Don't Minimize the Moment: Truth, Reparatory Justice & Healing for Black Families who are Descendants of Captive and Enslaved Africans in the U.S.

Stephanie S. Franklin, Esq.
President & CEO
The Franklin Law Group, P.C.
Baltimore, Maryland
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Gordon, "Whipped Peter," was an enslaved Black man who escaped from a Louisiana plantation in March 1863.
Why this webinar?
Purpose of this webinar

To educate the child welfare community on how to strengthen their service delivery to DCAUS families and communities.
What you will learn:

- Who are descendants of captive and enslaved Africans in the U.S. (DCAUS)?
- Brief historical overview of the DCAUS experience in the U.S.
- What is Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS)?
- Practical tips to work effectively with DCAUS families.
Structure of Presentation

4-Part Presentation

- Section I - Definition of DCAUS
- Section II - Historical overview of the DCAUS experience in the U.S.
- Section III - Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome
- Section IV - Practical tips to work effectively with DCAUS families.
Section I
Descendants of Captive & Enslaved Africans in the U.S. (DCAUS)
Context for Definition

A specific ethnic group within the Black/African American racial category.

Our Ancestors built this country off their backs and propelled the U.S. into the position of the wealthiest country in the world and died doing it, blood and bone in the ground.

I coined the term "DCAUS."
Who is DCAUS?

Definition

- Parent, grandparent, great grandparent born in the U.S. prior to 1965.
- At least one ancestor who was enslaved in the U.S.
- A person who has consistently identified in the Census as Black, African American, Colored or Negro.
- If biracial, your grandparent must meet all 3 prongs.

Sources in provided materials to NACC
DCAUS families have a unique history in the U.S. that has subjected them (us) to a sustained and continuous harm that has produced a specific injury that requires specific redress and repair.
Section II

Brief Historical Overview of the DCAUS Experience in the U.S.
History of Violence & Family Separation

Separation of Mother & Child
Account of a formerly enslaved Black man

"A mother unleashed a piercing scream as her baby was ripped from her arms during a slave auction. Even as a lash cut her back, she refused to put her baby down and climb atop an auction block. The woman pleaded for God’s mercy, Henry Bibb, a former slave, recalled in an 1849 narrative..."But the child was torn from the arms of its mother amid the most heart-rending shrieks from the mother and child on the one hand, and the bitter oaths and cruel lashes from the tyrants on the other. Her mother was sold to the highest bidder."

Narrative of the Life & Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, 1849
Quote from Washington Post Article
The African Holocaust
"The Maafa"

Captured & Sold on the Continent of Africa
Beginning of the Transatlantic Slave Trade
17th Century

- The Africans that were captured and sold came from mainly West, Central, and Southern Africa.
- Some Africans sold other Africans to Europeans for profit.
- Estimated 10-15 million stolen from Africa. Largest forced migration in history.

Source in provided materials to NACC
“Up to 1,000 male and 500 female slaves were shackled and crammed in the castle’s dank, poorly ventilated dungeons, with no space to lie down and very little light. Without water or sanitation, the floor of the dungeon was littered with human waste and many captives fell seriously ill. The men were separated from the women, and the captors regularly raped the helpless women. The castle also featured confinement cells — small pitch-black spaces for prisoners who revolted or were seen as rebellious. Once the slaves set foot in the castle, they could spend up to three months in captivity under these dreadful conditions before being shipped off to the New World.”

Source provided in materials to NACC
"If the Atlantic were to dry up, it would reveal a scattered pathway of human bones, African bones marking the various routes of the Middle Passage."

John Henrik Clarke, Historian

"...people were loaded onto ships and crammed together with sometimes less than 18 inches between them. Here they would dwell for many weeks to several months in the bowels of the ship. They were deprived of any human comfort and shared in a collective misery. This disgusting place was where they slept, wept, ate, defecated, urinated, menstruated, vomitted, gave birth, and died."

