# Historical trauma and its effects on American Indian and African American children and their families

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## Historical Context:
## Policies Impacting American Indians

- 1492-1820s Genocide (Colonial Years)
- 1820-1850   Removal
- 1600-1950s Boarding schools
- 1850-1857   Reservation treaties
- 1857-1934   Allotments
- 1934-1953   Indian Reorganization Act
- 1953-1968   Termination and Relocation

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Pueblo Indians from San Filippe, N.M. on arrival and after. Sheldon Jackson (Wattie) John Shilah (Kaiur-iowa) and Harvey Townsend (Hen-ti-ti).
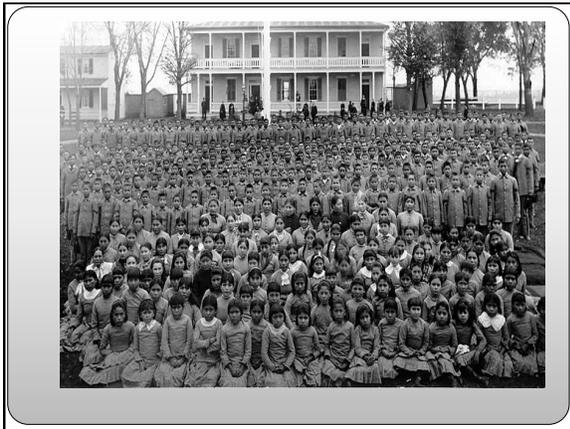
## Impact of boarding schools and the banning of religious practice

- Loss of language, culture, way of life
- Loss of parenting skills
- Low self esteem in generations of Indian people
- These issues remain and can be seen in the high school drop out rates which range between 40-50% or higher and in health disparities

## Historical Context for African American Families

1600s-1865  Slavery

- From the 16th to the 19th centuries, an estimated 645,000 Blacks were brought to the United States.

- By the 1860 US Census, the slave population reached 4 million.

- Jim Crow laws enforce racial segregation.

Example of Jim Crow law

Separate entrances for blacks and whites

## Impact on African American youth

Seven (7) times more likely to be reported as abused or neglected and 8 times more likely to be determined victims of maltreatment than were White children.

### Discussion

#1 What might be the consequences of having your customs, values, traditions, language and spirituality taken away?

#2 What would have to happen to you to make you stop speaking your language?

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### And...

#3 How would you feel if your entire family was separated and you would see them again?

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### Definition of Historical Trauma

"The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including trauma experienced in one's own lifespan, which emanates from massively traumatized group history."

M.Y. H. Brave Heart, 1998

## Response to Historical Trauma

- Anxiety
- Intrusive trauma imagery
- Depression
- Survivor guilt
- Elevated mortality rates from cardiovascular diseases as well as suicide and other forms of violent death
- Identification with ancestral pain and deceased ancestors
- Psychic numbing (dissociation) and poor affect tolerance
- Unresolved grief

(M.Y. H. Brave Heart, 2006)

## Effects of Historical Trauma

High rates of …
- Suicide
- Homicide
- Accidental deaths
- Domestic violence
- Child Abuse
- Alcoholism

Social problems are the result of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations

(M.Y. H. Brave Heart, 1998)

## Contemporary Violence

MicroAggressions

## Definitions

MICROINSULT

MICROINVALIDATION

MICROASSAULT

## Statistical Data: National Indian Child Welfare Association (2004)

- 29% live in poor families.

- American Indian children make up 1% of the child population but 2% of children in foster care.

- 10,398 were victims of child maltreatment.

- 33% are under the age of 18, compared with 26 percent of the total population.

- They have one of the highest rates of victimization at 15.5 per 1,000 children.

## Additional Statistics for American Indian youth

- The suicide rate is 2-3 times higher than the general U.S. rate for young males ages 15-24. Accounts for 64% of all American Indian suicides.

- More than half of those who committed suicide had never been seen by a mental health provider, yet 90% of all teens who die by suicide suffer from a diagnosable mental illness at the time of death.

- Alcohol-related deaths for ages 15-24 are 17 times higher than the national average for the same age group.

- In 2001, 74% of youth in custody in the Federal Bureau of Prisons system were Indian youth, a 50% increase since 1994.

### African American Youth

- There is diversity within the African American and Black community.
- African American children make up 15% of the child population but 34% of the children in foster care
- They are 2.4 times more likely to be placed in foster care than the national child population
- African American children are the 2nd largest percentage of racial-ethnic group in foster care
- African American children make up 30% of those awaiting adoption

Schwartz, A. (2010)

### Health Statistics for Black Youth (2007)

- The homicide rate was higher for Black males age 15-24 than for white males same age
- The infant mortality rate was highest for children of black mothers 13.31 per 1,000 live births compared to 6.75 overall
- Black children were more likely to have a learning disability (10%) than white children (8%)
- Black children were more likely to have ADHD (11%) than white children (10%)
- Black children were more likely to miss school (35%) than white children (25%) due to illness or injury

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010)

### Implication for practitioners

- They need to find out their clients family history (e.g. boarding school survivors)
- Understand that not all families are the same
- Understand the families culture and child rearing practices
- Collaborate with the family in addressing mental health needs
- Provide culturally appropriate services

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