

Addressing mental health in BIPOC Communities with Lines for Life

SPEAKERS

Speaker 1, Speaker 2

Speaker 1 00:03

All right. I'm James Shippy, breaking news anchor with KOIN 6 in Portland. CW, and I got the pleasure of being joined today with Martin Lockett, the Director of Cultural Engagement at Lines for Life. How's it going this morning? Going very well, James, thank you for having me this morning. No thanks for joining us. And it's very important. Obviously, it's Black History Month. We're coming to the end of the month, but I think not only highlighting Black stories just this month, but in general, but bringing to light a lot of stuff going on in our community. So I really thank you again for joining me. So it's Lines for Life. This is like a suicide prevention hotline, but you have a special kind of section of it. Or if you could just explain, can you tell us more about the mission of the suicide hotline and what it is that you're directing that you're doing there?

Speaker 2 00:50

Yes, sir. So Lines for Life, broadly, is known for the 988, suicide crisis line. However, we have a host of lines. We have a line specific for military folks and their families, veterans to call the military help line to receive help around those issues. We have a senior loneliness line. We identify seniors as anybody who is 55 and up, and that's our warm line. Don't have to be in a crisis at all. We know seniors get lonely and just want a warm voice on the other end of the line to connect to. So we have seniors who call on a regular basis. We have our youth line, which is our national line, very well known, where youth can call between four o'clock pm and 10 o'clock pm, Pacific Time, to get peer to peer support. We have young volunteers who get out of school and come down to our office in Southwest Portland and take calls. And then most of these young folks have had lived experience around suicidal ideation, self harm and other issues and now they support their peers who are going through similar struggles. But I know we're here to talk about our racial equity support line, and that is a line that was established in 2020, in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, we knew that a lot of Black folks and really BIPOC folks in general, would be struggling with what happened and needing a safe space to talk about this without anyone kind of pushing back on their views or minimizing it or explaining it in a way. We wanted folks to have a space where they could come to and talk openly and candidly and even angrily about what had happened. And so we created this line. And the secret sauce I'll say in this line, James is that it is entirely staffed by people of color, because we wanted to let the audience that we're targeting know that when you call this line, you're going to be talking to someone of color who also likewise has lived experience around discrimination and racism and microaggressions and just the issues that we face as people of color in this country. And so that was the basis of the line, and it's been going pretty well,

Speaker 1 03:04

yeah, and that's Glad you're getting to that specific, because I find that very fascinating, and I think it's important for viewers and listeners to know about that. Why is it why is it important? Do you feel for people if they're calling with, you know, mental health crisis or needing to talk to someone for them, to speak to someone with the same lived experience as them, especially if they're like a minority bipoc community.

Speaker 2 03:29

Well, I mean, the studies show, we know that a lot of folks of color are reluctant to reach out for help around substance abuse, around suicidal ideation, around mental health issues at large. I mean, there's several issues that can go into it. Certainly, stigma is always the overarching theme where many of us are not brought up in environments where reaching out for help and talking about sensitive issues is encouraged. So we're always fighting against that to kind of destigmatize issues around mental health and communities of color. But then there's also the fact that there's certain there's just not enough folks of color doing this work, frankly, and so folks are reluctant to go in and set up an appointment for an assessment, because they largely believe they're not going to be meeting with someone who looks like them or who can identify with their plight. And so we know these challenges exist, and so we want to find a way to kind of break through and let folks know that you're going to be talking to somebody who can, you know, identify, at least on some level, with what you're going through.

Speaker 1 04:32

That makes a lot of sense. Definitely, I grew up in the house. My step mom was a psychologist, so I kind of bypass some of those stigmas, because I had so many conversations with her growing up, but I do know I definitely understand about that, bringing that awareness to our community. What kind of issues, and I don't know if you can pinpoint this for me, but what kind of issues do folks, a lot of bipoc people, may come to. You to this hotline with or reach out to you guys with that may be a little different than what other folks may do,

