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**CULTURE,
COMMUNITY,
& CONNECTION**
BIPOC MENTAL HEALTH
OUTREACH TOOLKIT

In commemoration of Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month



FOREWORD

Mental Health America's mission to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness has been rooted in a commitment to justice since our founding in 1909. We pride ourselves on our long-standing commitment to the strength of communities, including those who may be marginalized or persecuted. Communities form on the basis of shared lived experience and often revolve around identity and geography. We recognize the inherent strengths of all communities and the unique ability of individual community members with lived experience to guide the creation of effective interventions. Mental Health America believes community-led solutions must be prioritized and sustained to build a more mentally healthy future.

Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities have always been at the forefront of social change. Even when displaced, underserved, and oppressed by systems not built for them, there have always and will always be ways that individuals find connection with one another and embrace traditions.

When advocating for community spaces and resources, we must always pay homage to the originating communities and leaders who have paved the way. Each July, we highlight the legacy of trailblazer, advocate, and author Bebe Moore Campbell by proudly commemorating Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. It is through Moore Campbell's devotion to the mental health of minoritized communities that we are able to celebrate each July and continue to build a better future for individuals of all backgrounds.

There is promise in the strength of community, as Moore Campbell demonstrated. Within communities and environments, the ability to build and maintain authentic connections and a sense of belonging is a foundational element of wellness. Culture and community can tie people to their ancestors and give a sense of pride or purpose.

Even amidst the past and present attacks on BIPOC folks, strong communities persist, continuing not only to survive but to thrive and flourish. This toolkit and campaign are intended to highlight this historical resilience. We encourage each of you to build up *your* communities for your collective well-being, and for allies outside of the BIPOC community to support in these efforts. Please join us in being inspired by and uplifting the innovative ways in which BIPOC communities care for each other and protect community wellness.



Schneider Strickling

President & CEO, Mental Health America

THE LEGACY OF BEBE MOORE CAMPBELL: CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND CONNECTION



Each July we honor the legacy of author, advocate, and trailblazer Bebe Moore Campbell by recognizing Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month (also known as BIPOC Mental Health Month). Moore Campbell's ability to tell impactful stories highlighting themes of racism, mental health, and family left a lasting mark on this world and is a foundation for much of the work that continues in support of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) mental health.

This year, July's theme is Culture, Community, and Connection. Community engagement, cultural preservation, representation, and advocacy all play major roles in Moore Campbell's books and her advocacy efforts. By delving into the complexities of cultural identity, community dynamics, and interpersonal connections, Moore Campbell highlighted both the tragedies and the joys that come up in life.

Throughout her work, Moore Campbell did not shy away from the realities of what it meant to live as a Black person in America. Her book, "Your Blues Ain't Like Mine," was inspired by the murder of Emmett Till and deemed as one of the most influential books of 1992 by The New York Times. Moore Campbell continued to write of real events that impacted Black and marginalized communities, such as her work in "Brothers and Sisters," which takes place in Los Angeles following the Rodney King riots. By highlighting these issues, Moore Campbell brought themes of environmental impact, race, and community connections to the forefront of American literature.

Moore Campbell was no stranger to the impact of environment on community and the need for stronger connections to one's culture and community members in order to survive and thrive. Her early books drew attention to the harsh realities of racism and the way that this continued trauma can show up in everyday life. Her later books continued with similar themes and included strong ties to mental health, as well as the importance of community bonds, leaning on family and friends, and finding support during an individual's treatment and recovery journey. Additionally, through her advocacy efforts, Moore Campbell continued to engage with community members, connect individuals to support networks, and create spaces that were truly inclusive for those within them.

Moore Campbell passed away on Nov. 27, 2006, but through her powerful storytelling, advocacy, and strong community roots, fellow advocates continued her fight. At Mental Health America, we honor her unforgettable legacy each July by releasing an outreach toolkit and campaign that gives individuals throughout the country the tools they need to educate themselves and others. Her legacy lives on, providing a powerful foundation for marginalized communities to thrive and be known.

INTRODUCTION TO CULTURE, COMMUNITY, & CONNECTION



The theme of Mental Health America's 2023 BIPOC Mental Health Campaign, developed in commemoration of Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, is ***Culture, Community, & Connection***. Our lives are deeply intertwined with the environments around us. Who and what we are surrounded by impacts our mental health and overall wellness. In particular, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) populations are faced with disproportionate amounts of historical trauma and displacement that have challenged how these communities remain sustainable and continue to thrive. Despite countless attempts to take away power, erase histories, and diminish future successes, BIPOC communities continue to prosper. Culture, community, and connection are pillars that support and uplift BIPOC individuals when the dangers of oppression and systemic racism threaten the environments where BIPOC individuals live, work, play, and thrive.

