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The Loop of Trauma

by Jayden Miller-Jones

On April 15, 2021, *The New York Times* posted an article stating that the national suicide rate was decreasing across the nation (Rabin). On the outside this statistic looks immensely positive. However, a harsher, deadlier, and extremely depressing statistic begins to rear its head when taking a deeper look. While the majority of suicides are decreasing across the nation as a whole, the suicide rate within the black community is skyrocketing to numbers never before seen. I was stunned by this news when I first saw it. What could possibly be happening within our community to make our suicide rates this high? The truth is the Black community is stuck in an everlasting loop of trauma, and the majority of us don't have the ability to talk about it or the knowledge of how to deal with it.

It's important to understand the stigma and context of mental health within the Black community when confronting a statistic as scary as this one. From the moment we stepped foot in America, the Black community has been fighting, whether that be fighting to free ourselves from the chains of slavery, fighting for basic human rights, or fighting to be given the same chances as other people. The Black community has been in, what feels like, a never-ending war with the world. It is because of this that we often tend to ignore how we truly feel. We are convinced that we simply don't have time to. We bury the emotions within our subconscious because it's what we believe to be the "courageous" thing to do. From unfair treatment in the workplace to violent attacks by those who are meant to protect us, we are bombarded by what seems like endless trauma, and no one appears to be worried about how that makes us feel. These

mental issues begin to fester as a result of never getting solved. They grow into a colossal burden that we feel stuck carrying on our shoulders, only to pass it down to our children, who pass it down to their children. It creates a snowball of generational trauma that goes unsolved.

Burying your emotions is not courageous. Giving in to your demons and letting them consume you is not courageous. As a Black man I understand the pressure that we all feel; I've felt it myself more times than I can count, that feeling of being forced to swim in shark-infested waters, that feeling that you're in a fight with life itself, but you have no weapons, no protection, and nobody to help you. That feeling that you're never able to truly get rid of. It's difficult to talk about. Even now writing this I have trouble describing it. It's like a burden that all of us are forced to carry.

We don't have to carry this burden on our own though. The reality is, all of us understand this indescribable feeling. We need to make it more acceptable in the Black community to talk about our emotions. This responsibility falls on parents and other influential leaders within our communities. Conversations about mental health need to become more commonplace. Simple questions like, "Are you okay?" or "How are you feeling?" will allow us to begin the healing process. Just being around for the people you care about is more than enough.

The Black community is in pain. We don't have to stay like this though. There are ways we can change this. First, we can start by bringing awareness to the problem. Black influencers need to speak out on issues regarding mental health. Doing this will make it more commonplace for the average Black person to talk about their problems. Social work like therapy and other counseling methods need to be destigmatized. Therapy isn't mandatory though. While professional help is beneficial, sometimes just simply talking about your troubles can help. We are fighting an uphill battle within this community, but the summit is near. We can lead happier,

healthier lives. It takes the will of everyone though. From the influencers, to parents, to children, it's up to each and every member of the Black community to help mend this wound. With enough effort, the Black community can begin to heal.

Work Cited

Rabin, Roni Caryn. "U.S. Suicides Declined Over All in 2020 but May Have Risen Among People of Color." *nytimes.com*, 15 April, 2021.

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