



Muslim Wellness
FOUNDATION

The Sky Is Over

Self-Care for Black Muslims

[BLACKMUSLIMPSYCHOLOGY.ORG/BLACKMUSLIMSELF CARE](https://blackmuslimpsychology.org/blackmuslimselfcare)

The Sky Is Ours: A Self-Care Primer for Black Muslims

By Kameelah Mu'Min Rashad, Founder – Muslim Wellness Foundation

We who are uniquely impacted by both anti-Black racism and anti-Muslim bigotry and violence are standing at this beautiful and complicated intersection. We are deeply wounded by the ongoing extrajudicial killings of Black people. Furthermore, as a result of our experiences with racial bigotry and oppression, Black Muslims remain steadfast yet hypervigilant given the rise of hate crimes against Muslims across the country. This vigilance and strength in the face of these assaults take an emotional and psychological toll we don't often acknowledge, recognize or know how to address. It is time that we address the unresolved trauma, pain, fear, and despair that is keenly and uniquely felt by Black Muslims in these moments of crisis and upheaval. Engaging in a fierce and dedicated practice of self-care is one way in which we can begin to heal.

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Being Black and Muslim in the post-9/11, post-Ferguson era

*"The dead won't let me sleep
The living won't let me die in peace
My heart filled with the yesterday that never happened
My hands filled with my face
My long breaths bleeding between my fingers"
~Amir Sulaiman, Come To The Hills (We Must Win)*

On the last day of our holiest month, breaking news about a murder of a 37 year old Black man in Baton Rouge begin to slowly bleed through the litany of cheerful, hopeful greetings of "Eid Mubarak"! Alton Sterling, known as the "CD Man", was gunned down outside a Louisiana convenience store. I'll be honest. I wouldn't click on those posted articles. I didn't want to know. I was angry and feeling shamefully selfish. This is my HOLIDAY!!! Can't I, can't WE get a moment of peace? To live? To breathe? To celebrate? I wanted to scream at the top of my lungs. How DARE you KILL us like this?! AGAIN. and AGAIN. and AGAIN.

Throughout most of Eid day, I remain outwardly calm, smiling with a tight jaw. I swallowed that lump in my throat, but I knew that this dark cloud would follow as more details emerged.

#AltonSterling

His name begin to forcefully break through the thin veneer of denial I had created to insulate me from the knowing.
#AltonSterling

"I Want My Daddy"

The raw, gut wrenching despair heard in the voice of Alton Sterling's 15 year old son as he pleaded for his murdered Father....Ya Rabb. This shattered my heart.

I made a promise to myself that I would not watch the video of Alton Sterling's death. In contradiction to a popular adage, we DON'T always have to SEE to BELIEVE.

This past Wednesday evening (7/6), I was trying in vain to focus. I wanted to make a dent in my ever-growing to do lists of tasks and (overdue) work and school-related assignments. Yet, like the self-professed news junkie I am, I turned to CNN and put the TV on mute. I happened to look up from my laptop and accidentally saw the video of Alton Sterling tackled to the ground and shot 5 times at point blank range. I was stunned. Enraged. Distracted. Unable to sleep, I was still awake at midnight when another name begin to slowly emerge. #PhilandoCastile.

'It's ok Mommy, I'm right here with you'

In a matter of seconds, a 32year old beloved cafeteria supervisor from St. Paul MN was brutally gunned down in his car after being pulled over for a busted tail light. His fiancée Diamond Reynolds [live-streamed](#) and narrated the horrifying last minutes of his death. All while her 4 year old daughter Dae Dae sat in the back seat of the car. I thought "this must be a mistake. This can't be". A nightmare unfolding before my eyes....

I admit still
Shookin' up every time I see Emmett's grill
Until my molars spark and I taste battery acid
Maybe that's too drastic
Maybe I'm overreacting
Maybe seeing dead babies shouldn't phase me
But it does
It does
It does
Are we not flesh and bone?
Are we not minds and souls?
Are eyes either blind or closed
As if we don't see
As if we don't know
They'll kill you!
They'll kill you
They'll kill you like it's no Biggie
No Diddy
~Amir Sulaiman, Come To The Hills (We Must Win)

#BeingBlackandMuslim in a post-9/11, post-Ferguson world

As we all struggle to cope with the onslaught of unexpected but incessant death and violence, I feel compelled to turn my care, my ministry, my love and comfort intentionally towards members of my community. Black Muslims. We who are uniquely impacted by both antiBlack racism and antiMuslim bigotry and violence. Standing at this beautiful and complicated intersection, we are deeply wounded by the deaths of Black people. According to a policy brutality database created by The Guardian called [The Counted](#), 137 Black people have been killed in 2016 as a result of deadly force. We cry silently as the name of yet another slain man, woman or child becomes a trending hashtag. A man, woman or child who looks like someone we love dearly (there but for the grace of God go I).

This particular political cycle has ushered in a new and emboldened form of Islamophobic rhetoric and discrimination. According to a report by the [Bridge Initiative](#) titled: [When Islamophobia Turns Violent: The 2016 US Presidential Elections](#), in the last 16 months, there have been approximately 180 reported incidents of anti-Muslim violence, including: 12 murders; 34 physical assaults; 49 verbal assaults or threats against persons and institutions; 56 acts of vandalisms or destruction of property; 9 arsons; and 8 shootings or bombings, among other incidents. In the last 10 days alone, Muslims have been brutally attacked, stabbed, shot and injured in [Brooklyn, NY](#), [Houston, TX](#), and [Dinkytown, MN](#).

As a result of our experiences with racial bigotry and oppression, Black Muslims remain steadfast yet hypervigilant given the rise of hate crimes against Muslims across the country (trust in Allah and tie your camel). This vigilance and strength in the face of these assaults take an emotional and psychological toll we don't often acknowledge, recognize or now how to address.

[Saudah Saleem](#), entrepreneur, blogger, wife and mother of 5 succinctly captures the unique overwhelming emotional challenge inherent in being Black and Muslim and living in a post-Ferguson, post 9/11 era:

"We started our week so excited to celebrate the ending of our holy month and began Eid morning with our family tradition of getting dressed in our finest clothes, opening gifts and then hurrying to the park to join our community in prayer and celebration. However, literally amidst the celebrations that day a video began circulating. "Have you heard? have you seen this yet?", as cell phones were passed around. Not AGAIN. I tried not to let the news permeate my joyful mood. After all, we'd been waiting 30 days to celebrate. But the next morning, we awoke to ANOTHER video of gruesome murder at the hands of law enforcement and I began to feel sick...and tired. The range of emotions I've felt over the past few days is overwhelming. I was raised to be proud of who and I am and firm in what I believe. I raise my children in the same manner in which I was raised. To be Black, to be a Muslim in America at this time is not for the faint of heart but it is who I, unapologetically, am."