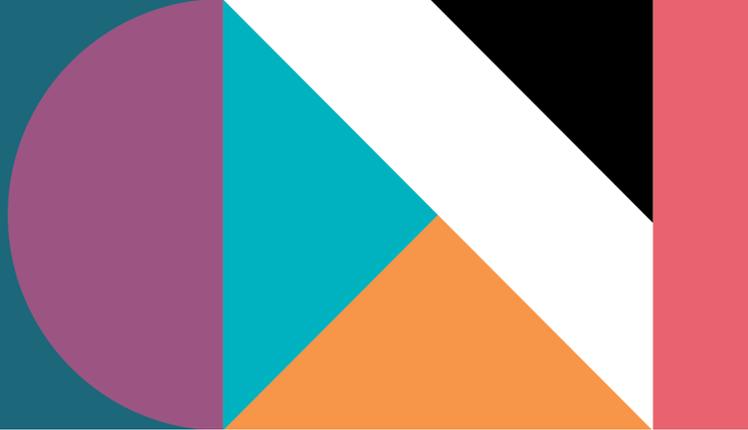
In many ways, BIPOC communities have had to look out for themselves and for each other in order to simply survive the systemic racism that most still face to this day. There have been numerous attempts to erase BIPOC communities through genocide, war, famine, displacement, loss of power, loss of culture, and even loss of language. Despite that, BIPOC communities have been powerful, unyielding, and revolutionary in combating these attempts to diminish their worth and value. In addition, historically, the mental health narrative around BIPOC communities has been defined by disparities, trauma, and oppression – but what could BIPOC stories and lives look like if the narrative was changed? Imagine a narrative that instead uplifted and accepted community-created systems of support as fundamental cornerstones connecting one another and providing a safe haven.

BIPOC communities throughout history have carved out systems of support in order to sustain collective well-being. These systems have centered around community and connection, deeply rooted in sustained cultural traditions, language, stories, food, art, and more. Community has been an anchor, allowing connection in a world that is seeking to ostracize and isolate. It is the power of community that has brought forth movements and social change, health and wellness, knowledge, and strength.

The cultures of BIPOC communities are born from the richness of ancestral wisdom, survival practices, and support systems that have not only sustained life but allowed it to thrive and bloom in even the most hostile of environments. BIPOC communities look out for one another and ensure survival, and in cultural hubs, BIPOC communities remind their loved ones of cultural practices that may have otherwise been forgotten.

When we reach out for help, we not only begin to heal ourselves, but we heal our communities. If trauma and displacement have been illnesses, then connection is our medicine. Connection allows us to be known and to know others. We can lean on one another. We can support each other and get support in return. We challenge each other to be better. We challenge each other to keep going.

TOOLKIT CONTENTS



Mental Health America's 2023 BIPOC Mental Health Toolkit provides free, practical resources, including information about how an individual's environment impacts their mental health, suggestions for making changes to improve and maintain mental well-being, and how to seek help for mental health challenges. This year's toolkit includes:

Media Materials

- Key Messages
- Sample Proclamation

Social Media

- Sample Social Media Messages
- Shareable Images

Factsheets

- Community Displacement and Its Influence on Mental Health
- Improving Mental Health of BIPOC Communities Through Community Advocacy
- Connecting with Your Community

Worksheets

- Creating a Community Safety and Connection Plan
- Advocating for Better Community Spaces

Posters

- Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month Poster
- Screening Poster

Other

- Outreach Ideas
- Additional Resources

Mental Health America hopes that the 2023 BIPOC Mental Health Campaign supports you in connecting with your community and in advocating for more community-led and mentally healthy spaces.

We will be reaching out in mid-August to ask about your outreach and impact. Make sure to keep track of your efforts by doing things like:

- Counting how many handouts you distribute;
- Tracking media hits and impressions;
- Downloading analytics for social media posts during BIPOC Mental Health Month;
- If you do a screening event or health fair, keep count of how many people visit your booth and/or take a screen; and
- Conducting a pre/post survey to see how you've increased knowledge about mental health issues among those you reach. Set up a quick survey of up to 10 questions for free online using SurveyMonkey.com.

LIKE OUR MATERIALS? WANT MORE?

MHA merchandise is available through the Mental Health America Store to supplement your outreach efforts. Visit the store at store.mhanational.org.

*MHA Affiliates – One of the benefits of being an affiliate is getting a discount on materials at the MHA store. Contact Valerie Sterns at vsterns@mhanational.org if you need help getting your affiliate discount code.

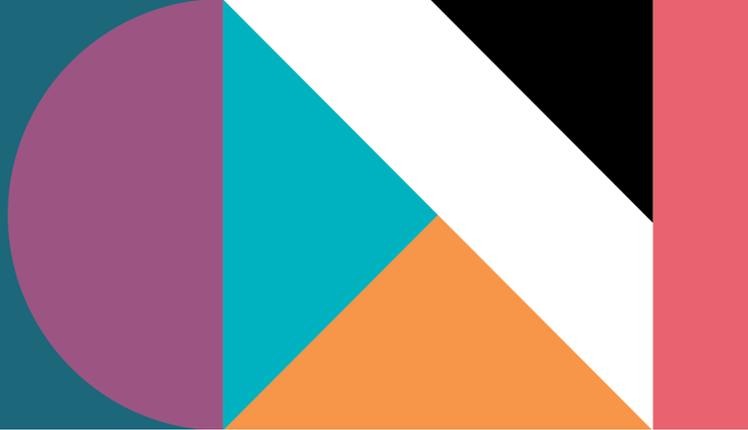
QUESTIONS?

If you have further questions about the BIPOC Mental Health Campaign, please contact Allissa Torres, Director of Mental Health Equity, at atorres@mhanational.org.

