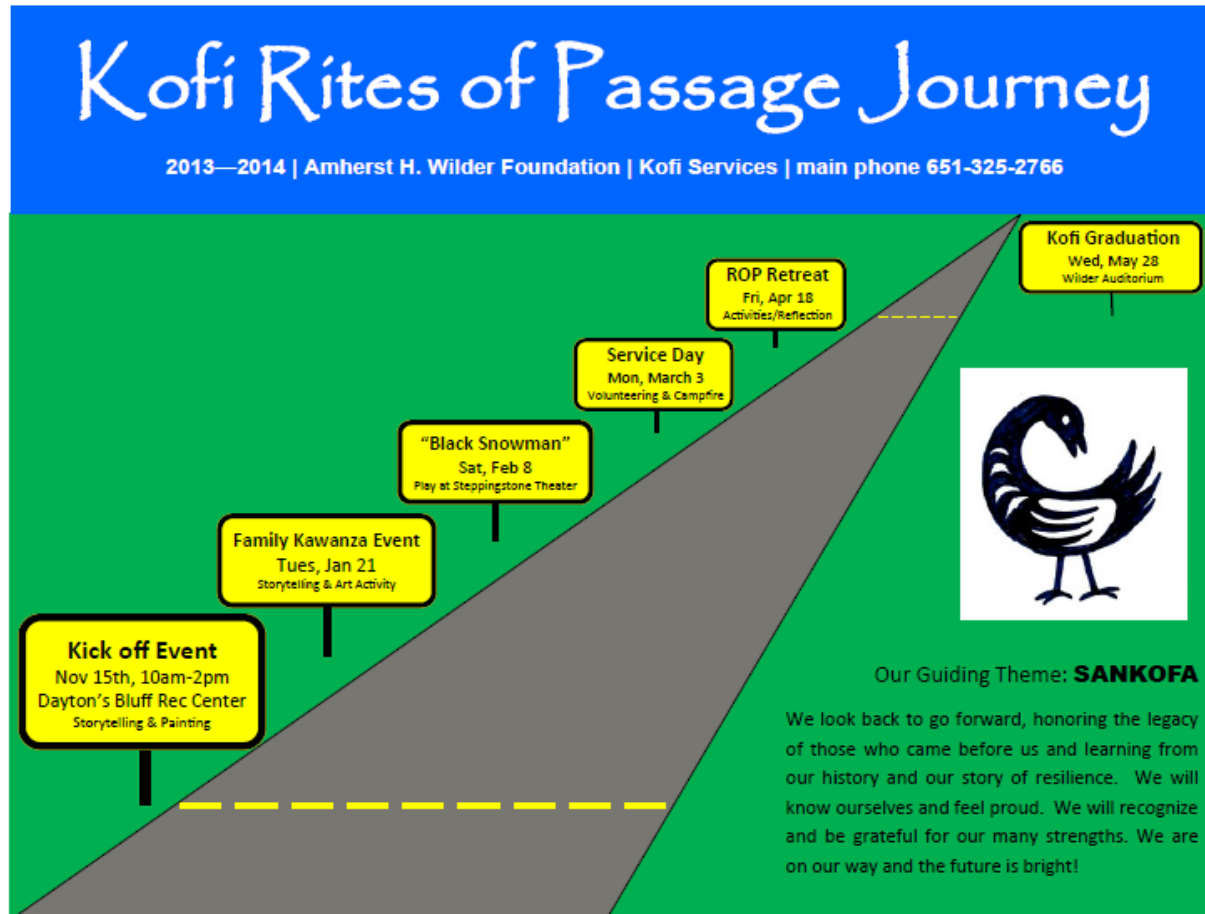


rites of passage

- We utilize African-centered (Kwanzaa) principles. Nguzo Saba.
 - ▣ Umoja (Unity)
 - ▣ Kujichagulia (Self-determination)
 - ▣ Ujima (Collective work and responsibility)
 - ▣ Ujamaa (Cooperative economics)
 - ▣ Nia (Purpose)
 - ▣ Kuumba (Creativity)
 - ▣ Imani (Faith)



rites of passage



rites of passage

I Am From Poem

I come from hearing screaming every day from my parents as a baby.

I come from a family that likes FUN and doing fun things together.

I come from a family that loves to be silly.

I come from a family that always cares about me no matter what I do, even when I'm bad.

I come from a family with anxiety.

I come from giving life to my auntie in Chicago.

I come from a family that loves to watch me play sports.

I come from dancing to the beat of my mom's stereo.

