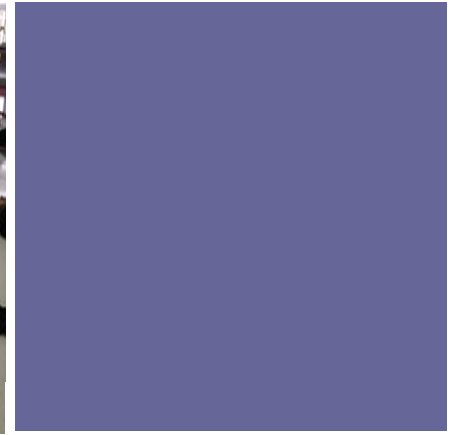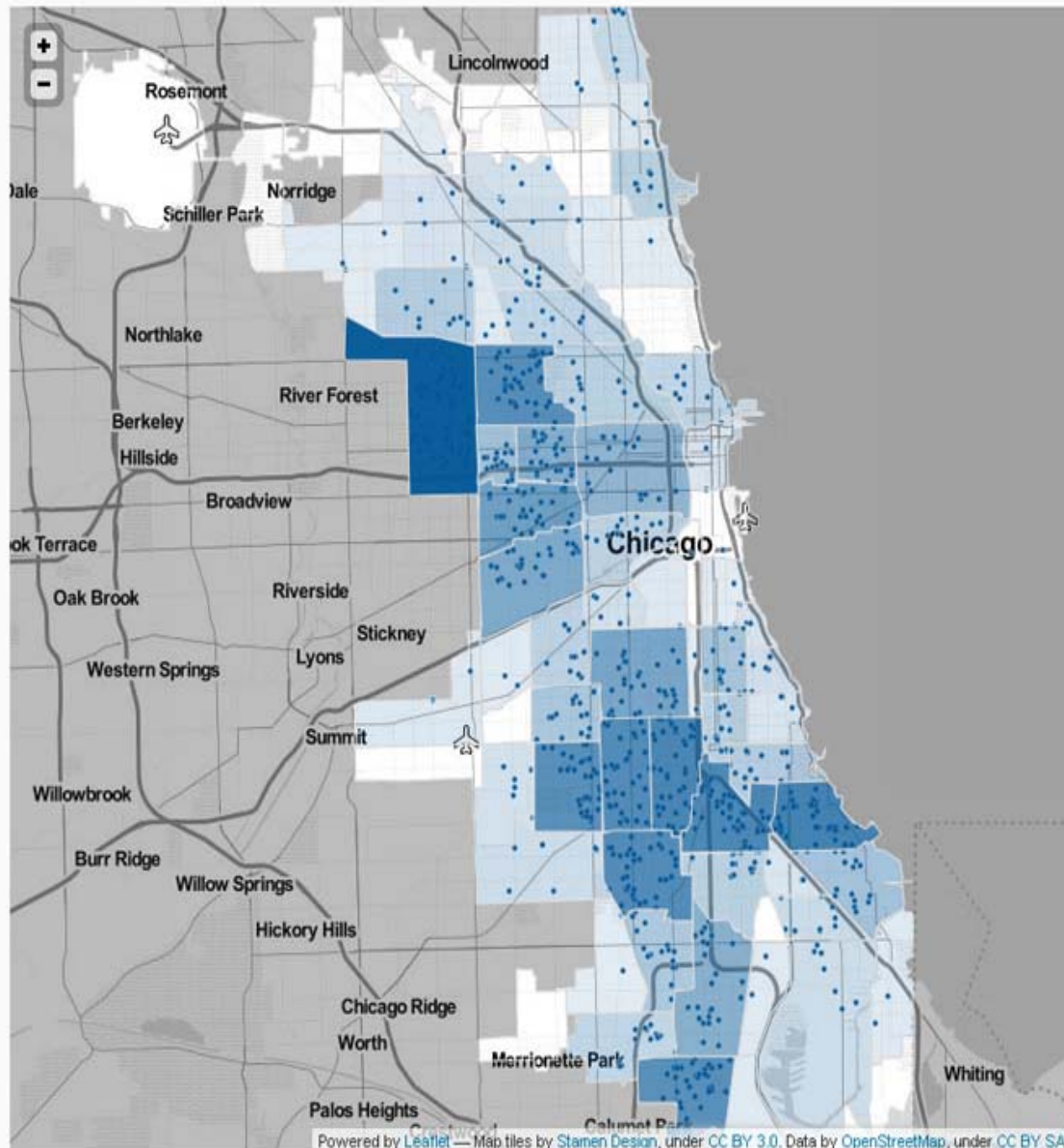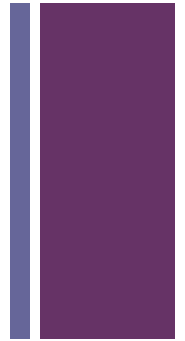# Healthy Blocks: Healing Trauma, Restoring Community

A framework for trauma-informed neighborhood recovery

Troy Harden, Ed.D., LCSW

University of Memphis

The Mid-South Family and Community Empowerment Institute
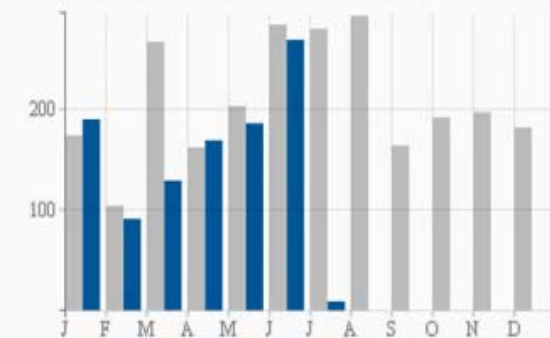
January 11th, 2016

+ Healing can be…

- Physical

- Emotional/Psychological

- Spiritual

- Individual

- Communal

1,043 shooting victims in 2013

VICTIMS BY MONTH • *2013* • *2012*

MOST RECENT VICTIMS *LAST 30 DAYS*

23, Male, on July 2 in Washington Heights

15, Male, on July 1 in Chicago Lawn

22, Male, on July 1 in Washington Park

18, Male, on July 1 in Washington Heights

32, Unknown gender, on July 1 in Roseland

42, Unknown gender, on July 1 in Roseland
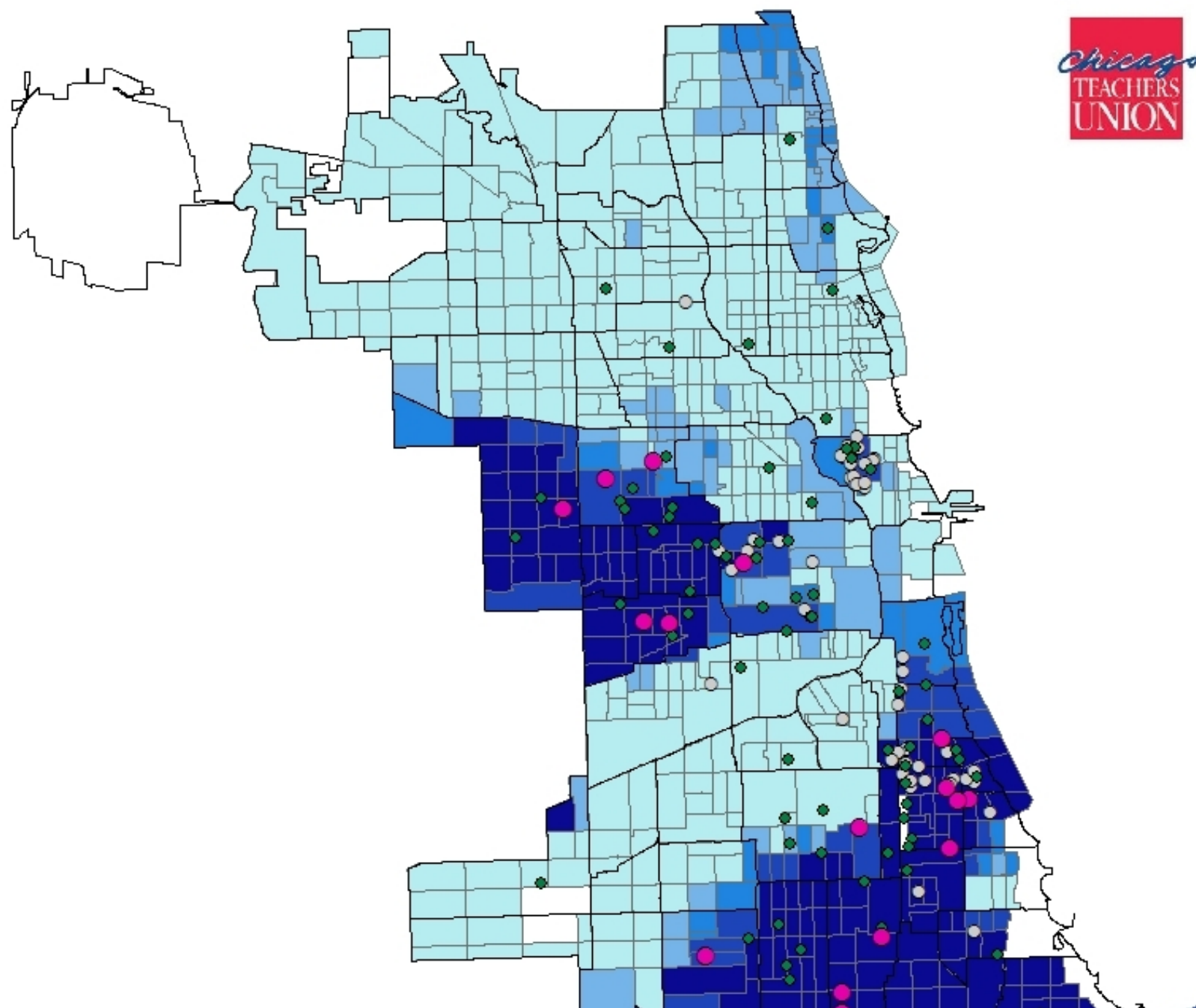
24, Male, on July 1 in West Garfield Park

