

# **NAMICon 2020**

A Virtual Event • July 13-14

**Together Toward Tomorrow**

# What is Behind the Increasing Suicide Rate Among Black Youth?

## Napoleon B. Higgins Jr. MD

CEO and Founder, Bay Pointe Behavioral Health, Inc.

CEO and Founder Member, Global Health Psychiatry, LLC

CEO and Founder, South East Houston Research Group

Past President, Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc.

Past President, Caucus of Black Psychiatrists, APA

## Ericka Goodwin, MD

Founding Member, Global Health Psychiatry, LLC

CEO and Founder, Goodwin Wellness Enterprises

CEO and Founder, Goodwin Medical Associates

## **NAMICon 2020**

A Virtual Event • July 13-14

**Together Toward Tomorrow**



# Eliminate Distractions



**NAMICon 2020**

# Disclosures (Speaker/Consultant/Ad Board)

## Napoleon B. Higgins, Jr. MD

- Lundbeck
- Otsuka
- Assurex Health
- Sage

## Ericka Goodwin, MD

- No disclosures



# Goals

- ❑ To discuss suicide rates, including the rising rate in Black children
- ❑ To discuss key factors that impact Black children
- ❑ To discuss additional considerations that impact children's mental health
- ❑ To discuss ways to decrease the risk of suicide



# Overall Suicide Rates

- ❑ Suicides are among the top 10 causes of death among all age groups
  - ❑ Costs billions of dollars of lost productivity
- ❑ Historically suicides are having been higher among whites than blacks across all age groups
- ❑ Growing trend among most groups (except white youths)
- ❑ Firearms contribute to 1/2 of all completed suicides
- ❑ 123 Suicides per day in US



**NAMICon 2020**

# Children and Suicide

- ❑ Second leading cause of death of children 10-24 years old
- ❑ Accelerating rates of suicide in children ages 5-12 years old



**NAMICon 2020**

# Rising African-American Suicide Rate

- ❑ Suicide rates traditionally have been higher among whites than blacks
- ❑ For 13-17 year olds white suicide rates are nearly ***double*** the rate of black children
- ❑ Suicide rates among black teens are increasing at a higher rate than whites



**NAMICon 2020**



# Rising Rates of Black Youth Suicides

- ❑ Blacks children 5-12 year olds are roughly **double** the rate of white children
    - ❑ This new trend debunks the idea that suicide rates are routinely higher for white children
  - ❑ Suicide rates have **doubled** among black youth from 1993-2012
    - ❑ Rates have declined for white youth 5-12 years old
  - ❑ 37% of all youth suicides are black children
    - ❑ Black children make up 15% of the population
- \*Highest increase of all youth suicides are black males



**NAMICon 2020**

PEDIATRICS Vol. 138 No. 4 October 01, 2016 &  
Volume: 28 issue: 3, page(s): 340-345

Article first published online: May 7, 2017; Issue published: March 1, 2018

# Rising Rates of Black Teenagers and Suicide

## 1980-1995 Suicide deaths

- ❑ Suicide deaths from U.S. Surgeon General (Dr. David Satcher)
  - ❑ The suicide rate among African Americans ages 10 to 14 increased 233%

## 2001-2017 Suicide deaths

- ❑ Black females
  - ❑ 182% increased rate
- ❑ Black males
  - ❑ 60% increased rate



**NAMICon 2020**

Price, J.H. & Khubchandani, J. J Community Health (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-019-00678->

# Key Contributing Factors in Black Suicide

- Lack of culturally relevant behavioral health providers
  - Lack of mental health providers
  - Counselors are teaching classes
  - Sharing between schools
- Risk of death due to homicide
- Unresolved trauma
- Perceived racism
- Access to firearms



# Key Factors for Suicide of Black Children???

- It is a new trend
- Only recently did we find a marker for this
- Lack of research
- What has happened?