Check out past years' campaigns here:

- [2022: Beyond the Numbers](#)
- [2021: Strength in Communities](#)
- [2020: Impact of Trauma](#)
- [2019: Depth of My Identity](#)
- [2018: My Story My Way](#)

OUTREACH IDEAS



WHAT INDIVIDUALS CAN DO

Spread the word:

- Share the BIPOC Mental Health Campaign and supplemental materials on social media and with your networks by linking to mhanational.org/july and encouraging others to do the same.
- Use the shareable images and messages to spread awareness and advocate for more mentally healthy spaces that support overall wellness for BIPOC communities.
- Print content from the campaign and post in high-traffic areas. For example, hanging posters and fact sheets in school hallways, libraries, recreation centers, and other community-centered places can make this content more accessible to those who may not have consistent internet access or who may otherwise be unaware of these resources.
- Take action for community-led support. Use the worksheets to create stronger systems of support for you and your community and to advocate for better environments that support your mental health.

Share Mental Health America's National Prevention and Screening Program:

- Spread the word about screening. Encourage individuals in your community to check in on their mental health by taking a brief test at mhascreening.org.
- Check-in on your own mental health at mhascreening.org. Remember – when we begin to heal ourselves, we heal our communities.

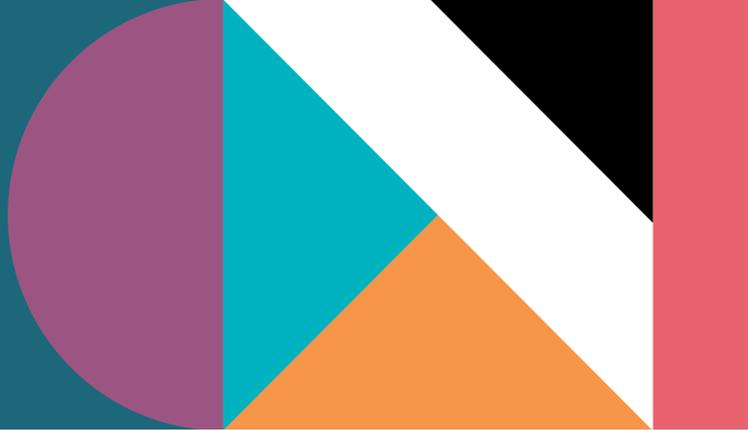
Call or email your elected officials and let them know why you think the mental health of BIPOC communities should be a priority:

- Ask your local government to declare July as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month and commit to building stronger communities with BIPOC-led initiatives. Use the sample proclamation in this campaign.
- Get in touch with your senators: www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm
- Contact your local representative. Find yours using the ZIP code search feature in the top right at www.house.gov.
- Check out our most recent State of Mental Health in America report and find out where your state ranks and share with your elected officials: www.mhanational.org/issues/state-mental-health-america
- Share detailed data about suicidal thinking, depression, psychosis, and trauma across your state and county from www.mhanational.org/mhamapping/mha-state-county-data.
- Check out Mental Health America's series of reports on Communities in Need Across the U.S. during COVID-19:
 - Suicide: www.mhanational.org/research-reports/suicide-and-covid-19-communities-need-across-us
 - Severe depression: www.mhanational.org/research-reports/severe-depression-and-covid-19-communities-need-across-us
 - Trauma: www.mhanational.org/research-reports/trauma-and-covid-19-communities-need-across-us
 - Psychosis: www.mhanational.org/research-reports/psychosis-and-covid-19-communities-need-across-us

WHAT ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES CAN DO

- Share the BIPOC Mental Health Campaign and supplemental materials on social media and with your networks by linking to mhanational.org/july and encouraging others to do the same.
- Include Mental Health America's National Prevention and Screening program in resources for your staff or audiences. Encourage individuals to check in on their mental health by using mhascreening.org.
- Provide consistent and accessible community-led support systems, such as employee resource groups and identity-specific services or resources.
- Plan events and services with – not just for – community members. Understand the power of community-initiated programs and prioritize representation in the voices your organization chooses to highlight.
- Provide ways for community members, employees, and other stakeholders to share feedback on a regular basis.
- Identify BIPOC community-owned businesses that your organization can support instead of large retailers
- Make connections in the community by engaging in community events, meeting with community members, and funding or supporting community initiatives.
- Prioritize psychological safety in the workplace. Use the content in this campaign to help promote inclusion, belonging, connection, and support.
- Host a mental health screening or other educational event at a local venue (e.g., town hall, firehouse, school, house of worship, or community center). Have computers or tablets available for people to go to mhascreening.org. Make sure to have a printer so that people can print their results. If an in-person event isn't possible, host a webinar or social media live event.
- Plan an advocacy event. This could be a day at your state capitol or an email campaign. Invite advocates, consumers, concerned citizens, and community and business leaders to reach out to policymakers to discuss your community's mental health needs.
- Team up with other local mental health and wellness organizations to host a community meet-and-greet. Connecting with community organizations on a regular basis can encourage stronger systems of support and collectivism.
- Connect with one of Mental Health America's affiliates and bring a speaker into your workplace. Find your local affiliate by visiting arc.mhanational.org/find-affiliate.
- Shop the Mental Health America Store, store.mhanational.org, for gifts that can be used to reward workers and spread awareness about BIPOC mental health.
- Use the sample posts from this campaign or share posts from Mental Health America's social media accounts on your organization's social media networks throughout July to raise awareness about BIPOC mental health.

