

# *Journey To Radiance*



*A Community-Based Ecosystems Approach for  
Promoting the Health, Wellbeing and Healing of  
Boys and Young Men of Colour*





## Radiant Health Strategies



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## ABSTRACT

Extant literature exposes the inordinate stress placed on urban school personnel and their students. While they both persevere through innumerable symptoms of a struggling educational system, and in many cases a milieu of challenges in their communities, both parties are expected to perform at their maximum on a daily basis during the teaching and

learning process. This study analyses the effects of community-based ecosystems approaches (with a community-based ecosystem defined as the social environment of boys and young men of colour (BYMOC), including parents/guardians, school personnel and community members). A community-based ecosystems approach is an interconnected and interdependent process of acknowledging and addressing the need for stress management, wellness, self-empowerment and healing strategies of the BYMOC's social environment. The community-based ecosystems approach is accomplished through a series of targeted health and healing programs designed for specific audiences, such as parents/guardians, community members, school personnel and BYMOC, on the well-being and academic achievement of BYMOC. Data were collected from 2436 youth, educators, school district personnel, parents/guardians, youth practitioners and community members over three years. Analyses showed a strong correlation between targeted interventions focused on the cultivation of a healthy ecosystem for both school personnel and boys and young men of colour and the increased ability to improve school dynamics and learn skills to reduce the negative effects of stress and trauma. Assessment results confirmed specific language, creating safe spaces, allowing permission for self-care and wellness practices,



The Journey To Radiance cultivates intergenerational engagement in a way that empowers each individual and seeks to tap into their inner joy.

and engaging intergenerational role models were essential to cultivating a successful community-based ecosystems approach. Evaluation of the most effective health and healing strategies concluded that the programs with the greatest impact helped to reduce stress and improve school performance.





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The Transformational Leadership from the Inside Out workshops and retreats infuse icebreaker activities throughout the day to cultivate joy, trust and collaboration.



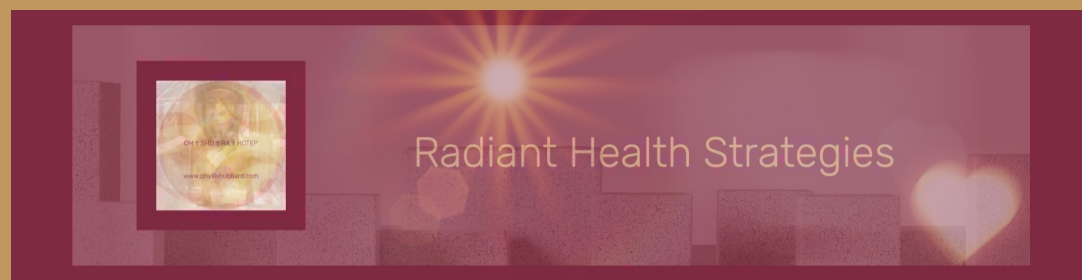


## WHY WE NEED A COMMUNITY-BASED ECOSYSTEMS APPROACH

In his thesis, Dr. Lesiba Baloyi “redefines psychology and psychotherapy from the viewpoint of the African experience” (Baloyi, 2008, p. 1). He asserts that “the dominant Western paradigm of scientific knowledge in general and, psychology in particular, is anchored in a defective claim to neutrality, objectivity and universality because it obstructs Indigenous and pluriversal strategies for healing.” This assertion is crucial to accurately supporting the need for a community-based ecosystems approach to promoting the health, wellbeing and healing of Boys and Young Men of Colour (BYMOC). Of equal importance is the necessity of addressing trauma specific to BYMOC by including healing strategies that can be substantiated through unconventional qualitative methodologies.

At the Association of Black Psychologists’ 50th anniversary convention, I surveyed the work of Dr. Baloyi and other psychologists of the African diaspora. They grappled with ways to promote and share their research to facilitate healing in Black communities. As I discovered that these challenges repeatedly surfaced during Black, Indigenous and Pacific Islander convenings, I decided to infuse their research into my work with BYMOC populations. My enthusiasm for helping children to realize their potential began as a teen mentor. During the summer I spent tutoring a young Black male, I discovered that emotional trauma was the root cause of his academic challenges (Harvey, 1996). Since that time, I have worked with BYMOC communities in various capacities, including talent recruitment, mentorship and wellness training. My collaboration with the Campaign for Black Male Achievement (CBMA<sup>1</sup>) began in 2009, when I was invited to be a keynote speaker at their Transformational Leadership retreat. I created an interactive experience for the retreat called “Transformational Leadership from the Inside Out<sup>2</sup>,” based on strategies (for healing the mind, body, emotions and spirit) that could be used to improve the personal and professional lives of its grantees. Although CBMA asked me to focus the presentation on nutrition, I firmly asserted that it was important to address unresolved emotional trauma (Carroll et al., 2021) and present it as a deep underlying root cause which, unless properly processed, would sabotage the success of BYMOC leaders and prevent them from thriving. My affirmation is based on my research and personal experience. I was seven years old when I witnessed a traumatic event<sup>3</sup>. Shortly thereafter, I developed Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD<sup>4</sup>), an incurable respiratory illness. After 27 years of enduring the negative side effects of prescription medication, I discovered that true healing begins with my ability to take care of myself in between doctor visits. I began to practice an ancient Indigenous form of medicine called Ayurveda which, when translated into English, means “the science of living<sup>5</sup>.” The Ayurvedic remedies prompted the processing of suppressed and repressed emotions and mental health into its healing strategies. Within three months, my 27-year bout with COPD came to an end. This experience convinced me of the need to acknowledge and diligently work to heal trauma, inspiring me to study holistic health<sup>6</sup> and become an advocate for Radiant Health Strategies<sup>7</sup>.





## BUILDING A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM



**Fig. 1** Indicates BMA HHS' four primary focus areas

In 2016, The California Endowment<sup>8</sup> awarded a one million dollar grant to CBMA for a health initiative within the Oakland and Sacramento City Unified School Districts who hired Dr. Hubbard to create a program entitled Black Male Achievement (BMA) Health and Healing Strategies (HHS). She based BMA HHS on her research and conviction that the BYMOC field needs the support of a healthy ecosystem to succeed, grow and fulfill its potential. BMA HHS' focus areas included building the knowledge and skill sets needed to improve the physical and emotional health and overall wellness of the ecosystem of BYMOC (see Fig. 1).

CBMA hosted a BMA HHS planning retreat with 34 school and community leaders to co-create a solid implementation strategy for the BMA HHS initiative in Northern California. The planning cohort decided to focus its efforts on supporting the psychosocial academic framework developed for middle and high school populations within Oakland Unified School District's African American Male Achievement Program (primarily Black males) and Sacramento City Unified School District's Men's (BYMOC) and Women's Leadership Academy.