51, Male, on July 1 in Washington Park

Age unknown, Male, on July 1 in Washington Park

Powered by Leaflet — Map tiles by Stamen Design, under CC BY 3.0. Data by OpenStreetMap, under CC BY SA.

• Three victims are not on the map but are included in total numbers.
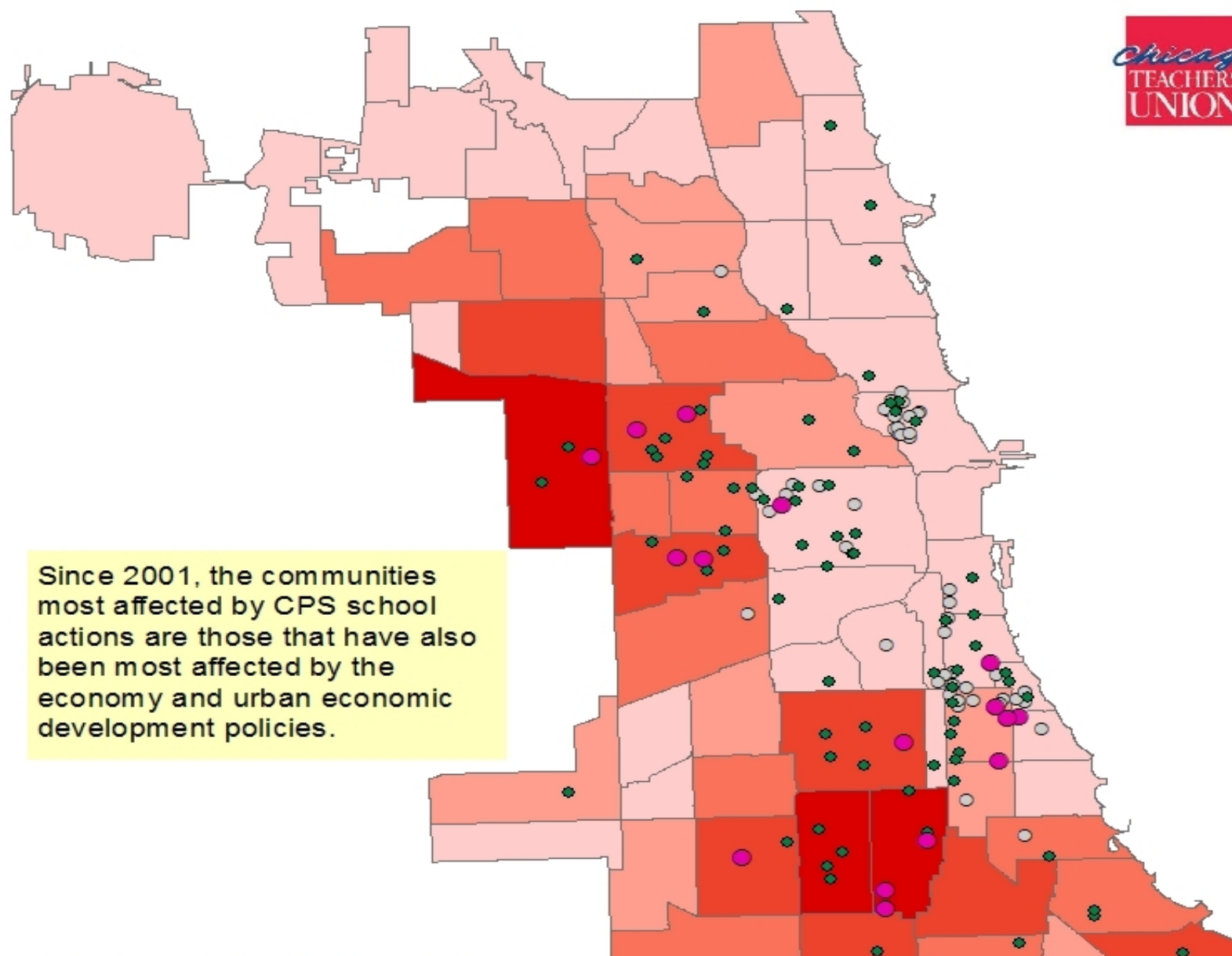
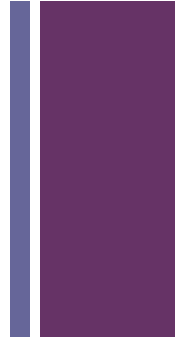# School Closings and Potential School Actions 2012 by Black Population

School Closings, Community Foreclosure Rates & CHA Public Housing Sites

Since 2001, the communities most affected by CPS school actions are those that have also been most affected by the economy and urban economic development policies.

+

- http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-gang-war-tyshawn-killing-met-20151130-story.html

A "different" developmental trajectory

Alternative schooling, drop out

Arrests/detention

Missed school days

Child welfare involvement

Disruptive school, family and community experiences

Harden (2013)

Trifecta of challenges

Negative school experiences

Poor family relationship

The lure and nurturance of "the block"
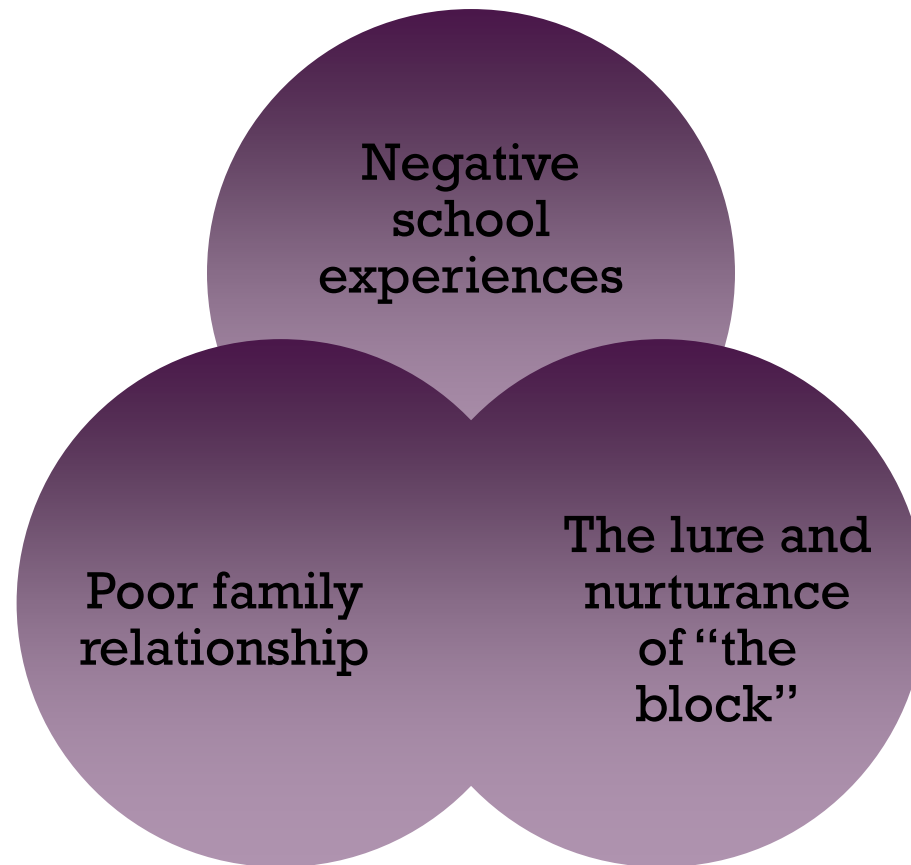
Trauma Defined:

"The experience of an event by a that is emotionally painful or distressful which often results in lasting mental and physical effects."

