

Courtyard Conversations S2E4 – Aundraea Brown Transcript

00:00:09:06 - 00:00:30:20

Jaelon:

Welcome to Courtyard Conversations, I'm your host, Jaelon Jackson. And in today's episode, we're joined by Aundraea Brown, a licensed master social worker in Texas and a passionate advocate for mental health access with a background in social work and as a clinical director of counseling and preventative services at Uplift Education. Aundraea leads a team providing crucial mental health services in Dallas schools.

00:00:31:01 - 00:00:38:14

Jaelon:

Not only that, but she's also one of our PhD students here at the University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work. How are you today?

00:00:38:16 - 00:00:45:09

Aundraea:

I'm well. Thanks for having me. That's the first time I've been introduced like that. Thank you. That really good?

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Jaelon:

Is no problem. You deserve it. Thank you. Given that about half of UTA's master's social work students complete the program online and our MSW program is consistently ranked number one among the best in rankings, how did the MSW program here prepare you for the PhD program?

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Aundraea:

It was phenomenal. I actually was one of the first cohorts to be a part of the Fort Worth campus. It was very intimate. So it was a smaller cohort of us, maybe about 15 to 18 students and the instructors I had. Incredible. And then also what was really integral, I believe, to my development as a social worker was the internship process.

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Aundraea:

So I interned at a behavioral health mental health hospital, and that fully prepared me to be effective and efficient going in to mental health in the schools after I completed my MSW program. But I got a lot of support. I enjoyed UTA. It's no wonder I'm back as a doc student, so I tell everyone this program shines and it's because of instructors and the high quality education that I receive that I'm where I am today.

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Aundraea:

So definitely a huge shout out.

00:02:07:05 - 00:02:20:19

Jaelon:

That makes sense. But I saw you didn't you didn't do your undergrad at a UTA?

Aundraea:

I didn't.

Jaelon:

What brought you to UTA for the MSW and for you to even still be here?

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Aundraea:

I did. I looked at other programs within the state and I just gravitated towards UTA. I came, I visited the campus then. I like that intimate setting with the folks at the Fort Worth cohort. So that just kind of led me to come here. I graduated with my BSW from UNT, but UTA was incredible.

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Jaelon:

Yes, ma'am. So what, what can you tell us a little bit about your research and what led you into it?

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Aundraea:

I have been in a social worker for about ten years. My most of my social work experience is in school based mental health. So school, social work and is two-fold. So growing up, I am dark skinned. I have a big nose. I have an afro. I struggled a lot just with my self-esteem, my own mental health growing up. I didn't exactly have the words to identify what I was navigating until I got plugged into a small group at my school.

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Aundraea:

So I didn't know this, but they were passing around surveys and we were supposed to identify different things that we were struggling with. I thought it was going to be anonymous, but thankfully it wasn't because that got me plugged into a support group at school where I was able to connect with other students like who were experiencing some of the same issues that I was.

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Aundraea:

And that's what led me to actually become a social worker, because the social worker that connected with us, he was phenomenal. I didn't realize that I was learning skills to like,

understand my emotions, my feelings, and to develop a better self-esteem. But I was in a fun way and this was something my parents are great. They're phenomenal.

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Aundraea:

But we didn't talk about, like, our emotions, our feelings. So I didn't have the vocabulary or just understanding to talk about that with anyone. So that just opened the door to, okay, I'm going to do this when I get older to help people who are like me. So as I began in the school setting, I started working with some phenomenal families actually in the Stop Six poly area of Fort Worth, which is a beautiful area.

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Aundraea:

I love the community. Some of the nicest people I've ever met. I'm originally from the Dallas area, so sometimes it can be a little rivalry between Dallas and Fort Worth, but I'm sorry, Fort Worth is amazing. Anyways, these kiddos and families that I was connecting with were going through a lot of significant struggles and some of the kiddos that I met with were apprehensive to engage in counseling.