Speaker 2 05:07

sure. So I can, I can speak from personal experience, having worked on the line about a year, year and a half ago, I was last on the line, and folks would call. First of all, a lot of people were surprised that the line even existed. They said, Well, I'm calling, you know, I saw this this online somewhere, but I don't really know what to expect here, but here's what I'm going through. They will talk about things like workplace discrimination. They would want to get feedback on, am I, am I seeing this the right way, or am I making too much, you know, too much of this? Like, kind of walk me through that. Some folks will talk about they were in like, interracial relationships, and the family of their partner was not accepting of the relationship, and what that feels like. We know that in the last month or so, with everything that's going on federally, obviously, people are experiencing a lot of fear and concern around these things, so we have seen an uptick, just within the last month, with folks calling the process, you know, the fears and concerns around what's going on in the in the federal government. So the, you know, it's a broad range. We've, I've had callers call and talking about just their identity and as as, as a person of color, maybe move from a predominantly black area to now Oregon, which is which is not the case, and just

grappling with those with those issues. And so it does vary, but they're all culturally specific and and so that's what, that's what, that's what we encourage folks to reach out

Speaker 1 06:40

for? Yeah, that's That's fascinating. And I think that's great to hear, actually, because sometimes when people hear of hotline, they think of, you know, maybe I'm speaking from own point of view, but I'm sure maybe other folks might feel the same way your hotline, you think someone's got to be in like, a life or death crisis, right? But the way you're explaining it can run the gamut. As you said, maybe stuff has to do with work or relationship, stuff identity, things like everyday kind of things that folks experience

Speaker 2 07:09

absolutely well, because we know that before folks are in a crisis, they're they're kind of dealing with the more subtle issues of stress and trauma and microaggressions and how you're processing that. And if you don't process those things as they come, then they can mount right and then it turns into a mental health crisis. So we can kind of be that early intervention support, you know, to alleviate the the later, you know, crisis situation. Then obviously we want to, we want to encourage that. And so, yeah, we highly encourage folks to call just dealing with you know, if things are just starting to feel heavy, whatever that may look like, give us a call. We'd be, we'd be happy to support you through that and and then, you know, the goal at the end of the call, James, and this kind of spans our suite of hotlines and warm lines, is to make sure that we're connecting folks to resources in their communities, wherever that may be, in Portland or, you know, Ontario, Oregon, for that matter, but getting folks connected because, I mean, they're only with us for 2030, minutes or so, right to process what they're going through, but we want to make sure that they have long, long term support if they want it. So we do everything we can to connect folk with community based resources. That's

Speaker 1 08:25

great to hear exactly that was going to be one of my last questions, you know, as far as that's concerned, and also one of my last questions too. What kind of training do you kind of like? What kind of background are these for? I know you mentioned some students there. Are you getting people that are maybe studying to become a therapist or in that, that realm, certainly,

Speaker 2 08:44

we have a robust volunteer program at lions live. We have master's level students at PSU. We have folks at Portland Community College, you know, looking to get those, those kind of clinical hours and so again, then we have young folks volunteering. They can put it on their resumes, you know, applying for college acceptance. It looks good when they, you know, supported their peers. They've gone through over 80 hours of training, you know, before they can start taking calls. And obviously, young folks are supervised all the time. And so it spans the gamut of folks that we have in the levels of training that we do, but nobody is going to be taking calls with less than four weeks of training. That is, that is kind of the bare minimum. Depending on your position. You may go through six weeks of training, but nobody's taking calls with less than four weeks. And then you have to have been working on the general 988, line and military helpline for six months before you can then apply to work on the racial equity support line, and obviously, having to identify as a person of color, first and foremost,

Speaker 1 09:55

that's great to hear. That's great to hear. And as we're wrapping up and we're going to be. On the QR code at some point as you're wrapping up, how can people, once again, just reach out to you guys for resources to get to you. What do you recommend people find out to get connected with you if they need to speak to

Speaker 2 10:13

somebody? Absolutely easiest way is to go to lines for life.org. We're we're, you know, all of our programs are listed. We have an equity page, so if you click on that tab, it'll populate with all of the different trainings and presentations that we do in the community. And so I encourage folks to check out. We have a lot of cool initiatives going on right now, frankly. Or you can reach out to me directly at Martin L at lines for life.org. That is my email address, and we'd love to hear from folks who are interested in getting in contact with us.

Speaker 1 10:46

Sounds good. Well, Martin, once again, just want to thank you for joining me today. Like I said, a lot of our stories do get highlighted during Black History Month. But like I said, you know, anything that has to do with our community is 365 obviously. But you know, whatever it takes to bring more awareness to the things we're doing in community, especially places like Oregon or Portland, where folks might be seeking to find where they can get connected with people that look like them and people from their same background. So just thanks again for joining me this morning. Absolutely

Speaker 2 11:19

no. Thank you for the work that you're doing and highlighting these issues, because they are they are critical, especially to our community. So thank you so much for having me. Applause.