Strength & Perseverance

In the Black community, there exists a cultural imperative to be strong, stoic and resilient in the face of unimaginable horrors. This has kept us living, loving and thriving for hundreds of years. The poise and courage of Diamond Reynolds as she witnessed her loved one die in front of her, exemplifies this almost incomprehensible fortitude. The emphasis on patience and perseverance from an Islamic perspective resonates strongly with the cultural image/stereotype of indomitable Black strength. Verses from the Holy Qu'ran related to suffering and trials are often used as a form of religious coping and to frame emotional issues:

"Oh you who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer, for God is with those who patiently persevere."
Holy Qu'ran (Chapter 2:Verse 153)

While this spiritual understanding of suffering may provide solace, many still struggle silently with feelings of grief, anxiety and sadness or depression. We can no longer deny that this call to be strong and persevere comes at a cost. We are asked to be gracious, forgiving; respectful, polite and calm while being terrorized. Our Black pain, suffering and grief in these moments is not validated or acknowledged. In fact, many turn away from the inconvenient and uncomfortable reality of the pain and degradation Black people continue to endure. This unspoken pain may manifest itself in other ways: in poor eating/over eating and diet, abuse of drugs or alcohol, extreme stress, high blood pressure and heart disease.

On the boat with Jesus' name

Lucifer came

And then proof of our name went poof, David Blaine

Disappeared between the noose and the chains

Euthanasia introducing the youth to the cane

So we singing

We rapping

Attempts to reducing the pain

We don't know what else to do with the pain

We don't know what else to do with the pain

~Amir Sulaiman, Come To The Hills (We Must Win)

Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare. - Audre Lorde

It is time that we address the unresolved trauma, pain, fear, and despair that is keenly and uniquely felt by Black Muslims in these moments of crisis and upheaval. Engaging in a fierce and dedicated practice of self-care is one way in which we can begin to heal. Self-care is defined as a set of actions, practices or rituals that help an individual restore balance in one's life and improve physical, mental and emotional health. In other words, self-care is: "one's ability to pay attention to, take responsibility for, and engage in practices that nurture one's body, mind and spirit in order to manage stress and live happier, more effective lives".

The sky is ours
Heaven's fallen
We either fly or die
We
Must
Win
We have died so many times
They have killed us so many times
We have died so many deaths
We have died for everyone
We have died for everything
We have died for nothing
We are done with death
We are done with death
We will not die another day
We are the true and living and
We
Must
Win

~Amir Sulaiman, Come To The Hills (We Must Win)

Despite the challenges that Black people generally, and Black Muslims specifically face, we are also a resilient and vibrant community with limitless potential. Donna Auston, scholar, activist and PhD Candidate in Anthropology offered this brilliant [Ramadan reflection](#) on [Sapelo Square](#) (an online resource on African American Islam): "*We, Africa's displaced children, see ourselves in Musa. The very land that engineered our captivity, received the stolen bodies of our ancestors, and continues to enact violence upon us, leaving scars we can see and many more that we cannot, is also our source of strength. It is our home. We are the parable of the goodly tree, the seed of Word and prayer planted by our foremothers and forefathers, a tree whose roots have been firmly fixed, in bitterness and toil, whose branches reach to the heavens (14:26). Through the hard work of cultivation in our individual selves, in the various collectives to which we belong, and faith in a hopeful future that we cannot always see, we are transformed.*"

Inshallah (God willing) we have the power and potential to not only survive, but thrive through the challenges that confront us. Black Muslims can experience what is called [post-traumatic growth](#): a positive change experienced as a result of the struggle with a major life crisis or a traumatic event. This crisis can help us as individuals and community members develop a sense that new opportunities have emerged from the struggle, opening up possibilities that were not present before. It can lead to an increased sense of connection to others, a renewed understanding of our own strength, a greater appreciation for the life that we have been given and a deeper commitment to our deen (way of life). We must be unwavering in our dedication to self-care and emotional well-being. Caring for our holistic health is an act of resistance and commitment to a vision of a healthy and flourishing community.

This **Black Muslim Self-Care Primer** will cover the following (click on any link to go directly to that page):

[What is Trauma? What Are the Emotional & Psychological Symptoms of Trauma?](#)

[Self-Care Tips & Strategies](#)

[Create Your Own Self-Care Plan](#)

[Mental Health Resources & Helpful Links](#)

***We
Must
Win***

Watch Amir Sulaiman's gripping performance of this poem: *Come To The Hills (We Must Win)* [here](#):

What Is Trauma?

What Are The Emotional and Psychological Symptoms of Trauma?

Decades of [research](#) have proven that Black Americans' physical and mental health is negatively impacted by experiences of discrimination and oppression. Essentially, Black folks are traumatized by racism and this has a very detrimental effect on almost every aspect of our lives. Sometimes this trauma is called race-based trauma, or race-based traumatic stress injury.

Traumatic experiences often **involve a threat to life or safety**, but any situation that leaves you feeling overwhelmed and alone can be traumatic, even if it doesn't involve physical harm. It's not the objective facts that determine whether an event is traumatic, but your subjective emotional experience of the event. The more frightened and helpless you feel, the more likely you are to be traumatized.

An experience can be perceived as traumatic if it destroys your sense of safety, leaving you feeling overwhelmed and helpless. Witnessing the murder of innocent Black men, women and children can certainly be a traumatic event.

According to one definition, an event will most likely lead to emotional or psychological trauma if:

- It happened unexpectedly.
- You were unprepared for it.
- You felt powerless to prevent it.
- It happened repeatedly.

Each extra judicial killing at the hands of a member of law enforcement often happens unexpectedly, we are woefully emotionally unprepared to deal with it, we feel powerless to prevent it and despite appeals for reform and accountability, it continues to happen.

SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

PHYSICAL

- Fatigue or sleep disturbances: Insomnia (inability to sleep) or hypersomnia (sleeping more than usual)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Edginess and agitation
- Insomnia or nightmares
- Being startled easily
- Racing heartbeat
- Aches and pains
- Eating disturbances: loss of appetite or overeating
- Low energy
- Sexual dysfunction

PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL

- Depression, spontaneous crying, despair and hopelessness
- Shock, denial, or disbelief
- Anger, irritability, mood swings
- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Emotional numbness or feeling disconnected
- Withdrawal from normal routine and relationships
- Confusion, difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety and fear

SPIRITUAL

- Lack of meaning or hope
- Feeling a sense of despair or disconnected from God or purpose
- Feeling empty or cynical
- Difficulty envisioning a brighter future
- Thinking "Is God punishing me?" or "Why is this happening?"

[Racial Battle Fatigue](#) is a term coined by researcher Dr. William Smith to describe the ongoing and cumulative stress many Black people feel as a result of dealing with subtle and overt manifestations of racism and discrimination. Dr. Smith writes that this fatigue “is the result of constant physiological, psychological, cultural, and emotional coping with racial microaggressions in less-than-ideal and racially hostile or unsupportive environments. Microaggressions are subtle but offensive comments or slights directed at a Black person. An example of a microaggression is a statement like “I don’t see color” or “I don’t understand, don’t all lives matter?” The cumulative symptoms of racial battle fatigue are both physiological and psychological.