KEY MESSAGES



BIPOC COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT HISTORY

- Throughout history, BIPOC communities have carved out culturally responsive spaces that give room for individuals to feel connected with their communities and maintain physical and psychological safety. These spaces of support include cultural hubs, community gardens, community care systems, social clubs, art collectives, sports teams, and more.
- BIPOC communities are rooted in collectivist cultures, which recognize that each person's health and wellness is deeply interconnected with their community's. When one person seeks to take care of their mental health, it has an impact on the wellness of the community at large.

CHALLENGES FACED BY BIPOC COMMUNITIES

- Historically, BIPOC populations have been pushed out of their living spaces intentionally and forcefully. Even if a BIPOC individual hasn't dealt with community displacement in their own lifetime, generational and historical trauma can still impact their current mental health and quality of life.
- Community displacement disproportionately impacts all individuals within BIPOC communities, not just the individuals forced to move. Gentrified neighborhoods see an increase in cost of living, lose small and local businesses, and disrupt community culture and safety.
- Many BIPOC communities have faced forced relocation and removal that has distanced them from their loved ones, cultural practices, languages, and sense of identity. This generational trauma has impacted the ability of BIPOC individuals to access services, feel secure, and have positive mental health outcomes.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

- A sense of belonging and inclusion in communities is vital for well-being and mental health. BIPOC individuals may frequently feel othered or as if they are tokenized in spaces in which their identities are not embraced or reflected.
- Community safety is more than just physical. Psychological safety consists of inclusion and the safety to learn, contribute, and challenge the status quo.
- Having a sense of community creates a sense of support and belonging, which can reduce feelings of isolation.
- Community-led spaces are vital sources of belonging that promote overall mental health and wellness. This includes cultural hubs, which are areas of people with a specific cultural background who have come together to live, provide services, or connect with one another.
- Individuals who have strong connections to their communities have better mental health outcomes, including lower rates of suicide, violence, and feelings of isolation.

ADVOCATING FOR MENTALLY HEALTHY SPACES

- No one knows a community better than those within the community itself. In order to move toward a more mentally healthy future, community-led action must be prioritized and sustained.
- There is power in numbers. When individuals get together to unite under a common goal, they increase their chances of enacting change that could promote overall wellness, a sense of purpose, and connection.
- BIPOC communities have always been at the forefront of social change. When advocating for community spaces and resources, it is important to pay homage to the originating communities that have led the way.
- Connection to others may exist either in person, in virtual spaces, or through other means of communication. Recognize that “community” can be more than in-person support and can especially be impactful for those who may be physically isolated from others in their culture.
- Prioritize access for all when advocating for mentally healthy environments. Strong community support requires an overall understanding that every person is deserving of a healthy environment and has a role in the wellness of those around them.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES



TOOLKIT

- This year, Mental Health America's #BIPOCMentalHealth campaign is all about the power of culture, community, and connection for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Learn more: mhanational.org/july
- July is #BebeMooreCampbell National Minority #MentalHealth Awareness Month. Learn more and find resources from Mental Health America: mhanational.org/july
- Throughout history, BIPOC communities have carved out systems of support in order to sustain collective #wellbeing. Learn more about #BIPOCMentalHealth and find resources: mhanational.org/july
- Historically, the narrative around #BIPOCMentalHealth has been defined by trauma, disparities, and oppression. Join Mental Health America in changing the narrative to one centered on culture, community, and connection: mhanational.org/july
- Culture, community, and connection are pillars that support and uplift BIPOC communities facing oppression and systemic racism. Learn more in Mental Health America's #BIPOCMentalHealth Toolkit: mhanational.org/july

SCREENING

- When we reach out for help, we begin to heal ourselves AND our communities. Take a free #mentalhealth test at mhascreening.org. #BIPOCMentalHealth
- Taking a mental health test is one of the easiest ways to check in on your #mentalhealth. Get screened at mhascreening.org. #BIPOCMentalHealth

CRISIS

- If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org. You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting MHA to 741741.

HASHTAGS

- #BIPOCMentalHealth
- #BebeMooreCampbell

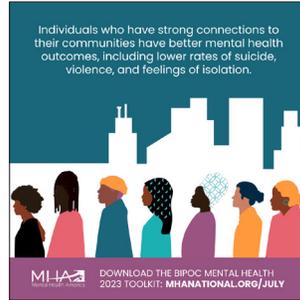
LINKS

- mhanational.org/july
- mhascreening.org

SHAREABLE SOCIAL MEDIA IMAGES



To download these images, please visit mhanational.org/bipoc/mental-health-month-toolkit.



SAMPLE PROCLAMATION



Encourage your local public officials to go on the record in support of BIPOC mental health. Below, please find a sample proclamation that designates July as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. An official signing of a proclamation is a perfect occasion for a news event, photo opportunity, or other activity.