-National Institute of Mental Health

A traumatic event is one in which a person experiences (witnesses or is confronted with):
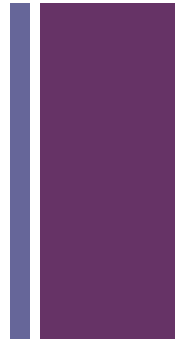
- Actual or threatened death
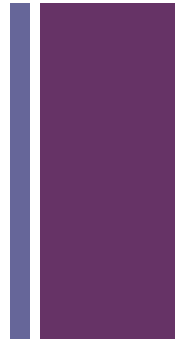
- Serious injury

- Threat to the physical integrity of self or another

- Responses to a traumatic event may include

- Intense fear

- Helplessness

- Horror

- (Marcenich, 2009)

+ Perception

- Perception of trauma varies vastly among individuals.

- Trauma is something that overwhelms our coping capacity

- Affects the whole self
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Intellectual
  - Spiritual

Impact of Trauma

- Prolonged exposure to trauma and/or repetitive traumatic events MAY:

- Cause an individual's natural alarm system to no longer function as it should.

- Create emotional and physical responses to stress.

- Result in emotional numbing and psychological avoidance.

- Affect an individual's sense of safety.

- Diminish an individual's capacity to trust others

- (Hopper, 2009)

+

ACE STUDY

- Research study of 17,000 participants.

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can affect an individual's physical and emotional health throughout the life span.

- Trauma/traumatic experiences are far more prevalent than previously recognized.

ACEs Conceptual Framework

Early Death

Disease, Disability, & Social Problems Adoption of Health-Risk Behaviors

Social, Emotional, & Cognitive Impairment

Disrupted Neurodevelopment

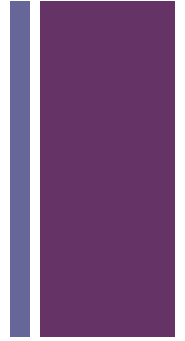Adverse Childhood Experience
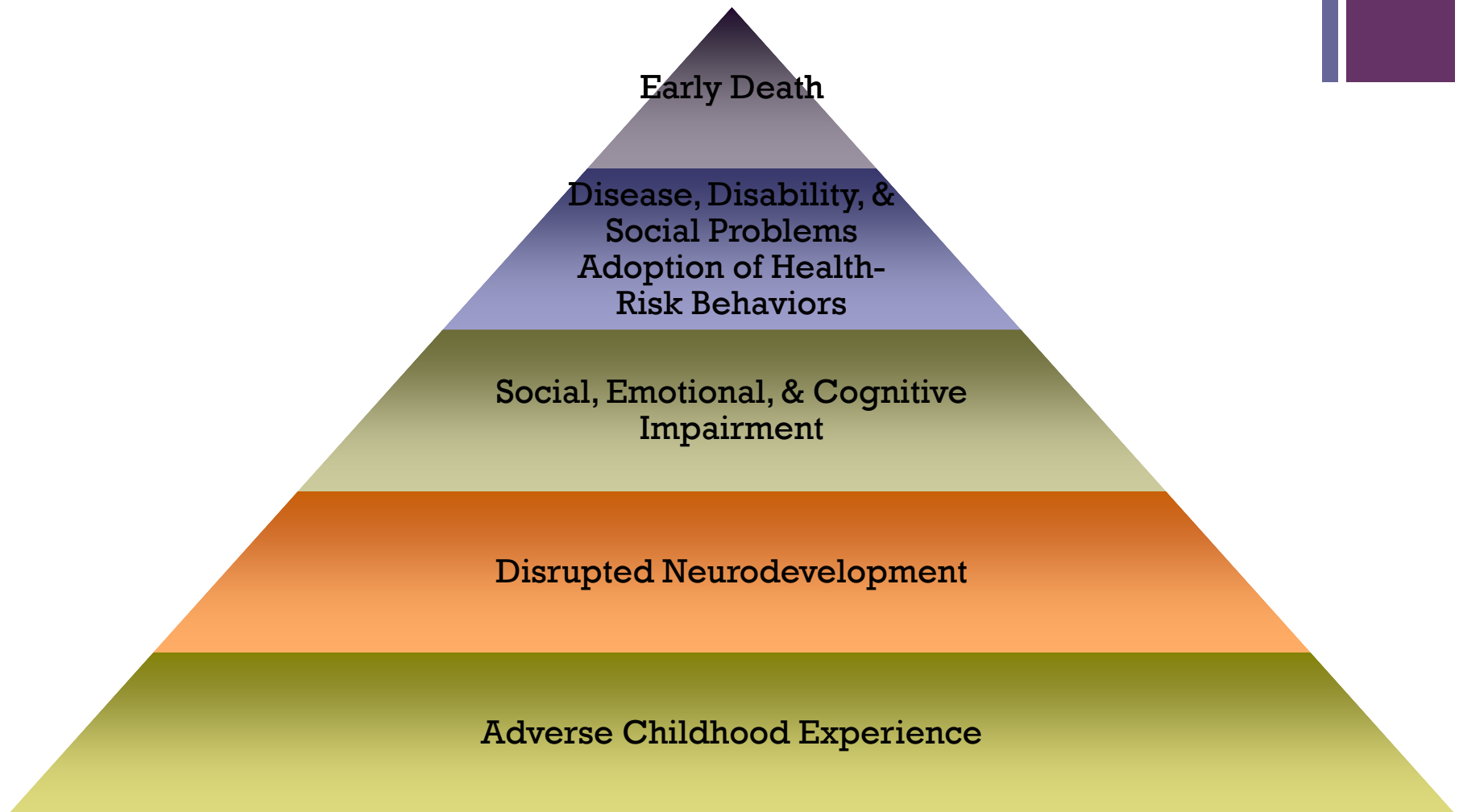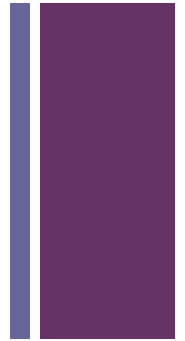
Components of Trauma

- **The *event*:**

- **The *experience* of the event:**

- **The *effects* of the event**

+ Environment

- A reliable support system (friends, family).

- Access to safe and stable housing.

- Timely and appropriate care from first responders.

Post Traumatic Growth
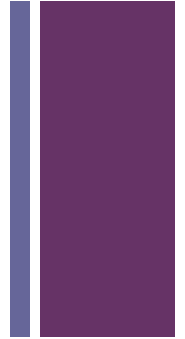
➢ "Resilient survivors continue therefore, to grow and even thrive in spite of and quite often because of their history." (Armour, 2007)

➢ Survivors of trauma who strengthen their abilities and find wisdom that allow them emotional growth in relationship with other are often referred to as experiencing post-traumatic growth.

➢ Post-traumatic growth is reflected in the following:

- strengthening of relationships/sense of connection

- increased sense of personal strengths

- awareness of increased possibilities in life

+

Three Pillars of Trauma Informed Care

- Safety

- Connections

- Managing emotional impulses
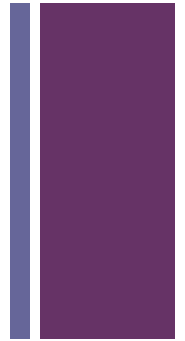
- I don't know who to trust anymore.

