



The Black Elephant on the HBCU Campus

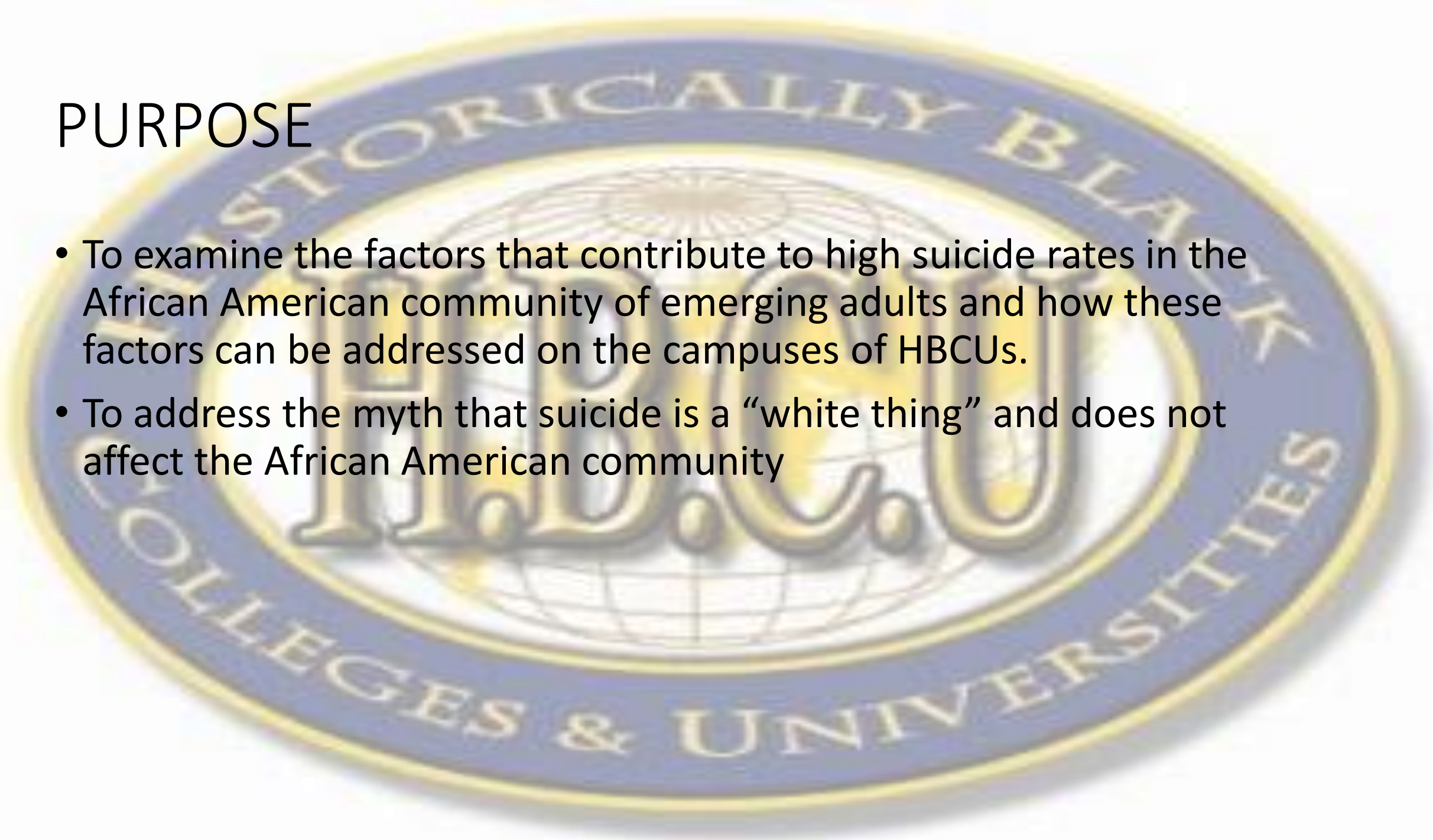
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**3rd Annual Alabama Higher Education Suicide
Prevention Conference**

Sept. 10, 2021

PURPOSE

- To examine the factors that contribute to high suicide rates in the African American community of emerging adults and how these factors can be addressed on the campuses of HBCUs.
- To address the myth that suicide is a “white thing” and does not affect the African American community



Alabama HBCUs

- • Alabama A&M University
- • Alabama State University
- • Bishop State Community College
- • Concordia College Alabama
- • Gadsden State Community College
- • H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College
- • J.F. Drake State Community and Technical College
- • Lawson State Community College Birmingham
- • Miles College
- • Oakwood University
- • Selma University
- • Shelton State Community College
- • Stillman College
- • Talladega College
- • Tuskegee University



Facts of Suicide Among College Students

- Suicide is a leading cause of death among college-aged students in the United States.
- 1,100 students take their own lives each year, according to a report in 2010
- Many students come to college with a prior history of mental health difficulties or treatment.
- College- aged men are four to six times more likely to die by suicide than women.
- College- aged women are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide using nonlethal means than men.