The team of trusted partners who lead the implementation of BMA HHS included Oakland and Sacramento City school districts and organisations working on behalf of BYMOC populations:

- † Oakland Unified School District (including school personnel from San Francisco Unified School District)
- † Sacramento City Unified School District
- † National CARES Mentoring Movement
- † Radiant Health Strategies
- † Strategic Destiny, LLC
- † 393Films
- † A Touch of Life Leadership and Wellness Institute
- † Flourish Agenda
- † Spearitwux





Oakland Unified School District's Fall Forum and ManUp Conference

Oakland Unified School District's (OUSD's) Office of Equity addresses disproportionality for Black boys by employing a targeted-universal approach. Through the African American Male Achievement (AAMA) Initiative and the Manhood Development Program (MDP<sup>9</sup>), OUSD's efforts increase the grade point averages and reading levels of the African American male student program participants<sup>10</sup>. OUSD's Office of Equity creates systems change based on leveraging relationships and empowering people to challenge and radically disrupt oppressive systems. AAMA (working in collaboration with the Kingmakers of Oakland<sup>11</sup>) was a vital partner in the implementation of BMA HHS in the City of Oakland. The subsequent section provides snapshots of the different activities implemented through BMA HHS. Specifically, the BMA HHS integration within OUSD included:

- † CARES Mentoring Wellness Circles<sup>12</sup> into OUSD's MDP
- † BMA HHS workshops during the OUSD Fall Forums and Spring Symposiums<sup>13</sup>
- † BMA HHS workshops during the Black Teacher Leadership and Sustainability Support Institute<sup>14</sup>
- † BMA HHS workshops for community engagement events

One AAMA administrator reported that "MDP facilitators are beginning to remember/use the concepts; very positive reception to the info cards for home and classroom ... [we need] more resources like this."





Winter Retreat for Sacramento City Unified School District school personnel and community leaders.

Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) provides targeted academic and social-emotional interventions offered through their Youth Development Support Services (YDSS). Programs include the Men's/Women's Leadership Academy (MLA/WLA<sup>15</sup>) and site-based, out-of-school-time opportunities (after school and summer programs) that have increased school connectedness, attendance and high school graduation rates. Explicit in their goal to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline and create systems to support the whole needs of the child and family, staff members of SCUSD's YDSS Department were ideal partners for the implementation of BMA HHS in Sacramento City.

Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD)'s YDSS Department employs a social justice youth development framework toward empowering young men and women to be scholars of advocacy for self, culture and community. BMA Health and Healing Strategies offerings included:

- † CARES Mentoring Wellness Circles at Sam Brannan Middle School and Will C. Wood Middle School
- † BMA HHS workshops for district school personnel, community partners, families and service providers
- † A series of health and wellness challenges with district staff including fitness competitions, the creation of healthy work environments and offering healing centred retreats





CARES Mentoring wellness circle mentors and participants

National CARES Mentoring Movement is a pioneering, community-galvanizing endeavour to offer Black children and underserved communities the social, emotional and academic support needed to unleash their potential and graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college or vocational-training programs and twenty-first century careers. More than 140,000 mentors and local CARES affiliate leaders across 58 U.S. cities are devoted to advancing young people who are often isolated and mostly written off by society.

BMA HHS collaborated with CARES Mentoring to elevate education, expectation and self-esteem by engaging youth in community wellness circles. The CARES Mentoring Wellness Circles were implemented across five middle school sites in a partnership between Oakland Unified School District's Office of Equity and Sacramento City Unified School District's Men's/Women's Leadership Academy (MLA/WLA). One mentee at Sam Brannan Middle School in Sacramento reported "I used to get into trouble with my teachers, now my grades are up." Another mentee shared that participating in mentoring circles "made me feel more responsible and helped me to think about life choices." The CARES Mentoring partners recruited and trained 240 adult mentors in Oakland and Sacramento City, conducting 71 wellness mentoring sessions with a total of 440 youth participants.





Radiant Health Strategies at the My Brother's Keeper Alliance (now the Obama Foundation) conference in Long Beach, CA. Members of the Oakland Unified School District's Manhood Development Program leaders were in attendance and participated in a roundtable discussion about their "Kingmakers of Oakland" philosophy and video series.

Radiant Health Strategies (RHS), is a Holistic Health Education business, founded by Dr. Phyllis Shu Hubbard. RHS specializes in root cause analysis, organisational, professional and personal transformation, sustainability, therapeutic nutrition and movement, clinical aromatherapy, herbalism, self-empowerment and cultural competency. Dr. Hubbard travels nationally and internationally as a holistic health educator, gathering research on Indigenous health practices to integrate into her healing techniques. RHS has provided customized wellness education for corporate and community organisations since 2007.

RHS launched BMA HHS and strategic communication endeavours, including recruiting 393Films<sup>16</sup> as a partner to co-host and produce the Journey to Radiance podcasts and webisodes, facilitating transformational leadership workshops, producing numerous blogs, instructional videos and empowering images<sup>17</sup>. RHS encouraged BYMOC participants to discover their unique gifts and talents and actively engage in self-care through self-empowerment and wellness education. One workshop participant reported, "After leaving Dr. Hubbard's session, I made a vow to become better holistically. I changed my diet, started exercising and found a circle of friends to help hold me accountable." RHS facilitated 10 transformational leadership workshops, produced 27 blogs and educational posts and executive produced and co-hosted 13 Journey to Radiance podcasts, two Journey to Radiance webisodes and a Journey to Radiance theme song.





Strategic Destiny's "Triumph Over Trauma" session for parents and caregivers of children.

Strategic Destiny: Designing Futures Through Faith and Facts was founded by Reverend Dr. Alfonso Wyatt. Strategic Destiny seeks to find common language and collaborative opportunities with socially engaged practitioners who are motivated by faith, as well as secular practitioners motivated by evidence-based learning. Through workshops, training and healing circle facilitation, Strategic Destiny empowers caregivers to support their own healing and to influence the health and wellness of the youth they serve. Dr. Wyatt is a renowned national speaker on issues affecting men, children, youth, adults, families, community mental and physical health. In his role as a national public theologian, he offers a message of hope in and out of the faith community. Dr. Wyatt provides consulting to government institutions, universities, foundations, public/charter schools, non-profits and civic groups.

In alignment with BMA HHS, Strategic Destiny provided workshops and training to community-based organisations, educators and families. SCUSD YDSS collaborated with Dr. Wyatt to provide crisis-response support and community healing for Sacramento families, district staff and community members after the tragic loss of Stephon Clark, a young Black man killed by police in March of 2018<sup>18</sup>.

One Strategic Destiny workshop participant reported that they learned "tools for reframing and redirecting student behavior and using strength-based language." Strategic Destiny facilitated 11 workshops with a total of 328 participants<sup>19</sup>.





Brotha Peace is a member of the DetermiNation Black Men’s Group and was a guest on the Journey To Radiance “Gratitude” episode. He continually takes and shares images of himself in nature to help shift the narrative of Black males.

393Films creates multimedia projects aimed at transforming thoughts through creating media that inspires action. A San Francisco (USA) Bay Area-based full production house, 393Films’ services include screenwriting, directing and editing with state-of-the-art equipment and innovative digital media software. Founder Adimu Madyun, a.k.a. “WolfHawkJaguar,” has an extensive history of production and service. An educator, filmmaker and musician, Adimu has produced films and music in both the United States and various African countries. Additionally, he facilitates the DetermiNation Black Men’s Group and trains youth in media and music production<sup>20</sup>.