- I'm afraid all the time. On edge…like something's going to happen to me and I can't be caught off guard.

- I have to watch what's going on around me when I'm out in the neighborhood.

- I'll do anything to stay safe. That's why I carry a gun or knife, like my friends do.
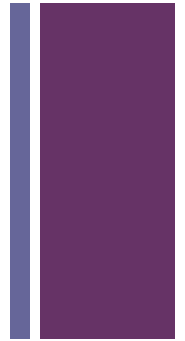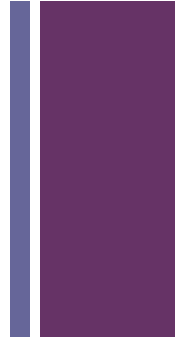
- I don't expect to graduate school. I'll probably die young anyway.

- Yeah, being in a gang makes me feel safe. But now they want me to get back at somebody in another gang…What happens then?

- If I stay in my house I feel safe…but who knows, someone could break in or bullets could come flying through the window.

- I worry most about my little brother and sister getting shot.

- I feel angry even when nobody is messing with me.

- I get jumpy or nervous at the smallest things or little sounds.

- Just can't stop thinking about all the violence, how it's never going to end and that I can't help my family stay safe.

- My friends say I'm different since the shooting.

- It's hard for me to sleep because I have nightmares about that fight.

- Sometimes thoughts pop up in my head and I'm right back to the night my world changed.

- Sometimes I can see, feel, smell, and hear the whole thing going down again.

- It's hard for me to pay attention in class or doing my homework.

- I'm "out of it" all the time…but I need to focus on surviving so I won't be shot.

- My stomach and head always hurt, even though the doc says I'm good.

- I'm more tempted to get drunk or high to numb it all.

+ Trauma Informed Care

- Aims to avoid re-victimization.

- Appreciates many problem behaviors began as understandable attempts to cope.

- Strives to maximize choices for the survivor and control over the healing process.

- Seeks to be culturally competent

- Understands each survivor in the context of life experiences and cultural background.
  - (Alvarez and Sloan, 2010)

+

- How can we create spaces where young people feel safe in a hostile world?

- How can we create opportunities for them to learn and grow?

- How can we create community/global change?

+ Full Circle: What did we find?
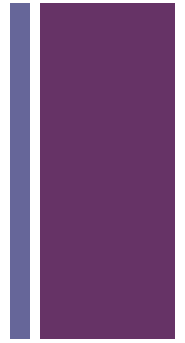
- One out of eighty youth arrested during 18-month period

- Increased social supports

- Young people, even so-called gang affiliated, respond positively when cared for and engaged critically
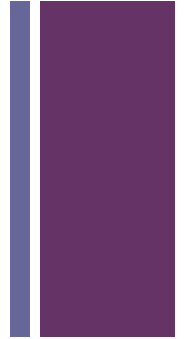
+ Project MENTOR

- Academic enhancement

- 1:1 and group mentoring

- Holistic health programming

- Case management

- Participatory Action Research

+ What did we find?

- Notably greater evidence of favorable program effects for a subgroup of youth

- Those at higher risk for behavioral, emotional, legal, and academic problems demonstrated:

  - Increased attitudes discouraging of substance use and violence, binge drinking, marijuana use, unhealthy dieting behaviors, legal problems (arrested or threatened with arrest),

  - Increased receipt of tutoring/homework assistance outside of the school day

  - Increased credits earned toward graduation

  - Increased social support

  - Less arrests and threat of arrests
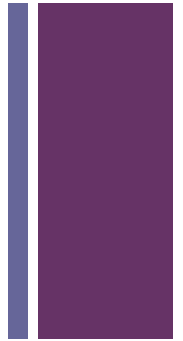
Project Aim:

The Truth n' Trauma (TNT) project aimed to:

- prevent and reduce violence in Chicago through supporting young people in addressing the impact of trauma on young people and families in their neighborhoods and communities

- develop new strategies for trauma and violence prevention and reduction.

+

Program Components

- Trauma Recovery Training

- Restorative Practices

- Media and Arts Training

- Community-based Research Training

- Leadership Training

- Life Skills as developmental issues emerge in the group: Substance use, relationships, peer conflicts…

Trans-Disciplinary Effort

- Social Work Department

- Communications, Media, Arts and Theater

- Counseling

- Other CSU faculty

- CSU Students

- Community Partners
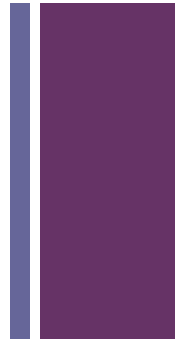
+ TNT Project- Youth Participants

- 40 high school age students (ages 14-18)

- Selected from the community contiguous to CSU

- Leadership was valued: Traditional & Non-traditional

- Interviews

- Recommendations from school or community resources
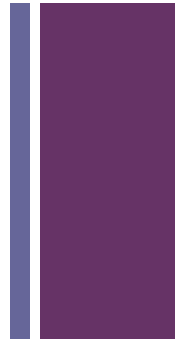
+ Positive Youth Development Principles

- Youth/Adult Partnership

- Youth Empowerment

- Understanding of social, cognitive, moral/spiritual, emotional, and physical development of youth in various contexts.

+ TNT Model

Structural Inequalities

Complex Trauma

Disempowerment

Trauma Informed Practices

Restorative Practices

Expressive/skills Modalities

Culture/ Created Community/ Safe Space

Critical Consciousness/ Identity

Family Peers Community

Youth Prevention Projects

Activism Advocacy

Personal/ Collective Empowerment

Post Traumatic Growth

Peace Restoration
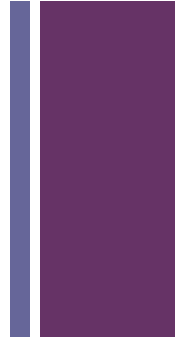
+ Trauma-informed Curriculum Contents:

- Defining traumatic experiences: Differentiating those experiences from stressful → distressing experiences;

- Identifying trauma symptoms

- Basic Neurobiology

- Relationship effects- building

  healthy networks

- Resilience

- Spirituality & Healing

- Restorative Practices

Flee
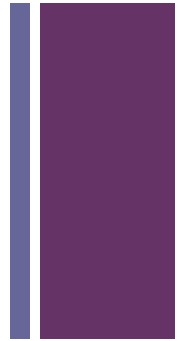
+ Core Training for Trauma

Part One: Trauma Basics

- Module 1: Too Much: The Impact of Traumatic Events on Youth

- Module 2: Not Enough

- Module 3: I Have Been Changed

Healing

- **Part Two: Resilience, Hope and Restoration**

- Module 4: Rebuilding the Broken Places

- Module 5: Reconnecting

- Module 6: Making a Difference

Each Module required about 2 hours for the y̶   ̶pants.

Let's take a look at some of the common problems [symptoms] that youth in high school deal with after they have been exposed to traumatic events:

- **Too much on your mind:** Which makes it difficult to concentrate in school, which leads to changes in grades/ behavior problems;

- **Thoughts about the things that have happened**: They just come when you don't want them, leaving you feeling like you have no control;

- **Worrying about things:** Your own safety, the safety of someone that you love, that it will it happen again;

- **Feelings that are out of control:** This may include feelings that are new for you like anger/ rage or thoughts of revenge, feeling hopeless, feeling afraid, ashamed, or different;

- **Changes in behavior:** doing things to avoid the difficult feelings, using drugs, taking risks, avoiding people or places. Anger/ rage may be easily triggered and may lead to more problems with peers, in school and in the community with police;

Reminders for TNT Staff:

- You may observe signals from our youth that indicate that they have been through some things.

- Current reports of symptoms discussed in this module should be discussed with one of the program faculty.

- While we are encouraging youth with the message that their reactions are normal, you should never try to handle these problems on your own.

- Any reports of feeling hopelessness, suicidal and in any way considering harming self or others must be ***immediately*** reported to program faculty.

