



## **Transcript: The Recovery Legacies of Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X**

Presenter: Mark Sanders  
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ANN E SCHENSKY: Good morning everyone, and welcome. We're going to give people a minute or so to get into the room and settled, and we will get started.

All right. It is the top of the hour, so we will get started. Good morning again, and welcome to everyone. Our webinar today is The Recovery Legacies of Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X. Our presenter today is Mark Sanders. Today's webinar is brought to you by the Great Lakes ATTC and SAMHSA. The Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, and PTTC are funded by SAMHSA under the following cooperative agreements.

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We have some housekeeping details for you today. If you are having technical issues, please individually message Kristina Spannbaauer or Stephanie Behlman in the chat section at the bottom of your screen, and they'll be happy to assist you. If you have questions for the speaker, please put any questions in the Q&A section, also at the bottom of your screen, and the speaker will respond to those questions.

The recording and PowerPoints will be posted on our website. It takes about 7 to 10 days for them to be posted in the product section of our website. You will be directed to a link, to a short survey at the end of this presentation. We really appreciate it if you can fill it out. It probably takes about three minutes and it's how we report our activities back to SAMHSA.

Certificates of attendance will be sent out via email to all who attend the full session. If you'd like to see what else we're doing, you can follow us on social media. And if you are on our mailing list, look for information about events coming up the following week in our email on Thursdays.

And again, we are very excited to have Mark Sanders as our presenter today. Mark is the State Project Manager for the Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, and PTTC. He is also an international speaker, trainer, and consultant in the behavioral health field whose work has reached thousands throughout the



United States, Europe, Canada, the Caribbean, and the British Isles. He's the past President of the Board of Illinois chapter of NAADAC.

Mark is also the 2021 recipient of the NAADAC Enlightenment Award, recognizing his outstanding service through a lifetime of consistent contributions to the advancement of NAADAC, the addiction profession, and its professionals. He has had a 30 year career as a university educator, having taught at the University of Chicago, Illinois State University, Illinois School of Professional Psychology, and Loyola University of Chicago in the School of Social Work. Mark is also the founder of the Serenity Academy in Chicago, the only recovery school in Illinois, and I am excited to turn it over to you, Mark.

MARK SANDERS: Thank you so very much Ann, and Christina, and Alyssa, and Stephanie. Thank you so very much and good morning, everyone, and I'm glad that you're with us today. And something that wasn't mentioned in my biographical sketch is that come March 6, 2022, I will celebrate 40 years as a certified alcohol and drug abuse counselor. And people often ask-- and that seems like a long time, even to me. And people often ask me how have you done this work for 40 years? The answer is recovery. I get excited about recovery, so what I'd like to do is share with you two quick recovery stories, then we shall get into our content.

In March of 1995 I was sitting in my office downtown-- I was giving a seminar-- I'm sorry-- in Downers Grove, Illinois, a suburb just west of Chicago. And there was a woman who attended the seminar, an African-American woman who sat in the front row, center aisle seat. She asked, are you the same Mark Sanders who worked at a detoxification facility in 1985, a decade earlier? I said yes, that's me. She says, I was a patient on the detox unit. You were my counselor.

I don't always remember names but I remember stories, so here's her story. Her drugs of choice were heroin and cocaine, and she supported her drug habit through prostitution. And shortly after she left our detoxification facility she went back out into the community and she started selling her body. And I worked the evening shift. Some nights as I was driving home I would see her standing on the corner selling her body, and she looked really bad to me. You know how when the person goes back to using drugs, they stop eating. She looked really bad. So I remember saying to myself, she looks really bad. I don't think she'll ever recover.

Am I the only one attending this webinar today who's ever had a client that you thought would never recover? You see, what I've learned in my 40 years is sometimes the individuals that we think definitely will recover, often they don't. And the ones that we think don't have a chance to recover, they surprise us when they do. You see, I'm convinced that computers will never



be able to do your job. Computers will never be counselors. It's not like you can feed information to a computer who will recover, who won't recover.

Although, if the job of a counselor is about empathy, compassion, and patience-- especially patience, patience, and more patience-- machines are getting really close to us. Once, I was staying in a Ritz-Carlton hotel-- Ritz-Carlton hotel in Washington DC-- put a dollar in a pop machine and couldn't figure out what brand of soda I wanted. And while I was standing there the machine said, sorry you're having a difficult time. Take your time. Sounded like a licensed therapist to me.

Anyway, there she was, sitting in the front row of my seminar. So I looked down and I saw the initials behind her name. LCSW, CADC-- Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Certified Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor-- from street prostitution. So during the break she shared her story. She said after I left the detoxification facility in 1985, I went back out in the streets to do more research. We used to call relapse back then "research." She said, I went back to detox-- I did the assessment-- after I left detox I started going to 12-step group meetings, and then I enrolled in the community college where I got my GED.

She said, I stayed in the community college and I received an associate's degree. I went to a university and I received a bachelor's degree in social work. I went to school one more year and I received a master's degree in social work. Now I'm eligible for the state license exam. She said, and one of the questions they ask you on the license exam, is have you ever been convicted of a felony? She checked "yes," and the State of Illinois denied her the right to take the exam. She looked at me and said, I fought too hard to quit. She appealed the decision and she became licensed.

When she told me that story I told her that you didn't make my day, she made my decade. And after that she became a school social worker for 25 years. She said, you helped me, and I spent 25 years helping children. You know that your great work never ends? Because every time you help someone with their recovery, eventually gratitude sets in, and once they become grateful they start helping people. And then the people they help start helping people.