In partnership with BMA HHS, 393Films co-hosted and produced the Journey to Radiance podcasts and webisodes to shift the narrative around BYMOC, specifically as it related to health and healing. The overarching goal for this collaboration was to elevate accurate, positive and healthy lifestyles of BYMOC. An activist, who calls himself “Young Black Soul,” left the following review of Journey to Radiance: “This is a great podcast! Journey to Radiance focuses on one of the most pervasive issues in the Black community—Health and Healing. Learn more about the art of health and healing through this high quality, informative, podcast! Side-note: awesome intro track!” Another reviewer shared, “I can’t recommend this podcast enough. Much needed and happy you’re creating this for us! Thank you.” 393Films produced 13 Journey to Radiance podcasts, two Journey to Radiance webisodes, and a Journey to Radiance theme song which was written by Dr. Hubbard and edited, performed and produced by Adimu Madyun.

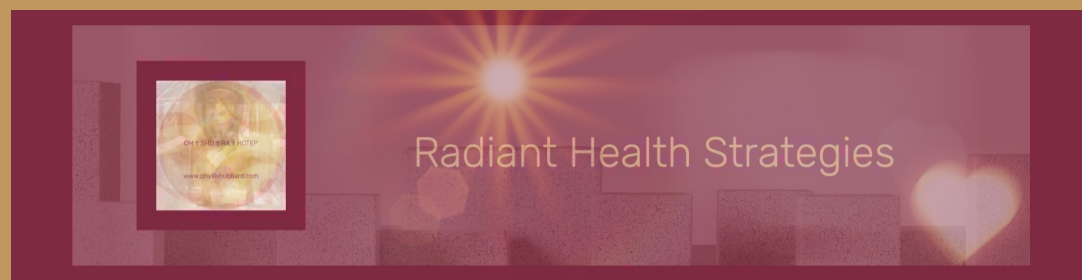




The BMA HHS workshops for the MDP Facilitators often included mindfulness practices such as meditation.

A Touch of Life is a health and wellness institute that specializes in facilitating transformational team building and employee wellness training for non-profit organisations, corporations and county/state institutions. Founder Asara Tsehai brings more than 35 years of experience in the health and wellness industry to her training and workshops. Ms. Tsehai's work has been featured in several national publications, including Essence, Sister to Sister and Heart and Soul magazines. OUSD's AAMA office commissioned A Touch of Life to lead the BMA HHS sessions for Oakland Unified School District's MDP personnel. Session topics included overall health and wellbeing, nutrition, reflexology, yoga and guided development of individualised personal wellness plans. One wellness session participant reported that Asara's sessions "created space to recharge/re-energize and ground one-self." Another participant shared that "[I'm] shifting patterns of behaviour (workaholic mode, overexertion), toward a more meditative state." A Touch of Life facilitated a total of 20 workshop sessions for the 25 OUSD MDP staff members.





The Flourish Agenda workshops were very popular with school personnel. They continually requested additional sessions and would participate in those sessions even if they had previously attended that particular workshop.

Flourish Agenda is a national non-profit consulting firm that works with youth of colour, schools, youth serving organisations, foundations and local governments to build and implement strategies that allow young people to flourish. They are the leading providers of the healing centred engagement strategies, tools and research that are necessary to reimagine how systems can more effectively support young people of colour<sup>21</sup>. Flourish Agenda’s mission is to design strategies that unlock the power of healing and engage youth of colour and adults in transforming their schools and communities. Their healing centred engagement approach is a non-clinical and holistic process involving culture, spirituality, civic action and collective healing. It views trauma not simply as an individual isolated experience, but rather highlights the ways in which trauma and healing are experienced collectively. The term “healing centred engagement” expands how participants think about responses to trauma and offers a more holistic approach to fostering well-being.

Flourish Agenda conducted seminars, workshops and trainings with K-12 teachers, non-traditional educators and district staff in each of the two targeted communities in Oakland and Sacramento City. Their Healing Centred Engagement workshops in schools and communities included strategies to support personal self-care, healing and tools toward the integration of a healing centred approach in educational practices. Additional BMA HHS efforts included:

- † Keynote addresses by Founder, Author and CEO Dr. Shawn Ginwright
- † Healing Centred Engagement workshops and retreats that provide breakthrough experiences to educational practitioners and caregivers
- † Customized services to support institutions and evaluate program impact and effectiveness
- † Application of research findings on youth of colour, racial trauma and well-being to improve practices and inform the field

Flourish Agenda facilitated 13 sessions with a total of 309 participants<sup>22</sup>. More than 80% of participants reported being motivated and willing to use the Healing Centred Engagement model for their youth and for their personal enrichment. Some participants were already using the model and enthusiastically attended these popular workshops as a refresher to their previous training experiences.





Spearitwux pioneered many different types of prolific convenings to support school personnel, students and parents, including this restorative hike and wellness gathering in nature.

Spearitwux provides innovative consulting and training for parents and youth development professionals on topics such as powerful parenting, staff wellness and sustainability, crisis intervention, intergenerational and vicarious trauma, classroom management, restorative justice, effective team building and more. Spearitwux’s mission is to develop young people’s ability to actively contribute to the transformation of their families and create a healthy and sustainable community. They fulfill their mission by equipping youth development professionals with the right tools to engage and empower youth toward health and wellness. Additionally, Spearitwux focuses on building support within families to provide a safe space for parents and youth to share strategies on how to build safety, sustainability and solidarity.

In alignment with BMA HHS, Spearitwux provided monthly healing centred workshops for parents, families and community members within the Oakland Unified School District. Most notably, at West Oakland Middle School, Spearitwux bridged the cultural gap between the school community’s African American and Yemeni families through engagement in shared health and healing learning opportunities for parents and guardians. One participant shared, “If the parents felt welcomed and loved in schools, we would be able to do so much more for the children.” Spearitwux facilitated 10 sessions with a total of 362 participants<sup>23</sup>.





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## BMA HHS PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

Since its official launch in Spring of 2016, BMA HHS engaged 2436 youth, educators, school district personnel, parents/guardians, youth practitioners and community members in various opportunities designed to build transformative leadership and promote health, healing and overall wellness for BYMOC, including, but not limited to, the following:

- † Facilitation of more than 135 health and healing workshops, seminars and retreats
- † Engagement of 440 middle school boys in wellness mentoring circles
- † Production of 13 BMA HHS podcasts and 2 webisodes containing health and healing demonstrations, an affirmative theme song and numerous educational graphics (see Fig. 2)
- † Recruitment and training of 240 mentors
- † Facilitation of informational workshops and caregiver retreats with 354 parents, grandparents and/or guardians
- † Development of 27 BMA HHS blogs and educational posts



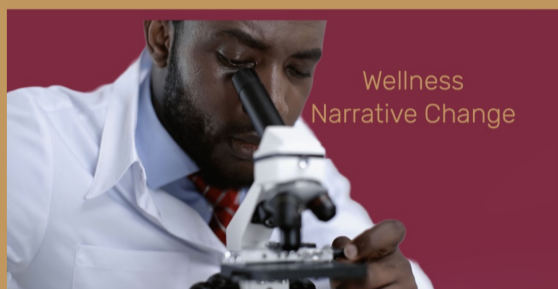
These students, community leaders and school personnel came from five different cities to participate in a healing retreat where they learned Qigong, Yoga, fly fishing, archery, horseback riding, hiking and personal/professional development skills such as self-awareness, financial management, interpersonal communication, mentorship, restorative practices, racial healing, etc. The following year, we were able to garner enough support to bring in female students for a joint conference.