Dr. Joy DeGruy

"Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome
America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing"
Chattel Slavery
1619 – 1865
Definition

A system of enslavement where the enslaved are treated as property and can be bought and sold at will. The condition of enslavement is inherited and passed down through generations. "Slave" status in the U.S. was based on the status of the mother. Chattel slavery is known to be the most brutal forms of enslavement.
U.S. Constitution & State Laws Codifying Slavery

- Virginia passes a law in 1662 declaring that a child inherits "slave" status based on the mother's condition.
- Slavery existed in both the North and the South.
- U.S. Constitution of 1787 established the U.S.' government and fundamental laws, and guaranteed certain basic rights for its "citizens."
- Three-fifths Compromise
- Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 & 1850
- Dred Scott v. John F.A. Sanford, 60 U.S. 393 (1857). Held that persons of African descent cannot and were never intended to be citizens under the U.S. Constitution. Plaintiff has no standing to file suit.
"No white could ever rape a slave woman"... "The regulations of law, as to the white race, on the subject of sexual intercourse do not and cannot, for obvious reasons, apply to slaves; their intercourse is promiscuous..."


"The fact that white men could profit from raping their female slaves does not mean that their motive was economic. The rape of slave women by their masters was primarily a weapon of terror that reinforced whites' domination over their human property. Rape was an act of physical violence designed to stifle black women's will to resist and to remind them of their servile status."

Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation declaring "slaves" to be free January 1, 1863.

- 13th amendment abolishing "slavery" occurred in 1865.
- Juneteenth - Texas - 1865

Sources in provided materials to NACC
"Black codes were restrictive laws designed to limit the freedom of African Americans and ensure their availability as a cheap labor force after slavery was abolished during the Civil War."

History.com

"...Mississippi and South Carolina enacted the first black codes. Mississippi’s law required blacks to have written evidence of employment for the coming year each January; if they left before the end of the contract, they would be forced to forfeit earlier wages and were subject to arrest."

History.com

**Apprentice Laws**

"...Black Codes provided another source of labor for white employers — black orphans and the children of vagrants or other destitute parents. The South Carolina code authorized courts to apprentice such black children, even against their will, to an employer until age 21 for males and 18 for females. Masters had the right to inflict moderate punishment on their apprentices and to recapture runaways."

Constitutional Rights Foundation
Utilized as another form of slavery, sharecropping allowed former enslaved Africans to work a portion of the land for money. However, white landowners would keep an "accounting" of monies used by the formerly enslaved to keep them indebted to the white landowner. This accounting would include supplies, equipment to work the fields, etc. Sharecroppers remained indebted to the landowner because of deceiving landowners, high interest rates, etc. This would be reinforced by the law and court system through laws favoring landowners and laws making it illegal for the sharecropper to sell the crops to others besides the landowner.

sharecropping
1866- circa. 1955

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Era of racial segregation (schools, public areas, transportation, hospitals, neighborhoods, etc.).

Segregation was in the North and the South.

Rise of white hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan and other mobs of white vigilantes.

Violence and torture against Black people persisted.

Lynching across the country, including the North, occurred.

Pbs.org

Jackson, Mississippi, 1961
Crowds were swarm to watch a Black person be lynched and burned alive. Lynch mob would cut off body parts, including genitals and would take parts of the body as souvenirs. Pictures would be taken of the barbecue and sent to family members and others. There would be advertisements in the newspapers about the lynchings. Local police officers and governments would allow this to occur and/or would be part of the white vigilante mob.
Lynching of Laura Nelson & her 14-year old son, L.D. Nelson
May 1911
Okfuskee County, Oklahoma

Lynching of Mary Turner
May 19, 1918
Valdosta, Georgia

Mary Turner was 8-months pregnant when she was "hanged, covered with oil and gas, and burned. As she dangled from the rope, a man stepped forward with a pocketknife and ripped open her abdomen in a crude caesarean operation. Out tumbled the prematurely born child...Two feeble cries it gave - and received for answer the heel of a stalwart man, as life was ground out of its tiny form."

"Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome"
Dr. Joy DeGruy
Red Summer was ignited by the race riot in Chicago in the summer of 1919 initiated by white people on the South Side of Chicago.

- Torching and race massacre of Tulsa Oklahoma's Greenwood District, known as "Black Wallstreet," and its Black residents, in 1921 by white vigilante mobs and with the assistance of local government officials.
- Torching and massacre of Rosewood, Florida and its Black residents in 1923.

History.com
Peaceful March for Civil Rights

Protesters hosed & 17-year old boy attacked by vicious dogs.
Birmingham, Alabama 1963
Race Trauma in the 21st Century
Section III
Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome
Trauma & Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V (DSM V)
Criterion A: Stressor -

- The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, as follows: (1 required)
  - Direct exposure
  - Witnessing, in-person
  - Indirectly, by learning that a close relative or close friend was exposed to trauma. If the event involved actual or threatened death, it must have been violent or accidental.
  - Repeated or extreme indirect exposure to aversive details of the event(s), usually in the course of professional duties (i.e. - first responders, professionals repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse). This does not include indirect, non-professional exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures.
Some Symptoms of PTSD

- Intense or prolonged distress after exposure to traumatic reminders.
- Trauma-related external reminders (i.e. - people, places, conversations, activities, objects, or situations).
- Persistent (and often distorted) negative beliefs and expectations about oneself or the world (i.e. - "I am bad." "The world is completely dangerous.")
- Persistent distorted blame of self or others for causing the traumatic event or resulting consequence.
- Persistent negative trauma-related emotions (i.e. - fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame).
- Constricted affect: persistent inability to experience positive emotions.
- Irritable or aggressive behavior.
- Self-destructive or reckless behavior.
- Hyper-vigilance.
**Epigenetics**

**Definition**

The environment can influence our genes and that trauma can be transmitted over generations.

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**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)**

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). For example:

- experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- witnessing violence in the home or community
- having a family member attempt or die by suicide

Also included are aspects of the child’s environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding such as growing up in a household with:

- substance misuse
- mental health problems
- instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison

ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood. ACEs can also negatively impact education and job opportunities. However, ACEs can be prevented.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
"The slave family existed only to serve the master and in order to survive physically, psychologically, and socially the slave family had to develop a system which made survival possible under degrading conditions. The slave society prepared the young to accept exploitation and abuse, to ignore the absence of dignity and respect for themselves as blacks. The social, emotional, and psychological price of this adjustment is well-known."

James Comer
"The Black Family: An Adaptive Perspective" (Unpublished Manuscript, Yale University Study Center, 1980)
Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) Patterns of Behavior

Vacant Esteem
"The state of believing oneself to have little or no worth, exacerbated by similar pronouncements of inferiority from the personal sphere and larger society. Vacant esteem is the net result of three spheres of influence - society, community, and family."

Ever-Present Anger
An anger that smoulders under the surface due to blocked goals and the fear of failure.

Racist Socialization
Adoption of the slave master's/captor's/oppressor's value system. At the foundation of this value system is "the belief that white and all things associated with whiteness are superior and that black and all things associated with blackness are inferior."

"Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome"
Dr. Joy DeGruy
Section IV
Practical Tips to Work Effectively with DCAUS Families
Three-Part Challenge

Individual Racism & Prejudice

Institutional & Structural Racism

DCAUS Family Vulnerabilities & Trauma
Practical Tips to Work Effectively with DCAUS Families

- Build Trust
- Respect
- Compassion
- Boundaries/Firmness
- Anger
Reparatory Justice

Part of a Larger Comprehensive Reparations Package

Mandating DCAUS as a specially protected class entitled to special protections and redress

DCAUS Child-Family Welfare Act
Thank You!

Stephanie S. Franklin, Esq.
President & CEO
The Franklin Law Group, P.C.
Baltimore, MD
sfranklin@franklinlaw.us