

## Expand trauma informed care policies: Healing symptoms while eliminating causes

Trauma-Informed Care (T-IC) is needed. It's a caring shift in focus for schools and educators from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"

While the concept and policy is important, it is incomplete.

- Current policy presumes the trauma is an individual experience, rather than a collective one.
- If trauma is collectively experienced, then we also have to consider the environmental context causing the initial harm. By only treating the individual we only address part of the equation leaving the toxic systems, policies, and practices intact.

## The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement (HCE)

T-IC runs the risk of focusing on the treatment of a pathology (trauma), rather than fostering the possibility of well-being via [Healing Centered Engagement](#).

HCE is explicitly political, rather than clinical.  
HCE is culturally grounded and views healing as the restoration of identity.

When seeking solutions to current African American mental health issues, "...concentrating on the lack of Black self-love represents the politics of therapy as opposed to the politics of organizing."

~ Dr. Lester Spence in the video: [Knocking the hustle: Against the neo-liberal turn in Black politics](#)

### A trauma recovery plan must include training for community organizing

Black people may need therapy to cope with their trauma and existential circumstances. The therapeutic response to the trauma from racism and oppression must include in its recovery plan training for community organizing. Individual therapist and clinics must empower their clients to organize others and their communities to challenge and change the conditions that enabled systems of oppression in the first place.

### Social Toxins Chart

An [Urban Conditions and Social Toxins Chart](#) (Radical Healing to Wellness) shows students, teachers, citizens, and community organizers what the issues are that need challenged and solved.

### It's not about grit

School personnel make the mistake of counseling students about their anger. They try to bring out their "grit" so they can make it through school and go to college, get a good job and "...move out to Carmel or Brownsburg."

"Schools and districts have spoon-fed lessons on grit to mostly students of color, suggesting that we must 'fix' them by making them grittier so that they can adapt to—rather than disrupt—racism and inequality in schools."  
~ Dena Simmons, "[How to Be an Anti-racist Educator](#)"

### James Wilson of Circle Up Indy: "A clear relationships exists around social and economic inequality, and poor mental health"

Despite "A clear relationship," psychiatric and psychological perspectives dominate mental health research and policy, obscuring root socio-economic causes. A collective cross-sector action, through changes in social and economic policy, as well as economic frameworks that move beyond an exclusive focus on economic growth, is needed to enable collective and societal wellbeing.

Read, "What has economics got to do with it? The impact of socioeconomic factors on mental health" at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-018-0063-2>

## **Perpetual Post Traumatic Stress Disorder\***

American soldiers come home from Afghanistan with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), but certain Black students **can't leave the toxic environment where they live**. School personnel do not realize African American children and youth do not suffer from PTSD, but from PPTSD (Perpetual Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). ~ From Dr. Jeff Duncan-Andrade

### [Toxic stress & children's outcomes: African American children growing up poor are at greater risk of disrupted physiological functioning & depressed academic achievement](#)

“Stress” is a commonplace term for bodily chemical changes in response to frightening or threatening events or conditions. A normal response comes with the production of hormones that can affect almost every tissue and organ in the body. Tolerable stress can contribute to better performance if individuals react by heightening their focus on the fright or threat without distraction.

But when frightening or threatening situations occur too frequently or are too intense, and when protective factors are insufficient to mitigate children’s stress to a tolerable level, these hormonal changes are deemed “toxic” and [can impede children's behavior, cognitive capacity, and emotional and physical health](#). Toxic stress produces not heightened focus but the opposite, a decrease in performance levels.

## ***Proposed Action Item***

### **[Healing Centered Engagement](#)**

ACCI will convene Marion County mental health professionals, medical doctors, religious leaders (Center for Interfaith Cooperation), politicians, educators, youth workers (Indiana Youth Institute) and youth to advance a paradigm shift from a strictly therapeutic/pharmaceutical response to African American youth and adult psycho-social trauma and other mental health issues to a community-oriented Healing Centered Engagement response. The group will contact Dr. Shawn Ginwright at <http://www.shawnginwright.com> for more on HCE.

### **Community Organizing: From the politics of therapy to the politics of organizing**

ACCI will gather social workers, politicians, Indiana Faith & Action/PICO trainers, IUPUI professors, and union representatives to create a program preparing therapists and counselors to add community organizing training as a part of the treatment plan for African American patients.

Take another look at [Knocking the hustle: Against the neo-liberal turn in Black politics](#). View the “Community Organizing” section of these recommendations for Indy’s Black Agenda.

### **PPTSD**

ACCI will realize African American children and youth suffer from PPTSD. The group convened will investigate symptoms, causes, and issues mentioned above in “Toxic stress & children's outcomes” in a long-term effort to lessen and eradicate poverty and other social toxins which are causes of stress.

An initiative will be organized by ACCI that includes the [Indiana Poor People's Campaign](#), Christian Theological Seminary’s Faith & Action Project (Lindsey Rabinowitch [lrabinowitch@cts.org](mailto:lrabinowitch@cts.org)), the Indianapolis NAACP, the IUPUI School of Social Work, Community Action of Greater Indianapolis (<https://www.cagi-in.org>), the Indianapolis Urban League, the Center for Interfaith Cooperation, labor union representatives, and the Salvation Army to develop a 10 year plan to eradicate poverty in Indianapolis.

## “grit”

The group will also unpack the quote by Dena Simmons in here essay, “[How to Be an Anti-racist Educator](#)” which suggests African American students must made “grittier” so they can do well in school and adapt to the *status quo*...rather than disrupting racism and inequality in their schools and communities.

### **A clear relationships exists around social-economic inequality, and mental health**

AACI will work with Circle Up ([www.circleupindy.com](http://www.circleupindy.com)) to enable collective and societal wellbeing, not just economic growth.

### **Urban school reform: an anti-poverty curriculum as a trauma-informed preventative, treatment, and cure**

To involve African American students in their own self-determination by “disrupting” the racism and inequality of poverty, the Black & Latino Policy Institute (B&LPI) recommends [a comprehensive vision for urban school transformation](#).

**B&LPI vision recognizes the need to move beyond attempts to only change the system of education inside schools in order to also address more fundamental problems in our community environment itself--an environment which enables failing schools.**

B&LPI believes in a long-range strategy to foster the self-determination and cultural empowerment of African American students who attend schools in impoverished areas by realizing [urban schools as sites to contest inequalities](#).

Without an anti-poverty curriculum that Black students need to challenge and eradicate the underlying causes of poverty and other social toxins they face daily, heroic attempts to restructure schools or to introduce new teaching/learning techniques in the classroom will be difficult to sustain.

View the “Redefine the purpose of schools located in the circumstances of poverty” section of these recommendations for Indy’s Black Agenda.