Suicide Statistics for African American Youth

- Suicide death rates for Black American girls ages 13 to 19 increased by 182% from 2001 to 2017
- The rate of suicide deaths among young black males increased by 60 percent from 2001 through 2017.
- Self-reported suicide attempts have increased by 73% for Black male and female adolescents over the past 25 years.
- In youth ages 10-19, suicide was the second leading cause of death and in 2017 – over 3,000 youth died by suicide in this age group
- For Black young adults ages 15–24 years, suicide is the third leading cause of death with approximately 3,000 Black Americans dying by suicide each year.

Key Factors that influence Help- Seeking Behaviors Among African Americans

- One study referred to college age African Americans, as “hidden ideators” who are less likely than other youth to disclose thoughts of suicide.
- New research findings indicate that racial discrimination is so painful that it is linked to the possibility to die by suicide
- Black or African Americans living below the poverty level, as compared to those over twice the poverty level, are twice as likely to report serious psychological distress.

Hidden Ideators- Hiding in Plain Sight

- The stigma of mental health is still very prevalent in the African American community
- Help- seeking behaviors are often not explored because of distrust of helping professionals, especially those of a different race, ethnicity, or cultural background
- For African American males, the perception of being seen as weak or vulnerable or a “punk” might discourage them from admitting or acknowledging mental and emotional health concerns
- For African American females, the tendency to portray a “strong woman” image could promote behaviors of suppressing their emotions and feelings

How Racial Discrimination impacts Suicidal Behaviors

- "Our findings demonstrate that for Black adults, perceived discrimination serves as a sufficiently painful experience that is directly associated with higher capability to overcome one's inherent fear of death and achieve an increased capacity for self-harm," -- Rheeda Walker, professor of psychology and director of the University of Houston's Culture, Risk and Resilience Lab.
- The study included 173 Black and 272 white college students, who responded to questionnaires about their experiences.
- "For Black adults, perceived discrimination accounted for statistically significant variance above and beyond both feelings of depression and non-discriminatory stressors in predicting suicide capability. For white adults, perceived discrimination was not uniquely associated with capability for suicide," reports Walker.

How Poverty and Financial Difficulties Influence Suicidal Behaviors

- Nearly 20 percent of Black Americans are uninsured and living below the poverty level, putting them at a disadvantage in accessing both medical and mental health care.
- Black and African American people living below poverty are twice as likely to report serious psychological distress as those living over two times the poverty level.
- There is a powerful link between suicide and economic deprivation — a measure that captures poverty, unemployment, low levels of education and reliance on government assistance.

Other Factors that Could Impact a College Student's Suicidal Tendencies

- Perceived Isolation from Family and Friends
- Difficulties adjusting to more freedom and limited supervision
- Challenges associated with having a life plan
- Struggles with academic, athletic, or other performance
- Perceptions related to self- esteem, self- worth, and self- confidence
- Deterioration of relationships/ friendships
- Perceived expectations of what it means to be a college student
- Improper balance of “playtime” and “worktime”
- Poor interpersonal connections on campus

Multiple and Dual Diagnoses Complications

- Onset of first episode psychosis
- Drug and Alcohol Use
- PTSD (environmental and societal factors)



How can HBCU Personnel assist with the Challenges that their Students face??

- Incorporate mental and emotional health services in their campus medical and physical health clinics
- Offer services in discreet locations so that students can get anonymous help
- Facilitate QPR trainings into the freshman orientation and require annual refresher courses
- Display posters and other informational materials in prominent locations around campus that have information about Suicide Prevention and include the National Suicide Prevention Hotline
- Build partnerships with local mental health providers to offer free or reduced prices to students
- Integrate a Student Assistance Program into university fees so that students can have off-campus, 24/7 availability to talk to a mental health professional

Coping Skills for Students

- Exercise (something requiring focus like weight lifting)
- Reading a book — preferably fiction
- Listening to (chill) music
- Listening to a podcast
- Spending time with your pet
- Playing a game or solving a puzzle (Solitaire, Sudoku, crosswords, etc.)
- Find a mantra or phrase associated with something positive
- Reward oneself when accomplishing something hard or big
- List and express gratitude
- Talk to someone you trust

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