SYMPTOMS OF RACIAL BATTLE FATIGUE

PHYSICAL

- Tension headaches and backaches
- Elevated heart beat
- Rapid breathing in anticipation of racial conflict
- An upset stomach or “butterflies,”
- Extreme fatigue
- Ulcers
- Loss of appetite
- Elevated blood pressure.

PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL

- Constant anxiety and worrying
- Increased swearing and complaining
- Inability to sleep
- Sleep broken by haunting, conflict-specific dreams
- Intrusive thoughts and images
- Loss of self-confidence
- Difficulty in thinking coherently or being able to articulate (confirming stereotype)
- Hypervigilance
- Frustration
- Denial
- John Henryism, or prolonged, high-effort coping with difficult psychological stressors
- Emotional and social withdrawal
- Anger, anger suppression, and verbal or nonverbal expressions of anger
- Keeping quiet
- Resentment

Self-Care Tips & Strategies

Given the ongoing fight against police brutality and efforts to combat rising anti-Muslim bigotry, it is no surprise that many are experiencing some of the symptoms described above: from shock to outrage. Black Muslims must practice self-care and self-love with a renewed sense of urgency, determination and commitment. It is also important to note that the anniversary of the deaths of Sandra Bland (d. 7/13/15) and Eric Garner (7/17/14) are only a few short days away. This will be a difficult time of remembrance and mourning for many. Having a self-care plan ready can help provide ease during this challenging time. Here are a few practical tips for those that are looking for strategies to cope with the horror, shock and fear triggered by recent events, specifically the deaths of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile.

Take A Break From Social Media



Seriously. This is often difficult for many of us to do. We want to stay informed and plugged into all of the breaking news. Yet we consume an overwhelming amount of harmful images and negative stereotypes and this consumption can be extremely disheartening and toxic. If your work or advocacy requires that you follow trending topics, at the very least, set limits around how much time you devote to being online. For example, turn your phone off and do not check social media until one hour after waking in the morning and log off one hour before going to bed. Lastly, do NOT engage in online debates or feel the need to respond to every offensive comment, tweet or snap. The world will continue to spin on its axis if you decide NOT to reply to the racist comment posted by a friend of a friend of your high school acquaintance.

Stay Connected

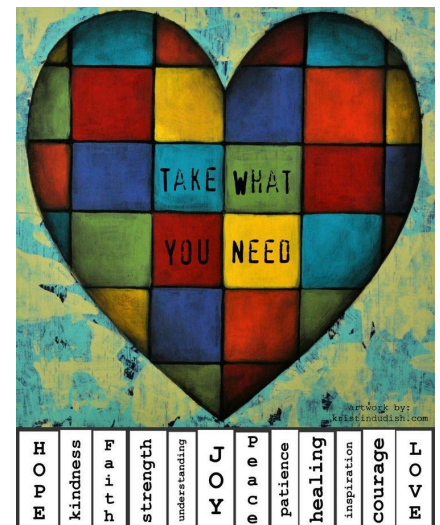
One of the symptoms of trauma and grief is the tendency to withdraw and isolate from others. Instead, reach out to those you trust and share your pain. Chances are, your loved ones are struggling in similar ways.

Be vulnerable.

Seek comfort from those that “get it”.

Ask for a hug.

Say “this hurts and I’m overwhelmed”.



Have Fun (Laugh)!

It is easy to sink into despair and hopelessness thinking about all of the hate, violence and chaos in the world. We are all trying to cope in this challenging times but we must also bear in mind that staying connected to all that brings us joy and happiness provides hope. The hashtag #CareFreeBlackKids2k16 was created with this idea in mind - as a reminder that joy and laughter are often our best antidote to despair.

Suggestions:

Play a board game like scrabble

Jump rope

Buy a coloring book and crayons

Have a dance party

Sing out loud!

Blow bubbles

Prayer, Supplication & Meditation

The wisdom and value of salat (prayer) and duaa (supplication) cannot be overstated. It is understandably hard to concentrate when the world feels as if it's heading a break neck speed towards some prophesized doom. Yet, this is EXACTLY the time when turning to Allah (swt) will provide comfort and ease. In fact, it is reported that Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: Beware the duaa of the oppressed, for nothing stands between it and Allah.

- Develop a ritual around each prayer time – if you can, give yourself a few minutes to sit, contemplate and reflect before rushing back into the regular routine of the day. This 5-10 minutes can help bring back clarity and focus.
- Make a list of your favorite verses from the Qu'ran or hadith that resonate with you and offer reassurance.

Here are a few examples:

- The Prophet (saw) said: "No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that." [Sahih Bukhari]
- "And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient. Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return." Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided. Qu'ran (2: 155-157)

The Prophet Muhammad (saw) would make this [duaa](#) often: O Allah, I take refuge in You from anxiety and sorrow, weakness and laziness, miserliness and cowardice, the burden of debts and from being overpowered by men {*Allahumma inni a'udhu bika minal-hammi wal-Huzni wal-'ajazi wal-kasli wal-bukhli wal-jubni wa dalaEid-dayni wa ghalabatir-rijal*}.



- “And We send down of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe (Qu’ran 17:82).
- Download a Quran app. Listening to the soothing words of our Holy Book can be the perfect medicine in times of distress.
Download a mindfulness or meditation app on your phone. Apps like Headspace, Buddhify and Stop, Breathe, Think offer an easy way of tracking your emotions and steps towards guided breathing, meditation and silent reflection. For some suggestions, take a look at the reviews found [here](#) and [here](#).

Get Active!

It is an undeniable fact that physical activity reduces stress. According to the [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#), exercise and other physical activity produce endorphins—chemicals in the brain that act as natural painkillers—and also improve the ability to sleep, which in turn reduces stress. Even FIVE MINUTES of activity can noticeably reduce anxiety levels. Psychologists studying how exercise relieves anxiety and depression suggest that a 10-minute walk may be just as good as a 45-minute workout. Some studies show that exercise can work quickly to elevate depressed mood in many people. Although the effects may be temporary, they demonstrate that a brisk walk or other simple activity can deliver several hours of relief, similar to taking an aspirin for a headache. Now I’m not suggesting that you begin training for a marathon! But moving your body in some way can improve your mood. Here are some tips:

- March in place (high-knees) for five (5) minutes
- Do 10-15 jumping jacks
- Go for a brisk 10 minute walk (raise your heart rate).
- More suggestions [here](#)
- Don’t forget to pay attention to [diet](#): What we eat and drink largely impacts our emotional state. Foods most associated with exacerbating anxiety are ones containing [caffeine](#) and alcohol. Even consumed in small amounts, studies have found that the stimulating effects of caffeine can cause anxiety, trigger panic attacks, and increase feelings of nervousness and irritability

Pamper Yourself!