# Journey To Radiance

Ten Health & Healing Strategies For  
Black † Indigenous † Immigrant Excellence



Wellness  
Narrative Change



Emotional & Mental  
Wellness & Balance



Therapeutic  
Nutrition



Healing Power  
Of Nature



Therapeutic  
Movement



Cultivation Of  
Self-Awareness



Wellness  
Mentorship



Accountability  
Inspired Action



Reinforce Health &  
Healing Strategies



Ongoing Support  
Through Strategic  
Communication

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**Fig. 2** An example of educational graphics provided to the public

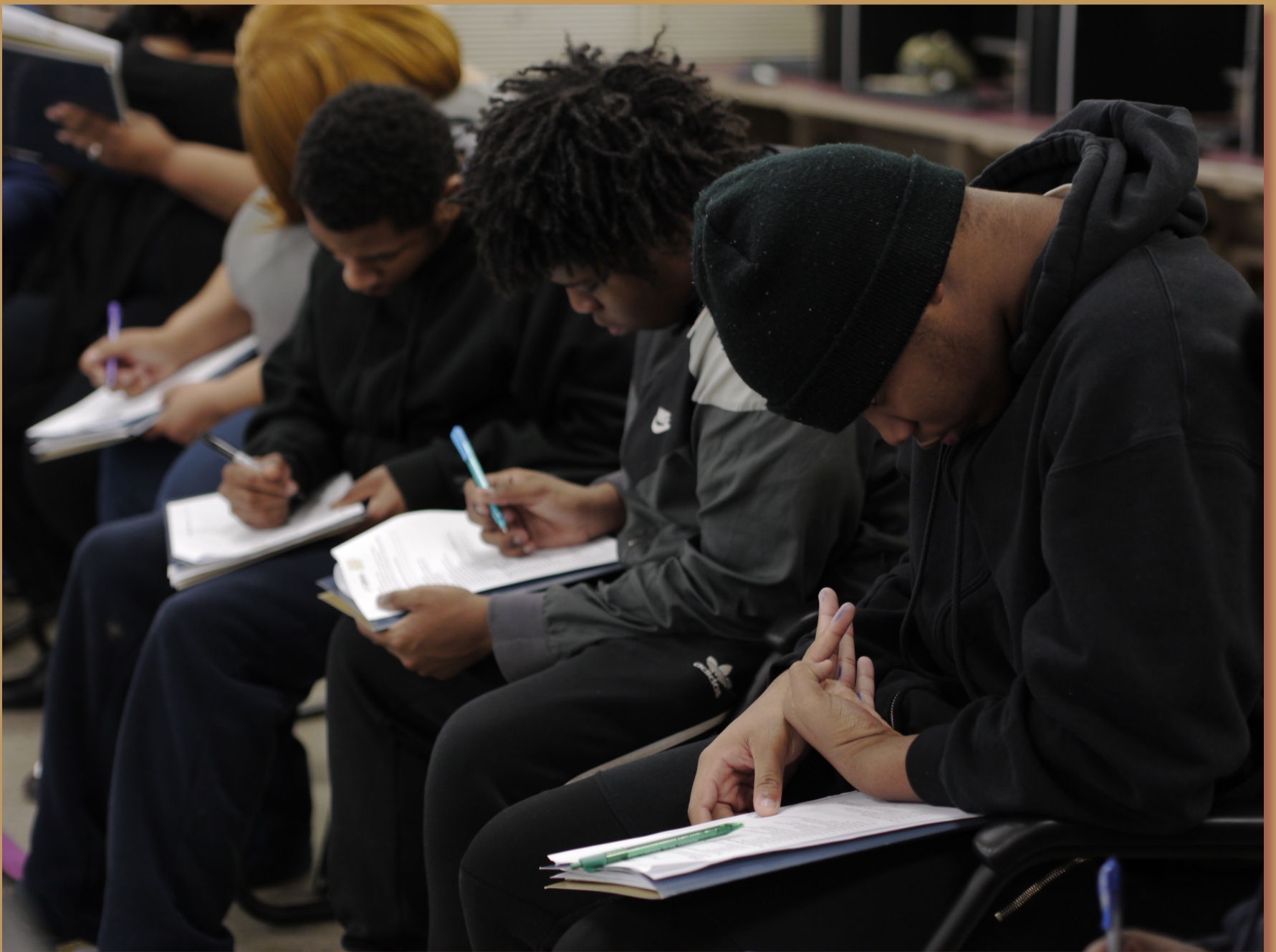
Ninety-one percent of workshop participants were motivated to increase physical activity; and 82% of workshop participants learned new skills to help reduce the negative effects of stress and trauma.





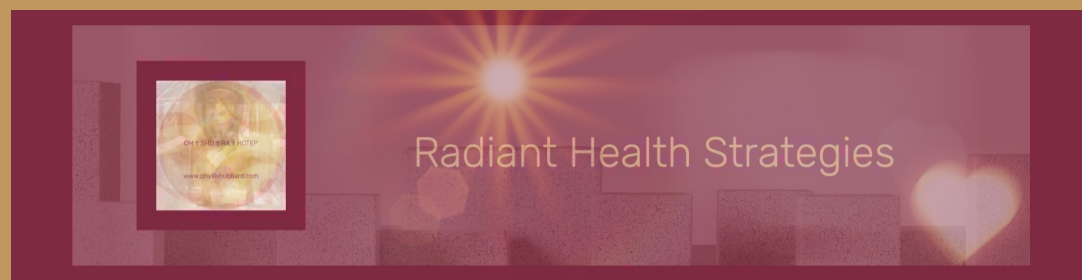
## EVALUATION AND METHODOLOGY

During the second year of the initiative, Dr. Hubbard engaged a local evaluation partner, Innovation Bridge, to capture, document and analyse impact. The following sections detail the methodology and key findings of that assessment. Historically, the BYMOC community has often found itself the subject of research that pathologized negative narratives, yielding more harm than benefits for the community. Repeated research-related atrocities have harmed, silenced and exploited BYMOC, leading to significant distrust between researchers and the BYMOC community. Understanding this context, this methodology sought to “illuminate the complex dimensions of goodness” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xvi) as a counterpoint to the dominant culture and tradition of documenting failure in communities of colour. The overall goal was to capture the wholeness and complexity of BMA HHS as it related to structures, people, relationships, goals, education and voice. The section below details how data was collected and evaluated.



The Journey To Radiance includes garnering feedback from all participants, including the students.





The analysis of BMA HHS commenced at the start of the second year. Innovation Bridge collected data using workshop attendance, post-workshop provider surveys and informal interviews with stakeholders to capture impact during the first year of implementation. The team surveyed attendance to provide a preliminary quantitative outlook on engagement and participation in the various programs/workshops and reviewed post-workshop surveys and stakeholder interviews to obtain preliminary qualitative data.