The second story is a little closer to home. So May 29, 1986, I was giving a speech and someone knocked on the door. Is there a Mark Sanders here? You have an urgent phone call. My mother was on the other end of the phone and she was crying hysterically. And she told me that my dad had just died in the closet at work and he was smoking the drug of his choice, cocaine. And that was May 29th, 1986.

A month later my Uncle Isaac went in front of a judge and convinced the judge to put him in drug abuse treatment rather than prison, and he was the first person in the family to get sober. We count 30 people in our family who are



now in recovery. So it was around May of 1996, my youngest brother called me. He said, I have a drug abuse problem. I said, I know. He said, I need help. I said, I know. So I put my brother in what they used to call back then a detoxification facility for three days.

He called me on the third day and said I'm bored, now what do I do? I said, why don't you go to a 12-step group meeting? So we attended his first 12-step group meeting. Then after the meeting he called me in tears. He was crying. I said, why are you crying? He said after the speaker spoke at the meeting I looked at the speaker and I said, you spoke the truth. I was there, I remember you. You spoke the truth. I was there, I remember you. The speaker was a man who used to use drugs and sell drugs with my father when my brother was a little boy. You spoke the truth. I was there, I remember you.

Speaker went up to my brother and said, you don't know this, but as soon as your dad died, I got into recovery. That's a famous expression out there, that some people die so other people can live. He said, you certainly don't know this. When I was out there selling drugs with your dad, he saved my life twice. He said so I often asked God, why did you save me? He looked at my brother and said, maybe one of the reasons that God saved me is so that I can help you.

They both are in long-term recovery, and he was talking about purpose. So today we're going to talk about the recovery legacies of Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X, and what you're going to learn in their story was purpose, was one of the ways that they were able to maintain their recovery. So we'll spend a little time talking about both men, and we'll spend the majority of our time talking about the implications of their recoveries for work with African-Americans with substance use disorders today.

Again, welcome. So I start with the question-- can you find your chat button? Look for your chat feature. Here's a question. Please put this in chat. What is the reason that African-American History Month is in February? Why not March? Why not July? Why'd they choose February?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Someone says they don't know. Someone said the shortest month.

MARK SANDERS: You know, Christina, when I asked that question across the country the most common answer is because it's the shortest month of the year. But here's the answer. Carter G. Woodson started what was back then known as African-American History Week, which later became known as African-American or Black History Month. He put it in February to celebrate the birthday of two men.

One was Abraham Lincoln after he signed the Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863. Africans who were enslaved in the South, December 31



1862, heard at midnight that Abraham Lincoln would sign the Emancipation Proclamation, so they gathered in churches and looked at the clock and started praying that at midnight it would be signed. Watch this question. Are there any individuals with us today that go to church on New Year's Eve? My mother invites me to her church service every New Year's Eve. It's called Watch Night Service and it's really based upon Abraham Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, and over 100 years later there's still African-Americans who go to church on New Year's Eve midnight because of that act.

The other reason that African-American History Month is in February is to celebrate the birthday of Frederick Douglass, because he was born into slavery but no one knew his exact birthday, but we were told that it was Valentine's Day. Did you know that Frederick Douglass, according to historian William White-- Frederick Douglass was the first prominent American recovering from alcoholism, and his famous quote is that we can't stagger to freedom. You see, he talked a lot about his drinking.

Frederick Douglass says when a slave was drunk the slaveholder had no fear that he would plant an insurrection, no fear that he would escape to the North. It was a sober-thinking slave who was dangerous and needed the vigilance of the slaveholder to keep him a slave. I used to drink. I found in me all those characteristics leading to drunkenness. Frederick Douglass says, "I have had some experience with intemperance. I knew what it was like to drink with all the ardor of a drunk." Back then they called the substance-use disorders "drunks." "Some of the slaves were not able to drink their share. I was able to drink my own and theirs, too."

You see, Frederick Douglass believed that alcohol was given to the slaves in order to control the slaves. And as a matter of fact his story, in his autobiography, was that when he was in slavery he was traumatized. He was brutalized. He was whipped. So he had nightmares and bad dreams and flashbacks. Today we would call that post-traumatic stress disorder. So he gave up alcohol out of protest, believing that it was used to control those who were enslaved, and he was one of the leaders of the Black Temperance Movement. So if you think about his recovery, there were no 12-step programs back then. His pathway of recovery included seeking social justice, advocacy, and social protests.

Then there's Malcolm X. I learned a lot about Malcolm X from my first student ever, a man by the name of Benneth Lee. So I've also taught addiction studies for 40 years, and the first semester I taught-- actually, I started teaching addiction studies in 1986-- more like 34 years. I had 40 students in the class and Benneth Lee showed up to class first and he sat in the first seat in the front row. Maybe there's something about that center aisle seat in the front row, and he was leaning forward, and his classmates were either leaning



back or sitting up. He was leaning forward. My first student, Benneth Lee, was hungrier for the subject matter than the other 39 students combined.

So I met with him and said, what's the reason you want this information so much? And he told me a story. He left prison-- solitary confinement, death row, and came into my class. He was serious. He was a gang leader addicted to heroin. He was on death row for the one crime that he didn't commit. He said, I committed all the rest. I used heroin, I was in a gang, but this one I didn't commit. Then I asked him, what was solitary confinement like? He said, I don't talk about it much, but a minute felt like an hour, an hour felt like a day, a day felt like a week, a week felt like a month. I was losing my mind in solitary confinement.