What are restorative practices?
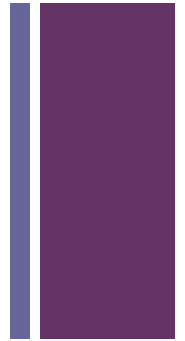
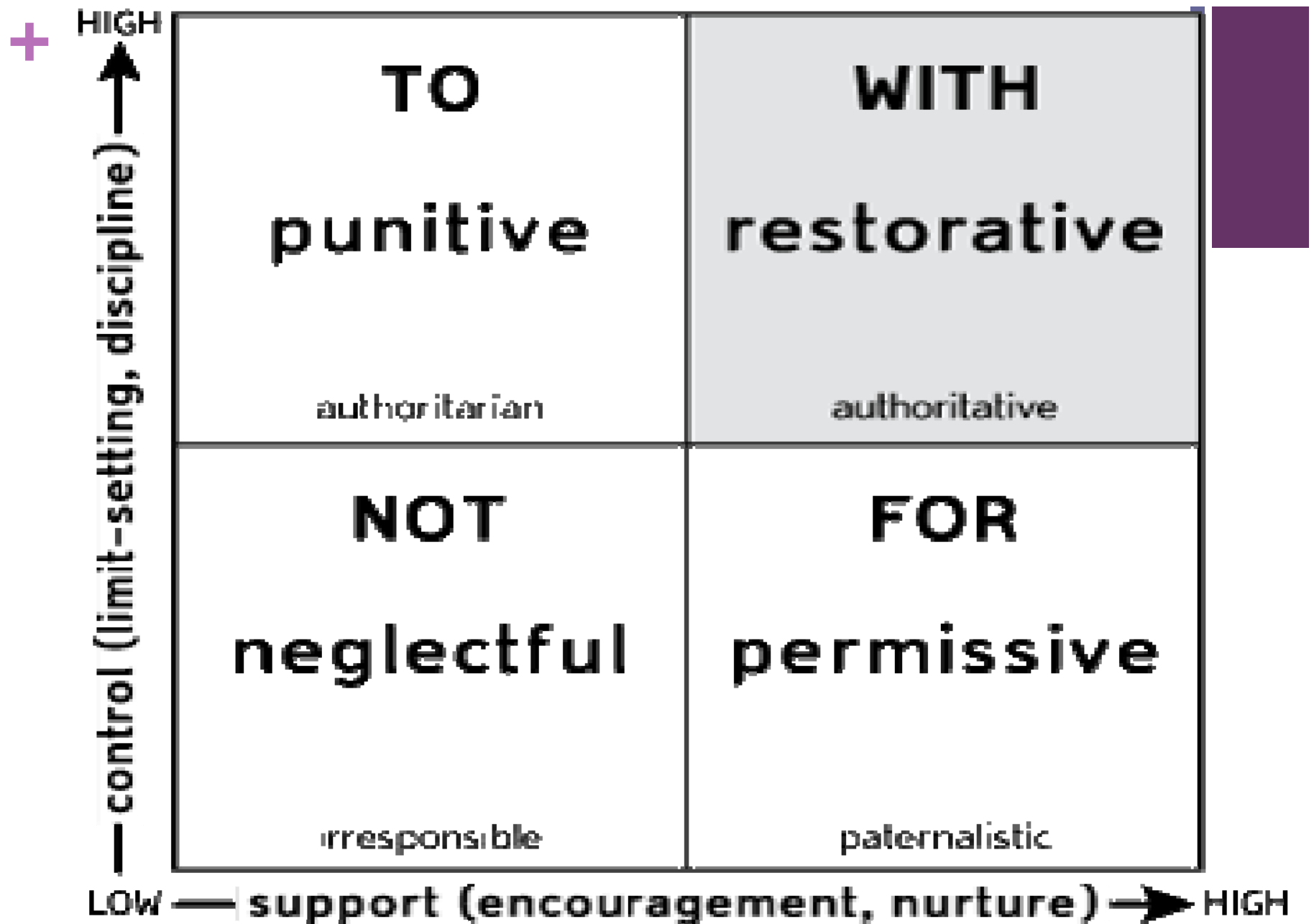- *Restorative practices seek to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making.*

- *The use of restorative practices helps to:*
  - *reduce crime, violence and bullying*
  - *improve human behavior*
  - *strengthen civil society*
  - *provide effective leadership*
  - *restore relationships*
  - *repair harm*
  - http://www.iirp.edu/restorative-solutions.php

+ Restorative Justice
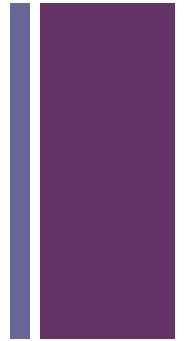
- Criminal Justice

- Street Justice

- Restorative Justice
  - Lowers recidivism rate (Latimer, Dowden and Muise, 2005)
  - reduces juvenile recidivism rates (Bradshaw, Roseborough, and Umbreit, 2006)
  - reduced offenders PTSD symptoms
  - provided more satisfaction for offenders and victims than traditional system
  - lowered costs (when used for diversion) (Sherman & Strang, 2007)

- Transformative Justice

Social Discipline Window

- **Control (limit-setting, discipline)** — vertical axis, LOW to HIGH
- **Support (encouragement, nurture)** — horizontal axis, LOW to HIGH

	LOW support	HIGH support
HIGH control	TO punitive *authoritarian*	WITH restorative *authoritative*
LOW control	NOT neglectful *irresponsible*	FOR permissive *paternalistic*

Restorative Practices

- Youth trained concerning restorative practice philosophy and methods, including:
  - How to prepare and facilitate peace-keeping circles
  - Small group conferencing
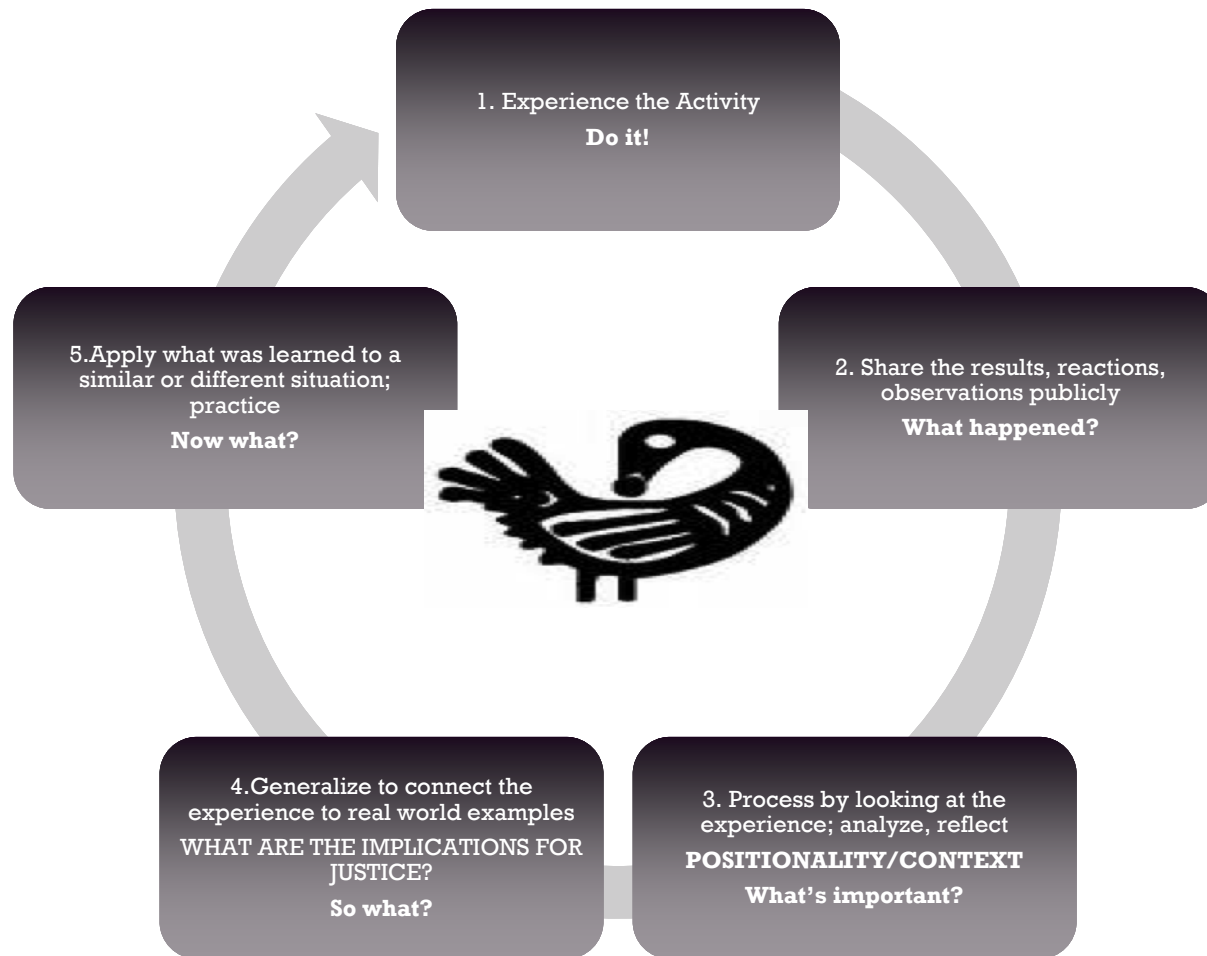 - Consensus Planning and Organizing
  - Peer mediation