The evaluation team began primary data collection during the second year of implementation. This data centred on participant evaluation surveys and field observations. The objective was to ascertain the impact and sustainability of health and healing strategies within participants' everyday lifestyle and practices. Innovation Bridge conducted field observations to gain a better understanding of participant level impact. The team conducted their observations from the vantage point of participant observers, who attended the full breadth of programming while on site, taking intermittent notes. Innovation Bridge then debriefed and expanded on the notes.

The evaluation team analysed targeted data via document review and provider focus groups to verify and support initial findings from the preliminary data review. Analysis of provider focus groups conducted during the second year of implementation and document review data, in conjunction with the primary data, provided additional clarity. The team and strategic partner organisations facilitated participant focus groups to further understand the impact of strategies on youth, practitioners and families. Innovation Bridge examined and triangulated the data for impact themes through the three data profiles (primary, targeted and analysis; see Fig. 3).

The team identified and cross-referenced emerging themes with health and healing strategies for relevance. They shared a preliminary write-up of the findings with BMA partners, who provided additional clarity and feedback. The feedback was used as an additional analytical tool to determine the overall impact, giving voice to the community to capture the "complex dimensions of goodness" associated with BMA HHS. Innovation Bridge organised their findings based on effective BMA HHS strategies, key opportunities and recommendations moving forward.



**Fig. 3** Illustrates impact assessment methodology





## FOSTERING A COMMUNITY-BASED ECOSYSTEMS APPROACH

The information that follows summarizes the most impactful health and healing strategies within the implementation and evaluation of this initiative. The evaluation team highlighted practices that may be useful for individuals looking to begin or enhance their personal journey to wellness, offering suggestions for those who support others on their paths.

### Confirming Specific Language

The first key finding from BMA HHS was the power of affirmative language in the healing process. This included both the acquisition and understanding of supportive language. One of the barriers to healing is the inability to name what is wrong and to address the need for healing. Learning the “language of self-care” enabled participants to identify and name the trauma in their own lives, as well as in the lives of BYMOC. Additionally, it allowed participants to refine the identification of their emotions and facilitate better communication, youth-to-youth, youth-to-adult, and adult-to-adult, in the process of securing empowering and authentic relationships.



A CARES Mentoring workshop for school personnel and community leaders in Sacramento City, CA.

The CARES wellness mentors created and consistently used memorable slogans to encourage student participants to use the language of self-care. One example is the expression “Saying it Out.” This expression empowered students to articulate their feelings, learn how to receive and respond to critical feedback and feel more confident in their ability to communicate. “Saying it Out” helped students provide counter statements or ask questions for improved clarity, to maintain balance when emotionally triggered, which improved engagement in their schoolwork.

Flourish Agenda provided teachers and school personnel with the language of CARMA – Culture, Agency, Relationships, Meaning and Aspirations (Ginwright, 2016). As one of the Flourish Agenda session participants stated, “Through CARMA, I have been able to attune and refine the abstract attitudes and behaviors that no longer serve me.” For this participant, acquiring the language has not only led to an evaluation of the behaviors that serve them, but has supported them in building healthy relationships as they engage in therapy and liberation work in the community. Acquiring the word “agency” helped another participant to identify toxic relationships and take control of one’s mental health. CARMA provided clarity of purpose and improved her sense of confidence and personal power.

Flourish Agenda addressed their youth participants as “wellness contributors” and community “change agents.” This reframing shifted limiting beliefs about BYMOC as they developed spiritual practices, growth mindsets and healthy ways of living which made a positive impression on adults, particularly as the youth discovered their identity and purpose.





## Creating Safe Spaces

The cultivation of safe healing spaces is another strategy that showed evidence of impact across BMA HHS partners and participants. Adult participants described their experiences of working within the school systems as “high stress, non-affirming and littered with microaggressions.” Youth participants spoke of school as a place that constantly threatened their physical and social-emotional safety. They also described having to endure fights, excessive discipline, low achievement and a lack of confidence. The BMA HHS partners worked diligently to curate peaceful meeting spaces and infuse Indigenous healing circle rituals (Mehl-Madrona & Mainguy, 2014) into their sessions<sup>24</sup>. The BMA HHS participants considered the meeting spaces to be places of refuge and healing for people of colour. The attendees obtained valuable problem-solving and stress-management skills that they could explore with their colleagues and apply to novel situations.

Dr. Alfonso Wyatt of Strategic Destiny communicated the importance of cultivating a familial connection with his participants. Because there were grandparents raising their grandchildren who participated in his workshops, he worked to find spaces within the community of the attendees to create an increased sense of safety, comfort and convenience.



Strategic Destiny conducted sessions with community leaders, parents and school personnel in nature or in spaces that were warm and welcoming to the participants.





## Allowing Permission for Self-Care and Wellness Practices



Students are an integral part of the healing process. We do not have discussions about the health and healing of our youth without their presence and active participation.

Many BMA HHS partners stressed the importance of working with school personnel and community leaders to allow permission for, promote and prioritize self-care. This foundation allowed participants to remix their approach to building relationships with BYMOC. Claudette Lee and Ethel Williams stated that “survival ... racism, discrimination and oppression define the childhood of an African American male” (2001, p. 56). This narrative can often be interpreted through the lens of fear for the survival of BYMOC, leading caring adults to inadvertently approach relationship building through the vehicle of toughness, aggression or hypermasculinity.

The mothers and grandmothers who participated in the BMA HHS workshop sessions led by Spearitwux spoke about the fear that comes from the challenge of raising BYMOC in Oakland, CA. Yet, as part of their BMA HHS efforts, Spearitwux emphasized the importance of self-care as a process of dealing with the increasing stressors of raising BYMOC. They recommended strategies such as “connecting before you correct,” and “taking a breath before you engage in the correction process to make it more meaningful and less punitive.” These more thoughtful approaches to correction impacted how the participants of Spearitwux engaged with their children. As one participant stated, the strategies she’s learned have helped her to “not be so aggressive” and to “calm myself down” when communicating with her grandchildren. Other participants noted that, despite the view that you can’t “slack on your mack with town teenagers,” the strategies of “more love and hugs, reciprocity with positivity,” and being more open to learning how to communicate with their children/grandchildren led to positive change.



## Engaging Intergenerational Role Models



Our sessions would often strategically seat a youth with an elder and an adult and then engage them in activities that allow each person to share their voice, experiences and wisdom.

One of the most prominent areas of impact was the interactive engagement of intergenerational role models (youth, adults and elders). The CARES mentors noted that the students who participated in their wellness circles at both the Oakland and Sacramento City sites experienced improved grades, confidence, behaviour and communication skills. Student focus group participants reported that the wellness circle sessions were a protected space that allowed them to express their emotions in healthy ways. Participating in the wellness circles increased their awareness and personal responsibility to self and community, including modeling respectful and positive male-female relationships. Utilising intergenerational role models to demonstrate and empower youth to create counter-narratives resulted in academic and interpersonal success. One middle school principal noted, “The boys have learned how to forgive each other.”