He said someone left a book in the cell and I hadn't read-- but I picked up the book because I thought it would keep my sanity if I read a book. He said that the book was called The Autobiography of Malcolm X. And he picked up the book and he tossed it in the air and he said whatever page it lands on is where I'm going to begin my reading. He was hoping it landed in the middle. He said even though I dropped out of high school, ninth grade, hadn't read much, I figured if something was juicy in the book it'd have to be in the middle. He tossed the book in the air and it landed on the page in the book where Malcolm X himself was in prison and could not read.

Does anyone know how Malcolm X learned to read in prison? He learned to read in prison reading the dictionary from cover to cover. 50 years later there are African-American men and women walking around prisons throughout the United States reading dictionaries because they heard that Malcolm X learned to read a dictionary in prison from cover to cover. So my friend-- now my friend, my former student Benneth Lee-- he learned to read well reading the dictionary. His next request was for a law book. I said, why a law book? He says, I was facing the death penalty and my public defender was falling asleep in the courtroom. I wanted a law book so I could figure out how do you fire your lawyer? They beat the case. He beat the case.

Let's take a moment to talk about Malcolm X's story. What he had in common with Frederick Douglass and so many other African-Americans, is a history of trauma. Malcolm X's father was killed by the Ku Klux Klan, and after his father was killed-- he was a little boy-- his mother was placed in an asylum and his siblings were separated. Malcolm X grew up in the child welfare system. He was a ward of the state. So to finish the story about my former student Benneth Lee, He is now the CEO of the National Alliance for the empowerment of the formerly incarcerated. He says Mark, I'm following in the footsteps of Malcolm X.

Malcolm X's Pathway of Recovery is what's called Quantum Change. William Miller, who is the author of motivational interviewing-- motivational interviewing is a slow, incremental change process. He also wrote a book



called Quantum Change. Suddenly, overnight transformation. Not everybody gets into recovery slowly, if I can just give you one example.

There's a teenage girl I used to counsel, and she loved marijuana. She smoked marijuana at least three times per day. The only thing she liked more than smoking marijuana was the smell of marijuana. You could put the smell of marijuana in a perfume bottle and she would buy it. She smoked more than anyone that I'd ever known in my life. By the way, the marijuana that teenagers smoke today, it's about 40 times more potent than the marijuana you all smoked in high school. Now all of you looking like you never smoked marijuana. OK, all right.

So anyway, she went to a party-- she wasn't much of a drinker. Have you ever noticed that lots of people at parties are uncomfortable with their hands, so they drink even if they're not really drinkers? And she did what we encourage teenagers to never do. After she got a drink at the party, she left it on the counter and she went to the bathroom. And a street gang put a pill in her drink, she passed out, and the entire street gang sexually assaulted her. She was 14 years old. I said, how did you know? She said, those fools posted it on Facebook. They were arrested.

She didn't have PTSD, and that was a miracle, because she was passed out. The only thing that she remembered about that night is that she smoked a lot of marijuana and after that day, that smell that she loved so much-- marijuana-- every time she smelled marijuana after that it reminded her of something horrible that happened to her. She hasn't smoked marijuana in seven years.

Her father was an alcoholic, or had alcohol-use disorder like my grandfather. You ever met someone who drinks so heavy that you could smell alcohol coming out of their pores? You don't need the DSM-5 to diagnose them. Her father drank heavy like that. And after his daughter was sexually assaulted he didn't go to treatment or Al-Anon, he went to church. Kneeled in front of the altar and he asked God to remove that desire to drink. He hasn't had a drink in seven years. It happened like that.

Malcolm X was visited by another incarcerated person when he was incarcerated, and the man was a Muslim and he said to Malcolm, get on your knees and pray to God. And Malcolm X said, the only time I get on my knees is if I'm robbing someone or picking a lock. This man left the room and a white light appeared above Malcolm while he was in the jail cell. He had an instant spiritual awakening. Never got high again.

You might know of actor Samuel L. Jackson. Did you know that Samuel L. Jackson was addicted to crack cocaine, and he was in treatment for crack cocaine dependence, and he received a phone call from a young movie director named Spike Lee? Who says I have a role for you, to play a coke-- a



crack cocaine user in a movie called *Jungle Fever*. Halle Berry will be your girlfriend in the movie. So Samuel L. Jackson left crack cocaine treatment to play the role of a crack user in a movie called *Jungle Fever*. He had already did the research.

And that was-- when they were rehearsing the movie, Samuel L. Jackson's character would do this crazy dance, this ridiculous dance for his mother so she would give him some money to stop dancing, and he would buy some crack. And during rehearsal Samuel L. Jackson was doing this crazy dance and his father, played by Ozzie Davis, pulled out a gun and shot and killed Samuel L. Jackson in rehearsal. He said when he heard the sound of the gunshot it killed the active drug user in him. It's been three decades, he hasn't gotten high off of crack cocaine since.

Now every time I talk about Quantum Change at a workshop, someone comes up to me and whispers, that's how I got into recovery. It happened like that. And I say, how come you're whispering? Because people wouldn't believe me, or they would think that I have mental illness or something if I told them that's what happened. But that's a legitimate pathway of recovery. It's called Quantum Change.

So let's take a moment and look at some of the lessons from the recovery legacies of Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X. Purpose, advocacy, and community development are important aspects of recovery for many African-Americans. As a matter of fact, I did a survey of African-Americans in long-term recovery. By definition, long-term recovery is five years or longer. Most of these individuals had over 20 years of recovery, and they told me that their recovery today is about advocacy, helping to develop the African-American community, making a difference in the world.

