

Grief, Loss, Grace & Nurturing: An African-American Perspective

Gloria T. Anderson, PhD, LMSW
University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Department of Social Work

Abstract

This poster presentation explores multiple layers of loss and grief in the African American culture from a historical perspective. Some of the cultural traditions of mourning, bereavement, and spiritual practices that influence many African Americans in the United States are also reflected. The theoretical framework consists of the Interpersonal and Intrapersonal dimensions of the Self that often connects the collective cultural stories to the individual stories experienced in loss and grief situations. The *Interpersonal* Self consists of the “outer world in connection to others” that constitutes family, friends, ancestry and significant others in one’s life. The *Intrapersonal* Self consists of the “inner world in connection to one’s own self and constitutes the heart, soul, mind, body, and spirit. Dr. Anderson’s own G.R.A.C.E. model of Personal Healing Action Steps provides a helpful modality to respond to loss and grief, regardless of one’s culture or background.

What is Culture?

Part 1: Our *Collective* Stories of Loss and Grief
Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective
Culture refers to the “specific ways of living and being in a particular group or people”

What is Grief?

Part 1: Our *Collective* Stories of Loss and Grief
Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective
Grief is the response to loss.
When you lose someone or something that matters to you, you most likely will experience grief.

Connecting the Importance of Stories

Connecting the Importance of Stories
Dimensions of Self
GRIEF, LOSS & G.R.A.C.E.
An African American Perspective
Dr. Gloria Anderson

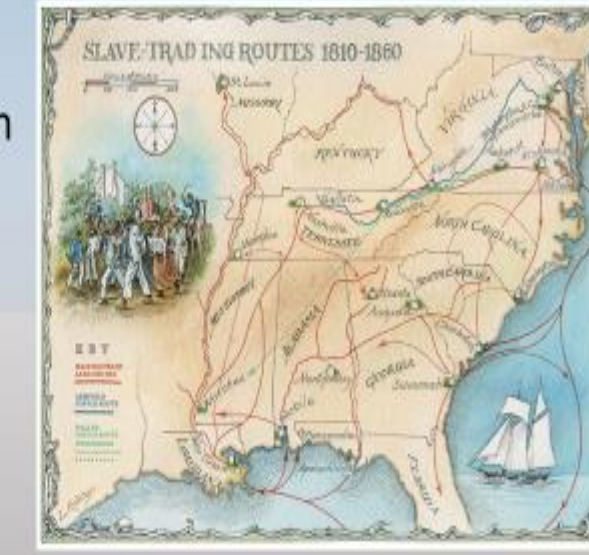


The Collective Grief Story of Slavery

Part 1: Our *Collective* Stories of Loss and Grief

Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective

Historical Layers of African-American Loss and Grief began with Slavery.

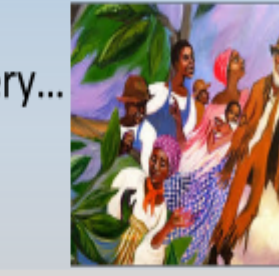


Part 1: Our *Collective* Stories of Loss and Grief

Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective

Three (3) notable areas of historical loss since slavery...