I come from being short and being made fun of.

I come from horrible bad behavior.

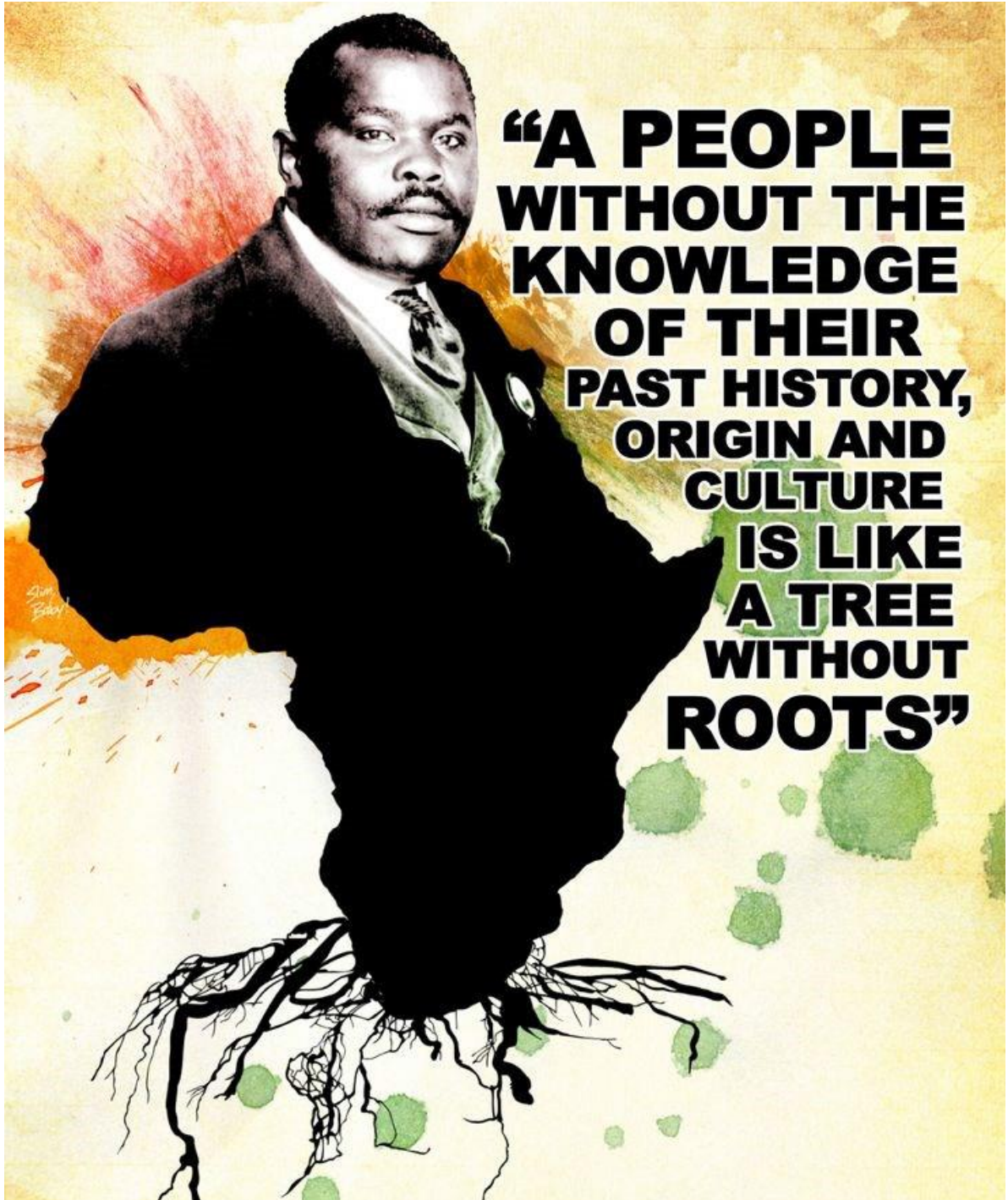
I come from meeting my Kofi brothers and sisters and overcoming my struggles.

I overcame my struggles by seeing Ms. Alma and working on my self control.

I come from Kofi where I explored my African American history.

I come from making beats on the table to keep myself going.

In the future I will play basketball and football and I will always be a team player.



**“A PEOPLE
WITHOUT THE
KNOWLEDGE
OF THEIR
PAST HISTORY,
ORIGIN AND
CULTURE
IS LIKE
A TREE
WITHOUT
ROOTS”**