Most people assume that self-care must take the form of a day at the spa, or spending money on a pedicure or manicure. While a luxurious facial and massage can make a WORLD of difference, there are many other no-cost options available as well.

- Drink a cup of (de-caffeinated) herbal tea
- Take a hot bath or shower
- Burn a scented candle and breathe in the aroma



Indulge yourself! Eat a piece of dark [chocolate](#)

- Find more suggestions [here](#)

Find A Therapist



Let's make one thing clear: seeking help is NOT a sign of weakness or ingratitude for the blessings Allah has bestowed upon us. For those experiencing anxiety, depression or simply being overwhelmed by life stressors, **stigma** acts as a significant barrier to seeking the help that is needed. In the American Muslim community, mental health challenges are just as prevalent as in other communities, yet stigma stemming from cultural and religious beliefs many Muslims to feel that they must **suffer in silence**. American Muslims struggling with mental illness or addiction may attribute their experience to **weak faith**, a **punishment** from God or test of perseverance and fortitude. Other barriers also exist that make seeking help incredibly difficult, including discrimination, racism, **Islamophobia** and lack of mental health professionals with a basic knowledge of Islam and Muslims.

[The Ladipo Group](#) is an African American owned therapy practice in Philadelphia and explains why counseling can be so beneficial:

With all of the struggles and oppressions that we face on a daily basis we need an outlet. We need a comfortable environment where we can talk about the impact oppression has on us and talk about healthy and productive ways to deal with it. Holding in the pain, frustration, anger, and sadness eats at you, leaving you feeling angry and dissatisfied, not a rewarding way to go through life. When you find an effective therapist, therapy can be a place to gain support and find more satisfying ways to live life. It is the one place, perhaps the only place, where you don't have to have all of the answers and you don't have to worry about the person sitting across from you. It is a place where you only have to worry about yourself and your needs

While it is true that finding a competent and qualified counselor/therapist/psychologist/psychiatrist may take some time, for our long term health and well-being, we **MUST** begin to bravely address our individual and collective "baggage". The secrets, silence, shame surrounding our emotional and psychological health only deepen the pain and isolation. Take a moment to understand how therapy works (click [here](#) for a helpful link). Engaging in therapy is the ultimate act of self-care and self-love.

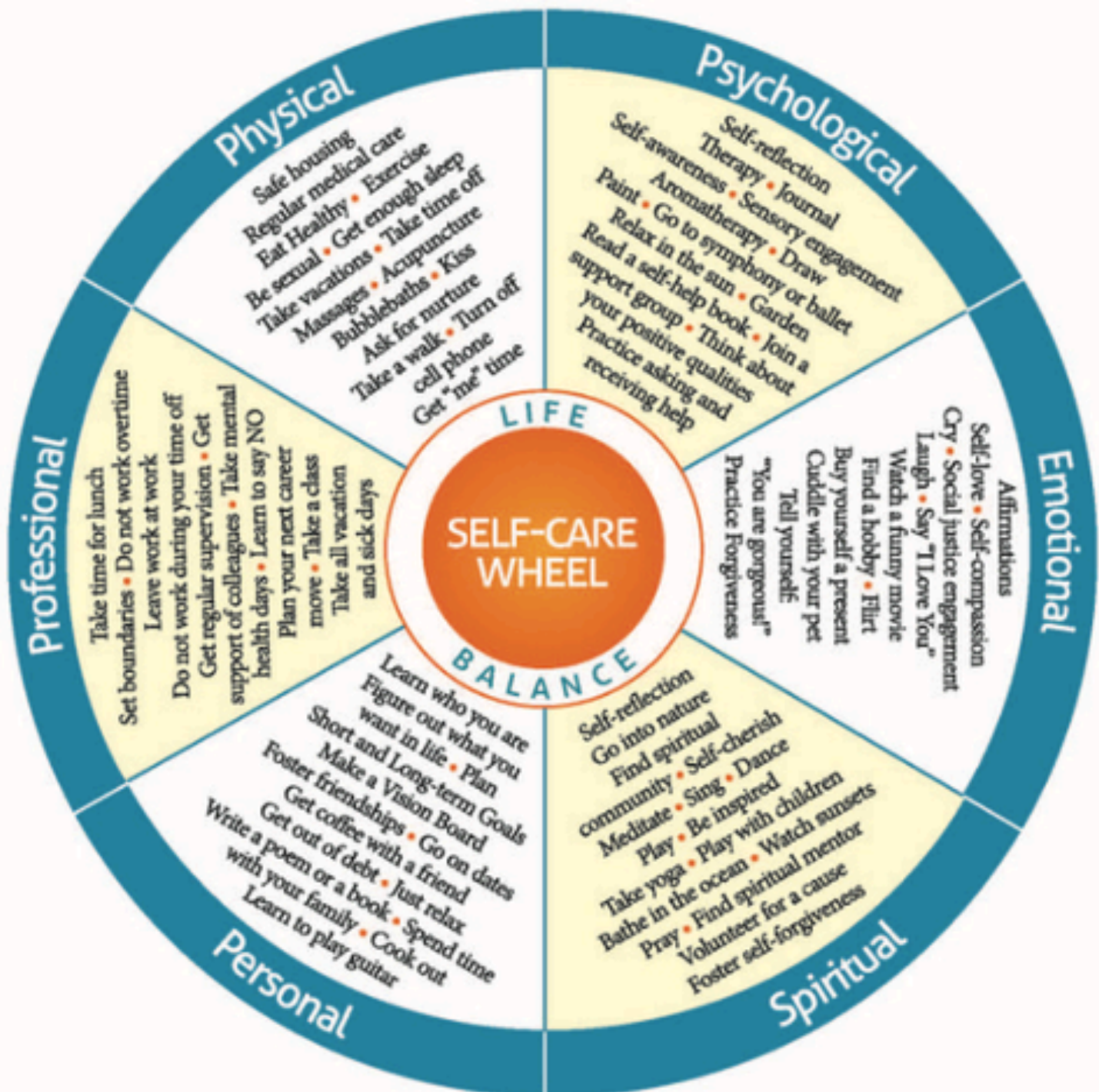
Create Your Own Self-Care Plan

Use the following resources to develop your own person self-care plan. Click on each image below to download the worksheet.