Frederick Douglass, in recovery, was a leader of the temperance movement-- The Black Temperance Movement. By the way, one of the leaders of the White Temperance Movement was First Lady Martha Washington, because so many fathers and sons were drinking heavy following the American Revolutionary War. So Frederick Douglass could not join the White Temperance Movement, so he went to Europe, started telling his recovery story, then he came back to the States and he became one of the leaders of the Black Temperance Movement. And he was also, as I mentioned earlier, an anti-slavery advocate.

Malcolm X started a program called "fishing for the dead." Just like his recovery was initiated when he was in prison, he would go into prisons and recruit men first, and then years later, women, to turn their life around and live a life of recovery. So here are three questions I often ask African-Americans seeking recovery. What are the reasons you survive? You know what I've discovered-- you know so many people have had friends and colleagues and





associates who died using drugs-- what's the reason you survived? And usually, whatever answer they give, it's connected to purpose.

Then we ask questions like, who would benefit from your recovery along with yourself? In other words, in traditional treatment we talk about how the individual would benefit from recovery, but here we're asking the question of individuals from a cultural group that is communal in its communication in nature, who else would stand to benefit from your recovery? As a matter of fact in my family, when my Uncle Isaac entered recovery, my whole family benefited.

By the way, he told me that when me and my siblings, my aunts and uncles and my mother visited him family night-- there were 39 of us that participate in his treatment-- he said all that he can think about when he was in treatment was if I turn this thing around, I can get my family back. Are there any conditions that you would like to help improve while in recovery?

Speaking of advocacy, you know the story of Billie Holiday. There was a man by the name of Harry Anslinger. In the 1930s he was the director of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, now call the FBI. In the 1930s they had a war on drugs. Why? Because there was a prohibition amendment, and whenever you outlaw drugs, gangsters get involved in selling the drugs.

So in the 1930s the war on drugs was with Italian gangsters like the Chicagoan Al Capone, who was a bootlegger of liquor. Iowa's gangsters like Bugs Moran, who sold alcohol. Mexicans along the border, for political reasons, and the Chinese in San Francisco, because they were so successful. And one African-American woman, Billie Holiday, after she sang the song Strange Fruit. I imagine that many of you have heard the song Strange Fruit. Billie Holiday talked about driving through the Southern states in the 1930s and seeing African-Americans hanging from trees and she said you know, that's Strange Fruit.

And Harry Anslinger said, we heard that you use heroin. If you keep singing that song Strange Fruit, you might incite a riot. We can't stand to have-- we can't afford to have more riots. So if you keep singing that song, we're going to take away your right to sing. Billie Holiday said, they silenced me when I was 10 years old, and they'll never silence me again. She kept singing the song.

What happened when she was 10? When Billie Holiday was a little girl her father deserted the family. To make ends meet, her mother worked in a brothel. That did you know that Billie Holiday grew up in a house of prostitution? And when she was 10 years old there was a raid on the brothel, her mother was arrested. When her mother returned from jail she opened the door, and there was a grown man having sex with 10-year-old Billie Holiday. They let him go but they put Billie Holiday in solitary confinement for a year to



silence her. We'll keep her quiet. United Nations says that everything over two weeks in solitary confinement is considered torture-- a year.

She gets out at age 11 after being traumatized, she starts drinking heavily. By her teenage years, she started using heroin. She was one of our first early advocates, if we listen to her voice. As a matter of fact, we learned that as she kept singing the song Strange Fruit, her song Strange Fruit was the theme song for the anti-lynching movement. Billie Holiday said imagine if the government takes sick people with diabetes, then forced them to take insulin in dark alleys, then sent them to jail. If we did that, everyone would know that we were crazy. Yet we do practically the same thing every day of the week with sick people hooked on drugs.

You know, my mentor said that for years he would have this waking nightmare that substance use disorders professionals a decade, 50 years from now, will look back on that period between 1986 and 1996 when crack cocaine had a stronghold on metropolitan cities, African-American communities, where the prison population increased. 400,000 incarcerated in 1985 to one million by 1995, to 2.5 million by 2005. Disproportionately African-Americans with alcohol and drug challenges. And what these councils are going to ask 50 years from now-- where were the counselors? And why didn't they stand up and speak out and advocate? And they're going to wonder, between 1986 and 1996, there were hundreds of thousands of women of color who were addicted to crack cocaine, who lost custody of their children during delivery based upon stigma and myth.

Truth of the matter is we now through research that alcohol does more damage to the unborn fetus than does cocaine. That cigarettes do more damage to the unborn fetus than cocaine. So I don't see how we can be the best we can be, and I work with African-American clients, if we're not willing to advocate. Malcolm X was an advocate. Frederick Douglass was an advocate. It's an important part of the work.

More lessons from the recovery legacies of Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X. Efforts should be made to address trauma with African-Americans seeking recovery. Would you put the word "yes" in chat if you are a trauma specialist? We want to know how many trauma specialists are with us today. "Yes" in chat.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Got three or four coming in so far.

MARK SANDERS: Which, by the way Christina, we should find it fascinating because we're starting to learn more and more that at the core of addiction is childhood trauma. The research says that 70% to 90% of women who have addictions were either sexually abused as girls or sexually assaulted as women. I'm not saying this is true what I'm about to say, but we could be the



only country in the world where there's an outside chance that men experience sexual assault with the frequency of women.