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Aundraea:

But I started going to their basketball games. I started going to their soccer games. I'm saying hey to them in the hallway trying to like break through that barrier of kiddos being okay with talking to a counselor and even talking to families. They were a little hesitant, but they were like, Oh, my kiddos talk about you, they like you.

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Aundraea:

So I was able to connect with them, but I understood that there were just some stigmas and barriers to kiddos and families still even, you know, 20 years later when I was that little girl struggling with her mental health. Like these kiddos are struggling with their mental health. So, okay, it's been this gap. I have so many questions like why is the stigma still here?

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Aundraea:

Why is it challenging for communities that are predominantly black and brown? Why is it just this access gap? Why are there not services that I can connect them to? So I had all these questions and I'm doing my own little research. You know, it's not official research, but I'm trying to get access to articles and looking and had all these wonderings.

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Aundraea:

So I said, I'm going to apply to the DOC program. And that's what led me back to UTA and I have just enjoyed the journey, coming back and exploring like some of these barriers and gaps and

answering the questions I have and that hopefully illuminating voices and then being able to support initiatives that can benefit and close those gaps.

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Jaelon:

That's pretty cool. You got introduced to social work on accident.

Aundraea:

Right!

00:06:53:05 - 00:06:54:21

Aundraea:

Right.

00:06:54:23 - 00:07:26:07

Jaelon:

Most people have like like they they they're introduced by like a any an event like like whatever they go through as as as a kid like with parents and things like that and that's how people are like CPS and social work is CPS. But, you know, it's so much broader than that. And as you learn more, it's just crazy to see how how much social work actually is rather than just CPS.

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Aundraea:

That's so true. That's so true. Because when I started at the school, some of the parents were, Oh, you're a social worker. I sometimes I was nervous to say I was a social worker. I was like, No, I'm a social worker. I'm going to change the narrative. We are here to help. So, yeah, you're exactly right. A lot of people receive services that are mandated through -

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Aundraea:

maybe they've gotten into trouble in their life, into the social I mean, the justice system is mandated to give services. So you're right.

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Jaelon:

So one question I have is, from your perspective, what is the current state of mental health and wellness access, particularly for people of color?

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Aundraea:

I'm going to respond specifically about black people. That's what I'm currently researching now. And in the literature in now. And what we're finding is, like all races, ethnicities are navigating mental health concerns. That is true across the board. What we're finding, what we know is that there are certain historical aspects or certain historical traumas that impact black people.

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Aundraea:

Because when you think about historical trauma, it's the pain that people who look like you have experienced maybe generations before you.] So thinking about some of the hardships that black people went through, whether, you know, there's enslavement, the civil rights era, social justice, Jim Crow, even seeing, you know, just in the media unarmed black men being killed by police officers or authority figures or different things like that, that impacts the well-being and the mental health of a community of people.

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Aundraea:

Just seeing that and going through that hurt and that pain. And there's research that's coming out that's showing that that historical trauma can live within generations. Right. Six generations. So think about, you know, our great great, great grandparents or goodness. Yeah, that's who they were enslaved or, you know, maybe they couldn't use a certain restroom. So that like, lives inside of us also, along with our excellence, our resilience that's there.

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Aundraea:

But we can't negate the fact that there's pain and intergenerational trauma that exists. So that's compounded just with the complexities of just day to day life of being a person. Like, it's true, you know, you're going to experience stress, you're going to experience challenges. So right now I think all of that is compounded and then post-pandemic, if we're post-pandemic, is hard to know.

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Aundraea:

Post-Pandemic like we went through a pandemic, with COVID, that's challenging. We saw an uptick in mental health concerns. And then while we were having that medical pandemic, there was also the Black Lives Matter movement that was that was, you know, starting. And we were seeing visuals of now you. Yeah, the George Floyd even before that Philando Castile like on and on and on we're seeing those images and it just definitely impacts your well-being.