We truly don't know



**NAMICon 2020**

# Key Factors impacting Black Children

- Bullying and teasing
- Lack of access to mental health
- Racism and racial discrimination
- Social media
  - Looking at other's lives
  - Parents on their phones
- Families are busy
- Single parent homes
  - Mostly mother, income disparities in men and women



# Key Factors impacting Black Children

- Poverty and low SES
- Lack of neighborhood play
- Trauma and violence in the home and community
  - What ever happens in the home, happens with the kid
  - Thoughts that children do not experience trauma



# Barriers to Care for Black Children

- Fear
- Access
- Gov't insurance (Medicaid)
  - Politics
- Stigma of mental illness
  - Lack of awareness
  - Fear of the medical model
  - Going to others, doctors last
    - Not seeking professional help
    - Labeled as weak, crazy



# Why the higher rates in early to late Adolescences? (10-24 years old)

- Untreated mental illness
- Society, changes and stress
- Parental workload
  - Squeezing of the middle class
- Pressures of society
- Blind eye vs. not a priority
- Individual versus the collective
- Social media





# Why the higher rates of suicide in Youth (5-12 years old)?

- Unable to tolerate things in the moment
- May not understand death and finality
- Lack of language development to explain their issues
- Not able to reason through the situation
  - Anger, despair, hopelessness

*Prone to Impulsivity*



**NAMICon 2020**

# Young Children and Suicide Risks

## Youth Suicides

- Only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> had shown symptoms of depression
- 60% of 5-12 year olds primarily ADHD Hyperactive Type
  - Impulsivity*
  - Undiagnosed mood or affective disorders?*
- Hanging, strangulation and suffocation

## Adolescent Suicides

- 2/3<sup>rd</sup> show symptoms of depression
- Firearms and strangulation



# Undiagnosed Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities

- ❑ 42% of children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities will have suicidal thoughts or gestures
- ❑ Most at risk
  - ❑ Higher than average IQ
  - ❑ Comorbid psychiatric diagnosis
  - ❑ Psychosocial stressors



# Children and Depression Symptoms

- Present differently
- Somatic
  - Stomach and headache
- Irritability, hostility, anger
- Behavioral issues
- Are not able to articulate due to lack of words to explain
  - “what’s that...what does that mean”
  - Clinicians not able to use their language
- Issues in schoolwork and other disciplinary issues



# Depressive symptoms to look for in schools?

## Children are with educators more than with parents

- Hostility, hyperactivity and impulsivity
  - Irritable aggression
- Looks sad or withdrawn
- Comes to class and puts their head down
- Often with somatic symptoms
  - Asking to go to the nurse's office
- Not wanting to go to school
- Withdrawn from activities and play



# What can schools do?

- ❑ School connectiveness
  - ❑ The school cares, peers care
  - ❑ Facilitating a positive community
  - ❑ Healthy behaviors and seeking help when supported
  
- ❑ Teach Social Learning and Mental Health in schools



# Bullying

- ❑ School ignoring complaints
  - ❑ Not being able to identify, recognize
  - ❑ Racial bias
  - ❑ Hands tied
  - ❑ Is it a big deal?
    - ❑ Interaction between students, teachers and parents matter
    - ❑ Black children are more likely to be bullied (prevention and detection)

Today's discourse and public figures



**NAMICon 2020**

# Media Coverage and Suicide Contagion

- Risks increase with popularity and with admired persons
- Responsible reporting
- Stories of hope and resilience decreases risks





# How do you decrease suicide risks?

- Research targeting those at highest risk
- Improving access to mental health services
- Reducing access to lethal means
- Increasing culturally competent mental health professionals
- Black mental health professionals



# Decreasing risks: Training teachers and youth providers

- Texas and other states
- Curriculum for training
- Expanding the role of counselors
- Increase the amount counselors and increase mental health professionals in schools
- Social workers for impoverished communities and schools



**NAMICon 2020**

# Conclusion: Resiliency and Protective Factors

- ❑ Identifying with your own race, walking between groups

- ❑ Code switching

- ❑ Organized religion

“Risk factors are not predictive factors due to protective factors”

