

BUILDING A CULTURE OF HEALTH IN NEW ORLEANS: A MULTI-SECTORIAL TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

"We envision a city with an education system, healthcare system and a criminal justice system that all adopt a trauma-informed approach to carrying out their missions."

Following Hurricane Katrina there has been a lack of investment in mental health in New Orleans. To address this gap, in 2016 a team made up of Jarvis DeBerry, Lisa Richardson and Iman Shervington applied to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Culture of Health Leaders program. The Team was selected to participate in RWJF's inaugural cohort, and since 2016 they have participated in online coursework and in-person networking and trainings to develop leadership skills through RWJF's Culture of Health Leaders framework and commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. In their third and final year, the Team was tasked with developing a "strategic initiative" to build a Culture of Health in New Orleans. Building upon their experience in public health, media/communications and journalism, the Team is relaunching the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies' renowned In That Number campaign to advocate for an increase in trauma-informed services in New Orleans across key sectors.

THE TEAM



Jarvis DeBerry worked for The Times-Picayune newspaper in New Orleans from 1997 to 2019, first as a reporter and later as an editorial writer and columnist. He was part of the team of journalists that was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for its coverage of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. DeBerry is a five-time winner for column writing in the annual contest sponsored by the Louisiana/Mississippi Associated Press Managing Editors Association. In 2016 and 2018 he won the National Association of Black Journalists' Salute to Excellence Award in commentary. He and his wife have one daughter.



Lisa Richardson is the Chief Impact Officer at the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies. Prior to this position she served as a National Director for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, a Visiting Professor at Florida State University, an Assistant Professor at California State University Northridge, and an evaluator for multiple organizations including Emory University and the Carter Presidential Center. She received her Ph.D. in 2002 at the University of New Orleans as a Board of Regents Fellow, and her Master of Science in 1996 from Georgia State University.



Iman Shervington is the Director of Media & Communications at the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies (IWES). She holds a BA from the University of Southern California and an MFA from Columbia University in film. As a writer, director and editor, she has created over 50 short films and PSAs, a web-series, and three feature films for IWES, and implemented multiple teen pregnancy and HIV prevention programs. She oversees IWES' social media and communications and has further experience in social marketing, graphic design, photography, and focus group facilitation.



WHY IT MATTERS

A 2018 situational analysis IWES conducted with 75 local mental health providers found: (1) a lack of facilities and services for children and adolescents, (2) the absence of a mental hospital, and (3) a severe shortage of psychiatrists. Additionally, providers who provide services to youth described a lack of: services for youth; services for developmental disabilities; and a mental hospital, or any facility, that provides long-term intensive mental health services in the Greater New Orleans area. With this backdrop, the need for more trauma-informed practices, policies and resources is critical to the health of the City and its most vulnerable residents, specifically children and adolescents.

From the floor of the United States Congress to New Orleans' City Hall there is growing national and local conversation about childhood trauma and its devastating impacts on survivors over the life course. Childhood trauma can result from life threatening experiences like homelessness, natural disasters, and persistent exposure to chronic poverty, discrimination, and violence. Traumatic experiences can profoundly impact children and affect their developing brains, sleep patterns and memory. Children with untreated trauma, may display behaviors in the classroom or community that meet with harsh discipline rather than compassion.

WE WANT TO END THIS TRAJECTORY.

WHAT WE'RE DOING

Through collaborations within the juvenile justice, education and health care sectors, the Team is working with organizations, activists, elected officials and concerned citizens who are committed to making New Orleans a trauma-informed city and a more healing environment, especially for children.

In 2012 IWES staff witnessed a high level of concerning behavior in the classroom and decided to design and implement an Emotional Wellness Survey to assess students' mental health. The alarmingly high rates of poor mental health prompted IWES to develop and launch the *In That Number* campaign in 2016 with the hashtag *#SadNotBad* to encourage adults to be aware of signs and symptoms of early childhood trauma. Visible on billboards and buses throughout the city, through first person narratives, evocative imagery, and a savvy social media strategy the public will campaign promoted an increase in quality trauma-informed care services for youth in New Orleans and championed efforts to circumvent the school-to-prison pipeline and excessive school suspensions, with a focus on restorative justice.

Throughout the years the campaign has remained active through: in person and virtual events; an active social media presence; more than 35 mentions in online, print and broadcast journalism; and the release of new narratives, statistics and imagery. As the Team began developing their initiative they decided that the New Orleans community was sufficiently "primed" on the issue of trauma and it was time to transition the public will campaign into a more active social marketing campaign.

To kick off the initiative, in December 2018 the Team hosted a community-wide charrette to ask local residents which areas of the city need to be more trauma-informed. Findings from the event were reviewed along with the results of an assessment IWES conducted on the quantity and quality of local behavioral health services to figure out the campaign's next steps. With partnerships in the Criminal Justice (The Welcoming Project) and Education (Black Education for New Orleans) sectors, the Team is relaunching *In That Number* in the Fall of 2019 with Calls-to-Action (CTAs) taken directly from formative research with nearly 50 members and constituents of the organizations. This work coincides with IWES' participation in the Childhood Trauma taskforce that was created in the Summer of 2018 following two historic City Council resolutions to make New Orleans a more trauma-informed city.

The new Calls-To-Action will be illustrated through new narratives and billboards featuring everyday heroes from the Education and Criminal Justice sectors that will discuss the importance of addressing trauma in their lives and their work. Short videos and promotional materials will be made to complement campaign messaging, and it will once again feature a strong online presence to share information and resources and engage with people around the topic of trauma. Finally, the Team is compiling an anthology of "experts" on trauma from a variety of backgrounds and lived experiences, which will be available in early 2020.

To make this a reality we need support and participation from the entire NOLA community and beyond. If you're interested in partnering with us, please email InThatNumber@iwesnola.org or call (504) 599-7712. If you'd like to support a community-led call to action or find out more about trauma and its impact, we invite you to engage with *In That Number* on Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram.