



## Healing the Hidden Wounds of Racial Trauma

### 1. What is the research about?

This article is about the racial traumas that youth of colour experience. It highlights strategies for healing and transformation, and how to better support children and youth of colour. Readers are introduced to how race is entangled with suffering; the article shows that most of this hurt is often confused with distracting secondary symptoms, ranging from hopelessness to acting out behaviours. Rarely do practitioners ask the right questions when unmasking and treating the hidden wounds of racial trauma. The article suggests that many take a general approach to supporting these youth, and emphasizes the importance of abandoning established treatment methods and incorporating effective strategies to better tackle racial oppression and promote healing.

### 2. Where did the research take place?

The author's work is based in the United States.

### 3. Who is this research about?

This research is about racialized youth.

### 4. How was the research done?

The article includes relevant literature to define key terms and explore central themes, and uses two case studies to illustrate the experiences of racialized youth: Angel, a youth of colour travelling on a subway and presumed to be a criminal; and Assad, a young person who struggles to share his story – and the pain he's experienced as a result of racialization – with a therapist.

### 5. What are the key findings?

This article recommends eight “critical and interrelated steps” (p. 27) that promote healing when working with youth of colour by cultivating what is “great in and about them” (p. 28):

#### i) Affirmation and Acknowledgment

Let the young person know you understand and accept that race is “a critical organizing principle in society” (p. 27).

**“Racial oppression is a traumatic form of interpersonal violence which can lacerate the spirit, scar the soul, and puncture the psyche” (p. 25).**

#### ii) Create Space for Race

Be open and curious in talking about race freely but respectfully with racialized youth.

#### iii) Racial Storytelling

Allow youth to share their stories and have voice to support critical thinking about their racialized experiences.

#### iv) Validation

Affirm the young person's worldview and worth.

#### v) The Process of Naming

Address the racialized experiences of the young person by ‘naming’ the “hidden wounds of racial oppression” (p. 28).

#### vi) Externalized Devaluation

Affirm that devaluation is connected to racial oppression; “increase their thirst for respect” (p. 28) and support their recognition that racial discrimination does not take away from their self-worth.

#### vii) Counteract Devaluation

Provide an array of resources (emotional, psychological, and behavioral) that support the young person to build on their strengths and “provide a buffer against future assaults” (p. 28).

#### viii) Rechanneling Rage

Support youth to be aware of their rage, “gain control of it, and ultimately to redirect it” (p. 28).

### 6. Why does it matter for youth work?

Youth of colour are often spoken to with a lack of understanding about their unique experiences, and receive guidance or support from practitioners that is not meaningful. These eight strategies are important because young people of colour can experience many hardships, and youth workers should consider approaches that recognize these experiences of racial trauma and actively promote healing.



Hardy, K. (2013). Healing the hidden wounds of racial trauma. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 22(1), 24-28.