BEBE MOORE CAMPBELL NATIONAL MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH 2023 "CULTURE, COMMUNITY, & CONNECTION"

WHEREAS, A sense of belonging and inclusion in communities is vital for the well-being and mental health of BIPOC individuals; and

WHEREAS, Community-led spaces such as cultural hubs, areas in which people of a specific cultural background have come together to live, provide services, or connect with one another, are vital sources of belonging that promote overall mental health and wellness; and

WHEREAS, Connection with one's culture and community is key to supporting overall mental health. Individuals who have strong connections to their communities have better mental health outcomes including lower rates of suicide, violence, and feelings of isolation; and

WHEREAS, No one knows a community better than those within the community itself. In order to move toward a more mentally healthy future, community-led action must be prioritized and sustained; and

WHEREAS, Advocating for mentally healthy environments must prioritize access for all. Strong community support requires an overall understanding that every person is deserving of a healthy environment and has a role in the wellness of those around them.

THEREFORE, I [NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL], do hereby proclaim July 2023 as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month in [STATE OR COMMUNITY]. As the [TITLE OF LOCAL OFFICIAL], I also call upon the citizens, government agencies, public and private institutions, businesses, and schools in [STATE OR COMMUNITY] to recommit our community to increasing awareness and understanding of BIPOC mental health, the steps our citizens can take to protect their mental health through community-led action and organizing, and the need for appropriate and accessible services for all BIPOC people with mental health conditions.

RESOURCES

RESOURCES FROM MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA

Webpages

- [BIPOC Mental Health](#)
- [Blog: 4 Things That Can Improve Your Community's Mental Health](#)
- [Blog: Empowering Yourself and Your Community of Color](#)
- [Blog: Here's How You Can Address Both Mental Health and Hunger in Your Community](#)
- [Blog: We Build Our Community, and Then It Builds Us](#)
- [Calls to Action for BIPOC Mental Health Community Care](#)
- [Connect with Others](#)
- [Culturally-Based Practices](#)
- [Health Care Disparities Among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color](#)
- [How to Be An Ally in the Fight Against Racial Justice](#)
- [How to Find an Anti-Racist Therapist](#)
- [MHA Peer Programs](#)
- [Racial Trauma](#)
- [Racism and Mental Health](#)
- [Social Determinants of Health](#)
- [Take a Mental Health Test](#)

Toolkits

- [2023 May is Mental Health Month Toolkit: Look Around, Look Within](#)
- [2022 BIPOC Mental Health Toolkit: Beyond the Numbers](#)
- [2021 BIPOC Mental Health Toolkit: Strength In Communities](#)
- [2020 BIPOC Mental Health Toolkit: Impact of Trauma](#)
- [2019 BIPOC Mental Health Toolkit: Depth of My Identity](#)
- [2018 BIPOC Mental Health Toolkit: My Story My Way](#)

En Español

- [Prueba de Ansiedad](#)
- [Prueba de Depresión](#)
- [Recursos En Español](#)

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- [American Civil Liberties Union](#)
- [APA: Working with Immigrant Origin Clients](#)
- [Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective \(BEAM\)](#)
- [Brown Boi Project](#)
- [Brown Girls Rise](#)
- [Clinicians of Color](#)
- [Community Building Toolkits](#)
- [Ethel's Club](#)
- [Fireweed Collective](#)
- [Health Coverage for Immigrants](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign: QTBIPOC Mental Health and Wellness](#)
- [Inclusive Therapists](#)
- [Informed Immigrant: Mental Health for Immigrants](#)
- [Inspire](#)
- [Latinx Therapy](#)
- [LGBTQ Psychotherapists of Color](#)
- [Lyf App](#)
- [Melanin & Mental Health](#)
- [Migrant Clinicians Network](#)
- [My Undocumented Life](#)
- [Nalgona Positivity Pride](#)
- [National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights](#)
- [National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network](#)
- [En Espanol: Nacional Queer & Trans Red de Terapeutas de Color](#)
- [Project LETS](#)
- [Recovery Dharma- BIPOC](#)
- [Rest for Resistance](#)
- [Safe Spaces](#)
- [Sista Afya](#)
- [Supportiv](#)
- [Therapy in Color](#)
- [The Steve Fund](#)
- [TrevorSpace](#)
- [United We Dream](#)
- [Visibility Project](#)
- [We R Native](#)
- [Yellow Chair Collective](#)



COMMUNITY DISPLACEMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MENTAL HEALTH

HISTORY SHAPES YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Historically, BIPOC populations have been pushed out of their living spaces intentionally and forcefully. Even if a BIPOC individual hasn't dealt with community displacement in their own lifetime, generational and historical trauma can still impact their current mental health and quality of life. Forced removal and relocation, [redlining](#) (the denial of services to residents of certain areas based on their race or ethnicity), urban renewal practices, and gentrification have all contributed to the erasure of BIPOC communities, their cultural values, languages, practices, and power.

Within each individual community, displacement has impacted overall wellness in a variety of ways. For example, on top of the genocide of Indigenous people in the United States, they also were stripped of their cultural and linguistic practices, forced to convert to foreign religions, and relocated to reservations. Due to the deep roots of colonialism in the U.S., to this day, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians continue to face immense challenges such as lack of access to resources, loss of cultural identity, environmental degradation, displacement from family systems, and high levels of violence.¹ Additionally, individuals of Indigenous communities that originated outside of the U.S. have faced similar barriers and forms of oppression that influence their abilities to thrive.

