

POST SCRIPT TO THE HARM IS TO OUR GENES

from the desk of N'COBRA Health Commission



African Centered Healing Is Essential to Our Health and Well-being N'COBRA Health Commission

If we as African Americans are ever to heal our community from the deleterious epigenetic and traumatic consequences of enslavement, Jim Crow apartheid and colonialism, we must first boldly confront, overturn, and disentangle ourselves from the epistemes that uphold the fallacies of white superiority. And toward that end it is imperative that we take agency over our own bodies, which includes accessing our own healing systems.

Western medicine has been used historically as a tool of power, as a weapon against Africans and other oppressed people, to advance European imperialist designs.⁽¹⁾ Western medicine is based on the premise that Eurocentric scientific analysis is absolute, and that its concept of medicine is the only framework in which medicine should operate. In most cases it asserts a monopoly on truth. {Richardson, Epidemic Illusions 5-6}.⁽²⁾

We understand the foundation of western medicine is based on the premise of white superiority, which actively engages in the denigration of the humanity of African people.⁽³⁾ From Benjamin Rush,⁽⁴⁾ who described Black skin as being caused by leprosy and who is considered the father of modern day psychiatry (his image was only recently removed from the logo of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 2015).⁽⁵⁾; to Samuel Cartwright⁽⁶⁾, a prominent 19th century doctor who wrote that Black people were biologically built for slavery and who characterized our desire for freedom as a disease (drapetomania) to be cured by whipping or amputating toes; to J. Marion Simms⁽⁷⁾, the father of gynecology who violently experimented on enslaved African women and children, forbidding anesthesia because Blacks women, he said, didn't feel pain⁽⁸⁾; to Richard Herrnstein, one of the authors of the Bell Curve⁽⁹⁾, which stated that African people were scientifically intellectually inferior to white people; to the American Psychiatric Association's response to the urban rebellions of the sixties in the rebranding of schizophrenia as a violent disease of the threatening, angry Black man. (Recently, the 176 year old organization issued an apology.⁽¹⁰⁾ for its racist past)⁽¹¹⁾ - western medicine gave scholarly license to the racial terrorism committed against African American bodies and our psyche.

As African people, we cannot dispel or deny this truth, nor normalize the power dynamic that systems of oppression have over the oppressed.

In contrast to the Western school of medicine, the African medical praxis views the world as a unified body

POST SCRIPT TO THE HARM IS TO OUR GENES

from the desk of N'COBRA Health Commission

where things are understood in terms of the collective effort, and whereby healing is communal.⁽¹²⁾ This framework holds that healing is grounded in both flesh and spirituality, involving every aspect of one's life, and that it takes on many forms. Thus, healing from transgenerational epigenetic inheritance and transgenerational transmission of trauma, where the injury is projected into the future of our progeny, will require involvement from every aspect of African American society to create a new epistemological, liberatory health praxis in Black America with the ultimate goal of empowerment. As Karanja Keita Carroll and DeReef F. Jamison so presciently intimated in "African-Centered Psychology, Education and the Liberation of African Minds: Notes on the Psycho-Cultural Justification for Reparations," healing for Black people must be African centered and liberatory, and "must have a transformative function in the lives of African people, by functioning as a mechanism of social change and it must also attack all that which is an affront to African existence."⁽¹³⁾