[21 Day Self-Care Challenge](#)

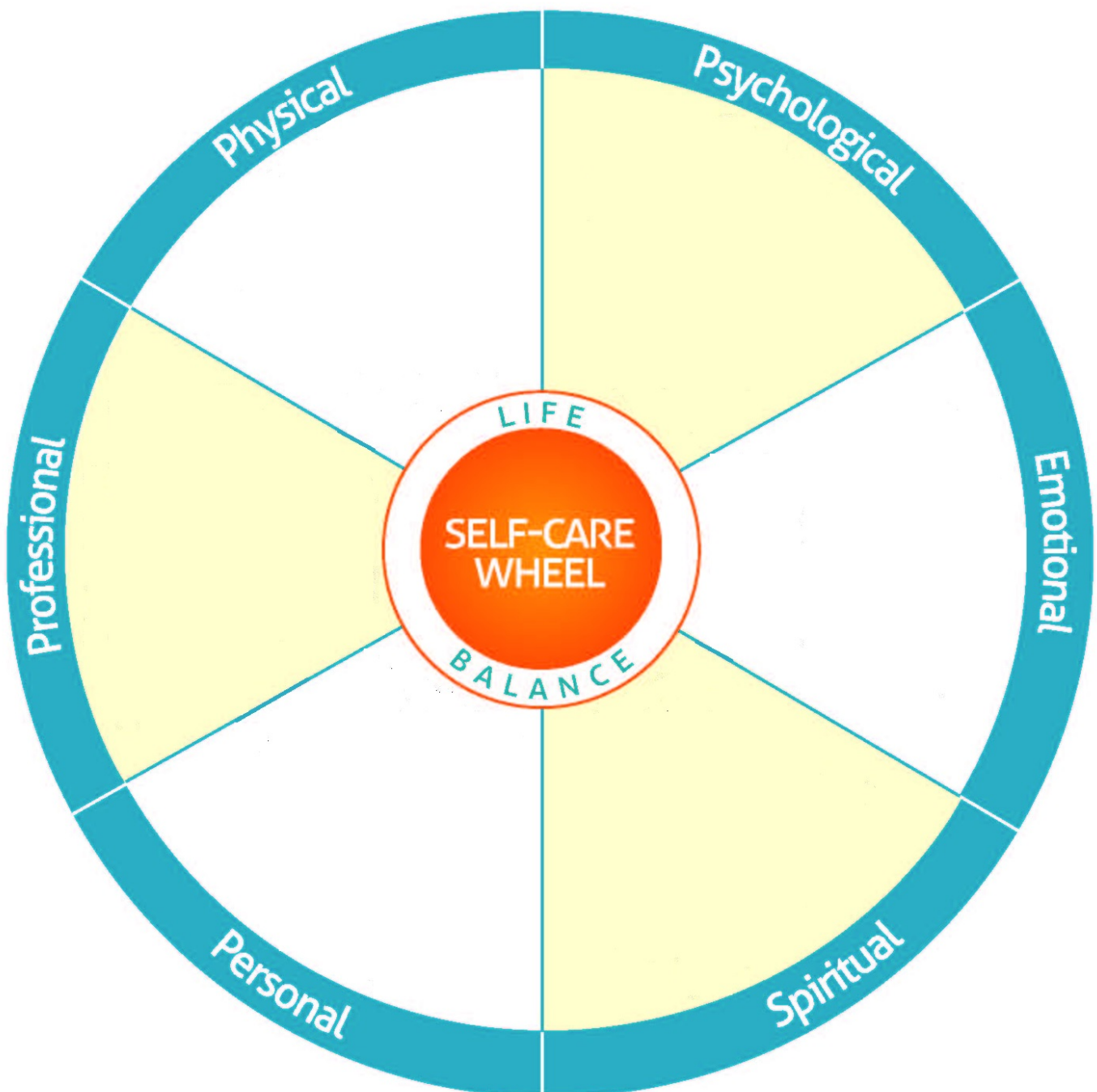


Self-Care Wheel



[Blank Self-Care Wheel](#)

SELF-CARE WHEEL



More Helpful Tips:

STEPS TO SELF CARE AFTER EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

Race-based trauma can create symptoms and experiences much like PTSD. Repeated race-based trauma puts your emotional, psychological, and physical well-being at risk

Mindful Isolation

Disconnect from triggering interactions or other situations that might elicit the fight-or-flight response

Discharge Energy

Find ways to exert physical energy. go for a brisk walk or run. Find (safe) ways to discharge intense anger that includes physical movement.

Ask For Help

If you find yourself unable to cope, find a trauma support group or therapist to assist you. You matter.

Community

Connect with people who you've identified as your empathetic and open support. Process your feelings with them.

Well-Being

- Feed yourself well
- Get good rest
- Avoid toxins
- Breath deep

Self-Care

Cheat Sheet

Self-care isn't rocket science.
Here's all you need to know:

1 Get Some Rest

You probably need to sleep more. Who doesn't? 7-8 hours a night. Nap if you can. Make it a point to tell yourself "I'm resting now" at least once a day. Yeah. For real.

2 Fuel Your Body

If you're eating junk, living on caffeine & feeling like a zombie, stop it. Plants. Lean protein. Healthy fats. WATER. Whatever makes you feel vibrant.

3 Move It

Do what feels good to you. Dance in the kitchen. Jump on a trampoline. Swim, bike, walk, run. You don't *have* to sweat it out in a gym. Just MOVE.

4 Be Still

Take 10 minutes every day and just breathe. Learn to meditate. Get quiet. Center yourself. Count your blessings. Express gratitude. Forgive yourself & others. Watch your life change.

5 Speak Up

No one can read your mind. If you need something, ask for it. If something pisses you off, say so (respectfully). Stand up for yourself. Be the friend you deserve.

6 Enjoy Yourself

Life's too short! Do something every day that makes you laugh. Talk to friends. Play. See a movie. Join a club. Take a class. Live your life!

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

[Healthy Minds: Online Mental Health Screening](#)

You keep tabs on your blood pressure, weight, and cholesterol. How about your emotional well-being? You can check it out right here, anytime. This tool is completely anonymous. In a few minutes, you will learn whether or not you might be experiencing behavioral health challenges.

[The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale](#)

Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that "demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize." In less formal terms, we feel stressed when we feel that "things are out of control". The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale is a tool helps us measure the stress load we carry, and think about what we should do about it.

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

If you feel you are in a crisis, whether or not you are thinking about killing yourself, please call the Lifeline. People have called us for help with substance abuse, economic worries, relationship and family problems, sexual orientation, illness, getting over abuse, depression, mental and physical illness, and even loneliness.

[Khalil Center](#)

Khalil Center is a community psychological and spiritual wellness center. Khalil Center's approach emphasizes: psychological reconstruction, behavioral reformation and spiritual elevation. Khalil Center utilizes faith-based approaches rooted in Islamic theological concepts while integrating the science of psychology towards addressing social, psychological, communal and spiritual health

[Muslim Mental Health - Find A Therapist](#)

This directory is a very useful tool to help people find a counselor, therapist, psychologist, and/or psychiatrist throughout North America

[Muslim Wellness Foundation](#)

Muslim Wellness Foundation (MWF) is an organization which seeks to reduce stigma associate with mental illness, addiction and trauma through dialogue, education and training.