1. Loss of Heritage & Identity
2. Loss of Family (and connection to loved ones)
3. Loss of Human Rights & Dignity

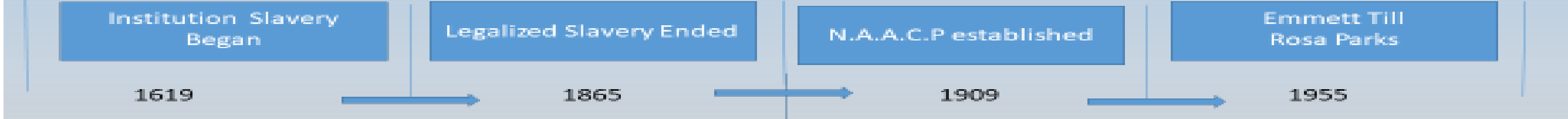


A Brief Timeline of a Collective Grief Past to Present

Part 1: Our *Collective* Stories of Loss and Grief

Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective

A Brief Timeline Reflecting Some Historical Events in Our Collective Past



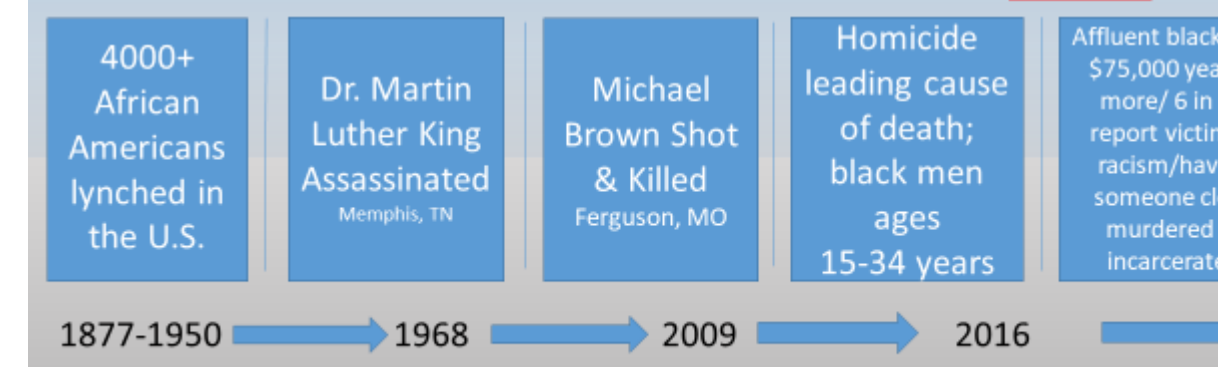
Two (2) Major Outcomes from the Historical Past that Contribute to the Collective Stories of African American Grief Today

1. Individual, institutional and cultural **racism**
2. **Disparities** in health and standards of living

Part 1: Our *Collective* Stories of Loss and Grief

Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective

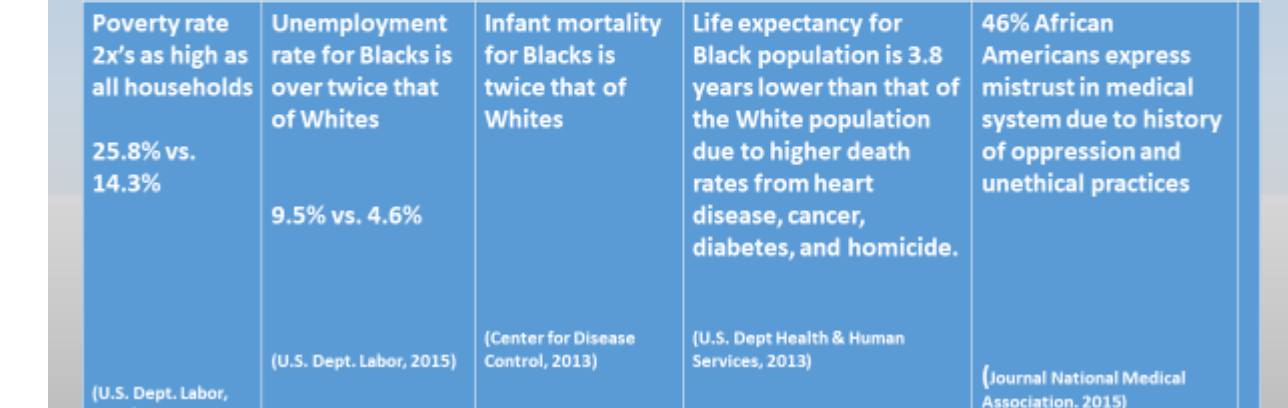
1. Individual, institutional and cultural **racism**



Part 1: Our *Collective* Stories of Loss and Grief

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2. **Disparities** in health and standards of living.



Our Individual Stories: The Transcendence of Grace

Part 2: Our *Individual* Stories

The Transcendence of Grace into our Intrapersonal World
Intrapersonal Self = inner world (heart, mind, body, soul, spirit)



“Grace” from Greek word “Charis”
that means...
‘graciousness, favor, gift, benefit’.

The Transcendence of Grace into our Intrapersonal World
Intrapersonal Self = inner world (heart, mind, body, soul, spirit)

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace,
that we may obtain mercy and find grace

to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

The Healing Steps of G.R.A.C.E. Model

Part 2: Our *Individual* Stories

GRIEF, LOSS & G.R.A.C.E.
An African American Perspective
Dr. Gloria Anderson

Grow through the past and present **gain**.
Reach out to others for **support** through the **grieving** process.
Allow grief to be what it is for you
Choose to live in the present, move **forward** from the **past**.
Embrace who you are **now** and who you are **becoming**

The Cultural Connection to Religion & Spirituality

Part 1: Our *Collective* Stories of Loss and Grief

Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective

The Cultural Connection to Religion & Spirituality:

African American Traditions of Mourning & Bereavement



Part 1: Our *Collective* Stories of Loss and Grief

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Death is believed to be a transition to **eternal** life in heaven or in hell.