As a matter of fact, in 2019 there were 177,000 reported cases of sexual abuse-- men, women, and children in the general public in 2019-- 177,000. A quarter of a million in prison, mostly men. You ever notice that prisons have a moral code? Someone could end the life of their mother and someone might slap them a high five, but if you abuse, if you assault a child, they'll end your life in prison. That's the moral code. You know why? Because so many of the incarcerated have histories of trauma, which they medicate with alcohol and other drugs.

So here's what I think. In the next decade I'm going to ask that question, and most of us are going to do that work to become trauma-informed specialists. Why with African-Americans? There's a definition of trauma. Why do we need to be trauma specialists when we work with African-Americans?

Let's talk about traumatic stress and African-Americans. There's a woman by the name of Doctor Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, who's done a lot of work on historical trauma. Accumulative emotional, psychological wounding over the life span, across generations, emanating from massive group trauma.

Let's talk about the historical trauma in African-Americans. There was the Middle Passage. And some writers report that there were more people who died in those slave ships from West Africa to the Indies and to the Americas, than those who survived the Middle Passage. Those who did not survive were dropped into the Atlantic Ocean. Then there was slavery itself. African-Americans have been in America for a little over 400 years, and 250 of those years were in chattel slavery.

Then there was a Reconstruction Era after the Civil War, after the Civil War ended. The North took the troops away from the South and those in the South, whites in the South, would arrest African-Americans for minor infractions like jaywalking or dropping a piece of paper on the ground, give them long prison sentences-- 10, 15, 20 years for jaywalking-- in order to maintain that system of slavery. Does anyone know what the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution says? What does the 13th Amendment to the Constitution say?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Still a slave if incarcerated, someone said.

MARK SANDERS: There it is. See, most people get the first half of it. Thank you, Christina. Thank you, whoever responded. The 13th Amendment of the Constitution says no one can enslave another in these states unless you're incarcerated. So one way they were able to keep what looked like the system of slavery was to incarcerate large percentages of African-Americans. In many ways, that's still happening today.



Then there were the Jim Crow Laws, separate but equal, lynchings, and riots. Medical experimentation like the Tuskegee experiment. Let's take a moment to talk about the impact of historical trauma on African-Americans' loss of culture. Let me lean in when I share this. Have you ever noticed that when one country takes over another, the first thing they do is remove the paintings, the libraries, and every aspect connected to that group's culture. Because culture is what people fall back on during difficult times. Now let me make a bold statement.

You know Kwanzaa is kind of a holiday that was really created as so many of us who came to the New World, brought to the New World, lost our culture. Hip hop is an example of what a cultural group will do to find culture when their culture has been taken away. Survivor guilt-- to this day there are middle class African-Americans who grew up in poverty who feel guilty about their success. Not all, but quite a few. Depression, traumatic stress symptoms, numbing. I work with lots of teenagers, the African-American teenagers who numb with marijuana. Historical unresolved grief.

About 20 years ago, me and seven African-American social workers took a journey to a country called Ghana, located in West Africa. We were on a plane for 18 hours. Have you ever been on a plane for 18 hours? If yes, where did you go? You can put that in chat. If you've ever been on a plane for 18 hours, where did you go? I'm curious. Where did you go? 18 hours, that's a long time on the plane.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Sydney, Cambodia, India, Dubai.

MARK SANDERS: And guess what, my friends? I will never take an 18 hour flight ever again. That's too long. I couldn't sleep, my sinuses were acting up and I couldn't breathe, I had a headache you wouldn't believe. We were headed to Ghana, West Africa, me and seven African-American social workers. As a matter of fact, just about everyone was into recovery, that journey to Ghana, West Africa was part of their recovery. And I'll say a little bit more about that in a little while.

And on top of all that, that bad headache, when the plane landed in Ghana, West Africa, my luggage was lost. Didn't have a clue what to expect. Our first visit was to a space where the elders were meeting, and there were about 30 elders sitting in a circle and they invited the seven of us to join them in the circle. And one of my friends asked the elders a question-- so how do you feel about us as African-Americans?

When he asked that question it was so quiet, you can almost hear a pin drop. I asked him, why did you ask that question? How do you feel about us as African-Americans? We were not prepared for their response. They said, we



love you. We think about more than you know, and we pray for you. We were crying like babies.

Actually, as soon as they said we love you-- the elder says we love you, we think about you more than you know and we pray for you-- an 85-year-old man stood up and started singing a song. The lyrics were, you've come back home. All 30 of them were singing this song that you had come back home. Then they told us that 200 years ago it was a Ghanaian and African who was being forced on the ship to be enslaved in the Americas. He looked back at the shores of Ghana and he said, I'll be back home one day. And right after they sang the song they looked at us and they said, for all we know, one of you could be the descendants of that man. Welcome home. And we started to cry. We were healed in places that did not hurt.

Because this was a part of most of my colleagues' recovery journey, we learned rites of passage in Ghana, West Africa, and went back to African-American communities and started teaching rites of passage to young people. The impact of historical trauma, historical unresolved grief, heavy substance use, and heavy suicide. Does anyone know the country in the world that has the highest suicide rate in the world? Which country has the highest suicide rate in the world?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: The USA, Russia, China, Japan.

MARK SANDERS: Thank you, everyone. There's a country that's called Lithuania, and Lithuania sits between Russia and Poland. And Lithuania has the highest suicide rate in the world, heavy alcohol drinking. Here's what happened. Hitler took over Lithuania, Stalin took over Lithuania. Whenever you have a hostile takeover, you have lots of traumatic stress which people often medicate with the use of alcohol and other drugs.