Community displacement disproportionately impacts all individuals within BIPOC communities, not just the individuals that are forced to move or those who have directly been affected by violence and oppressive practices. Gentrified neighborhoods increase the cost of living, lose small and local businesses, and disrupt community culture and safety. Community members impacted by gentrification face feelings of isolation, distrust in contributing systems such as their government or corporations and feel undervalued among other symptoms of psychological distress.²

Forced relocation and removal has distanced many BIPOC communities from their loved ones, cultural practices, languages, religious faith, and sense of identity. This generational trauma impacts the ability of BIPOC individuals to access services, feel secure, and have positive mental health outcomes. In lacking access to resources and services, individuals may be denied basic human rights such as clean water and healthy food.

WE TAKE CARE OF US – HOW BIPOC COMMUNITIES HAVE TAKEN ACTION TOWARD COMMUNITY SUPPORT

To safeguard themselves from the impact of displacement, BIPOC communities have historically carved out spaces of support through cultural hubs, community gardens, community care systems, social clubs, and more. These culturally responsive spaces allow BIPOC individuals to feel connected with their communities, maintain physical and psychological safety, and gather together for times of joy and celebration. Cultural hubs often include restaurants that serve foods that may remind individuals of traditional family meals and practices, play music that helps individuals connect to past traditions, and offer opportunities to speak in a shared language. Community events may often include music, dancing, art, and other creative arts that are rooted in cultural traditions and practices. Furthermore, these cultural hubs serve as a point of entry for newly arrived individuals and a way to connect back to their culture.



BIPOC communities have also sought connection with one another and built sustainable systems of support through practices such as mutual aid, community health clinics, cooperative businesses, activism, cultural celebrations, and educational programs. For example, BIPOC communities have sustained culture and community through the following:

Mutual aid: Mutual aid is a form of community support where people pool their resources to help each other in times of need. BIPOC communities have a long history of practicing mutual aid, from sharing food and shelter during times of crisis to supporting each other financially.

Cooperative businesses: Cooperative businesses were created by BIPOC individuals to help support their own communities. These businesses are owned and operated by members of the community and are designed to provide goods and services that meet the specific needs of the community.

Community health clinics: Community health clinics often provide affordable health care to people who might otherwise not have access to it. These clinics are often community-led and staffed by people who have experience and expertise in providing culturally responsive care.

Advocacy and activism: BIPOC individuals have organized their communities to activate and advocate to counter the injustices often faced by, such as racial justice, police brutality, and environmental justice. community members

Cultural celebrations: To celebrate cultural heritage, BIPOC communities often host celebrations, such as festivals and parades, as a way of building community, promoting a sense of belonging, and reinforcing individual and community pride.

Educational programs: Educational programs developed by and for BIPOC communities provide skills and knowledge to succeed in a variety of areas. These can range from after-school programs for youth to job training and adult education.

Community gardens: BIPOC-established community gardens are a safety net for many individuals who may not have access to fresh produce. These gardens can also serve as a place for community members to gather and connect with one another and may provide skills training tied to cultural practices in working with the land.

SOURCES

¹Tran, L. D., Rice, T. H., Ong, P. M., Banerjee, S., Liou, J., & Ponce, N. A. (2020). Impact of gentrification on adult mental health. *Health services research, 55*(3), 432–444. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.13264>

²Sarache, M., & Spicer, P. (2008). Poverty and health disparities for American Indian and Alaska Native children: current knowledge and future prospects. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1136*, 126–136. <https://doi.org/10.1196/annals.1425.017>



IMPROVING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF BIPOC COMMUNITIES THROUGH COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

Connection with one's culture and community, as well as a sense of belonging and inclusion, is vital for well-being and mental health. Individuals who have strong connections to their communities have better mental health outcomes – including lower rates of suicide, violence, and feelings of isolation. They may also have more pride in themselves and where they live, in addition to stronger feelings of purpose.¹

As an individual who is Black, Indigenous, or a person of color (BIPOC), you may feel othered or tokenized in spaces where your identity is not embraced or fully reflected. BIPOC individuals who are subjected to emotionally toxic environments, where they may be harmed by discriminatory practices, or have faced discriminatory practices, may have increases in rates of suicide, depression, stress, crime, and feelings of isolation, in addition to, less access to green spaces, increased likelihood of environmental toxins, less financial ability, poor overall health outcomes, and changes to brain chemistry that mimic exposure to severe trauma. Community safety includes psychological safety, which consists of inclusion and safety to learn, contribute, and challenge the status quo.

When considering action-oriented ways to advocate for one's community, it is critical to focus on overall mental health and a sense of belonging for those being served. Individuals should have the ability to share their thoughts, challenge norms, and be their authentic selves.

These goals must include community leadership and ensure systems are in place to sustain the challenges that may come with advocacy.