[Nasiha Counseling](#)

Counseling can be a meaningful way to address some of life's challenges you are facing or have been facing for a long time. As therapists, we provide support and feedback to help you cope with current life challenges and long-standing issues

HELPFUL LINKS & ARTICLES:

[5 Self-Care Practices Black People Can Use While Coping With Trauma](#)

[Footage of Police Killings Has Enabled A Sick Sort of Voyeurism](#)

[OpEd: A Spiral of Anger and Helplessness, My Search For Self-Care](#)

[How Black People Can Emotionally Protect Themselves in the Age of #BlackLivesMatter](#)

[We Can Help Each Other Cope: One Simple Way to Be With Each Other Through Pain Right Now](#)

[These Days, Black Self Care Matters Too](#)

[4 Self-Care Resources for Days When the World is Terrible](#)

[Tips for Self-Care: When Police Brutality Has You Questioning Humanity and Social Media Is Enough](#)

[Racism's Psychological Toll](#)

[Emotional and Psychological Trauma](#)

[Emotional and Psychological Trauma: Causes and Effects, Symptoms and Treatment](#)

[The Ripple Effects of Police Violence](#)

[The Supplication Series: Distress, Sadness and Anxiety](#)

[Exercise and Stress: Get Moving To Manage Stress](#)

[The Mental Health Benefits of Exercise](#)

[23 Science- Backed Ways To Reduce Stress Right Now](#)

[The Best 7 Anti-Anxiety Foods](#)

[Dark Chocolate Takes A Bite Out Of Stress](#)

DEVELOPING A SELF-CARE PLAN

[Self-Care Wheel](#)

[21 Day Self-Care Challenge](#)

[Social Work & Self-Care](#)

THE
Deeply

Rooted
PROJECT

A BLACK MUSLIM
MENTAL HEALTH & HEALING INITIATIVE

[MUSLIMWELLNESS.COM/DEEPLYROOTED](https://muslimwellness.com/deeplyrooted)

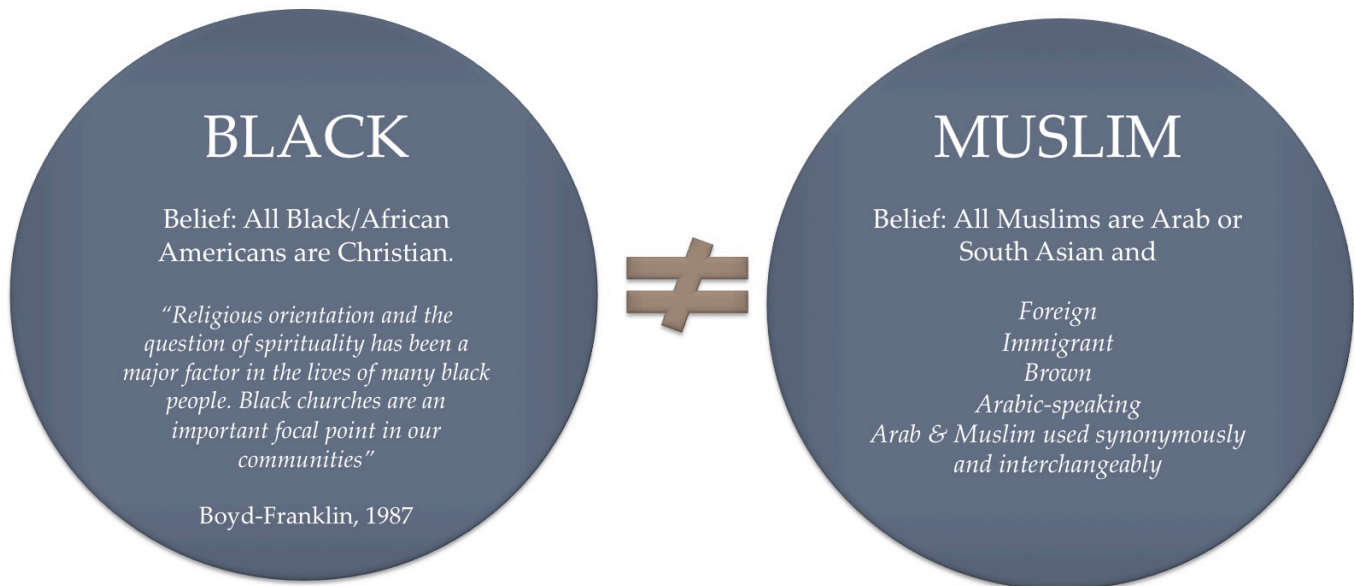
THE DEEPLY ROOTED PROJECT: A BLACK MUSLIM MENTAL HEALTH & HEALING INITIATIVE

Black/African Americans represent 25% of the American Muslim population, the single largest racial group in this religious community. However, Black Muslims experience intersectional or “acute” invisibility as they are not perceived as typical members of the American Muslim community, with Arab and South Asian Muslims viewed as the norm; or of the Black community, in which Christianity is the dominant religion. Black Muslims also experience marginalization due to anti-Black sentiment within the Muslim community.

*“By intersectional invisibility we mean the general failure to fully recognize people with intersecting identities as members of their constituent groups. Intersectional invisibility also refers to the distortion of the intersectional persons’ characteristics in order to fit them into frameworks defined by prototypes of constituent identity groups... Such individuals tend to be marginal members within marginalized groups. This status relegates them to a position of **acute social invisibility**.”* - Purdie-Vaughns & Eichbach, 2008

In a recent essay entitled **"Towards a Black Muslim Ontology of Resistance"**, Muna Mire writes "The reality for today's Black Muslims is bifurcated into a war fought on two fronts: a battle with one's own community to be seen and respected as well as a battle to resist targeted state and vigilante violence...you will always be too Black to be a true

INTERSECTIONAL INVISIBILITY



Muslim, but you must live with all of the pain that America inflicts on both Black people and Muslims". Ms. Mire goes on to pose a thought-provoking question: *"How are we to understand ourselves and our social locations, if being Muslim precludes being Black, which cannot be reconciled with being an American subject? The historical and contemporary erasure of Black Muslims can only be situated in the context of a violent anti-Black solidarity; the Black Muslim in America must then contend with an economy of unresolved strivings—towards faith, visibility, resistance, and self determination."*

Black Muslims often find themselves navigating and negotiating the subtle and overt manifestations of marginalization and microaggressions on a daily basis. Following the election and inauguration of Donald J. Trump, there has been an increase in hate crimes, discrimination as well as anxiety induced by uncertainty and feelings of powerlessness in the face of impending proposals and executive actions that threaten the safety of individuals and communities. However, in the face of anti-Black racism and anti-Muslim bigotry, Black Muslims often draw upon faith and deeply rooted spirituality, ancestral knowledge and cultural identities to strive towards restoring meaning, health and balance in their lives. In a post-9/11, post-Ferguson Trump era, it is important to discuss the cultural and spiritual resilience which have strengthened Black Muslims through the centuries and the strategies/coping mechanisms that will serve the community as they face new threats to their collective well being.

The Deeply Rooted Project will focus on addressing the “acute social invisibility” which affects the mental health of Black Muslims, particularly in light of rising anti-Muslim bigotry and ongoing racial violence and trauma in the Black community. It will also seek to enhance protective factors which mitigate these stressors and promote positive psychological well-being. By leveraging the effectiveness of community based education on reducing mental health stigma, Muslim Wellness Foundation (MWF) proposes a series of interrelated activities designed to build the capacity of community leaders and lay people to recognize and alleviate the negative impact of anti-Muslim bigotry and racism on Black Muslims.

