

The Role of Systemic Therapists in addressing Anti- Black Racism in Schools

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Welcome



Agenda

Defining	Anti-Blackness
Unpacking	Racial discrimination in schools and beyond
Discussing	The mental health of Black Youth
Identifying	Strategies for intervention

Learning Objectives

1. Participants will be able to define anti-Black racism and identify its impact on the mental health of Black students in the United States.
2. Participants will be able to describe 1-2 specific mental health challenges facing Black students and their families
3. Participants will be able to develop 1 -2 strategies to intervene with Black students who experience the effects of anti-Black racism in schools

Anti-Blackness



Cultural Paradigm

Cultural paradigms are the cultural role-concepts which we use to negotiate our notion of self and our relationships with others in our everyday lives

Culture is the multitude of habits that control the behavior and motivation of the people in a particular group

Key
Characteristics
of Cultural
Paradigms

Crucial

Mundane

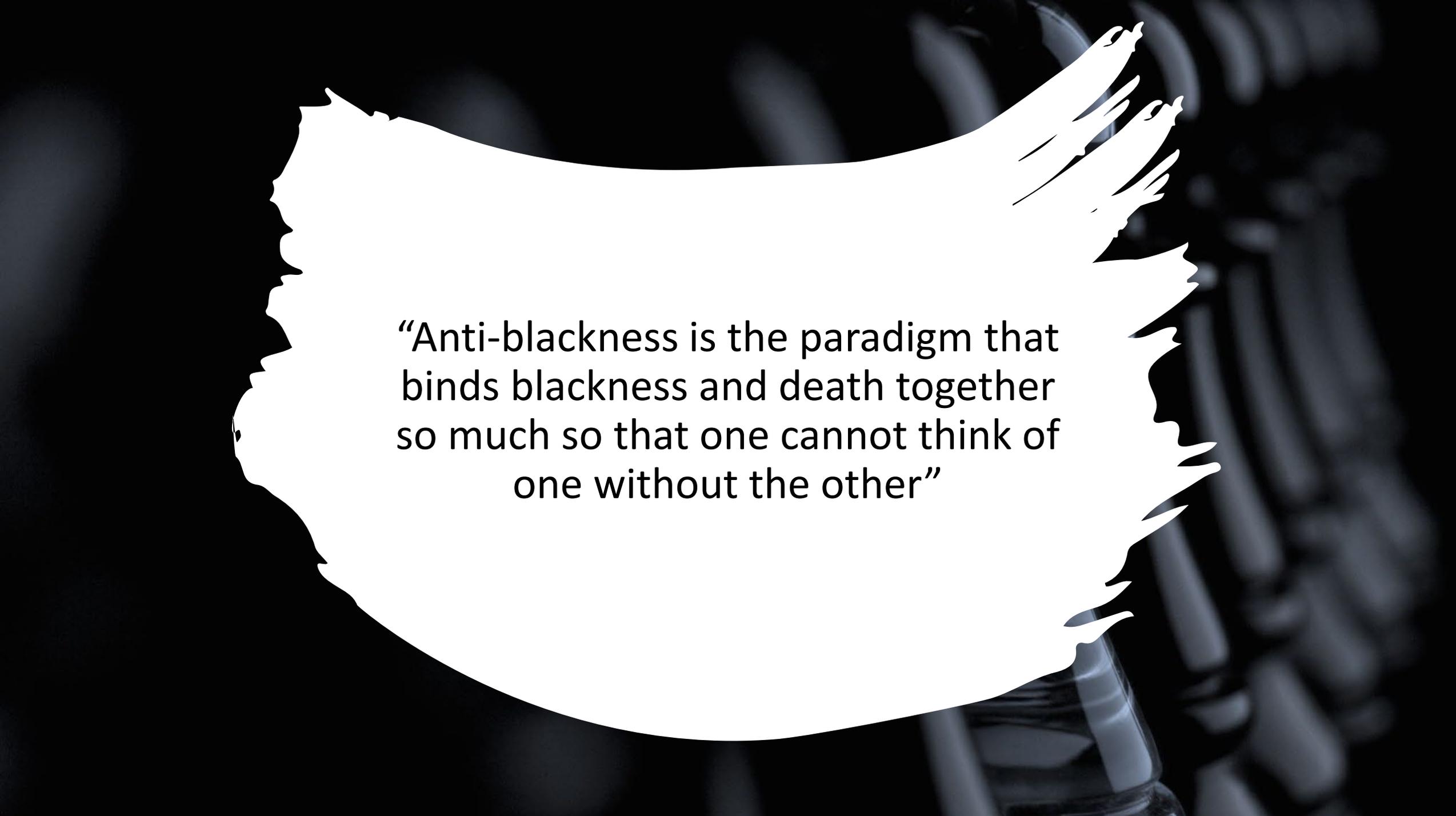
Unavoidable

Examples of Cultural Paradigms

National
Holidays

Responses to
Hot Weather

Diets and
Responses to
Health Concerns

A white, torn-edge paper shape is centered on a black background. The paper has irregular, jagged edges, particularly on the right side. In the background, behind the paper, there is a blurred image of a person's hands, possibly holding a glass or a similar object. The text is printed in a clean, black, sans-serif font on the white paper.

“Anti-blackness is the paradigm that binds blackness and death together so much so that one cannot think of one without the other”

Riding with Death, Jean-Michel Basquiat, 1988



Social death is the condition under which some people can be condemned to civil death, while the rest of us fail to care or even to notice.

Social death

1. Gratuitous Violence: Violence that is not contingent upon some transgression or crime
2. Natal Alienation: The loss of all formal, legally enforceable ties of “blood,” and from any attachment to groups or localities
3. General Dishonor: The state of being disgraced or dishonored before any thought or action is considered

Key Takeaways

1. Anti-Blackness goes beyond individual or corporate racism
2. Anti-Blackness is a paradigm
3. Anti-Blackness is rooted in culture
4. Anti-Blackness informs our worldview and meaning making
5. Anti-Blackness equates Blackness to death – denies the humanity of Black lives

Racial discrimination in schools and beyond

Prevalence of Racial Discrimination in Schools*

Approximately one third (35.6%) of U.S. high school students report perceived racism

Perceived racism was highest among Asian (63.9%), Black (55.2%), and multiracial students (54.5%)