While there must be understanding and acceptance of the historical trauma that has led to disenfranchisement, advocates should remember the historical resilience that has ensured continued survival and success. When working to create a better environment to improve BIPOC mental health and wellness, focus on the strengths of the community, in addition to the disparities. When the narrative is only centered on disparities, there may be erasure of the true experiences of individuals, further perpetuating stereotypes, discrimination, and loss of power or resources. To avoid removing BIPOC community strengths, use historical and current examples within your community that represent culturally responsive spaces, such as community-led health or education centers, cultural hubs, and creative services. Highlight protective factors of BIPOC communities, such as strong familial bonds, community pride, and the use of community care practices.

Action with intention is key to cultivating affirming and safe spaces for BIPOC communities. Authentic social change requires community-led action alongside support and action from allies. BIPOC individuals are the

Examples of advocacy efforts that promote better mental health outcomes for BIPOC communities include advocating for:

- **Increased access to basic resources, such as health programs, efficient and accessible community infrastructure, WiFi, and healthy food.**
- **Culturally responsive social services and providers.**
- **Sufficient educational opportunities at all levels.**
- **A decrease in community policing and government surveillance, which can lead to less police violence, stronger feelings of safety, and rebuilding of trust amongst community members.**

A vertical illustration on the left side of the page shows the profiles of several diverse individuals. From top to bottom, there is a woman with a black headscarf featuring white crescent moon patterns, a woman with dark skin and a pink earring, a woman with dark hair in a purple headscarf, a woman with dark hair in a white headscarf with a blue geometric pattern, a woman with dark skin and a purple headscarf, a man with dark skin and glasses, and a woman with dark skin and curly hair. The background behind the profiles is a mix of teal, orange, and white.

experts within their communities, so make sure allies know that they must prioritize BIPOC voices in decision-making. This includes making space providing access for community leaders and members on larger platforms, offering continuous opportunities for community feedback, and funding and uplifting the work that has been and continues to be done in BIPOC communities by grassroots activists and representative service providers. There is power in numbers, and there is always a need for solidarity from allies who are willing to uplift and give space to those within the communities they support. When allies show support and solidarity in public and action-oriented ways, they can use their privilege to promote wellness, increase social power, and improve cross-cultural unity.

To learn more about other ways that you can take action to create more mentally healthy environments, take a look at MHA's 2023 May is Mental Health Month Toolkit accessible at mhanational.org/may.

SOURCES

¹Dabrusin, J. (2018). A vision for cultural hubs and districts in Canada: Report of the standing committee on Canadian heritage. House of Commons. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/CHPC/Reports/RP10045531/chpcrp13/chpcrp13-e.pdf>



CONNECTING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Creating and sustaining a community around you is important to your mental health. Humans are social creatures, meaning our brains are wired to seek connection with others. These connections allow us to share interests and feel a sense of belonging and security. As young as infancy, babies will point to objects as a way to share their interests and enjoy seeing their caregiver show interest in return.¹ The need to be in relationships with one another is deeply ingrained in our DNA.

For BIPOC individuals, making connections with those of similar backgrounds has not only provided a sense of belonging and solidarity but has also been a necessary method of survival. Through the power of community connection, BIPOC individuals have been able to sustain themselves and their cultural values.

FIND COMMUNITY IN PERSON

Community and connection may be different for everyone. For BIPOC individuals, this need often also centers around safety, inclusion, and purpose. To be in community with others may sometimes easily blend with day-to-day tasks and activities, and a sense of connection may exist in spaces such as neighborhoods, bodegas, mosques, sports events, dance studios, restaurants, art shows, or community centers. In neighborhoods, individuals are able to build stronger bonds and often look out for one another. Meal trains, carpooling, community safety groups, or childcare networks can all serve as vital forms of connection and support that help meet physical and psychological needs. Community-led actions include social justice rallies, charity walks, community gardens, collaborative kitchens, protests, town hall meetings, child-friendly events, and other community advocacy events. Check out the list below for more ideas on making stronger community connections:

- **Get involved in community activities.** Join community organizations or volunteer for community events. If there isn't a community organization, consider creating one.
- **Create a community initiative.** Discuss common issues among your community members to determine community needs. Ask your neighbors about their experiences in your area. If there is a common need and interest, this could be an opportunity to unite and act for change.
- **Attend community events.** Go to events such as festivals, fairs, and community gatherings to meet others in your community and build relationships.
- **Reach out to neighbors.** Introduce yourself to neighbors and engage in friendly conversation to establish a support network.
- **Advocate for change.** Get involved in local politics and advocate for policies that support a better community and environment.
- **Share resources.** Engage with local "buy nothing" or similar groups to share items like extra food or household items.
- **Create safe spaces.** Consider getting involved with community gardens or neighborhood watch groups to build a sense of safety and security.
- **Participate in cultural events.** Join in if your community hosts cultural events.
- **Support local businesses.** Shopping at or even sharing social posts from local businesses can help retain community culture and stimulate the local economy.
- **Listen to and learn from others.** Take time to hear from others in the community to build understanding, inclusivity, and empathy.