These interrelated activities and programming will take place between Sept 2017 – August 2018 and will include the following:

- Mental Health First Aid Training in Six (6) Cities:
 - Philadelphia, PA | Detroit, MI | Chicago, IL | Atlanta, GA | Baltimore, MD | Oakland, CA
- Deeply Rooted Healing Circles - Combatting Racial Trauma
- Aya Women's Circle - A Reflection & Process Group for Black Muslim Women
- [The Sky Is Ours: Self-Care Primer for Black Muslims](#)
- [Annual Black Muslim Psychology Conference \[BMPC\]](#)
- [Deeply Rooted Emerging Leaders \[DREL\] Fellowship Program](#)

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an intense, interactive session, which runs one full day and introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact and overviews common treatments. It offers concrete tools and answers key questions like, “What can I do?” and “Where can someone find help?”. This training curriculum has been developed by the National Council for Behavioral Health and adapted specifically by MWF to address psycho-spiritual concerns related to jinn, black magic and evil eye.

MHFA has been MWF’s key initiative thus far. While Imams, Muslim chaplains, youth directors, and other community leaders are often seen as primary caregivers within the Muslim community, they lack training in pastoral care or counseling, and often find themselves overwhelmed by those seeking counseling for issues like: intimate partner violence, substance use, stress, anxiety, and depression. In the last three years, MWF facilitated trainings in Philadelphia, PA, Dearborn, MI, Detroit, MI, Duluth GA, Washington, DC and Newark, NJ, and certified over 300 Muslims as Mental Health First Aiders. Specifically designed to engage American Muslims of various racial, cultural and sectarian backgrounds, the trainings increased collaboration between religious leaders, professionals, healthcare providers and community members. In 2014, MWF Founder & President Kameelah Rashad was selected for the MHFA Community Impact Award for her pioneering work and facilitation of this relevant training. President & CEO Linda Rosenberg personally bestowed this honor on Kameelah and offered the following praise: “Kameelah facilitates...with sensitivity to the religious, spiritual and sociocultural context in which Muslims experience and understand the underlying factors that contribute to...lack of emotional well being”. We have selected six target cities to launch these trainings as they contain large and diverse Black Muslim communities and local institutions such as which have expressed interest in collaborating with MWF on this project.

DEEPLY ROOTED HEALING CIRCLES - COMBATTING RACIAL TRAUMA

These circles will be designed as facilitated gatherings where Black Muslims can expect to

- Create safe spaces to disengage and detoxify from consistent exposure to assertions of inferiority, inherent pathology and negative stereotypes about black people and affirm humanizing and empowering truths about ourselves from the witness of Divine scripture, history and our shared experiences.
- Deepen understanding of the impact of historical forces on the spiritual and emotional lives of families and our communities.
- Actively engage new centering narratives about Black people, Muslims and Americans.
- Learn, share and practice the emotional, spiritual and mental wellness skills we need to preserve safety, sanity and well-being.
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AYA WOMEN'S CIRCLE: BRIEF PSYCHODYNAMIC GROUP THERAPY INTERVENTION FOR BLACK MUSLIM WOMEN

This intervention was designed by MWF Founder & President Kameelah Mu'Min Rashad to combine a *psychodynamic approach* (emphasis on self-awareness, development of insight into patterns of relationship), *spiritual orientation* (incorporating Islamic values, principles and beliefs) and grounded in a *womanist perspective* (centering the sociocultural context, history, and lived experiences of Black women). It explores issues related to mental health, family dynamics, self-esteem and spirituality. Based on previous research and models related to Black women and group therapy, the following themes have emerged as well: emotional expression and isolation, intimate partner relationships, family of origin: mother-daughter relationship, father-daughter relationship, personal empowerment, internalized oppression, racial identity and sexuality. This brief semi-structured psychodynamic, womanist group offers Black American Muslim women an opportunity to experience sisterhood in a therapeutic setting, validation from a supportive female network and greater insight into relationships and issues related to self-worth and identity.

THE SKY IS OURS: SELF-CARE PRIMER FOR BLACK MUSLIMS

This primer was written as a mental health resource for Black Muslims in the wake of the murders of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile - both tragedies occurring on the Muslim holiday of Eid-ul Fitr in 2016. It addresses signs and symptoms of trauma, spiritual and religious coping and relevant self-care strategies. This primer will be expanded and updated with local and national resources for Black Muslims.

ANNUAL BLACK MUSLIM PSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCE

Established in 2015, the conference is the only one of its kind: by centering Black Muslims and their experiences with respect to identity, faith, race and well-being. The aim of the conference is to bring together grassroots activists, youth leaders, community organizers, community members, religious scholars and multidisciplinary experts in conversation about the effect of continued systemic racism on the psychological well-being of Black Muslims and strategies to facilitate community healing. This conference is also dedicated to exploring strategies and opportunities for solidarity and authentic allyship with other marginalized as well as privileged communities. This conference has grown from a gathering of 75 in 2015, to 125 last year. The 3rd Annual Black Muslim Psychology Conference was attended by 375 grassroots activists and organizers, mental health professionals, youth leaders, community members, religious scholars and multidisciplinary experts grassroots activists and organizers, mental health professionals, youth leaders, community members, religious scholars and multidisciplinary experts. The conference goals and objectives include the following:

- Developing the skills of community leaders to recognize and attend to mental health in order to build a base of capable and emotionally intelligent leaders.
- Provide leaders and community members with pertinent information to respond to crises where people are emotionally impacted
- Assist leaders and community members in development and implementation of a triage mechanism in response to a traumatic incident or a community crisis
- Facilitate constructive channeling of anger in pursuit of healing, justice and reconciliation;

- Increased collaboration between religious leaders, professionals, healthcare providers and community members through dialogue, brainstorming strategies and healing circles.

DEEPLY ROOTED EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Deeply Rooted Emerging Leaders Fellowship centers the concerns, strengths and opportunities of Black Muslim Emerging adults (18-25 years old). It is built upon an understanding of self-awareness and critical self-reflection as invaluable components to cultivating resilience and leadership capacity. This fellowship is also grounded in the belief that building power and civic engagement cannot occur without healing and introspection. Therefore in this political moment young adults especially must acquire new skills related to racial trauma and healing, emotional intelligence, compassionate leadership and community organizing. This fellowship will offer support through the racial healing process and mentoring opportunities to emerging Black Muslim young adults. We hope to nurture a cohort of emotionally intelligent social justice activists and community leaders who will more assertively and constructively engage in sustainable advocacy within the Muslim community. This unique intensive leadership retreat: Black Muslim Youth Rising is one component of the Fellowship and will center the developmental needs of millennials through experiential learning and team building exercises designed to create a space and consciousness from which to question, and deconstruct, internalized voicelessness, devaluation and trauma. The convening will invite organizers, artists, and scholars to lead workshops that will usher our participants on a journey of self-awareness and leadership building. On the first day of the retreat, attendees will participate in group activities designed to establishing trust, cohesion and healthy group dynamics. It will also focus on guided discussions on the psychological impact of oppression, trauma of racism, Islamophobia. The second day of the retreat will focus on emotionally intelligent leadership, including self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, networking and relationship building; consciousness of context, self and of others. The final day of the retreat will seek to integrate each fellows understanding of self and leadership capacity with strategies for community engagement and advocacy.