-Carl Bell, MD

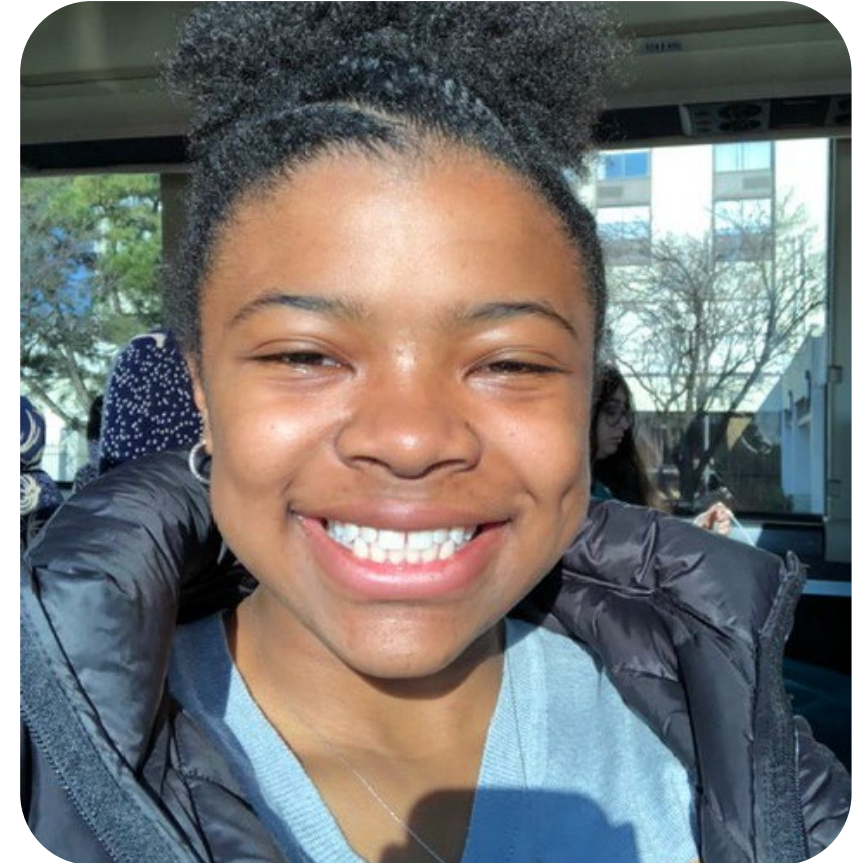


**NAMICon 2020**

# “Black people” are not a monolith

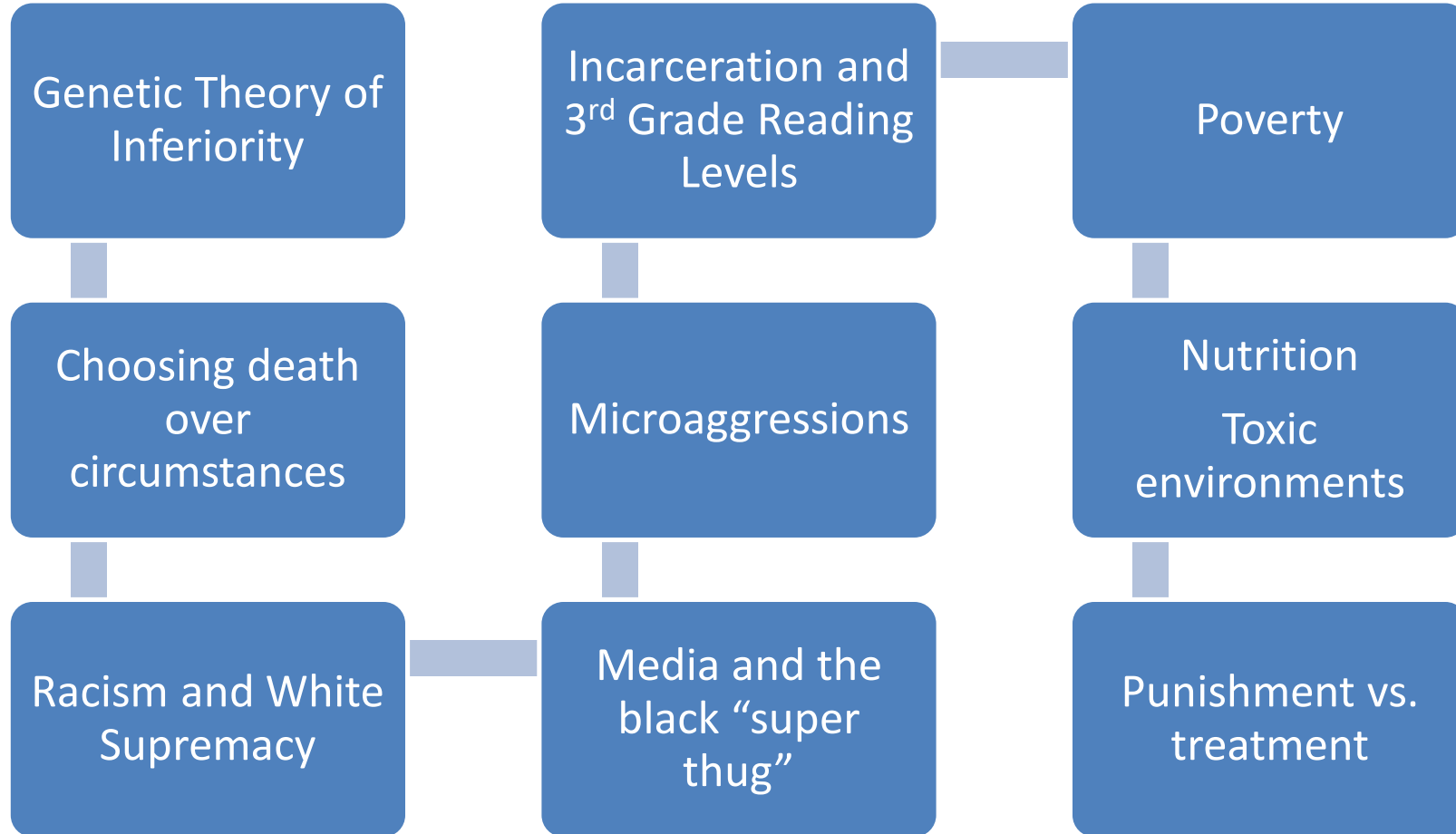
## What is “Black”?