Culturally-centered/Sankofa

- Understanding the past in order to move forward

- Self reflection and positionality

- Identify community, stakeholders and the historical and political context of community

- Understanding the community in regard to the larger societal context (policies, structural forces and process, etc.)

+Sankofa Reflection

1. Experience the Activity
Do it!

2. Share the results, reactions, observations publicly
What happened?

3. Process by looking at the experience; analyze, reflect
POSITIONALITY/CONTEXT
What's important?

4. Generalize to connect the experience to real world examples
WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR JUSTICE?
So what?

5. Apply what was learned to a similar or different situation; practice
Now what?
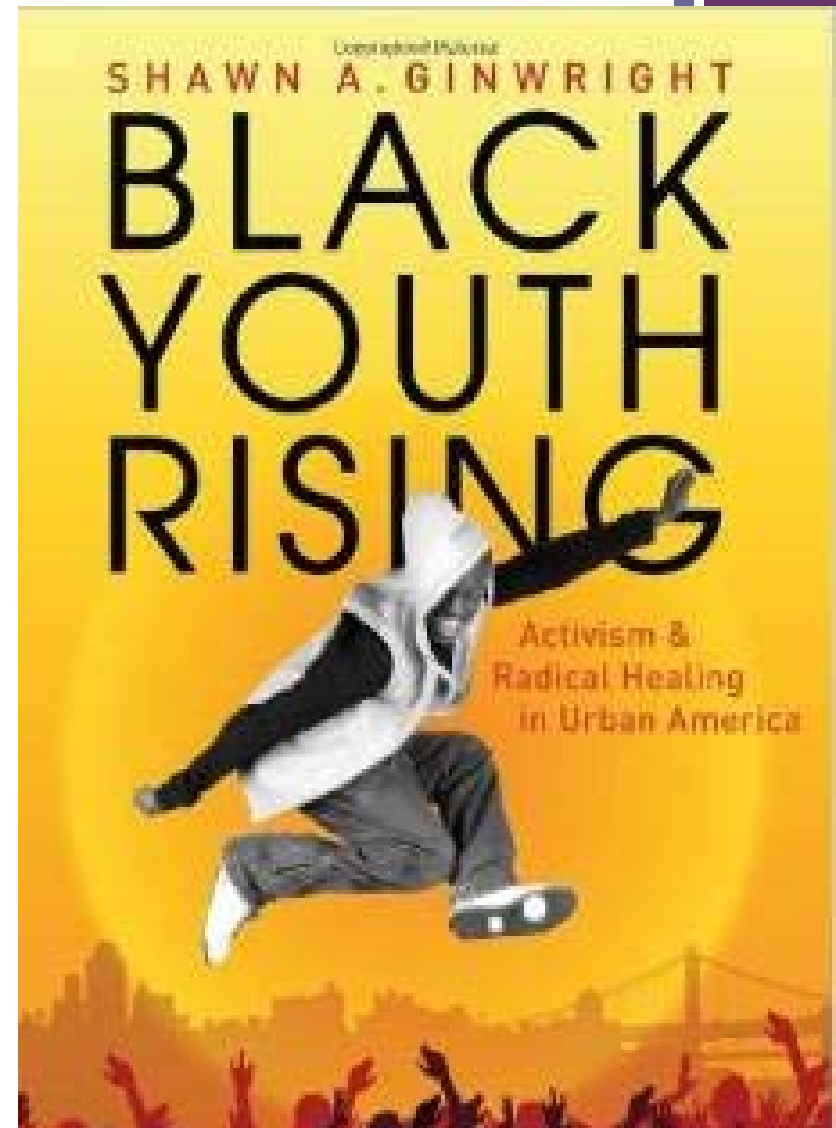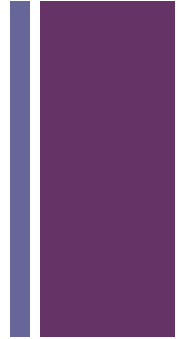
Radical Healing

- Radical healing involves building the capacity of young people to act upon their environment to create the type of communities in which they want to live.

- By integrating issues of power, history, identity, and the possibility of collective agency and struggle, radical healing rebuilds communities that foster hope and political possibilities for young people. (Ginwright, 2010)
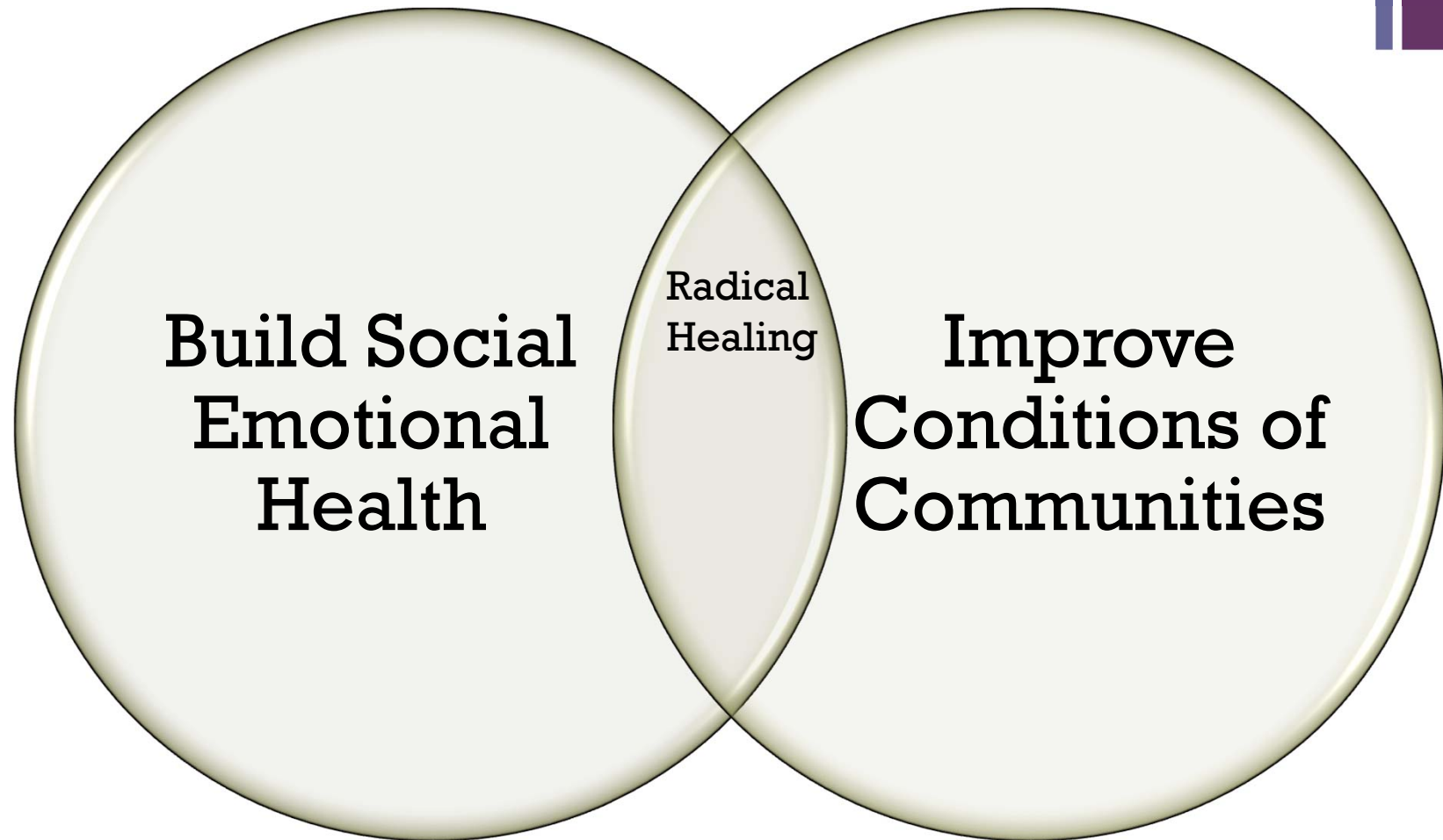
SHAWN A. GINWRIGHT