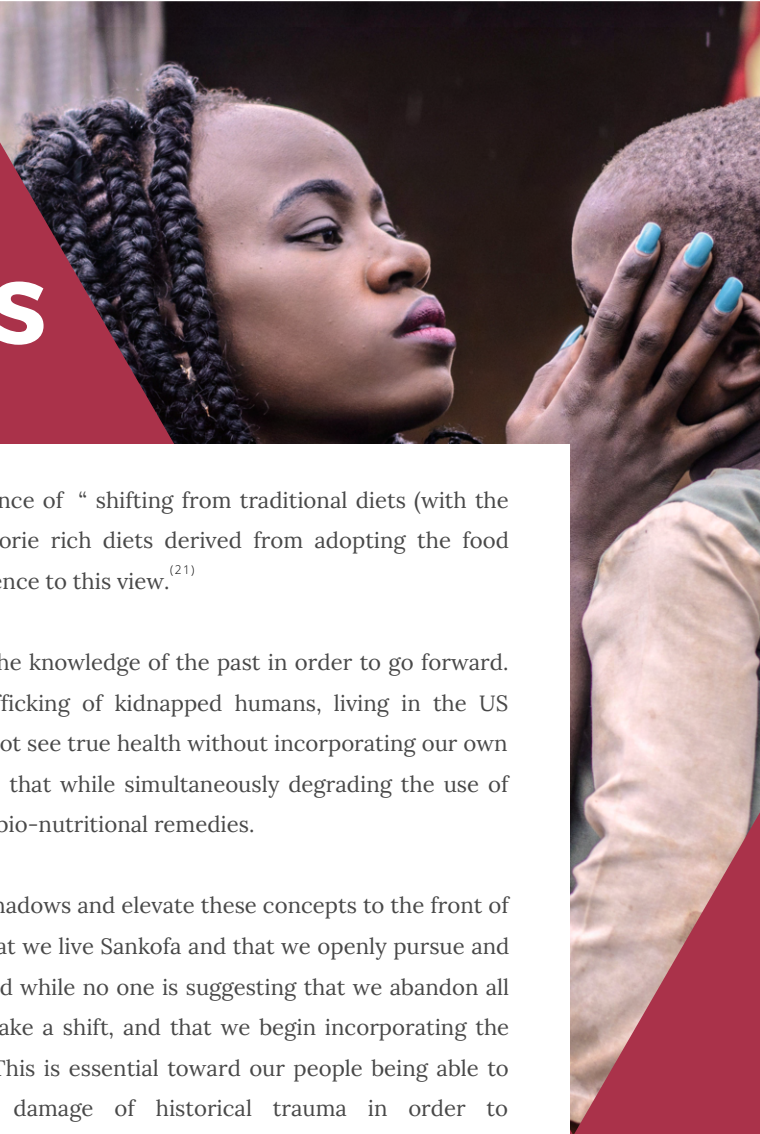
Currently, there is a growing call afoot for African Americans and all oppressed people to decolonize our minds, and decolonizing healthcare is a part of that call.⁽¹⁴⁾ In addition to the work of the Ausar Auset Society International⁽¹⁵⁾ that was mentioned earlier in the Report, the Community Healing Network, in partnership with the Association of Black Psychologists, have been active around the country. As a result, their Emotional Emancipation Circles are on the rise.⁽¹⁶⁾ This movement has to a large extent been propelled by the healing works of people such as Amos Wilson, Dr. Joy DeGruy, Dr. Franz Fanon, and more. These are just a couple of initiatives that have already begun. Clearly, however, African American society needs a greater more comprehensive, all-encompassing approach that involves all sectors of our society – the clergy, educators, students, medical practitioners, scientists, artists and everyday people to create the necessary healing pathways.

In the African tradition, there is also a nutritional component to healing trauma, as the study of epigenetics is illuminating the multidimensional benefits of nutrition⁽¹⁷⁾. Western medicine is slowly recognizing that food is so much more than the transfer of energy and vital nutrients throughout the body, but that it is also able to affect the genome and the very genetic expression of our descendants for generations to come.⁽¹⁸⁾

Africa, as the cradle of human civilization, has the longest history of the domestication of plants for food and medicine in the world and is home to the richest microbial diversity on the planet.⁽¹⁹⁾ Africa has a rich history in the healing arts, in which plants, energy, and minerals are used medicinally.⁽²⁰⁾ This system is known as Traditional African Medicine (TAM), Prior to European colonialism, TAM influenced a large percentage of the world. The colonial imposition of western medicine, along with its food and dietary choices has been a major attack on African indigenous knowledge systems. The many studies on the deleterious health effects on Africans who adopt a Western lifestyle, defined by Maurice M. Iwu, a professor of Pharmacognosy in Nigeria,



POST SCRIPT TO
**THE HARM IS
 TO OUR GENES**
from the desk of Onaje Muid



and head of the country's COVID task force, as a consequence of “ shifting from traditional diets (with the protective functional foods from the forests) to more calorie rich diets derived from adopting the food systems of the more developed countries,” gives added credence to this view.⁽²¹⁾

Sankofa is a Ghanaian word which means we must retrieve the knowledge of the past in order to go forward.

Clearly, as African descendants of the Transatlantic trafficking of kidnapped humans, living in the US disconnected from our African knowledge systems, we will not see true health without incorporating our own knowledge systems of healing. We must also acknowledge that while simultaneously degrading the use of TAM, Big Pharma has made billions⁽²²⁾ appropriating Africa's bio-nutritional remedies.

As Black people it is time that we pull TAM from out of the shadows and elevate these concepts to the front of our medical lexicon and healing practice,. It is imperative that we live Sankofa and that we openly pursue and receive the inheritance of the vast knowledge of Africa. And while no one is suggesting that we abandon all that we have learned in the US, it is imperative that we make a shift, and that we begin incorporating the African part of our identity into every aspect of our lives. This is essential toward our people being able to powerfully mitigate the psychological and epigenetic damage of historical trauma in order to transgenerationally transmit health and the fullness of Africa's treasures to our progeny well into the future.

Finally, we repeat the Charge of Genocide as William Patterson presented in his petition to the United Nations in 1951, seventy years ago. Therefore we DEMAND REPARATIONS NOW.⁽²³⁾

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
 Article II

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.


 Lisa Davis


 Onaje Muid