Medical science and the Black body

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE
- Surgeons preserved “human cargo” for maximum profit

SLAVE TRADE
- Physicians inspected bodies of enslaved
- Key professional competency = determining market value of Black bodies
- Bodies as teaching materials
- Black women as bearers of capital of enslavers

ROOTS OF GYNECOLOGY
- Pioneering surgical techniques developed on bodies of enslaved women who were experimented on
- Physicians blamed enslaved mothers and midwives for infant mortality
- Forced sterilization

TODAY
- Pregnancy-related mortality 2-4x higher among Black women
- Black mothers’ self-reports of pain overlooked and minimized
- Black women “make themselves” prone to illness

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Bodies marked as different because of race

The Paradox Begins: Justifying a system of inhumane forced labor
White weakness as strength/purported “stamina and invulnerability” of workers of African Descent as evidence of inferiority

1826
“by the very nature of his constitution.”

1850s
Justifying denial of rest, shade, fluids, health care – “Less sensitivity to pain.”

1911
Race “differences” fuel the “yellow peril”

1900s
Immigration restrictions = focus on “Mexicans”

POST-WWI
End of WWI in 1918 moves focus to labor

2016
Racial bias persists

2008
People of color still in “hottest” jobs

1932-1972
Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male

1933
Beginning of the end of superficial racial science

1930s
Great Depression: High rate of unemployment tips the script

1925
“Mexicans endure heat well.”

2008
1932-1972

2016
1826
1850s
1911
1900s
Post-WWI

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Historical trauma
- A set of events perpetrated on a group of people who share a specific group identity with genocidal or ethnocidal intent
- Often result in annihilation or disruption of traditional ways of life, culture, and/or identity
- Contributes to sustained cultural disruption and community destruction
Women in the US: A history of subjugation and abuse

PROPERTY ERA

- Deplorable working conditions
- Limited employment options
- Viewed as property
- Denied education
- "Civilly dead" if married

ROLE OF WOMEN
- Women's rights regarding legal property were limited.
- A woman might have had feels in her dowry; however, when she married, her husband gained control over her dowry. In most cases a woman regained control of the property in her dowry if her husband died.
- Women mainly performed household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, weaving, spinning, and sewing.
- Occasionally they also hunted for food and fought in battles, learning to use weapons to defend their homes and castles.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ERA

- Limited roles – housework & caretaker
- Women’s rights movement = white & cisgender
- Lack of access to leadership positions
- Invisibility
- Limited or no reproductive rights

CURRENT DAY

- Attacks on reproductive health
- Murder (common among trans women)
- Lower pay
- Widespread gender-based violence & sexual assault
- Hate crimes
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender & queer: Cultural genocide

- Ban on sexual minority immigrants
- Classification as mentally ill
- Punitive castration
- Military discrimination
- Harassment
- Anti-sodomy laws
- The “Lavender Scare”
- Isolation
- Imprisonment

- “Deserving of AIDS” at beginning of epidemic
- Broad discrimination
- Anti-LGBTQ protests at LGBTQ funerals
- Considered erosive to family & American values
- Police violence
- Accused of inherent pedophilia

- Erasure from census & research
- Workplace/employment discrimination
- Hate crimes
- High rates of suicide
- Loneliness
- Community-level HIV trauma
- Conversion therapy
- Addiction

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PRE-STONEWALL ERA

STONEWALL ERA

CURRENT DAY
African Americans: Ethnic & cultural genocide

SLAVERY ERA
- Stolen from lands
- Enslaved (1619-1865)
- Systematic abuse
- Forced breeding
- Prohibition of native language, customs & traditions
- Sold as property
- Shackled, stored & shipped in inhumane conditions

JIM CROW ERA: SEPARATE BUT EQUAL
- Abolition of slavery replaced with restrictive Black codes
- Convict leasing system
- Mass public lynching (late 1880s-1920s)
- Police violence
- Denial of VA & other benefits
- Redlining
- Sharecropping

CURRENT DAY
- Mass incarceration
- Negative stereotypes & microaggressions
- Health disparities
- Police violence
- Highest homicide rates

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American Indian & Alaska Native: Ethnic & cultural genocide

- Tradition of extermination
- Pandemics from introduction of new disease
- Community massacres
- Genocidal policies
- Stolen land
- Prohibition of spiritual & cultural practices
- Forced relocation & marches
- Colonization
- Broken treaties

- Poor health
- Negative stereotypes & microaggressions
- Forced removal of children (1879-1935+)
- Mandatory imprisonment of parents who refused
- Rampant sexual & physical abuse of children
- “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” policy

Lack of concern about “missing” women
Destruction of natural resources on native lands
Suicide epidemic
Underfunding of Indian health services
Child abuse & neglect
Highest rates of violence & victimization
Interpersonal violence
Police violence

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Latina/Latino/Latinx & Ethnic & cultural violence

- 1848: Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo forces Mexicans out of “Texas”
- Colonization
- Slavery
- Colonization
- Lynchings
- Texas Rangers “Los Rinches”
- Fighting for independence
- Revolutions, revolts & rebellions
- Immigration Act of 1917: “Literacy” requirement
- 1921: Limits to US immigration imposed for 1st time
- 1925: Border control created by Congress
- 1932: US begins to deport Mexicans (300k-500k in 1930s)
- 1940s: Mexican American vets struggle to receive benefits
- 1950s: Operation Wetback – locate & deport
- 1962: Travel to & from Cuba prohibited
- 1917: Mexican immigrants obligated to register for draft
- 1921: Limits to US immigration imposed for 1st time
- 1925: Border control created by Congress
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- 1940s: Mexican American vets struggle to receive benefits
- 1950s: Operation Wetback – locate & deport
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- 1917: Mexican immigrants obligated to register for draft

- Widespread anti-immigrant sentiment – rise of minutemen
- Detaining children – separation from parents
- Deportation of documented & undocumented
- Health disparities
- Ongoing English only campaigns
- Violence
- Hate crimes
- Health disparities
- Ongoing English only campaigns
- Violence
- Hate crimes

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Asian/Pacific Islander: Ethnic & cultural genocide

Deplorable working conditions
Denied citizenship – “US nationals”
Women fetishized, men emasculated
Imported as laborers
Yellow Peril

Denied right to own property
Predatory taxes
Family not allowed
Banned from schools

Normative anti-immigration laws
Redlining & restricted to impoverished areas “China towns”
Territories denied representation & citizenship
Labor movement met w/ violence
Japanese internment camps

Denial of VA benefits

Lack of disaggregated data = silencing
Filipinos in underpaid/long hour service industry jobs
Underrepresentation
Gentrification
Denial of ethnic studies programs at universities
Invisibility
Stereotypes

Laborers not citizens
National Threat
Current Day

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The impact of historical trauma

Trauma of these events is “embodied” or held personally and passed down over generations (Walters et al, 2011)

*May Impair Ability to cope effectively with stressors*

When high levels of stress are experienced in day-to-day life, a heightened stress vulnerability may result in PTSD or other related symptoms of trauma (Kellerman, 2001)

Stressful environmental conditions can leave an imprint or “mark” on epigenome (cellular material) (Serpeloni et al, 2017; Ryan et al, 2017)

Psychological and nutritional stress during pregnancy can lead to biological changes predisposing children to negative health outcomes

Biological and psychological expressions of historical trauma are likely contributors to current health disparities

Impacts the individual, the family, and the community

Thank you