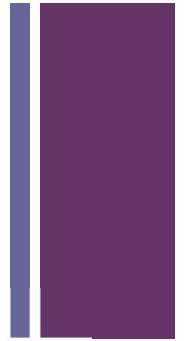BLACK YOUTH RISING

Activism & Radical Healing in Urban America

5 Principles of Radical Healing

- Culture

- Agency

- Relationships

- Meaning

- Achievement

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."
*--Desmond Tutu*

Two Dominating Themes

Build Social Emotional Health
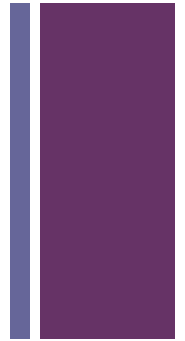
Radical Healing

Improve Conditions of Communities

+Radical Healing

- Transformative Justice

- http://www.msnbc.com/melissa-harris-perry/chicago-student-violence-will-never-cease-u#

- Connection between PIC and schooling

- Global to local
  - How do guns enter our communities?

- Ritual and Cultural Affirmation
  - Unapologetically Black

- Faith-perspectives in healing
  - Healing and the Black Church

- Yoga and mindfulness practice

- Asset mapping in community on authentic places of healing
  - Barbershop, basketball court, hairbraiding, laundrymat, etc.
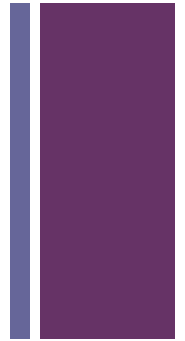
MULTIPLE METHOD APPROACH

- Overall:
  - **Ozer participant empowerment pre-post survey:** demonstrating change
  - **Individual interviews with participants:** demonstrating experience
  - **Parent interviews:** demonstrating experience
  - **Staff interviews:** demonstrating experience
  - **Community surveys:** demonstrating impact
  - **Audience surveys:** demonstrating impact

+ What did I/we learn?

- Our young people are dealing with an incredible amount of stress that is family/community/societal driven

- The stress (trauma) impacts day-to-day functioning

- Different developmental trajectories for our young people

- Healing, life affirming spaces (restorative practices, gender-specific circles by facilitators committed to their own personal growth) matter

- Personal experiences connected to collective experiences

- Strength-based approach to school/community moves from pathologizing youth and their communities as "the problem"

- Socio-political engagement can support emotional and social well-being

- Documenting your process and the impact is critical and important to do as a collective

- Restorative practices and culturally affirmative practices can be viable means to address exposure to violence and related advocacy

- Stigma-reduction concerning addressing mental health needs in community

MORAL INJURY:

- **"Disruption in an individual's confidence and expectations about his or her own moral behavior, or others' capacity to behave in a just and ethical manner."** ("Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy," B.T.Litz, N.Stein, E. DeLaney, L.Lebowittz, W.P.Nash, C.Silva, and S.Maguen, (Dec. 2009) Clinical Psychology Review, 29, 695-706.
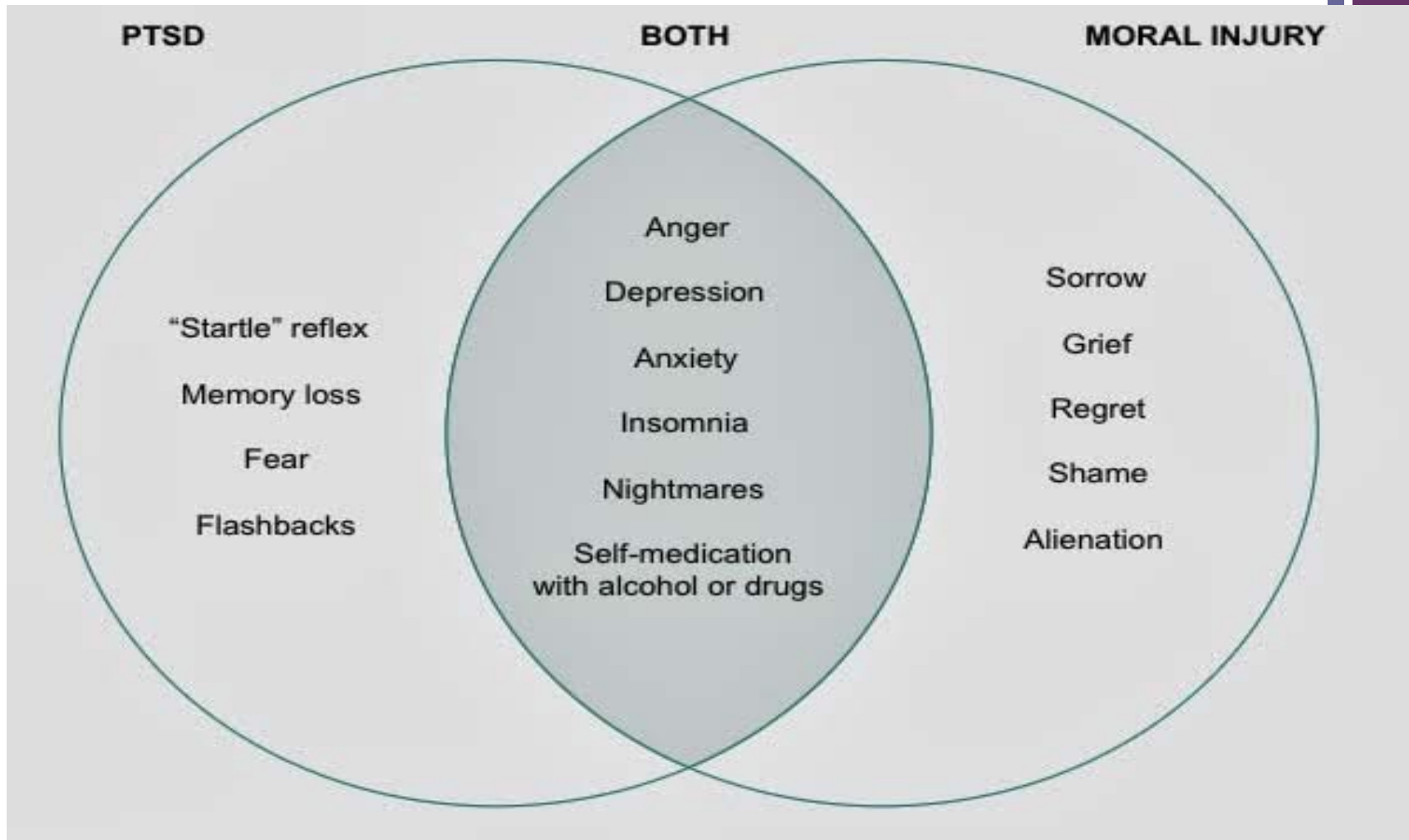
+ Moral Injury

What is it?

■ The VA now identifies Moral Injury as: "An act of transgression, which shatters moral and ethical expectations that are rooted in religious or spiritual beliefs, or culture-based, organizational, and group-based rules about fairness, and the value of life."

■ Moral Injury in war can occur from:

• Direct participation in acts of combat, such as killing or harming others

• Indirect acts, such as witnessing death or dying, failing to prevent immoral acts of others, or giving or receiving orders that are perceived as gross moral violations
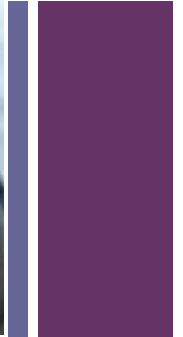
What can we do about it?