The intergenerational role models consistently affirmed the BYMOC participants with empowering titles to focus them on a vision for their success. Spearitwux presented BYMOC as “entrepreneurs,” providing place and space for students to be seen as resources to their community through their pop-up resource village. Spearitwux also employed a catering company founded by a 13-year-old African American male to provide healthy food for their workshops.





## ADDITIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER

The following recommendations are focused more specifically on challenges and opportunities to increase BMA HHS for BYMOC within educational, city and community-based systems of support. Several BMA HHS partners noted the complexity and challenges of promoting wellness within the various school systems. These obstacles impacted their access to a diversity of potential participants who could benefit from their programming. The strategic partners asserted the need for school-wide and district-wide buy-in from institutional partners as well as an emphasis on streamlining access to space and potential participants for effective implementation.

While participants from educational systems spoke to the value and safety of having spaces that were primarily for people of colour, there was also an acknowledgment that it was important to engage their White peers in the process. Attendees reported a dire need for motivating white school and community leaders to participate in the process of self-care and to improve cultural competence to facilitate narrative change and the creation of a healthy ecosystem for BYMOC in schools.

Although background checks are used to contribute to the overall safety of schools, they can also serve as a barrier to the inclusion and participation of male adults of colour. Though the culture of mass incarceration and the prison-industrial complex<sup>25</sup> disproportionately impacts men of colour, this fact is not addressed within the current policies around background checks, specifically regarding schools and/or youth-serving organisations. Consequently, males of colour are frequently excluded from program leadership. Unfortunately, access to health and healing strategies that can assist BYMOC in recovering from trauma experienced within the justice system (through direct and/or indirect involvement) is denied due to their association with those justice systems. BMA HHS partners and participants noted how the work is incomplete and, in some ways, self-defeating if these opportunities for participation continue to be elusive for men of colour.

Recognising that the specific health and healing needs for BYMOC in each city, school district and community are unique, how can we build on impactful strategies from Northern California to expand the work of this initiative to other communities throughout the country? What online or web-based opportunities exist for learning collaborations between Oakland or Sacramento City and other cities like Detroit, Michigan where BMA HHS work has commenced? Furthermore, how do we expand to more explicitly address the critical needs of BYMOC, such as nutritional and mental health needs at various stages of life or health and healing support for BYMOC who are gender non-conforming, non-binary or transgender?



The Journey To Radiance cultivates love and acceptance of ourselves exactly as we are, which includes those of us who identify as gender non-conforming. This youth leader continues to be a health and healing advocate.





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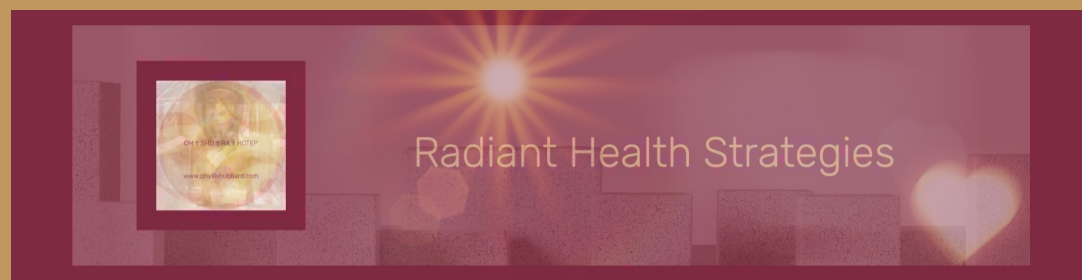
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During this session, we see a parent, school administrator, student and teacher sitting together and learning Qigong, a breathing and movement exercise that cultivates self-awareness, mental acuity and reduces stress.





## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Campaign for Black Male Achievement (CBMA) was an organisation focused on improving the life outcomes of leaders in the field of Black Male Achievement (BMA), which included community organisations and school personnel who mentored or educated Black males. Although the organisation focused its efforts primarily on BMA leaders, it funded and developed several programs that directly served Black males and BYMOC communities. CBMA ceased operations of the organisation in December of 2020. The Black Male Achievement (BMA) Health and Healing Strategies and Journey to Radiance content is archived at <https://www.phyllishubbard.com/journey>, which serves as a community partner, radiant health advocate and role model to share, archive and preserve its content to ensure that the health and healing information is available for open source use globally.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Phyllis Shu Hubbard created Transformational Leadership from the Inside Out as a theory of change model based on Radiant Health Strategies for self-mastery, self-empowerment and active engagement in self-care.

<sup>3</sup> [When she was a child], Dr. Hubbard accidentally stumbled upon a preteen White boy raping a five-year-old Black girl. She immediately wanted to rush in to help but felt some force that froze her in place. She was confused by the White boy, who seemed to be talking aloud to no one and then realized, to her horror, that he was communicating with six Black boys who were watching the scene from a distance with their hands down their pants. The White boy was giving the Black boys instructions on how to rape the little girl. Though the boys had not yet spotted Dr. Hubbard, they were dangerously close. She realized that she had to make a quick exit to prevent herself from being attacked. She experienced a severe asthma attack as she attempted to explain to an adult what happened and then passed out before she could speak.

<sup>4</sup> The COPD Foundation defines Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) as “chronic lung diseases including emphysema and chronic bronchitis. This disease is characterised by breathlessness. COPD is [currently] an incurable disease, but with the right diagnosis and treatment, there are many things you can do to breathe better and enjoy life and live for many years.” (Source: <https://www.copdfoundation.org/What-is-COPD/Understanding-COPD/What-is-COPD.aspx>) Although the COPD Foundation considers COPD to be incurable, holistic health asserts that diseases are actually dis-eases (a lack of ease or balance in the body). For example, Ayurveda (defined in footnote number five) teaches that there are six stages of dis-ease, and that a person can reverse the course of dis-ease by identifying and removing the mental, emotional and physical root causes. Dr. Hubbard was on prescription medication which caused the COPD to become progressively worse. Ayurveda teaches that dis-ease originates as an emotion that, if not processed properly, weakens the body and makes it vulnerable to dis-ease. According to Ayurveda, if a person’s sadness, depression, guilt and/or grief is suppressed, repressed and/or unhealed, it will cause a weakness or vulnerability in the lungs. This weakness is greatly exacerbated by the onset of a traumatic event. After practicing Ayurveda for three months, Dr. Hubbard’s chronic cough stopped and she was able to reverse the course of the dis-ease.

<sup>5</sup> Ayurveda is an East Indian form of medicine that helps a person understand the profound effects that the mind and emotions have on the body. It uses self-awareness to help a person understand the difference between a balanced and imbalanced state. This increased level of awareness helps a person to make corrections and establish a heightened state of wellbeing regardless of illness or age. The practice of Ayurveda includes but is not limited to: elemental theory (the notion that the elements of ether, air, fire, water and earth are the building blocks and foundation of life for the body and for the universe); strategies for healing the body, mind, emotions and spirit; developing a wellness lifestyle; techniques for creating and/or re-establishing balance through setting and enforcing healthy boundaries, healing a person’s emotions, the use of therapeutic nutrition and movement, herbal remedies, etc.