*Mpofu et. al (2022). Perceived racism and demographic, mental health, and behavioral characteristics among high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic—Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey, United States, January–June 2021. *MMWR supplements*, 71(3), 22.

Disparities in School Discipline

- A growing body of research shows that Black, Hispanic, and students whose parent's incomes are below the federal poverty threshold are disciplined more often and more severely than their white peers or those with higher socioeconomic status.
- This has been demonstrated across K-12 settings

Disparities in School Discipline

- A recent study* explored if these disciplinary differences could occur as early as preschool
- Disruptive Behavior Diagnostic Observation Schedule
- Results
 - Black/Hispanic poor and Black non poor groups had significantly more teacher-identified behavioral problems than children in the White/Hispanic non poor group
 - The observation tool showed no difference in children's objective disruptive behavior

*Sabol et al. (2021). A window into racial and socioeconomic status disparities in preschool disciplinary action using developmental methodology

Disparities in School Discipline

- Teacher identified behavioral problems
- Discipline practices or strategies
- Involvement of school policing
- Involvement with juvenile justice system
- Engagement with families and communities

Today's Students Experience...

Prison-Like Environments

- SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS
- POLICE DOGS
- ARMED GUARDS
- SCHOOL AND LOCAL POLICE ON CAMPUS
- METAL DETECTORS
- STRIP SEARCHES
- PHYSICALLY UNINVITING BUILDINGS

Harsh School Discipline

- OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS
- EXPULSIONS
- TRANSFERS TO ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS
- ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES

Youth of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities are punished **more often** and **more harshly** than their peers for the same misbehavior.



Under Investment

- CUTBACKS ON COUNSELORS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES
- UNDERFUNDED AND UNDER-RESOURCED SCHOOLS

Pressures & Uncertainty

- SCHOOL CLOSURES
- PRIVATIZATION
- HIGH-STAKES TESTING PRESSURES ON STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS
- IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT BIAS





Disparities in Family/Parent Engagement

- Research shows that family involvement in schools is associated with better academic and social outcomes for students especially lower income students
- For Black Youth we often see a mistrust of the educational institution
- Differences in resource investment for Black youth

Expectation



VS

unfulfilled

Hope
Dec 2013



Mental Health of Black Youth





Black Youth in Crisis



- In March 2022, the American Psychological Association, the Congressional Black Caucus, and Sound the Alarm for kids held spotlighted a national emergency in Black child and adolescent mental health