And then suicide becomes high when there's heavy drinking. Traumatizing others at the micro and macro level. You've heard the expression "the traumatized people." There's a man by the name of Frantz Fanon, a revolutionary from the 60s who wrote a book called *The Wretched of the Earth*. He said a people are oppressed. They fight the oppressor back. And then the oppressor retreats. And then they oppress each other.

You see, when African-Americans made that great migration from the southern states to Chicago, to Detroit, to Harlem, they didn't have gangs in the beginning. But they were attacked by European gangs and they fought back. The European gangs retreated. And in my town, over the next 50 years, African-American gang members have killed other African-American gang members. Traumatized people traumatize people. Does anyone know the capital city of Liberia? Liberia is about 30 miles from Ghana in West Africa. What's the capital city of Liberia?



The capital city of Liberia is Monrovia. When James Monroe was president of the United States, he allowed a group of Africans to return to Africa and they showed up in Liberia. Traumatized people traumatize people. For 200 years, those who are enslaved in the Southern states went back to Liberia and they've had a Civil War. Those from the United States traumatizing those in Liberia because traumatized people traumatize people.

So we have the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. Take a moment to look at it. The criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. And what's the reason they call post-traumatic stress disorder post-traumatic stress? It's because most people who experience post-traumatic stress, they are not having most of the symptoms while they're in the stressful situation. It's when they return. Soldiers coming back from the Middle East to the United States-- the flashbacks and nightmares and bad dreams appear when they arrive. People coming back to neighborhood from incarceration, the symptoms are more pronounced when they leave prison.

There's no research that said that African-Americans have higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder than others, but yet, it's there. There's a few unique factors contributing to post-traumatic stress amongst African-Americans, including witnessing community violence. They've done some studies. There are lots of African-American children and teenagers who live in metropolitan areas who report firsthand seeing someone get shot, seeing someone die, et cetera. Incarceration is a risk factor.

African-American men and women collectively are the most incarcerated group of individuals on the face of this Earth. Some will go to prison without post-traumatic stress disorder and then leave prison and go into neighborhoods with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. I put a group of Black teenagers in a treatment center, and most of the youth coming into that treatment center were from the criminal justice system, juvenile justice. These youth we put in treatment did not have post-traumatic stress disorder when they went to treatment. They came out of treatment with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Let's take a moment to talk about the difference between post-traumatic stress disorder and complex trauma. By the way, one of my consultations is I work with young men in my town who are at the greatest risk of gun violence. Shooting someone with a gun. It's often retaliatory or they feel disrespected by someone. We'll talk about being disrespected in a moment. And a bunch of these young men, I use cognitive behavioral approaches. They share with me-- these are young African-American men—of course we all have post-traumatic stress disorder. You'll never stop me from smoking marijuana because that's my treatment for PTSD. Kind of a self-diagnosis.

The primary difference between post-traumatic stress disorder and complex trauma is that in order to be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder,



you have to be someplace that's stressful. You would often return to someplace safer. You're having flashbacks, nightmares, bad dreams. With complex trauma, exposure to a specific traumatic event is not required. All that's required to be diagnosed with complex trauma is a sudden, traumatic incident, years of neglect. Sudden incidence is post-traumatic stress disorder.

With complex trauma, years of neglect, abandonment, multiple placements like ward to the state multiple placement, parental substance abuse, adult emotional unavailability, multiple losses, exposure to domestic violence and abuse, and you're vulnerable to complex trauma. Let us check. Do you think your clients on average are more vulnerable to post-traumatic stress disorder or complex trauma? Would you put one of the two of those diagnoses in chat? Are more of your clients vulnerable to PTSD or complex trauma?

**KRISTINA SPANNBAUER:** A lot of complex trauma. Few people said both. Majority complex trauma.

**MARK SANDERS:** Yeah, and we don't talk as much about complex trauma as we do post-traumatic stress disorder. If the primary symptoms of PTSD are flashbacks, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, nightmares and bad dreams, the number one symptom of complex trauma is difficulty regulating emotions. You ever work with a client that went from calm to explosive, quickly? You know the rapper, Drake? He had a song where he says I go 0 to 100 real quick, from calm to explosive, like that. The young men who I work with, African-Americans, so many of them have complex trauma. Let's talk about the why. What's behind it?

Lots of African-Americans in general, men specifically, have lots of dehumanizing experiences that send the message that you're less human than others. Stop and frisk, intrusive search, hands on the squad car, put your pants down, followed around stores. Those messages say you're less human than other people. That is why for so many of the young generation of African-Americans, one of the worst things you can do is disrespect me. And that's after having years of dehumanizing experiences.

At my age now, and I'm older than the Sears Tower in Chicago, I still have lots of experiences where I'm treated like I'm not as important as other people. You remember in the 1960s when Martin Luther King Jr., 1968, April 3, was killed in Memphis, Tennessee? The workers were holding around signs that read, I'm a man too. Dehumanizing experiences combined with ignored losses.

I want to share with you a story about a boy who played park district football, and he was a fifth-string running back on the football team. What are the chances he's ever going to get in the football game as a fifth-string running back? I'll answer my own question. If you're a fifth-string running back on a football team, you would have an easier time finding a penny in the Sahara



desert than ever getting in the football game. If you're a fifth-string running back on a football team, you will be more likely to be struck by lightning five times in the same day and live, than ever getting in a football game. His whole job as a fifth-string running back was to watch grass grow on the football field.