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Aundraea:

So I would say the state right now is, is compounded with a lot of other different things that black people are just navigating. And then not necessarily being able to seek help or not knowing how to seek help. We're finding they're just barriers or disparities that exist.

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Jaelon:

Now, I've actually read that, you know, most people would there there's actually like, oh, I remember, you know, growing up growing up as a as African-American is like a lot a lot of the

older generation doesn't believe in the in the whole mental health thing. So it's like as as times are changing, it's like you're seeing the shift of, okay, mental health is important, right.

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Jaelon:

You know, what are your thoughts on on that on how the the the the shift of mindsets about mental health in the black community?

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Aundraea:

Yes, I definitely think it's shifting. I can understand why maybe our parents or even some people are still struggling with the stigma there because like we just heard a lot of themes in our life of like we have to work twice as hard. We have to, like this resilience and grit in sometimes mental health concerns can be seen as a weakness, or maybe it's just not brought up in conversation a lot.

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Aundraea:

And so someone might think they're struggling by themselves and like, this is a normal thing that a lot of people are going through and there's help. It is definitely a shift. I think social media has contributed a lot to just the awareness. Even the advertisements that we see, it's everywhere. Celebrities are talking about mental health and wellness and wellbeing and they're just safe spaces that have sparked everywhere, whether it's Facebook or Instagram or places where we can connect and learn more about wellbeing and wellness spaces and how to access care.

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Aundraea:

So I definitely see the tide turning, which is good news.

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Jaelon:

And that's great. Are there any specific statistics that stand out to you, when highlighting the disparities in mental health outcomes?

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Aundraea:

Yes. So there was a study and it found that about 25%, I would say about 25%, approximately, black people were reaching out for mental health services and support. And if we see that across races, mental health concerns are pretty much the same, right? Everyone is experiencing mental health concerns. But 25% are reaching out when compared to white people it's about 40%.

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Aundraea:

So you see the gap like 25% are seeking or receiving services and then compare it to white people, 40% are seeking and receive services, just trying to understand why that disparity is there. Something else that we're noticing. So I'm primarily I work with primarily school age kiddos, but we're noticing that kiddos under 12 now are experiencing more suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviors, which that is more thoughts about not wanting to live or even maybe acting on attempting on those thoughts or even die by suicide.

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Aundraea:

So never have we seen this group of students like 12 and under experiencing more deaths by suicide than their peers. So that's research that's just emerging and just want to understand why. And what they're noticing is that there's no there was no outcry of I'm having these thoughts, I'm having these struggles. It was just unfortunately, they died by suicide.

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Aundraea:

So there was no time to sort of like mitigate I'm sure there were signs there just maybe were missed, unfortunately. So that's emerging. We're seeing that now.

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Jaelon:

And what do you think? You know, set that set that turn to to where it started affecting younger people more?

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Aundraea:

Yeah, that's a great question. I, I'm wondering because in some research that we were doing with the younger kiddos, since we're knowing that this is emerging, I work with a phenomenal mentor here at UTA. Her name is Dr. Harrell. She's fabulous. The epitome of sponsorship and mentorship, something that I would wish upon any doc student. But her research directly aligns with some of my research.

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Aundraea:

Like areas like this is great. We get to work together, but what we notice is that kiddos are experiencing like bullying and peer victimization, which is just like some pain from peer to peer. So whether it's teasing or some violence or aggression there and they what's showing up in black students may be some aggression or maybe someone's driving behaviors.

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Aundraea:

If a student is withdrawing. Oh, okay. You know, maybe there's other high needs things I need to work on. Maybe I just miss it. I don't notice that they're not as talkative or engaging or

interactive. And then if a student is navigating some stressors like bullying, etc., and they are more aggressive, maybe it's okay. Well, maybe there's some.