Black Youth in Crisis- National Data*

- 29% of Black youth in grades 9-12 report feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks such that it impacted their daily functioning and
- Black youth are more likely than White youth to attempt suicide, with 10% of Black youth reported attempting suicide in the last year
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Black Americans ages 15-24

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *1991-2019 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data*. Available at <http://yrbs-explorer.services.cdc.gov/>. Accessed on January 11, 2022

Black Youth in Crisis –Ohio Data*

- 21% of Black youth in grades 6-8 report feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks such that it impacted their daily functioning
- 19% of Black youth in grades 6-8 seriously considered attempting suicide
- 20% of Black youth in grades 6-8 attempted suicide
- The prevalence for black students and for Hispanic students is significantly higher than for white students.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *2019 Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data*. Available at <http://yrbs-explorer.services.cdc.gov/>. Accessed on January 11, 2022

Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey, United States, January– June 2021

Students who reporting perceived racism had higher prevalence:

1. Poor mental health (38.1%)
2. Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions (44.1)
3. Not feeling close to persons at school (40.7%)

Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey, United States, January– June 2021

- Perceived racism was higher among those students who reported poor mental health
 - Asian (67.9% versus 40.5%)
 - Black (62.1% versus 38.5%)
 - Hispanic (45.7% and 22.9%)
 - White students (24.5% versus 12.7%)

Black Adolescent Mental Health and School Policing

Fragile Families Study Year 15 wave
(N=1601)

Identified 4 distinct subgroup of Black students

- Unscathed (no school discipline or policing reported)
- School disciplined
- Combined school policing
- School policed (arrested by police)

Each group had an incremental increase in average depressive symptom scores

Group 2, 3, and 4 had lower school attachment than group 1

Resistance and Intervention



What can we do?

1. Become knowledgeable about Anti-Blackness and its Impact
2. Engage in cultural evaluation
3. Take Action



Identify and Address Racial MICROaggressions

- Race and ethnicity-based compliments and jokes
- Microinsults, microinvalidations, and micro assaults

Identify and Address Racial MACROaggressions

- Overt teacher or school practices
 - Disparities in discipline, resources, and opinions about Black students

Healing and Empowerment

Promote

- Develop or promote adaptive coping strategies to mitigate adverse outcomes

Create

- Create safe spaces for processing negative racial school experiences

Respond

- Respond to Anti-Blackness in real time

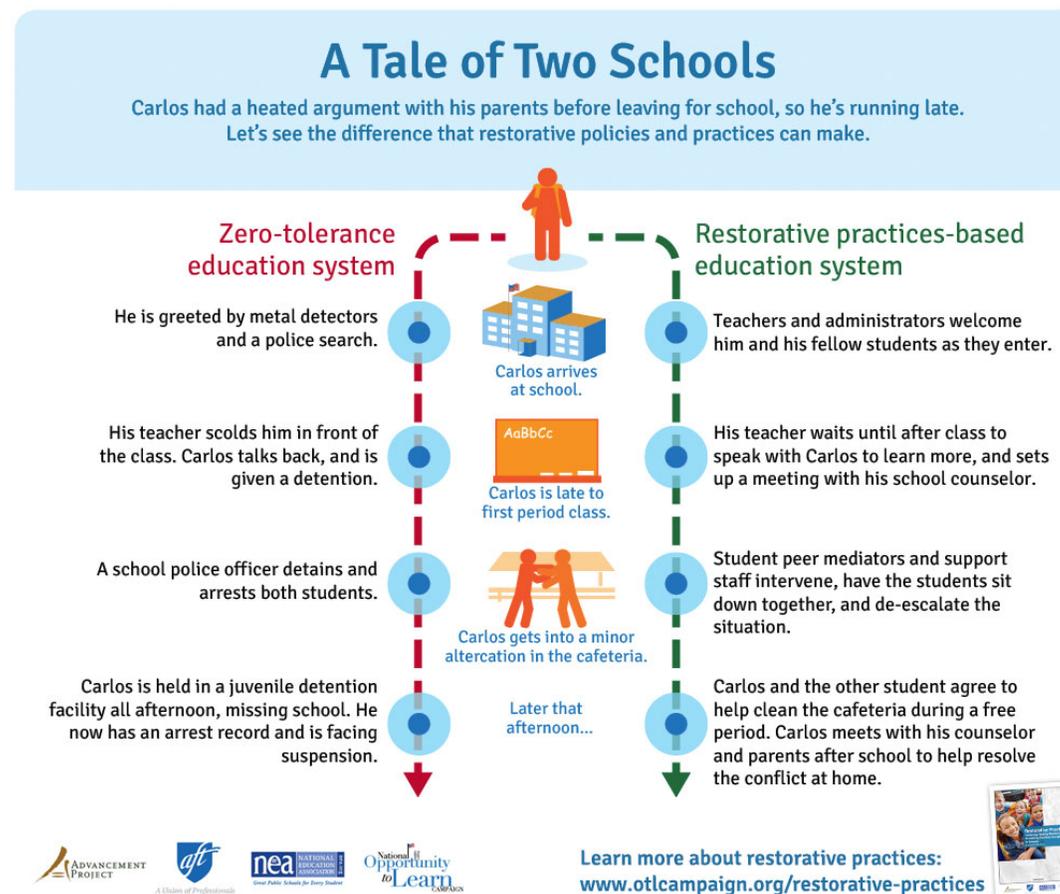


Develop adaptive coping strategies to mitigate adverse outcomes

There are protective processes that serve as resilience resources against Anti Blackness

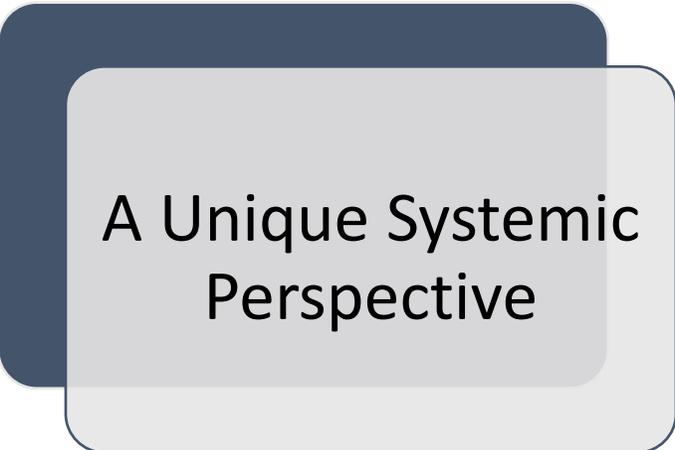
- Receipt of emotional support
 - Racial Socialization strategies and messages
 - Strong sense of racial identity
 - Coping strategies that emphasize cultural pride
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Restorative Justice/Practices in Schools

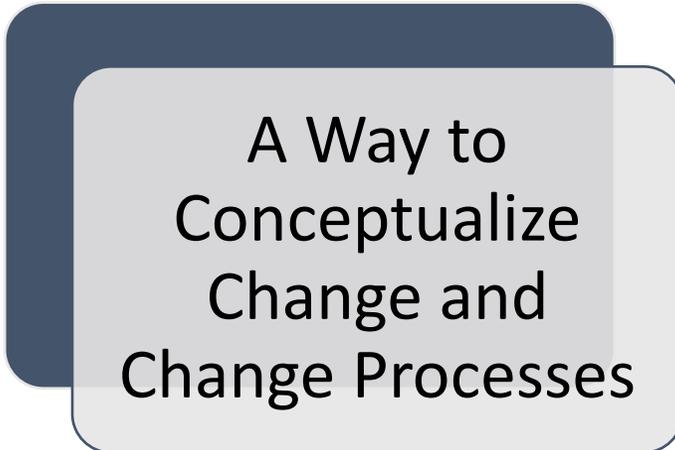




Our Unique Role as Systemic Therapists



A Unique Systemic
Perspective



A Way to
Conceptualize
Change and
Change Processes



An
Intergenerational
Awareness



Our Unique Role as Systemic Therapists

- Develop a therapeutic perspective that offers a sign of hope in an enduring culture of oppression and Anti-Blackness
 - Examine the impact of Antiblackness and other forms of oppression in therapeutic situations and what can be done about it
 - Recognizes the persistence of Anti-Blackness and actively avoid engaging in practices that perpetuate this cultural paradigm
 - Actively work to promote accountability within our selves and larger systems that impact Black Lives
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**CULTURE
SWIFT**

An Invitation

Develop a therapeutic perspective that offers a sign of hope in an enduring culture of oppression

Examine the impact of systemic racism and other forms of oppression in therapeutic situations and what can be done about it

Recognizes the persistence of oppression in a mental health establishment founded upon Anti-Blackness

Actively avoid engaging in practices that perpetuate Anti-Blackness

Actively work to promote accountability within ourselves and larger systems that impact Black Lives



Let's Connect!

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