His father died, and they held a funeral on a Friday. And the boy walked into the locker room the following Saturday morning and said, coach I want to play the whole game. And the coach did what you'd have done, let him play the whole game. His father died. He scored five touchdowns. The great Walter Payton from Jackson, Mississippi never scored five touchdowns in a football game. And coach said, what got you, you're a fifth-string running back? He said coach, when my dad was alive he was legally blind, so I figured since he died and went to heaven, he could see me. I wanted him to be proud of me.

Lots of the African-American young men who I work with, who get high every day, so many of them suffer from what we call father hunger. Where they did not get enough fathering. By the way, that's a crisis all over the United States - father hunger. And then other ignored losses including young men saying to me, I've had three buddies that were killed and nobody processed with me.

So when you have a combination of dehumanizing experiences plus ignored losses, that increases the possibility of rage, lots of anger and rage, making it difficult to regulate emotions. And what these young men tell me is that when they get high, when they smoke weed, it calms them down, if that makes sense. 63% of those with complex trauma have difficulty with impulse control, negative self-image, difficulty concentrating. By the way, disproportionately African-American men are diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, but it really could be complex trauma.

Aggression-- they're disproportionately diagnosed with conduct disorder, but could really be complex trauma. 12% of those with complex trauma also have post-traumatic stress disorder. And 10% of those with complex trauma are medicating the trauma with the use of alcohol and other drugs.

There's a kind of a traumatic stress disorder that I named myself. I call it 24-7-365 terror. And 24-7-365 terror differs from post-traumatic stress disorder. With post-traumatic stress disorder, as I mentioned earlier, you were traumatized but then you get relief when you leave the war zone. With 24-7-365 terror, you know that something bad can happen at any moment. These are communities that have lots of gun violence within communities. You're always on alert that something bad can happen at any moment.

So let's talk, and my friends, we are running out of time. Let's talk about addressing trauma with African-Americans' historical trauma. We haven't done a lot of this work, but Native Americans sure have. They say the steps involve awakening and the commitment to work together, mass mobilization, and personal grieving together. Forgiving the unforgivable and then returning





to culture. I have found that lots of African-Americans in long-term recovery want to know a lot about African-American culture, a lot about African culture, as a part of their recovery.

But there are some non-traditional approaches to treating historical trauma. The woman on this slide is a social worker from Liberia. Remember when I told you that for 200 years the Africans who went back to Liberia from the United States started a 200-year civil war? The social worker on the screen, she got tired of men and boys killing each other. So she organized the women in Liberia-- that's what women do. She organized the women in Liberia and they went on a sex strike and a prayer vigil, and they said we'll stop having sex and we'll pray every day until the men and boys stop killing each other. They stopped the 200-year civil war. She won a Nobel Peace Prize.

See, right now we have these non-traditional approaches. There's a priest by the name of Father Gregory Boyle who started a program called Homeboy Industries. He works with Latino and African-American gang members. He said the greatest deterrent from a bullet is a job, so he puts gang members to work. It works. What he likes to do is have rival gang members work side by side, because once you work side by side with this person he's no longer your enemy. He's your coworker.

And Bessel Van Der Kolk wrote a book called *The Body Keeps The Score*. The trauma lodges itself in the human body. That the brain can forget some of the details of the trauma, but the body has a way of remembering for a long time. That is why sometimes when you hug someone who has a history of trauma, their whole body will tense up. The body keeps the score.

Have you noticed or was it just me? Every few months, for the last 70 years, African-Americans are creating new dances. I happen to believe that the dances today are the best I've ever seen. I can do none of them but they're the best I've ever seen. Every several months. Here's my thought. What they're doing is removing trauma from their body through dance. After I read the book *The Body Keeps The Score*, I went to my mother's church, and you know in African-American churches you have lots of singing, dancing, and shouting.

I figured it out. What they're doing is removing historical trauma from their body through singing, dancing, and shouting. So some of the experiential approaches like dance and movement and music therapy would be really important with clients in general, and specifically with African-American clients.

So post-traumatic stress disorder and complex trauma are addressed with post-traumatic stress disorder. I invented a therapy for 24-7-365 terror. A client I work with grew up in my neighborhood. He was 20 years old. He went on the weekend pass to the neighborhood where I used to live, he lives now.



He came back smelling like marijuana and the program had a policy-- he was on intensive probation-- you can't get high while you're in the program.

And so I said, what did you do? He said, I know I smell like marijuana. He went across the street to Target and bought a bottle of Febreze. He sprayed Febreze all over himself. Then what'd you smell like? He said, weed and Febreze. Hard to get rid of that smell. They told him he couldn't go outside next week, and he was restricted. He got angry. I'm going, I don't care what they say, I'm going. I said, if you go and they put you out of the program, you'll go to prison. You're on intensive probation. I don't care. I had three buddies that were murdered. My birthday is next weekend. I'll be 21 years old. I'm not guaranteed to see my 21st birthday.

So I negotiated it for him. I said, you know they're afraid of you going home to our old neighborhood-- to our neighborhood. I didn't say you're-- our neighborhood. You negotiate a trip downtown on your birthday, because I know you're going. You negotiate it. Skip downtown, now I'm ready for him when he returns. Here's the question I asked him. How long do African-American men live? I've asked that question to African-American males across the country. What do you think are the most common answer they've given me? What age?

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: 67?

MARK SANDERS: Interesting.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: 50.

MARK SANDERS: So the African-Americans I asked, they're under 21. And I asked them, how long do African-American men live? I've been asking young African-American women how long do African-American women live? Same answer. The most common answer, that African-American men lived to be about 21 years old and women live to be about 27 years old. That's the most common answer. Not an epiphany, a moment of clarity. If you think you're going to be dead by age 21 why would you stop getting high?