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Aundraea:

We need to take the discipline route. We need to maybe suspend or like we're going to get on to them because their behaviors are more aggressive or explosive when really these may just be outcries of I'm struggling internally. I need some help. I don't know how to say it because I'm younger. Like I don't have sometimes the communication skills to say that I'm I'm just I'm not well.

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Aundraea:

You know? So I think maybe that's why we're seeing that. And if we can get educators or mental health professionals or parents in the schools to recognize these risk factors, then early on we can intervene. And so I think maybe they just don't know how to communicate and then people don't know what signs to look for. So that's been some of the research that we've been working on and what the implications we've uncovered thus far.

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Jaelon:

Definitely, I can see that because I remember we talked about that before, you know, where people look at a child is, oh, that child is bad, that child is troubled, but they don't look at why necessarily.

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Aundraea:

Exactly. Exactly.

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Jaelon:

It's so it's it's a it's a it's a battle. It's a battle. But I think I think and I hope that it'll get better over time with people realizing their mental health is serious. And it doesn't just affect teenagers and adults.

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Aundraea:

Exactly. Exactly. If we can catch them young and build up the mental health skills and vocabulary and self-advocacy, just imagining how their life trajectory may look different in middle and high.

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Jaelon:

Definitely. Um, in your experience in research, what do you think are the barriers and challenges faced by African-Americans in mental health accessing mental health resources? I'm sorry.

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Aundraea:

There's a lot of layers to it.

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Jaelon:

I definitely understand that.

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Aundraea:

Just, you know, what I've seen in research is just the physical access. And, you know, I'm from a community that's predominately black and the resources that I see and I like Googling are just in my community as far as like mental health support and wellness support is not as prevalent as other communities. Sometimes I'm driving an hour, an hour and a half just to get to, you know, different park like green spaces, wellness spaces, which I'm really interested in, and the intersections of mental health and how being active and being in nature and how that plays a part in someone's wellbeing and not even having that access to it.

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Aundraea:

So I know that plays a part just physical physically, there's just not as much in areas that are more populated by people of color. And then it's the, you know, you just kind of grown up in a certain way. So even just thinking about wellness access, I just started hiking and I never knew anybody who looked at look like me.

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Aundraea:

Who hiked camp or any of that stuff. And I asked my grandmother, why did we go outside and go to parks and go in nature? Because I'm originally from Monroe, Louisiana, and they have like these beautiful pines. And and sometimes we would go for family reunions to the park. That was it. And I was like, Grandma, why didn't we go?

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Aundraea:

And she said, there's a particular park culturally park stunning is that Well I wasn't able we weren't able to go when I was growing up because we were black. So we just kind of stuck with me. I didn't experience it. So that's sort of some of that historical in a gender intergenerational trauma that shows itself. And for me, I'm like, Oh yeah, I don't go to a park, I don't go, I don't do nature.

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Aundraea:

But it wasn't till the pandemic got I started exploring excuse me, some of those other things. And so, like we're starting to unlearn, I think some of the things that we used to adapt. I can't blame my grandmother. She was adapting to what she had. So I think sometimes we have this mentality of in black people aren't a monolith, right?

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Aundraea:

Obviously we're all different. But just from my experience and experiences of others that we're learning is that sometimes you just have to unlearn something and start to understand that there is help and there is support. And I can put a name to or maybe I'm not just tired or maybe I'm not just an interested potentially in this depression.

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Aundraea:

Oh, I'm nervous. And I'm like, Oh, I'm jittery. Maybe I'm experiencing anxiety. So I think it's just about some unlearning and us now being able to put words to the things.

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Jaelon:

That's, that's, that's real and definitely real. Because, man, when you unlearn, it's like, I don't know, it's like a weight lifted off your shoulders because now you know how to navigate and express what you need to. So how do cultural, socioeconomic and systemic factors contribute to these obstacles?

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Aundraea:

Yes, I mentioned some of the layers, like the physical barriers, which I just can't access because it doesn't exist. But culturally and structurally, I think again, like sometimes it's when you're in a system or you're part of a community or system that continue to sort of like push down on you and you've had to, so to speak, fight like this resilience.