<sup>6</sup> Dr. Hubbard defines Holistic Health as a wellness lifestyle approach to healing that seeks to discover and correct imbalances in the person's physical body (including mental, emotional and spiritual health) and their social environment. Her Holistic Health expertise includes Ayurveda, Naturopathy (a system of healing that uses food, water, herbs, therapeutic massage and other physical therapeutic processes to facilitate the body's self-healing mechanisms), Kamitic/Kemetic (Ancient Egyptian) Yoga, Qigong (an ancient Chinese system of healing), Reiki (ancient Japanese system of energy healing), holistic nutrition and movement, aromatherapy, herbology, self-empowerment and cultural competency.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Hubbard coined the term "Radiant Health Strategies" to promote healing of the body, mind, spirit and emotions so profound that it "radiates" wellness from one person to another and motivates people to inspire others to actively engage in self-care.

<sup>8</sup> "California Endowment is a not-for-profit foundation with \$3.4 billion assets under management. The foundation primarily focuses on healthcare issues including access to health care and health and well-being in California. It was founded in 1996 and is based in Los Angeles, California. Additional regional offices are situated in Sacramento, Fresno, San Diego, and Oakland." (Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-california-endowment/>) Learn more about the California Endowment at: <https://www.calendow.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> The Office of African American Male Achievement (AAMA) functions within the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD). OUSD was the first school district in the United States to create an office to address disproportionality amongst African American males. AAMA's Manhood Development Program is "a unique academic mentoring model designed and implemented by African American males for African American males. Instructors for the program were carefully chosen based upon cultural competency, understanding of youth development and past experience teaching." (Source: <https://www.ousd.org/Page/17777>)

<sup>10</sup> Research data for OUSD AAMA and MDP student success can be found at: <https://www.ousddata.org/>.

<sup>11</sup> After more than ten years in the district, a non-profit organization was developed called "Kingmakers of Oakland" (<https://kingmakersofoakland.org/>). Under the direction of Chris Chatmon (former Deputy Chief of OUSD's AAMA), "the independent non-profit now supports school districts across the country to improve the educational and life outcomes of Black boys by 'healing the fish while treating the toxic ecosystem.' This multi-faceted approach is rooted in a desire to collaborate, coordinate and convene folks who are inspired to create a healthy, affirming learning environment for Black boys in the public school system. Through professional development, narrative change, resources, curriculum and more, Kingmakers helps each unique district transform their school environment." (Source: <https://kingmakersofoakland.org/who-we-are/story/>)

<sup>12</sup> The National CARES Mentoring Movement is a pioneering, community-galvanizing movement, dedicated to alleviating intergenerational poverty among African Americans. It offers Black children in low-income families and underserved communities the social, emotional and academic support needed to unleash their potential and graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college or vocational-training programs and twenty-first century careers. More than 140,000 mentors and local CARES Affiliate Leaders across 58 U.S. cities are devoted to advancing young people who are often isolated and mostly written off by society. (Source: [www.caresmentoring.org](http://www.caresmentoring.org))

<sup>13</sup> "The OUSD Fall Forum [and Spring Symposium] is a multi-day conference showcasing the Kingmakers of Oakland model for African American Male Achievement. This event is an opportunity for participants to learn ways to address the systems, structures, conditions and cultures that can lead to improved educational outcomes for African American boys from Pre-K





to 12th grade. Participants will leave with an action plan to inspire leadership for Black boys in their own city, town, or region. The Fall Forum and Spring Symposium convene teams of students, teachers, principals, staff, administrators and elected officials from a combination of school district, non-profits, philanthropic and other educational institutions. The event is hosted each year by Kingmakers of Oakland, in collaboration with the African American Male Achievement Program within OUSD, as well as with their fiscal sponsor, The National Equity Project. (Source: <https://www.kingmakersofoakland.org/>)

<sup>14</sup> “The Black Teacher Leadership and Sustainability Institute is the Black Teacher Project’s signature professional development offering – an experiential institute providing ample opportunities for Black teachers to share, reflect and set intentions for how to lead from the classroom. Teachers will deepen their commitment, relationships and agency while developing strategies for leadership and sustainability.” (Source: <https://www.blackteacherproject.org/>)

<sup>15</sup> The Men’s/Women’s Leadership Academy is “a class offered during the school day (and for elective credit) to teens at risk of dropping out. Through service learning and a multicultural curriculum, the class aims to provide students with the tools to succeed, including teamwork, leadership, life skills, problem-solving and resiliency skills. The Academy focuses on bringing together teachers, students, parents and community businesses and partners to provide the encouragement needed for these teens to complete high school and enroll in college. The targeted audience for the Men’s/Women’s Leadership Academy is boys/girls in grades 9–12 who have multiple risk factors, including low attendance, low academic performance and high suspension rates. Schools that have academies include C.K. McClatchy, John F. Kennedy, Rosemont, Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions, American Legion and Sutter and California middle schools.” (Source: <https://www.scusd.edu/district-program/mens-leadership-academy>).

<sup>16</sup> 393Films is a Bay Area-based full production house that specializes in screenwriting, directing and editing with state-of-the-art equipment and innovative digital media software. 393Films creates multimedia projects that inspires action. Founder Adimu Madyun has an extensive history of production and service. An educator, filmmaker and musician, Adimu, a.k.a. “WolfHawkJaguar,” has produced films and music in both the United States and various African countries. Additionally, he facilitates the DetermiNation Black Men’s Group (see footnote 20), a men of colour achievement circle (through partnership with United Roots and Urban Peace Movement) and trains youth in media and music production. (Source: [www.393films.com](http://www.393films.com) and [www.unitedrootsoakland.org](http://www.unitedrootsoakland.org))

<sup>17</sup> The Journey to Radiance podcasts and webisodes aimed to promote healthy lifestyles, share empowering healing strategies and provide accurate, positive and healthy depictions of Black men and boys, specifically as it relates to cultural identity, health and healing. Dr. Phyllis Shu Hubbard (Radiant Health Strategies) and WolfHawkJaguar (393Films) served as co-hosts and producers of the Journey To Radiance multimedia series. The Journey to Radiance theme song and multimedia productions are available for open-source use to the public at: <https://www.phyllishubbard.com/journey>.

<sup>18</sup> “In the late evening of March 18, 2018, Stephon Clark, a 22-year-old African-American man, was shot and killed in Meadowview, Sacramento City, California by Terrence Mercadal and Jared Robinet, two officers of the Sacramento City Police Department in the backyard of his grandmother’s house while he had a phone in his hand. The encounter was filmed by police video cameras and by a Sacramento City County Sheriff’s Department helicopter which was involved in observing Clark on the ground and in directing ground officers to the point at which the shooting took place. The officers stated that they shot Clark, firing 20 rounds, believing that he had pointed a gun at them. Police found only a cell phone on him. While the Sacramento City County Coroner’s autopsy report concluded that Clark was shot seven times, including three shots to the right side of the back, the pathologist hired by the Clark family stated that Clark was shot eight times,





including six times in the back. The shooting caused large protests in Sacramento City, and Clark’s family members have rejected the initial police description of the events leading to Clark’s death. The Sacramento City Police Department placed the officers on paid administrative leave and opened a use of force investigation. Police have stated they are confident that Clark was the suspect responsible for breaking windows in the area prior to the encounter.” (Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting\\_of\\_Stephon\\_Clark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Stephon_Clark))

<sup>19</sup> The Strategic Destiny workshops offered extensive follow-up (including handouts and take home activities). Some presentations were facilitated as a series. Although each workshop welcomed new attendees, the total may include duplicate participants who attended more than one session.