- ❑ African-Americans with history before 1865 and the end of slavery
- ❑ Generational trauma and slavery
- ❑ Caribbean-Blacks
  - ❑ Spanish, French and Creole speaking
- ❑ Recent African Immigrant Blacks
- ❑ I’m not sure who or what you are, but in America... “your Black right?”

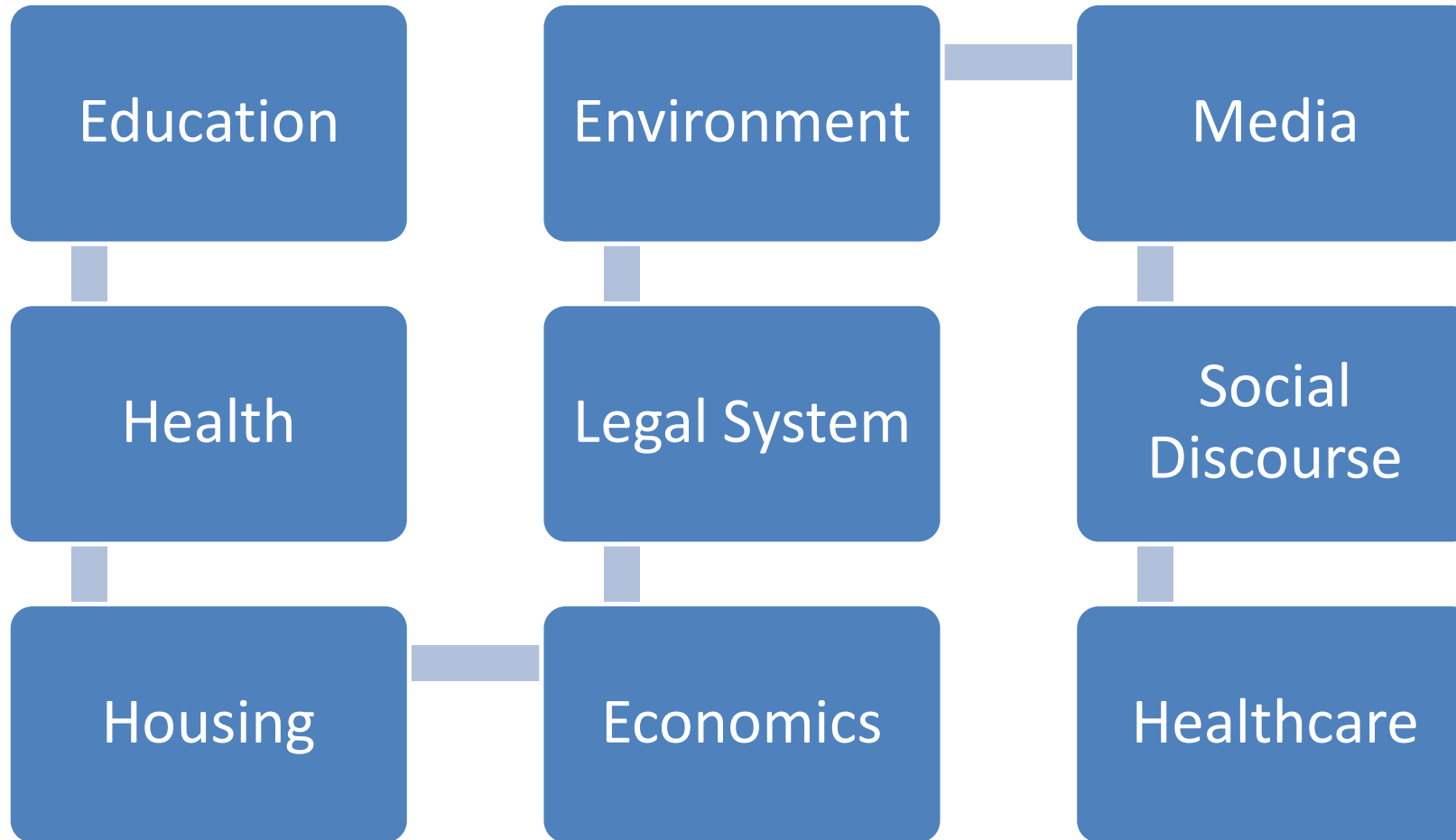


**NAMICon 2020**

# Things to look at (what I could not get to)



# Conclusion Changes needed in the System



**NAMICon 2020**

Orlando Lightfoot, MD

# The Profile for Youth Suicide

## ADHD

### Learning Disabilities

#### Underlying mood disorder

#### Normal to elevated IQ

#### Recognition of the educational difficulties

#### Trauma

#### Bullying

#### Lack of social supports (home and school)

#### Hopelessness

#### Perceived Racism

#### Increasingly Black



# Suicide Prevention Resource Center

## References

- ❑ Bridge, J. A., Horowitz, L. M., Fontanella, C. A., Sheftall, A. H., Greenhouse, J., Kelleher, K. J., & Campo, J. V. (2015). Age-related racial disparity in suicide rates among U.S. youths from 2001 through 2015. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 172(7), 697–699.
- ❑ Bridge, J. A., Asti, L., Horowitz, L. M., Greenhouse, J. B., Fontanella, C. A., Sheftall, A. H., . . . Campo, J. V. (2015). Suicide trends among elementary school-aged children in the United States from 1993 to 2012. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(7), 673–677.
- ❑ Moyer, J. W. (2018, March 8). Researchers unclear why suicide is increasing among Black children. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/health/ct-Black-childrens-suicide-20180308-story.html>
