

**Black Issues Conference
February 6, 2021**

Presentation Proposal

Title: Embodying Healing and Joy through Relationships and Sexual Wellness

Presenter Information:

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Program Abstract:

With the ways in which Black bodies are policed and carry racial trauma, experiencing joy in a Black body is an act of resistance and liberation. This session will guide attendees in exploring ways to cultivate positive and affirming relationships with oneself and others to experience healing and joy. Foundational information about healthy relationships and sexual wellness will be shared to provide a framework for discussing barriers to experiencing joy and how to navigate these in a way that aligns with an individual's values. All identities are welcome.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Participants will be able to identify at least three values that guide their relationships
2. Participants will be able to define at least two personal behaviors that contribute to creating healthy relationships
3. Participants will be able to define at least two personal behaviors that contribute to their sexual wellness
4. Participants will be able to describe at least two strategies they will use to address barriers related to experiencing joy and appreciation for their bodies

Program Summary:

Black bodies are often weaponized, undervalued, oversexualized while simultaneously being deemed unattractive in the context of beauty standards rooted in White supremacy. This reality can create stress (and for many this stress would be characterized as trauma) which can manifest in physiological symptoms while also impacting mental health. In turn, it may be difficult to create relationships, connection, and a sense of self that are affirming and celebratory. This session is a foundational level inquiry into how this may specifically impact relationships and sexual wellness.

What it can mean to experience joy and healing and barriers to these experiences will be described. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on the way messaging, beliefs, and experiences have shaped their beliefs about themselves, who they are in relationships and key components to healthy sexuality. Values will be used to help frame and further define behaviors that promote healthy relationships and healthy sexuality. Recognizing that an individual cannot always maintain optimal mental and physical wellness, especially when faced with racial trauma and stress, participants will think through strategies that can reconnect them to an appreciation for their bodies and recenter behaviors and actions that promote healthy relationships and sexual wellness.

Relationship to Theme:

The theme of the 2021 Black Issues Conference is “Manifesting Hope, Health, and Healing.” Hope, health, and healing can be found through social connections. Individuals who have a community and loving relationships have a support system to turn to and experience positive health outcomes. So much of who we are, how we feel about ourselves, and our ability to cultivate positive relationships is rooted in how others see us. Unfortunately, the perceptions that others may have can be harmful and therefore, may impact the ability to form those social connections that are so vital to well-being. This session is a guided workshop aimed at helping participants move through barriers and find ways to experience healing and joy as it relates to healthy relationships and sexual wellness.

Program Outline:

- 1) Presenter introduction
 - a) Session overview
 - b) Establish ground rules for the session
 - c) Establish purpose of the session and justification for the topic
- 2) Lecture: Definitions
 - a) Describe the relationship between relationships and health outcomes
 - b) Define “sexual health” and “sexually healthy” after asking participants to share definitions in the chat box
 - c) Describe the relationship between sexual health and health outcomes
 - d) Define “joy” for the purpose of this session
- 3) Lecture: Brief explanation of the ways in which Black bodies are policed and experience trauma and how this may impact relationships and sexual wellness
- 4) Activity 1: Individual Reflection & Small Group Share
 - a) Ask participants to think about and write down the answers to the following:
 - i) What influenced your sense of self? What messages did you receive that shaped how you feel about yourself? Were they positive or negative?
 - ii) How have these messages shaped who you are in relationships?
 - iii) How have these messages shaped your perceptions or beliefs related to sexual wellness?
 - iv) How have these messages prevented you from experiencing joy?
 - b) Invite participants to share responses they are comfortable sharing in breakout rooms
- 5) Lecture: Describe the role values play in creating meaningful relationships and a personal definition of sexual wellness
- 6) Activity 2: Identify Values
 - a) Ask participants to identify three values they want to guide their relationships and sexual wellness
- 7) Lecture: List and describe strategies and characteristics for healthy relationships and sexual wellness
- 8) Activity 3: Personal Strategies & Small Group Share
 - a) Ask participants to write down at least two strategies for improving their relationships and at least two strategies for improving their sexual wellness that honor their values
 - b) Invite participants to share in breakout rooms if they feel comfortable sharing
- 9) Activity 4: Addressing Barriers

- a) Ask participants to write down at least two strategies for addressing barriers to experiencing joy
- 10) Activity 5: Large Group Share
 - a) Ask participants to share their strategies for improving their relationships and/or sexual wellness and how they'll address barriers
- 11) Lecture: Review strategies for improving relationships, improving sexual wellness, and addressing barriers
- 12) Conclusion
 - a) List and describe relevant resources for more information
 - b) Q&A

Presenter Bio:

Bilqis Amatus-Salaam is the Wellness Coordinator for Interpersonal Wellness and Sexual Health at the Center for Health Education & Wellness (CHEW). She earned her Master's in Public Health in 2015 and joined CHEW the same year. In her role, she educates students about bystander intervention, consent, healthy relationships, sexual health, and sexual violence prevention. She is passionate about sexual health and human sexuality and firmly believes in the power of cultivating healthy relationships with oneself and within communities.