Overview of Retreat Topics:

1. Race/Racism/Oppression/White Supremacy
2. Trauma & Healing
3. Spirituality/Identity/Faith based coping
4. Community Activism/Social Justice Organizing/Coalition-building/Allyship
5. Leadership/Leadership Development/Models of Prophetic Leadership & Liberation

ABOUT MUSLIM WELLNESS FOUNDATION (MWF)

Muslim Wellness Foundation (MWF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing stigma associated with mental illness, addiction and trauma in the American Muslim community through dialogue, education and training. We envision a future in which faith communities are at the forefront of mental health advocacy and committed to developing an inclusive culture of compassion, understanding and support. For those experiencing a mental health challenge, stigma acts as a significant barrier to seeking the help that is needed. In the American Muslim community, mental health challenges are just as prevalent as in other communities, yet stigma stemming from cultural and religious beliefs lead many to feel that they must suffer in silence. American Muslims struggling with mental illness or addiction may attribute their experience to weak faith, a punishment from God or test of perseverance and fortitude. Our aim is to address the glaring mental health disparities present in the American Muslim community by engaging community members, health professionals, and religious leaders in conversation to improve mental health literacy, stigma reduction, help-seeking behavior and access to affordable and culturally competent services. In order to achieve this goal, we have adopted an interdisciplinary, spiritually grounded, community based public health approach to wellness. This approach emphasizes the importance of addressing sociocultural stressors (poverty, oppression, anti-Black racism) that lead to diminished well being. Racial oppression and religious discrimination are also forms of violence, which inevitably lead to trauma and stress. Therefore, we advocate that health is not simply the absence of illness, but draws upon a holistic understanding of an individual's environment and leverages community, faith and identity in the attainment of an optimal quality of life.

Muslim Wellness Model

In order to achieve this goal, we have adopted an interdisciplinary approach which promotes emotional well-being using a holistic, spiritually relevant, community-based public health framework. We engage community members, health professionals and providers & religious leaders and Islamic organizations in much needed dialogue and conversation. Our projects and initiatives focus on 3 major areas:

- Community Engagement & Outreach
- Training & Consultation
- Professional Development & Networking

MWF is leading the way in Muslim mental health awareness by offering community based workshops and seminars. A few of our key initiatives include Mental Health First Aid training, Annual Black Muslim Psychology Conference (BMPC), Youth Anti-Muslim Bigotry Symposium, Healers Collective Forum (online resource for Muslim mental health professionals) and several community based workshops including a maternal mental health retreat for Muslim women, stepfamily workshop, online



webinars on topics such as sexual abuse, domestic violence/spiritual abuse, coping with racism, developing a national network of Muslim mental health professionals.



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KAMEELAH MU'MIN RASHAD, MS, MRP, M.ED*Founder & President, Muslim Wellness Foundation*

Kameelah is the Founder and President of Muslim Wellness Foundation (MWF), a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing stigma associated with mental illness, addiction and trauma in the American Muslim community through dialogue, education and training. Muslim Wellness Foundation envisions a future in which faith communities are at the forefront of mental health advocacy and committed to developing an inclusive culture of compassion, understanding and holistic health. Kameelah also serves as the Fellow for Spirituality, Wellness and Social Justice at the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) and advisor for Penn Sapelo, the first Black Muslim Student organization on campus. In this capacity, Kameelah supports students in their exploration of faith-based activism, spirituality, emotional well-being and healing. Working in conjunction with the Chaplain's Office, she collaborates with other cultural centers on campus to facilitate intersectional conversations on race,

religion, identity, belonging and advocacy. Kameelah served three years as the Muslim Chaplain at UPenn and continues to facilitate discussions on religious identity development and challenges faced by American Muslim youth. She is also a resource to the wider Penn community and administration on Islam and Muslims.

In addition to Kameelah's involvement in mental health advocacy and religious life, she is a proud social justice activist and founding member of Muslims Make It Plain, a coalition of concerned Muslims working to inspire, empower and support grass roots mobilization and direct action to address police brutality, racial & religious profiling, unlawful surveillance and the overpolicing of America's Black & Brown communities. In December 2014, Muslims Make It Plain organized the first Muslim led rally and march in the country in support of BlackLivesMatter. Kameelah serves as a member of the Advisory Council of Muslim Advocates, a national legal advocacy and educational organization that works on the frontlines of civil rights to guarantee freedom and justice for Americans of all faiths. Further, Kameelah is an advisory board member of Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC), Stony Point Center, Social Health & Medical Services (SHAMS) Clinic and the Husayn Center for Social Justice, a Muslim-run social services and advocacy center that promotes health and wellness for the residents of Trenton, NJ.

Kameelah is a 2014 Ariane deRothschild Fellow and a recipient of the 2014 Student Multiculturalism and Salter Family Memorial Education Awards and recipient of the 2017 Matthew Smith Education Award from the Pennsylvania Psychological Association (PPA). Since 2015 Kameelah has served as the Diversity Focus Chair for PPA's Graduate Student Board. National Council for Behavioral Health selected Kameelah for the prestigious 2015 Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Community Impact Award and honored her as a "passionate, committed, and outstanding behavioral health leader".

In February of 2015, Kameelah was one of 14 American Muslim Leaders invited to attend a Roundtable discussion with President Obama at the White House. At that meeting, Kameelah shared her concerns regarding the psychological impact of anti-Muslim bigotry on the Muslim community, particularly as it effects youth and African Americans. Kameelah has since been invited to a subsequent roundtable discussion with President Obama before his historic visit to a U.S. Mosque in Feb 2016 and listening sessions with senior White House officials on mental health in the American Muslim community. Kameelah's insights and perspectives have been featured in The Huffington Post, The Atlantic, BuzzFeed, Patheos-Muslim, MuslimMatters, The Pennsylvania Gazette, and NPR's Radio Times with Marty Moss-Coane

Kameelah graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a BA in Psychology and MEd in Psychological Services. She has pursued further graduate education, completing a second Masters in Restorative Practices & Youth Counseling (MRP) from the International Institute for Restorative Practices and obtaining a post-Masters certificate in Family Therapy from the Philadelphia Child & Family Therapy Training Center. Kameelah is a certified instructor in Adult, Higher Education & Youth Mental Health First Aid. She is pursuing her doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, PA.

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Self care
is a
divine
responsibility