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Funerals are known as “home goings” & “celebrations of life”

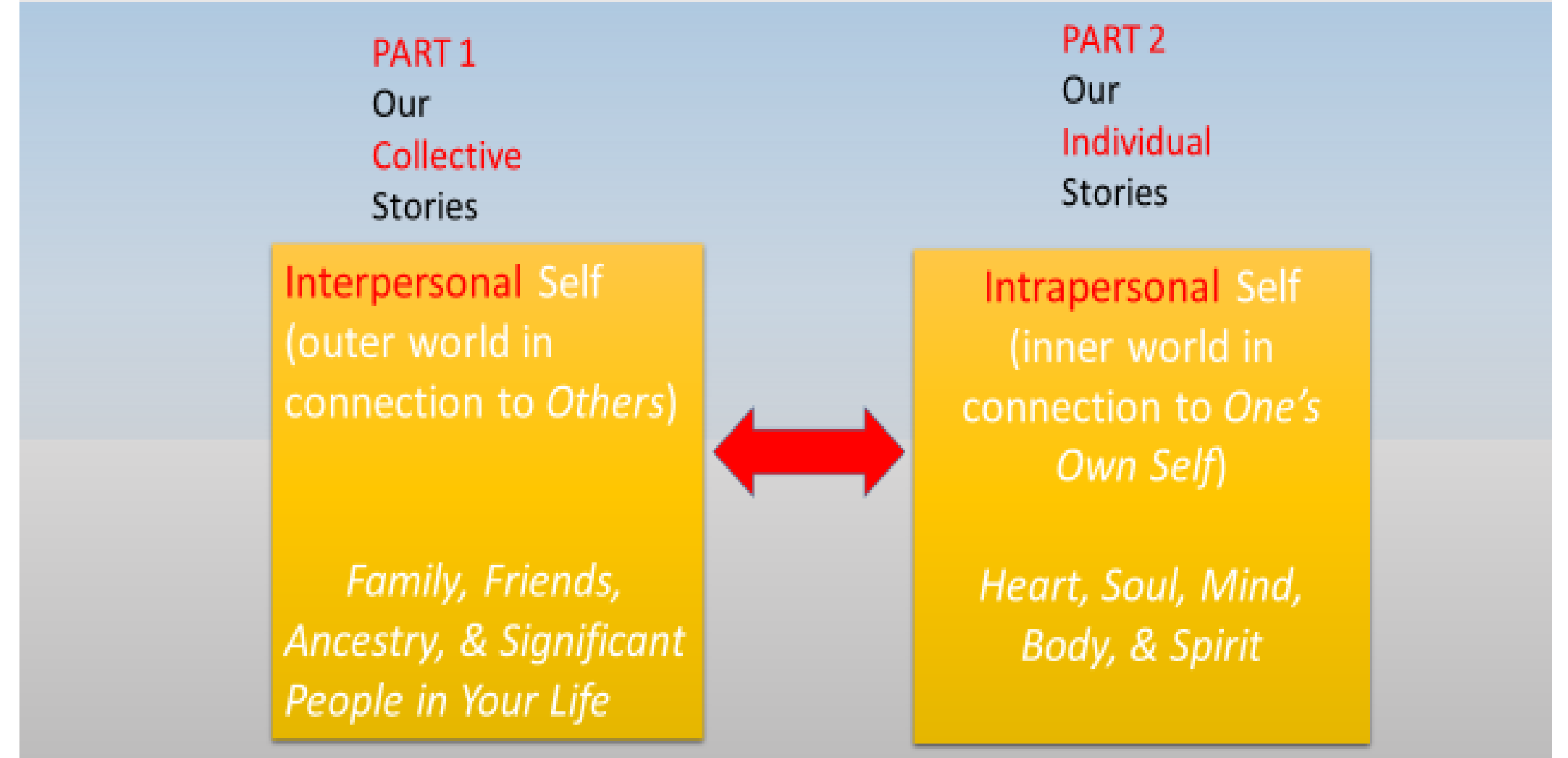
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Dancing, singing, and the African style of “**call and response**” are often reflected in African American funeral services.

