

Black Women's Mental Health History: Contexts for Illness and Wellness

Edited by Stephanie Y. Evans

CALL FOR BOOK CHAPTERS | DEADLINE: MARCH 30, 2020

On June 7, 2019, actress Taraji P. Henson delivered emotional testimony to the United States Congress about the vital need for mental health services in African American communities. Henson passionately attested to the dire need to destigmatize challenges such as anxiety and depression that disproportionately impact Black families. Historical research focused on balanced models of mental illness and wellness must be included in what Henson calls “culturally competent” tool kits used by service providers to address this ongoing crisis. Henson, invited to Congress to discuss the topic, “Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health,” sought to raise awareness by sharing her personal connection to the issue and “break the silence to end the cycle of shame” around issues of anxiety and depression that cause so many to self-harm. It is imperative to develop a deeper understanding of the historical roots of mental illness in the Black community. It is equally important to learn and teach about wellness.

Early African American women pioneers of mental health research, including psychologists Ruth Howard Becham (University of Minnesota, 1934) and Mamie Phipps Clark (Columbia University, 1943) made critical interventions in psychology, particularly child psychology, by operating from strength-based assessments of Black children and analyzing the impacts of racism in American society. Clark developed mental health intervention programs to strengthen self-consciousness and understand self-esteem development in terms of power. Black girlhood studies has evolved to include sociology, social work, and historical perspectives that traces the self-worth of those most directly impacted by intersections of racism and sexism. This convergence, what Kimberly Crenshaw dubbed intersectionality, results in disproportionate harm to Black women's health. In this light, it is imperative to reference several generations of researchers who point to viable approaches to improve and maintain wellbeing. Counselors, therapists, social workers, social justice advocates, and mental health educators who work with Black women can benefit from historical narratives of both oppression and transformation that render Black women's experiences visible in all their complex formations.

Black Women's Mental Health History will engage authors and readers in an interdisciplinary discussion focused on historical contexts of mental health in terms of both illness and wellness. The focus on illness will highlight historical foundations of public health problems that disproportionately impact Black women and families. The focus on wellness will identify environmental roots of ongoing issues but also chart longstanding healing traditions in order to more effectively promote holistic health. In the intellectual lineage of W. E. B. Du Bois and generations of women researchers like Mamie Clark, we acknowledge that Black women have problems, but Black women, ourselves, are not *the* problem.

Chapters are welcome that explore the psychological, physiological, and behavioral histories of Black women. Co-authored contributions, interdisciplinary approaches, inclusive gender analyses, and international topics that engage the African diaspora are especially encouraged. This volume is a continuation of the Black Women's Mental Health Project and will be submitted to SUNY Press for the *Black Women's Wellness* Series.

For more information, visit:

- *Black Women's Mental Health* (2017) book: <http://www.bwmentalhealth.net/book.html>
- SUNY *Black Women's Wellness* book series: <https://www.sunypress.edu/l-49-series.aspx>

Send chapters to contact@professorevans.net by Monday, March 30, 2020.

- Only complete, original, and polished chapters will be reviewed (do not send drafts or reprints).
- Submit chapters between 7000-8000 words, inclusive of notes and bibliography (Word document, APA citation style).
- Include 200-word bio of all authors, 6 keywords, and 200 word abstract at the end of document.