



African American Behavioral Health CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

The “Healing History” Series on Behavioral Health Equity for African Americans

“There is no cure for history. It happened. It is happening.”

Those first words of the [Healing History self-study and discussion guide](#) (Woll, 2021) point to some essential challenges for the behavioral health field. If we want to respond effectively to the depth and breadth of the behavioral health challenges that African American communities face, we will need a deeper understanding of our nation’s past and some of the ways it has led to our present—and how it is propelling us toward our future.



Photo courtesy The National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

For example, what does history have to do with:

- Why many of the people most in need of help have the hardest time getting the help they need?
- Why it can be hard to engage and retain Black participants in behavioral health services?
- Why some Black participants you sincerely want to help might seem to mistrust you?
- Why some African American potential patients/clients are more likely to seek help from their faith leaders than from behavioral health providers?

The [Healing History self-study and discussion guide](#) explores the connections between the historical trauma inflicted on enslaved Africans, the abuse and inequities that their descendants have endured, the social determinants of health, and the behavioral health conditions that many Black communities, families, and individuals face. It also provides thought/discussion questions that help behavioral health professionals integrate this material into their work and make their services safer and more effective.

There is also a [Healing History Web Page](#) on the African American Behavioral Health Center of Excellence Website. It offers a growing series of chapters focused on the history itself, with each chapter also linking to songs, poetry, artwork, videos, web pages, and documents that highlight important events, ideas, or authors.

In collaboration with Special Advisor Mark Sanders, LCSW, CADC and the Healing History Advisory Group (Tanya Jules, MPH and Kaneisha Gaston, MPH), the new Web Page is developing under the care of Senior Consultant Pamela Woll, MA, CPS, author of the [Healing History self-study and discussion guide](#). (Woll, P. (2021). [Healing history: Where history meets behavioral health equity for African Americans](#). Atlanta, GA: African American Behavioral Health Center of Excellence.)