Connecting our Collective & Individual Grief Stories

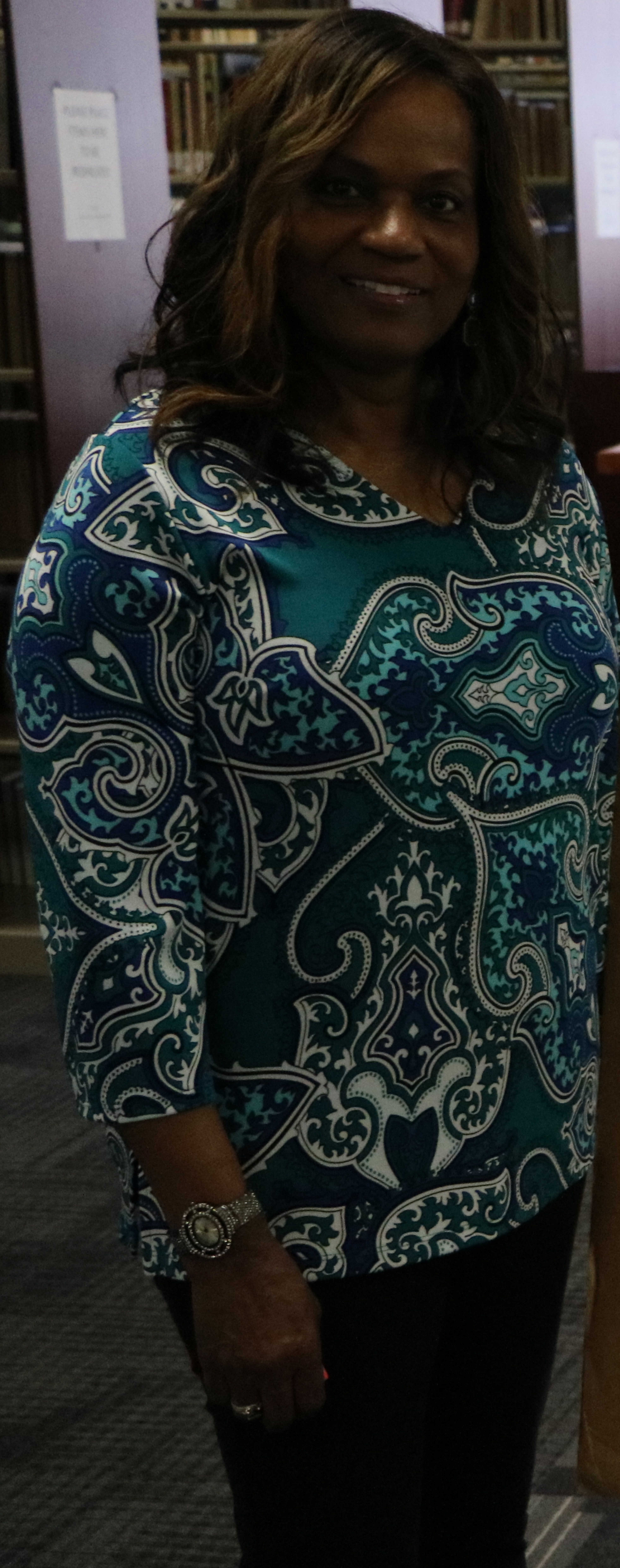


Contact

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References

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2. Gillies, J. & Neimeyer, R.A. (2005). Loss, grief, and the search for significance: Toward a model of meaning reconstruction in bereavement. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*. Vol 19 Issue 1, pp 31-65.
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5. Stevenson, B. (2016). Equal Justice Initiative. Retrieved September 5 2016 from www.eji.org.
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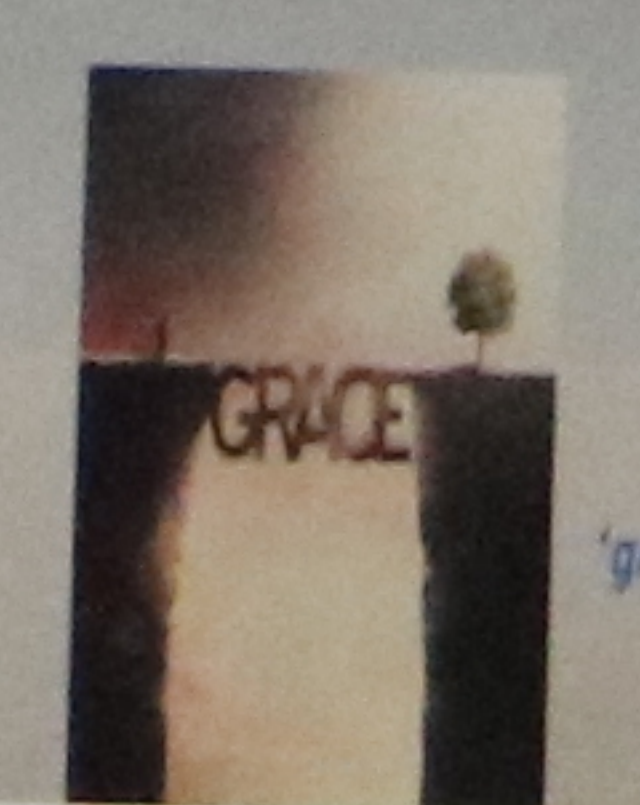
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Our Individual Stories: The Transcendence of Grace

Part 2: Our Individual Stories

The Transcendence of Grace into our Intrapersonal World

Grace from Greek word "Charis" that means... "graciousness, favor, gift, benefit"



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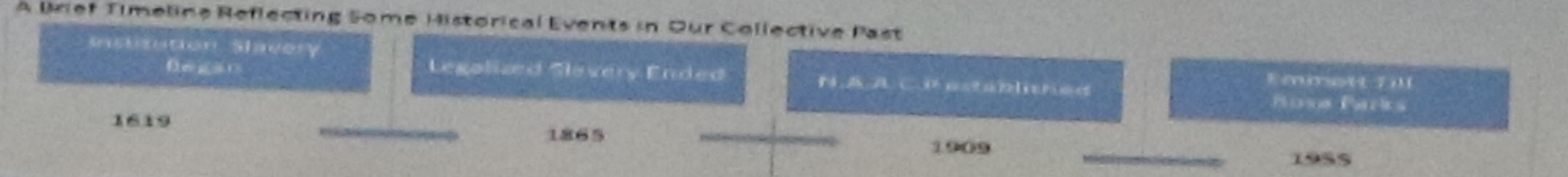
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A Brief Timeline of a Collective Grief Past to Present

Part 1: Our Collective Stories of Loss and Grief

Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective

A Brief Timeline Reflecting Some Historical Events in Our Collective Past



Two (2) Major Outcomes from the Historical Past that Contribute to the Collective Stories of African American Grief Today

1. **Individual, institutional and cultural racism**
2. **Disparities** in health and standards of living

Part 2: Our Individual Stories

Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective

1. **Individual, institutional and cultural racism**

Part 3: Our Collective Stories of Loss and Grief