FIND COMMUNITY IN VIRTUAL SPACES

For those who may be physically distant from others within their community, or who may not have the ability to go to in-person events, virtual spaces can offer a sense of community. Online spaces allow people to connect with others of similar backgrounds and share personal experiences, challenges, supports, or successes. The following tips can help you make stronger connections in virtual spaces:

- **Join online groups or engage with social media.** Look for online groups or communities that share similar interests or goals, which can help you build relationships with like-minded individuals.
- **Use messaging platforms.** If you feel comfortable with it, exchange contact information with individuals to make long-distance friendships feel easier. FaceTime, Zoom, text messaging, direct messaging, or emails are options to help you stay in touch even when you are not able to see one another in person.
- **Participate in online events.** Attend webinars, online conferences, virtual events, or volunteer virtually to connect with others who share similar interests or goals.
- **Create online content.** Share your blogs, podcasts, or videos to connect with others who share similar interests or experiences.
- **Host online discussions.** Make a space for meaningful conversation by having discussions on video chatting platforms.
- **Use online resources.** Look for online mental health support groups and educational resources that speak to you or connect you with others who share similar experiences or challenges.
- **Show kindness and respect.** No matter how you choose to engage online, treating others with kindness and respect can help create a welcoming and supportive digital community for all.

ADVOCATE FOR MENTALLY HEALTHY SPACES

Connecting with others in your community is easier when you are in a healthy environment. Below are some tips on how to support your community and yourself in creating mentally healthy spaces:

- **Educate others.** Talk to your community about why it's important to create spaces that are welcoming and inclusive for people with mental health challenges.
- **Start conversations.** Sometimes just speaking up about mental health will encourage others to share their experiences and concerns.
- **Organize wellness events.** Work with community organizations, leaders, and mental health professionals to organize events and activities that promote mental health and well-being.
- **Advocate for the creation of safe spaces.** Whether it's a community center, spiritual gathering place, or school, advocate and work toward creating safe spaces where people can feel comfortable talking about their mental health challenges without fear of judgment or stigma.
- **Seek support.** Connect with mental health professionals and community resources to get the support you need in your neighborhood or community.

SOURCES

¹Wickramaratne, P. J., et al. (2022). Social connectedness as a determinant of mental health: A scoping review. *PLoS one*, 17(10). e0275004. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0275004>



CREATING A COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CONNECTION PLAN



Having a sense of community creates a sense of support and belonging, which can support better mental health outcomes and reduce feelings of isolation. Connection to others may exist either in person, in virtual spaces, or through other means of communication. Use this worksheet to keep track of your current support network and make preventive plans for connection and safety.

Did you know?

Community safety is more than just physical. Psychological safety consists of inclusion and the safety to learn, contribute, and challenge the status quo.

SAFETY

WHERE DO YOU FEEL MOST SAFE AND COMFORTABLE?

Location _____ Location _____
 Location _____ Location _____

WHO CAN YOU REACH OUT TO IF YOU NEED HELP STAYING SAFE?

Name _____ Contact info _____
 Name _____ Contact info _____
 Name _____ Contact info _____

CONNECTION

WHERE DO YOU FEEL MOST CONNECTED TO YOUR CULTURE?

Location _____ Location _____
 Location _____ Location _____

WHO CAN YOU REACH OUT TO IN ORDER TO FEEL MORE CONNECTED WITH YOUR CULTURE?

Name _____ Contact info _____
 Name _____ Contact info _____
 Name _____ Contact info _____

SUPPORT

WHO MAKES UP YOUR CURRENT SUPPORT SYSTEM?

Name _____ Contact info _____
 Name _____ Contact info _____
 Name _____ Contact info _____

WHO IN YOUR COMMUNITY CAN YOU REACH OUT TO FOR GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT OR WHEN YOU FEEL ISOLATED OR DISTANCED FROM OTHERS?

Name _____ Contact info _____
 Name _____ Contact info _____
 Name _____ Contact info _____

WHAT VIRTUAL SPACES CAN YOU ACCESS TO FEEL A STRONGER SENSE OF SAFETY AND CONNECTION?



ADVOCATING FOR BETTER COMMUNITY SPACES

Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities have always been at the forefront of social change. When individuals get together to unite under a common goal, they increase their chances of enacting change that could promote overall wellness, a sense of purpose, and connection. Use this worksheet to plan and advocate for better community spaces.

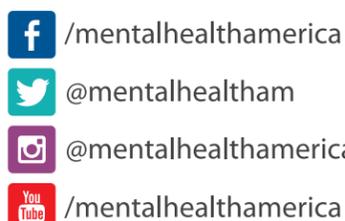
1. **What problem do you want to solve?**
2. **Who has the power to change this problem?**
3. **Who are the people affected by this? Who are the stakeholders? (Consider both the communities affected by the issue, funders, and those who benefit from the issue.)**
4. **How does this problem impact your community and its mental health needs?**
5. **What does a solution to this issue look like? How can this solution be achieved?**
6. **What might you need in order to achieve this solution? (Ex., data, backing from community leaders, financial support, etc.)**
7. **Who else can you bring together from your community to help you advocate for this issue? (Ex., community leaders, local organizations, like-minded community members, etc.)**
8. **How can you gain more backing on this issue? (Ex., social media campaign, accessible educational materials, local flyers, emails, canvassing, etc.)**
9. **What additional support might you need in order to sustain this advocacy effort? (Think about your social supports, financial and transportation needs, and self-care in order to support your mental health.)**
10. **What other ways can you protect your mental health and overall wellness while you are advocating?**

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OUT FOR HELP,
WE BEGIN TO
HEAL OURSELVES
AND OUR
COMMUNITIES.**



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