

# We Need to Nurture Black Youth



***Written by Darryl Turpin, Director of Equity and Cultural Engagement***

Real talk. No more time for hollowed-out and anti-intellectual conversation. Our Black youth are in crisis. Continuing to ignore is the mental warping that comes before physical extermination. The lack of continuous and substantive engagement and honest dialogue has only exacerbated the problem. We continue to “pathologize” our Black youth’s mental health rather than develop culturally responsive solutions, which could be critical to the healing process.

Indeed, the fastest rising suicidal population in America is black youth. Though this is a relatively new phenomenon, it is not surprising. While society continues to criminalize, villainize and dehumanize our Black children, we need an approach based on evidence in how Black populations have endured and overcome trauma and horrific adversity. Our resiliency has created problems with our physical health—the rise in hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and mental health conditions. Our survival and resiliency have depended solely on our faith and hope.

Faith and hope are cornerstones of our Black existence. Whether church, negro spirituals, blues, or jazz, faith and hope have been foundational. Due to desegregation and gentrification, much of the racial socialization to be resilient and survive has suffered. We should reappropriate and teach our Black youth to appreciate the values and strengths of Black culture. We should nurture them to value their history and heritage, cultivating Black joy.

Teaching pro-social pride in oneself and attitude is an evidence-based practice. Black youth who embrace Blackness are less likely to become violent, use drugs, commit crimes, drop out of high school or become suicidal. They are more likely to value their community, respect their elders and embrace faith and hope.

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