Grace Embedded in Our Interpersonal World—A Shared Historical Perspective

2. **Disparities** in health and standards of living

The Healing Steps of G.R.A.C.E. Model

Part 2: Our Individual Stories

GRIEF, LOSS & G.R.A.C.E. An African American Perspective Dr. Gloria Anderson

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What is Grief?

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Grief is the **response** to loss.

When you lose someone or something that matters to you, you most likely will experience grief.

Connecting the Importance of Stories

Connecting the Importance of Stories

Dimensions of Self

GRIEF, LOSS & G.R.A.C.E. An African American Perspective Dr. Gloria Anderson

PART 1 Our Collective Stories

Interpersonal Self (Outer World in Connection to Others)
Family, Friends, Ancestry, & Significant People in Your Life

1. Explore multiple layers of loss and grief in the African American culture from a historical perspective.
2. Discuss some cultural traditions of mourning, bereavement, and spiritual practices that influence many African Americans in the U.S.

PART 2 Our Individual Stories

Intrapersonal Self (Inner World in Connection to One's Own Self)
Heart, Soul, Mind, Body, & Spirit

3. Present the G.R.A.C.E. Personal Healing Action Steps model as a helpful tool for those who may be experiencing loss and grief in their lives


The Cultural Connection to Religion & Spirituality

Part 1: Our Collective Stories of Loss and Grief

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The Cultural Connection to Religion & Spirituality:

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Connecting our Collective & Individual Grief Stories

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PART 2 Our Individual Stories

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