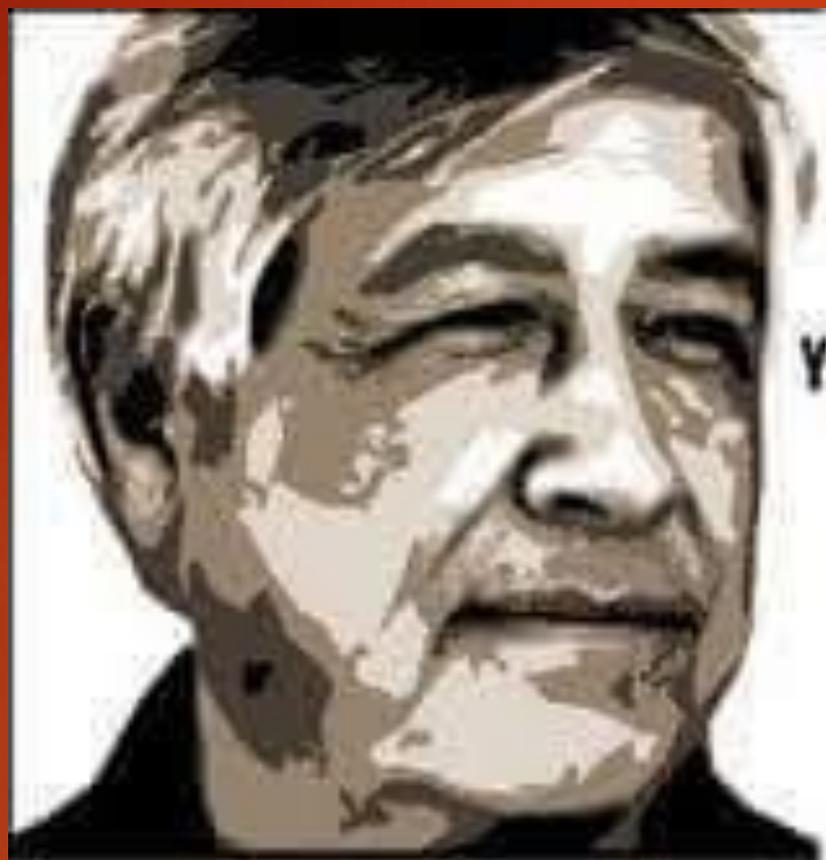




# Social Emotional Wellbeing: The Foundational Role of Cultural Identity

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**You are never strong enough  
where you don't need help.**

**Cesar Chavez**

# Introduction

- ▶ The Mental Health field has a poor track record of incorporating and recognizing the importance of cultural identity.
- ▶ How do we de-stigmatize a process where it's foundational values (individualism) are often counter to primary values of communities of color (collectivism)?

# Values

- ▶ Individualism- the notion that our behaviors and attitudes are guided by incentives that promote independence
- ▶ Collectivism- the idea that decisions and what is valued as important is based on the betterment of others (e.g. community or family members)

(Hays & McLeod, 2010)



# Current Issues

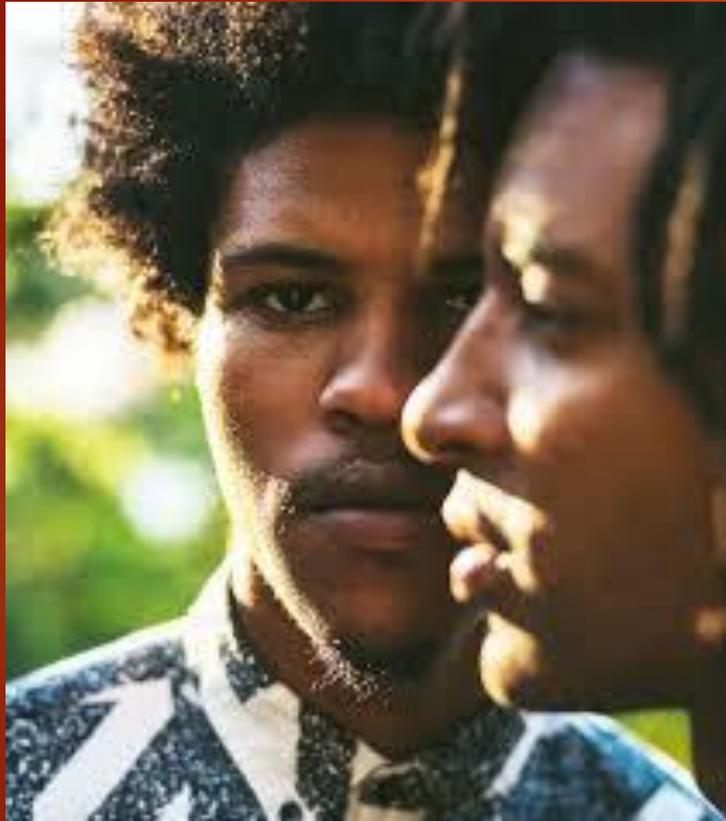
- ▶ A high rate of multiple stress exposures strongly linked to a greater risk for suicide attempts and mental health diagnoses.  
(Primm,2018)