- ❑ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1998). Suicide among Black youths—United States, 1980–1995. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 47(10), 193–196.
- ❑ Joe, S. (2006). Explaining changes in the patterns of Black Suicide in the United States from 1981 to 2002: An age, cohort, and period analysis. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 32(3), 262–284.
- ❑ Joe, S., Baser, R., Breeden, G., Neighbors, H., & Jackson, J. (2006). Prevalence of and risk factors for lifetime suicide attempts among Blacks in the United States. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 296(17), 2112–2123.
- ❑ Joe, S., Baser, R., Neighbors, H. W., Caldwell, C., & Jackson, J. S. (2009). 12-Month and lifetime prevalence of suicide attempts among Black adolescents in the National Survey of American Life. *Journal of American Academy on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 43(3), 272–283.
- ❑ Chatters, L. C., Taylor, R., Lincoln, K., Nguyen, A., & Joe, S. (2011). Church-based social support and suicidality among African Americans and Black Caribbeans. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 15(4), 337–353.
- ❑ Joe, S., & Kaplan, M. S. (2001). Suicide among African American men. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 31(1), 106–121.



**NAMICon 2020**



# Contact us

## **Napoleon Higgins, Jr. MD**

- ❑ IG, Facebook, Twitter, Linked In:  
**@NapoleonHiggins**
- ❑ [www.NapoleonHigginsMD.com](http://www.NapoleonHigginsMD.com)

## **Ericka Goodwin, MD**

- ❑ IG, Facebook, Twitter, Linked In:  
**@doctorericka**
- ❑ [www.doctorericka.com](http://www.doctorericka.com)