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Aundraea:

Black people show resilience, it's amazing. It's like we have overcome so much and we have this grit, this tenacity about ourselves that it can be easy to get in this grind culture. So some research coming out now about just rest, like just being able to rest and black people tapping into that instead of leaning on, No, I have to work.

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Aundraea:

I have to work hard. I have to work hard. You know, sometimes we hear I can sleep when I'm dead. I know your body needs to rest. You need you need to be well, that's a part of your

wellness. And you being able to sustain. So I think is because of those structural, social, cultural systems that have been put in place that can be challenging for folks to delve into that.

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Aundraea:

And then I think to just being able to connect, I think about just personally, you know, I told I said my parents and I, they're wonderful parents. If they're listening to this. They're great, we just didn't talk about, you know, emotional stuff. And it wasn't until I call my mom and I was just having a hard time. I was like, I'm struggling with my mental health.

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Aundraea:

This is what's going on. And it was the first time she opened up and she said, You though, I'm a social worker and I can reflect back and think, Oh, she was struggling with the things too, but she was able to communicate that. But it was because I created a space for her to feel like she could share too.

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Aundraea:

And so it's that that culture of it's okay to talk about some of these, what we may consider taboo topics, like even saying like suicide or saying like I'm struggling with. I've had thoughts of not wanting to live. So I'm now I'm having conversations with my friends, even we're opening up the conversation and they're sharing like some struggles aren't going through.

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Aundraea:

I like, okay, that sounds stressful. Now, I'm not their counselors, right? We can't counsel our friends. Okay? But I'm like, That sounds stressful. I mean, maybe somebody's navigating that, maybe maybe experiencing depression or having thoughts about not wanting to live. Like, do you feel like you're thinking about that? And so you're opening up the conversation. And I think sometimes we have a culture where understandably so, we can't talk about those things.

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Aundraea:

But now, like we're starting to have more of those conversations, I think that has been pivotal in the kiddos that I work with and the counselors that I manage who work with other people, like just opening up that dialog and that conversation and education and awareness has helped.

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Jaelon:

That make sense. I literally, I, I, I, even me, I, I'm like I grew up like I'm like, oh yeah, I'm tough. I'm all right. I'm all right. Then one day I was struggling, so bad, mom, I called my mom and that day I didn't I didn't know. We we, we had access to two mental health services, but turns out my family had a therapist for a mental health therapist already.

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Jaelon:

So, like, I didn't. I never knew that. So when I told my mom she was able to get me help immediately and I started going to therapy and stuff like that and is it's so crazy because it's just like all I had to do was say something.

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Aundraea:

That's right.

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Jaelon:

And I had my whole time like I was in college and this was like during a pandemic, I was in college and like during the whole time, I never I never knew that, you know, this was as as serious. I didn't know that my family had access or we we were able to just get to it that easy, right until until I said something.

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Jaelon:

So I feel like that that's you know, that's part of like those those things that you have to unlearn, like, you know, just trying to be tough all the time and.

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Aundraea:

Yeah, right. Because saying that, that was huge. You just opened the door to you being able to get support and services. But it's challenging when you've been told like, Oh, I'm strong, especially, I mean, as a black man, like just seeing everything y'all navigate and go through. It can be challenging to feel like you can say that. So, yeah, that's.

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Jaelon:

Yeah, definitely. Um, are there what do you believe are the stigma surrounding inequities in mental health and wellness access?

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Aundraea:

Mm. I think this is more the thing. Just sort of the. The ideals that we come to know based on our experiences, you know, whether that's individually or just the historical, inter-generational things that, you know, there's also just stigma on health care, which is kind of closely related to mental health, understandably so, because of different research that is going on.