# Current Issues

- ▶ Stigma
- ▶ Reluctance to seek help for mental health needs
- ▶ Cultural mistrust of mental health professionals

# Acculturative Stress



- ▶ Collective confusion and anxiety, loss of identity, feelings of alienation, and striking out against the larger society. Behaviors and experiences generated during acculturation that are pathological and disruptive to the individual and ethnic group.

# Traditional Mental Health Assumptions

- ▶ Assumption that individuals are the building blocks of a society
  - ▶ From Western perspective, counseling's primary goal is the development of the individual; opposed to well-being of units of individuals or groups



# Traditional Mental Health Assumptions

- ▶ Western assumption: independence has value and dependence does not
  - ▶ In many communities of color, the family unit is given great importance

▶ **Interdependencies** are viewed as both **healthy and necessary**



# Traditional Mental Health Assumptions

- ▶ The premise of changing the individual
  - ▶ interventions tend to focus on the individual, individual should take initiative to change; regardless of the possibility that the environment may be the problem

# De-stigmatizing: Centering Cultural Identities

## ▶ Our Work:

- ▶ Deconstruct what we often view as “traditional” masculinity.
- ▶ Family roles, school roles, peer roles, individual roles. Self descriptions in each role. Behaviors in each role.



# De-stigmatizing: Centering Cultural Identities

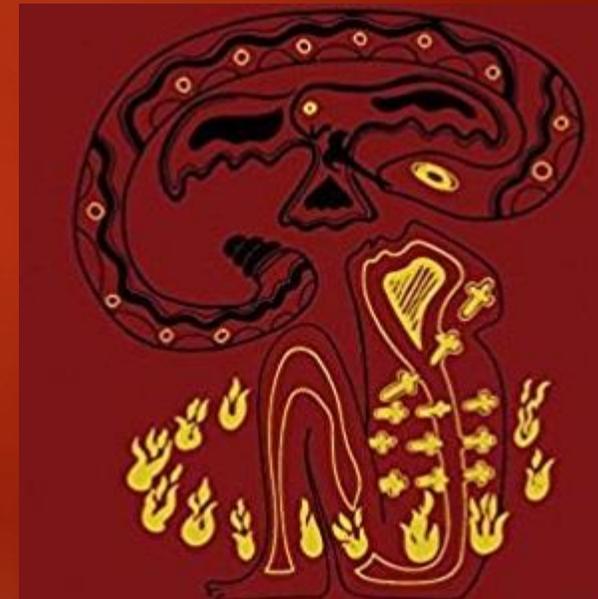
## ▶ Our Work:

- ▶ Revisit our notions of power, strength, “communication”.
- ▶ Conflicting messages.
- ▶ Intergenerational trauma in constructing the current notions of masculinity and how to express power and health.



