The Impact of Historical and Current Experiences of Oppression on Black Mental Health

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This project investigates the historical impact of the Middle Passage, slavery, Reconstruction, the Black Codes, and the Civil Rights movement on Black Americans' current mental health struggles and racism in mental health care. The methodology for this project involves an in-depth comparison of first- and second-hand historical accounts of Black Americans, as well as contemporary accounts, books, and studies about Black mental health in the present. The results reveal an ongoing experience of trauma from which African Americans have not been allowed to recover collectively due to unyielding racism. The results also show how Black Americans have consistently found psychological and emotional strength through community and music. These findings demonstrate the importance of enabling Black Americans to heal and offer implications for mental health providers serving Black clients. Acknowledging painful truths about racism and understanding the impacts of historical and current racial trauma is particularly important today as politicians and people in power attempt to ban the accurate teaching of history.