• Create interdisciplinary approaches to veteran care that combine clergy and behavioral health.

• Create linkage relationships between faith-based communities and behavioral health providers.

• Create community resource asset mapping and greater access to resources

• Provide clergy and clinician training on moral injury in the military

• Facilitate clergy in creating religious care programs for caring for veterans

PTSD/Moral Injury

PTSD | BOTH | MORAL INJURY

PTSD
"Startle" reflex
Memory loss
Fear
Flashbacks

BOTH
Anger
Depression
Anxiety
Insomnia
Nightmares
Self-medication with alcohol or drugs

MORAL INJURY
Sorrow
Grief
Regret
Shame
Alienation

+ Mission

■The mission of the Multi-Faith Veteran Support Initiative is to mobilize the Illinois faith community to improve the quality of life for Veterans and their families by:

1) Provide Spiritual Care training to faith communities around the issues of military related moral injury, Post Traumatic Stress, and suicide.

2) Improving the integration of behavioral health support within faith communities.

3) Identify, share, and advance best practices among faith communities for proactively engaging veterans and military families.

Community Needs Map

Illiteracy
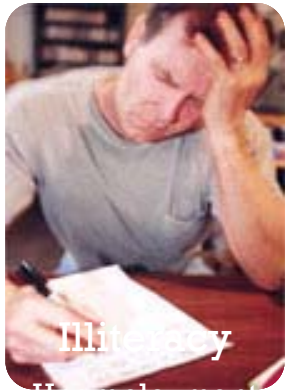
Environmental issues

Mental illness

Teenage pregnancy

Disease

Lack of green space

Abandoned buildings

Foreclosed homes

Homelessness

Drugs

Alcoholism

Violence

Gangs

Crime

+ The Glass Half Empty….

People and Communities have *deficiencies & needs*

……**Or Half Full**
Individuals and Communities have *skills and talents*

Five Types of Assets Found in Every Community

- **Individual** talents and skills are gifts and resources of residents from the community

- Local **associations** within the community are the individuals who share a common interest like: bowling leagues, book clubs, church groups, block clubs, and tutoring groups

- **Institutions:** schools, libraries, churches, fire department, police station, bank, non-for profit agencies,

- **Physical environment:** green space, parks, bodies of water, gathering places, vacant land

- Local **economy:** informal economic exchanges, what do people consume and produce, businesses (farmers market)

# Embracing ABCD as a philosophical approach

- When people discover what they have, they find power.

- When people join together in connections and relationships they build power.

- When people become more productive together, they exercise their power to address problems and realize dreams.

What are your Gifts ?
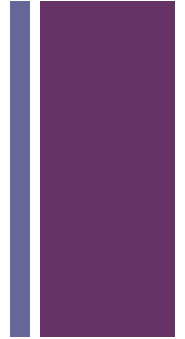
- **Gifts of the head – knowledge, information**

- **Gifts of the hand – practical skills**

- **Gifts of the heart- for example, passion, listening**

- ***The life of a single human being is worth a million times more than all the property of the richest man on earth."* Che Guevara**

+ What are your Gifts?
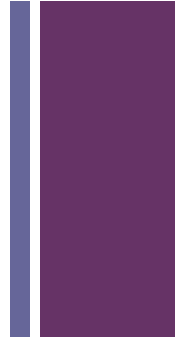
- Write down Gifts of the Head, Heart and Hands that you posses

- Share with a neighbor

- What did you learn?

- Write gifts that your organization possesses

+ Strength-based approach to school/community moves away from pathologizing youth and their communities as "the problem" towards viewing them as partners in the solution"
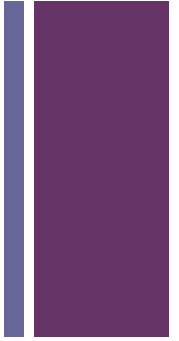
+

## Socio-political and community engagement can support emotional and social well-being

+
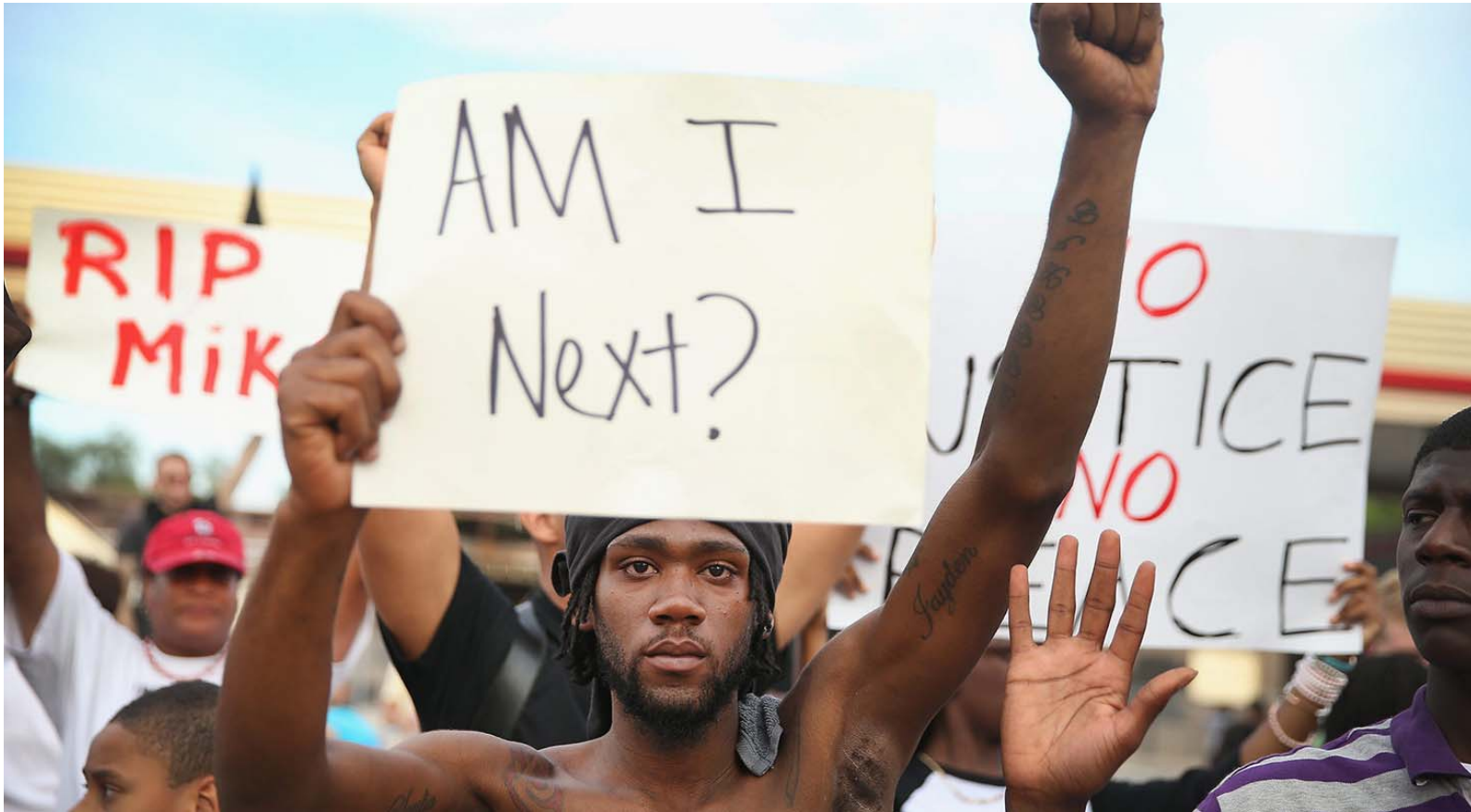
Documenting your process and the impact is critical and important to do as a collective

Confront the dark parts of yourself, and work to banish them with illumination and forgiveness. Your willingness to wrestle with your demons will cause your angels to sing. Use the pain as fuel, as a reminder of your strength.

(August Wilson)

+
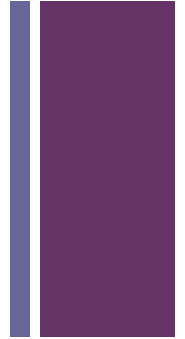
- Container Building

- Reflective Listening

- Transformational Learning

- Ritual Affirmation