# De-stigmatizing: Centering Cultural Identities

- ▶ De-colonize our notions of health.
  - ▶ Ancestral wisdom: the power of “healing through talk”. We have been disconnected from that.
  - ▶ Incorporate programming and psychoeducation to reconnect to that community healing power.
- ▶ “Hangouts” “Power Ups” “Rallies”



# Cultural & Social Identities - ADDRESSING Framework (Hays, 2008)

- ▶ Age/Generation
- ▶ Developmental Disability
- ▶ Disability acquired later in life
- ▶ Religious and Spiritual Orientation
- ▶ Ethnic and Racial Identity
- ▶ Socioeconomic Status
- ▶ Sexual Orientation
- ▶ Indigenous Heritage
- ▶ National Origin
- ▶ Gender



# De-stigmatizing: Centering Cultural Identities

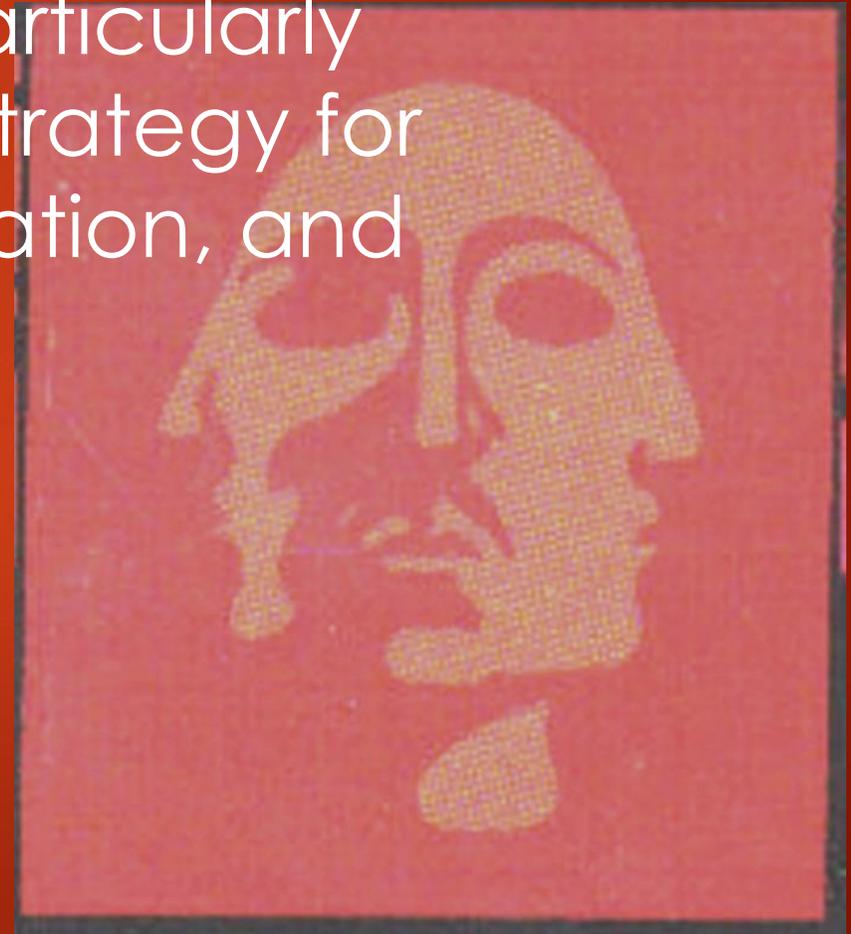
## ▶ Training Work:

- ▶ Recognize different ways of communicating as valid. Talking around the problem may not be resistant, but culturally appropriate.
- ▶ Intergenerational trauma
- ▶ Identity, Family/community, spirituality. These areas are not only historically relevant, they also incorporate the notion of intersectionality.



# Cultural Strengths

- ▶ Ethnic identity believed to be particularly important for as self-protective strategy for coping with prejudice, discrimination, and stigmatization



# Cultural Strengths – Collectivism

- ▶ Interdependent does not have to mean perpetual self sacrifice
- ▶ Strong or traditional family roles does not have to mean dominating or devaluing others



# Cultural Strengths

- ▶ “Calling Back the Spirit”
  - ▶ From liberation theology and liberation psychology
  - ▶ Development of spiritual resilience and empowerment via affirmation of ethnic roots and practices
  - ▶ Recognizing the legacy of conquest



THERE'S NO TURNING BACK...  
WE WILL WIN.

WE ARE WINNING BECAUSE OURS  
IS A **REVOLUTION** OF  
MIND AND HEART.

