

Perspectives THE STATE OF PLAY

Each month, we examine how the mental health conversation is evolving, with a focus on youth, women, and the justice system. Last month, we analyzed topics connected to Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This November, we will look back on our Summit, *Prioritizing Trauma: Perspectives and Experiences from Across the Community* to introduce you to our speakers who shared their ideas for how we can work together to better respond to trauma.

Takeaways include:

COMMUNITY VOICES: Shared at the NEXUS Trauma Summit

“Resilience is not owed, but it can be a beautiful thing when we have it. It shouldn’t be expected from oppressed people who have experienced trauma.”

Vesper Moore, COO of Kiva Centers

Resilience is often expected from survivors of traumatic events, setting an unrealistic expectation that can lead to poor outcomes. Vesper and fellow panelists furthered this argument during the *Perspectives on Trauma* panel.

“Sometimes as a trauma survivor, I feel like a peacock in a sea of penguins. I don’t fit in. I try to keep my feathers down because I don’t want to be too much. I always say how I feel recharged when I am with fellow peacocks, I can say this is who I am... Healing happens in community, not in isolation.”

Tanya Ryder, M Ed., Director, Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion of National Alliance on Mental Illness

Oftentimes feelings of isolation can plague trauma survivors, which is why seeking out a supportive community can play a pivotal role in one’s healing journey.

“Know where you stand, knowingly, is one of my favorite quotes. If we know what our biases are, if we take into consideration our training, our own personal histories, our cultural and community context, if we know what baggage we bring to the table and we are open and curious, then the conversation may be less difficult.”

Saundra Jain, MA, PsyD, LPC of UT Austin School of Nursing

Dr. Jain continued, suggesting that approaching trauma by leaning in with radical self curiosity—recognizing who you are and what your struggles are—can be a strong step in one’s path forward.

To kick off the Summit, speakers shared how they are practicing "radical self-care". *Radical self-care* is defined as both far-reaching and thorough care for oneself.

NEXUS TRAUMA SUMMIT

October 26, 2021

PRIORITIZING TRAUMA: PERSPECTIVES & EXPERIENCES FROM ACROSS THE COMMUNITY

HOW ARE YOU PRACTISING

RADICAL SELF-CARE?

what speaks to US ~ ~

Sorry-NO

• Radical WELLNESS- saying "No"-
Setting boundaries- yes to yourself.

• Having a schedule
time for prayer, scripture - a radical reset
refill my cup

The one thing I'm committed to every day...
• Connecting with my breath
the foundation
• Managing my thoughts
I love myself - PERIOD

• Getting enough rest-
break time to lie down, recharge myself - my break!

• Separating self worth from productivity
taking a moment to recharge

32,071
• "Hallmark card" stories
that people have shared
large banner boards

• Routine - the same steps
sticking to it...

• Radical acceptance - knowing there are things I can't control

• Setting healthy boundaries
offering myself grace



THOUGHT STARTERS

A roundup of thought-provoking pieces on mental health for youth, women, and the justice system.

Youth Mental Health: Discrimination can lead to higher risk of mental and behavioral issues for young people.

Such discrimination includes racism, ageism, sexism and physical appearance. **CNN Health's** Kristen Rogers reports:

"Those who faced discrimination frequently – at least a few times per month – were around 25% more likely to be diagnosed with a mental disorder and twice as likely to develop severe psychological distress than people who didn't experience discrimination or did less often, according to a study published Monday in the journal Pediatrics."

This finding furthers the importance of keeping all communities engaged on the topics of trauma and mental health. During the *Perspectives on Trauma* panel, **TyMBER HUDSON of Youth MOVE** emphasized the importance of mindfulness when talking about trauma, and making sure all communities are heard, especially those subject to discrimination.

Women's Mental Health: Students lose when Black women aren't supported.

Educational consultant and equity and justice strategist Jamilah Pitts reflects on her time as a school leader and the trauma she endured during her career and after leaving the role. In a recent article for **Learning for Justice**, Pitts emphasizes the importance of creating supportive environments for Black women in school leadership in order to mitigate harm against Black students:

"As educators and leaders seek to create equitable school spaces, including equity for staff and students, we must also consider the ways that Black women are uniquely harmed. Black women can and do experience oppression based on racism and sexism... Because schools are institutions that are rooted in white supremacist culture and uphold white and Eurocentric ideas of success, Black women face particularly destructive challenges."

This finding aligns with work by the **Jed Foundation**. It is leading efforts to strengthen schools by creating systems, programs and policies that protect student mental health, build life skills, and encourage students to seek help. **Sara Gorman**, Director of Research and Knowledge Dissemination at the Jed Foundation, shared this work during the *Perspectives on Trauma* panel.

The Justice System: State prisons are increasingly deadly places.

Data released in June from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reveals alarming rises in suicide, homicide and drug and alcohol-related deaths in prisons across the United States. During the *Trauma Across the NEXUS Pillars* panel, **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Ryan Price** reflected on the overlooked and underaddressed issue of trauma within nationwide jails, noting that 77% of people who take their lives in prison are unconvicted. **Prison Policy Initiative** outlines key BJS findings in a blog post:

"Incarceration is not only difficult for someone who comes in with mental health needs, but it creates and exacerbates disconnection, despair and overall psychological distress. Prison is basically a mental health crisis in and of itself, and too many incarcerated people contemplate and/or commit suicide."



THE PUNCHLIST

3

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION ON THIS MONTH.

1

Read:

Award-winning author Rachel Thompson courageously confronts topics of sexual abuse and suicide, love and healing in her nonfiction collection: **Broken Pieces and Broken Places**. At the Summit, Thompson shared her journey to post-traumatic recognition, support and advocacy with attendees.

2

Listen:

In a recent episode of **Voices of NEXUS**, NEXUS Summit speaker and Flawless Foundation Fellow Tre Gabriel shared his story of growth and resilience as it relates to his mental health journey. As a Black man and athlete, Tre long struggled to navigate his depression due the stigma around mental health within his communities.

3

Watch:

American PTSD Association Director Ron Blake shared his story of a traumatic sexual assault experience, which lead to severe PTSD and suicide ideation. In a **TEDx Talk** early within his advocacy journey, Blake shared his journey in overcoming PTSD by taking control of his own narrative and not letting fear control him.

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