<sup>20</sup> The DetermiNation Black Men’s Group is a program developed by United Roots of Oakland, a Youth Impact Hub. “United Roots, in partnership with Urban Peace Movement, launched the DetermiNation youth program in May 2013. DetermiNation is a program designed to support the success and development of young African American males (ages 16–24) from the Oakland area (the DetermiNation project was created and developed by Markese Bryant of Fight for Light). The DetermiNation program is especially tailored to support young men who are struggling to advance in their own life goals (such as employment, career, educational or other personal goals) and who have been formerly involved in or are currently in close proximity to the “street life.” As part of the program, youth participants will develop their media production skills and produce projects like short films, music and graphic design to share their personal stories and/or present a vision of what is possible for young men of colour in our communities. The media production will be part of the Boys and Men of Colour media engagement strategy (a statewide initiative led by The California Endowment: <https://www.calendow.org/>). DetermiNation was developed by Markese Bryant (CEO of Flight for Light), and the lead facilitator is Adimu Madyun (393Films). The program entails a weekly support group for young Black males, with opportunities to do media production with youth groups throughout California. Participants will learn about Black culture and history and develop new skills and tools for achieving life goals. The program will also offer basic instruction in media production, and participants will be required to produce media projects as part of the training. Participants will receive a stipend for participation in weekly training sessions and have the opportunity for additional paid opportunities doing media production. For more information go to: <https://www.unitedrootsoakland.org/determination.html>.

<sup>21</sup> “Healing Centred Engagement is an asset-based and culturally-rooted approach to healing and well-being for young people of colour and their adult allies. The term was coined by Dr. Shawn Ginwright in 2018 and is based on more than 30 years of research and practice with young people, schools, probation departments and social workers.” (Source: <https://flourishagenda.com/healing-centered-engagement-certification/>) The healing centred engagement approach is a non-clinical and holistic process involving culture, spirituality, civic action and collective healing. It views trauma not simply as an individual isolated experience, but rather highlights the ways in which trauma and healing are experienced collectively.

<sup>22</sup> Flourish Agenda workshops offered extensive follow-up (including handouts and take-home activities). Some presentations were facilitated as a series. Although each workshop welcomed new attendees, the total may include duplicate participants who attended more than one session.

<sup>23</sup> Spearitwurx workshops offered extensive follow-up (including handouts and take-home activities). Some presentations were facilitated as a series. Although each workshop welcomed new attendees, the total may include duplicate participants who attended more than one session.





<sup>24</sup> “[Indigenous] Healing circles ... consist of people who sit together in a talking circle, in prayer, in ceremony and are committed to helping one another and to each other’s healing.” (Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4022550/>) BMA HHS Indigenous healing circle rituals would often include burning sage, palo santo or another traditional incense to clean the energy of the room before attendees arrive/during the opening ceremony, setting boundaries and intentions at the beginning of the session, taking a few moments to acknowledge the ancestors, the use of a talking piece such as a healing crystal or stone, breathing exercises with movement, engaging the participants in simple art projects to express their feelings, ice breaker games to cultivate joy, trust and collaboration, etc.

<sup>25</sup> The prison-industrial complex is a term that makes the connection between various prisons systems (such as juvenile detention centres, prisons, psychiatric hospitals, etc.) and the businesses/government that financially benefit from their growth and expansion.







## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Phyllis † SHU † Hubbard (a.k.a. The Body Whisperer) is the Founder and Chief Healing Officer of Radiant Health Strategies, a privately owned holistic health educational business. Having used holistic healing strategies to heal herself of an incurable illness (COPD - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), she develops and provides health prevention and intervention programs that helps individuals and organisations to transform their leadership potential from the inside out through cultural competency and healing.

She is a Kamitologist, Doctor of Natural † Indigenous Medicine, a Kamitic Yoga and Qigong Instructor, an Ayurvedic Practitioner, Reiki Master, Author, Video Editor and Sacred Geometry † Visual Healing Artist.

Dr. Hubbard specialises in Kamitic Culture Restoration, Root Cause Analysis, Healing Through Storytelling, Intuition Reconnection and Development, Restorative Strategies For White Allies, Naturopathy, Ayurveda, Kamitic Yoga, Qigong, Transformational Leadership From The Inside Out, Cultural Competency and Self-Empowerment. Dr. Hubbard believes that if we give our body what it needs, our body will heal itself.

Her work is dedicated to sharing knowledge to inspire people to heal † nourish † rise so that they can master their lives. She travels nationally and internationally as a Holistic Health Educator and to research indigenous holistic practices to integrate into her educational materials.

Dr. Hubbard has contributed to research, collaborated with and facilitated and/or customized workshops, seminars and retreats for organisations and educational institutions such as: The Obama Foundation, Forward Promise, Rafiki Coalition For Health & Wellness, The Centre For Creative Leadership, Summit Eden, The United Way, Johns Hopkins University, University of Michigan, University of Louisville, Rutgers University, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, American Express, The Carillon Resort and Spa, Breast Cancer Project, Oakland Unified School District,



California State University, Chico



Dr. Phyllis SHU Hubbard with Shu who is the Kamitian (Ancient Egyptian) God of Air † Breathologist † Sustenance of Life. This picture represents healing through connection to identity, ancestry and culture. The “†” symbol means “key of life” and is an integral part of the restorative healing strategies shared on [phyllishubbard.com](http://phyllishubbard.com).

California State University Chico, Own Your Power Radio, Dreamcatchers For The Soul Foundation, Sacramento City Unified School District, Prudential, The Moriah Group, The Breakers Palm Beach, Swarthmore College, The Overtown Youth Centre, Pritikin Longevity Centre, The Whole Expo, Dress for Success, African American Research Library and Cultural Centre, The National Association of Community and Restorative Justice, Restorative Justice For Oakland's Youth, The Matriarch Gathering, Association for Black Foundation Executives (ABFE), The Lt. Governor's Summit on Financial Education, Black Male Engagement (BMe), Free African Society School, Jewish Community Centre, etc.





## WITH GRATITUDE FOR THE TEAM OF TRUSTED PARTNERS



## AND THE PIONEERING VISIONARIES WHO LEAD THE WORK



Pictured left to right (top row): Stephen Powell of National CARES Mentoring Movement, Nedra and Shawn Ginwright of Flourish Agenda, Adimu Madyun (WolfHawkJaguar) of 393Films, Marcus Strother (MENTOR California/formerly of Sacramento City Unified School District). Pictured left to right (bottom row): Sizwe and Mizan Abakah of Spearitwurx, Reverend Dr. Alfonso Wyatt of Strategic Destiny, Dr. Phyllis SHU Hubbard of Radiant Health Strategies/ phyllishubbard.com, Chris Chatmon (Kingmakers of Oakland/formerly of Oakland Unified School District), Brit Irby and Bel Reyes of Innovation Bridge.