So my first order of business is to convince these young men and women, you can live. So the neighborhood where my client lived, it's the murder capital of the world, they say. So I showed him some statistics after the crisis was over, he celebrated his birthday. I said man, in Chicago, you said you're going to be dead before your 21st birthday. There's only 500 murders in Chicago annually. I say only because I know it's a big deal, but there are 40,000 births in Chicago annually. I show them some data where there are 2.7 million residents in Chicago and 500 murders annually. I showed them some data

that there are nine million residents of Cook County, that's Chicago plus the suburbs, and 500 murders annually. The neighborhood where he lived, which



is considered the murder capital of the United States, it was 112 murders over a 20 year period. 73,000 people live in that neighborhood.

Then I show them these numbers. The life expectancy of African-American men in Chicago is 70, African-American woman 75. He looked at that number he says man, he snatched the paper from my hand, she said I can live? I said, it looks like it. Man, I need to smoke some weed and think about that. He never thought that he could live.

Part of my job is to give them hope, to give them some reasons to live. Just like there's so many men who read the book The Autobiography of Malcolm X, I've been recommended that every African-American woman incarcerated ought to read a book called Afeni Shakur, about the mother of rapper Tupac Shakur. It tells her recovery story and how she helped to uplift African-American communities in recovery. We are running out of time.

The other thing that we learned from the recovery legacies of Malcolm X and Frederick Douglass is the importance of honoring multiple pathways of recovery. Again, Frederick Douglass's pathway of recovery was like a stubborn refusal to drink because he thought it was a way of controlling the enslaved, and advocacy. Same with Malcolm X, advocacy in Quantum Change. So there are so many ways in which African-Americans, like other clients, are initiating recovery. So many ways. You know that when COVID 19 hit, that virtual Zoom AA and NA meetings were common in African-American communities.

There's recovery basketball in Philadelphia, a group of African-American men have formed a basketball league where they work on their recovery and they play basketball together. Eastern approaches to recovery amongst African-Americans, it's endless.

So Christine, I'm going to see if there are any questions. And if I can't get to them all, but if they put them in chat, then I'll make sure I respond in writing.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Looks like we just have one right now.

MARK SANDERS: OK, we're ready.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: All right. Cedric asks, what do you think of the substitute name for PTSD, such as UTSD, Urban Traumatic Stress Disorder. This is specifically for individuals living in urban areas.

MARK SANDERS: Yeah, I don't have a problem with it. Lately, we've been using the term metropolitan, so I just got used to that. But I don't have a problem with it. The reason I named it 24-7-365 terror is because scientists from Harvard were calling it Hood Disease. They were making it pathological



so I created my own name for it. When you live in the neighborhood and there's a constant threat that something bad might happen.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: I will say there was-- oh, sorry, Mark. Go ahead.

MARK SANDERS: No, you go ahead.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: There was, just kind of as a follow up to that, someone asked in the chat where they might be able to find your curriculum or research, the 24-7-365 terror stuff.

MARK SANDERS: Yeah, so Harvard did the research, I just didn't like what they called it. But they did research on it, like a unique type of violence when you think that something can happen, police sort of circling around all the time, and something bad can happen at any time.

The one last thing I want to say, and I got to move quick because we just have such a little time, another lesson from Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X once community needs them in recovery is not just for you but your family needs you community needs you my uncle Isaac one of his first acts in recovery was to go and get his daughter and tell her how smart she was.

My cousin Yvette went back to college and she got a PhD, the only person in our family that got a PhD. And she wrote a book called Going From the Projects to a PhD, and there she is at the graduation ceremony. That's her son. Notice the resemblance. He got a college degree at the same University where his mother is on the faculty with a PhD. Says Mark, my brothers died of overdose but none of my sons became addicted to drugs. It skipped a generation. Started with that one man in recovery, my uncle, going back to get his daughter.

So I'm the curator and founder of the Online Museum of African-American Addictions, Treatment, and Recovery. We have 15 more webinars there like the one that we had today with different subjects, lots of articles, et cetera. I have a quick story for you, I'm going to turn it over to Christina.

So there's a Puerto Rican boxer from Humboldt Park, the Northwest side of Chicago, who was going to be the next great one. But he was killed by an intoxicated motorist. And there was a short film about his life. The film showed his mother meeting the people that received his organs. Her son was an organ donor. Man walked in the room that had received one of her son's kidneys. The mother politely smiled and shook his hand. A woman walked in the room who received her son's other kidney and the mother politely smiled and shook her hand. A man walked in that room who received her son's lungs. The mother politely smiled and shook his hand.



And then the woman walked in the room that received her son's heart. When the woman saw that woman, she lost it. With tears in her eyes she ran over and asked, can I give you a hug? Could I put my head against your chest? Because she wanted to hear her son's heartbeat one more time. It's about the heart, and the most important thing we could do is to make sure that we do our work with our heart. We do our work with love. Thank you so very much for spending this time with me, and enjoy the rest of your day. I turn it over to Christina.

KRISTINA SPANNBAUER: Thank you so much, Mark. Excellent presentation. As we said in the beginning, the recording of this webinar will be posted on the Great Lakes ATTC Product and Resources website. It'll take about a week and everyone who attended the full session will get a certificate of attendance via email. That will also take about a week. So thank you again, everyone. Mark there's so much thanks for you in the chat, so have a wonderful rest of your day.