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Aundraea:

One of the most notable was the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, where black “participants”, if you could even, I just shudder to even call it a research study, but they were not getting the care that they needed to get better. And then undergoing all of these torturous treatments under the guise that they were thinking that they were getting care when care,

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Aundraea:

Was so simple, right? Even something as simple as penicillin that would have been a cure. But I think just that mistrust and skepticism is still there, too. And then also feeling like, you know, someone is going to connect with you. The mental health field professionals, black people are also underrepresented and as mental health professionals in psychology, 2% are black.

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Aundraea:

So I know that statistic.

Jaelon:

That's a very low number.

Aundraea:

I know. So sometimes you want you may want to counsel, therapist who has a similar background or ideals. So no matter race, some people may want someone who's a Christian or has those values or somebody may want to speak with a man or woman. And if you're unable to connect with a therapist that's black or that's important to you, that may be challenging.

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Aundraea:

This isn't to say that just because you're black, you could provide competent services, but there may be this idea of, Oh, I don't have to explain certain things, or I may feel uncomfortable sharing this with someone who doesn't share my identity. So I've seen that be, you know, a stigma or a barrier.

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Aundraea:

Yeah, that's that's the thing, too, cause I know it is hard. I mean, it's it's really weird, but you tend to gravitate towards, you know, people who look like you and it, you feel like they've experienced some similar things. Um, so now, now that we've talked about stigmas, my question is, based on your research, what recommendations do you have for addressing and overcoming mental health inequities?

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Aundraea:

So in the study that I engaged with my mentor when we uncovered that, oh, there is a connection between the younger students experiencing suicidal ideation or thoughts about suicide and experiencing bullying and issues with peers. There's also this could be this

mitigating factor of like school connectedness that can support students. I think just what I would say is connection within the school setting.

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Aundraea:

Educators or mental health professionals being aware, or cognizant of like students presenting with maybe heightened emotions or just like like you mentioned, like sometimes we want to label them as this just isn't a good kid.. Well, maybe they're just struggling with their mental health, and we notice that sometimes with black students, especially black boys, they are overly disciplined and suspended and expelled.

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Aundraea:

And that leads to, like, the pipeline to prison. And then we see that in prisons is mostly blacks. Like we make it, what, 13% or 14% of the population, but 40% or so of the prison population is black. What we are finding is a lot of them have unaddressed mental health concerns. If we could rewind the tape and funnel students to support their mental health, what type of impact they may have on their life longevity.

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Aundraea:

So I think that that's a huge piece. And then also just that connection piece. Whether it's, you know, you just with your friends like you shared about talking to your mom and just like making mental health language, just, like, comfortable. And being able to talk about it so that we can point folks to care.

00:32:16:22 - 00:32:35:00

Aundraea:

And then there's is a lot of services out now that make things easier. Instead of calling 911, when someone has a mental, mental health emergency and it may be challenging when you know you have officers present and you're nervous and that could be very triggering for some folks in the black community. We have nine eight, eight that you can use.

00:32:35:01 - 00:32:51:04

Aundraea:

So I think just all of those different virtual spaces and that we have Mental health podcast and we have all these ways for you to engage that's just benefited the access and has definitely mitigated some of the barriers to support.

00:32:51:06 - 00:33:02:21

Jaelon:

Yes, ma'am. Are there any specific strategies or initiatives you've discussed that show promise in improving access for the black community?

00:33:02:23 - 00:33:11:06

Aundraea:

Yes. Well, I don't know if I shared it, but I definitely think about I'm a little biased because I work in the school setting.

00:33:11:08 - 00:33:12:07

Jaelon:

Mm hmm.

00:33:12:09 - 00:33:37:22

Aundraea:

But there's definitely a lot of promise to the school based mental health program at the charter school network I work in. We have some phenomenal counselors that only do mental health support. They don't do the scheduling and the testing, and they're trained mental health professionals like their masters level competent social workers or counselors or licensed professional counselors working in the school setting.

00:33:37:23 - 00:34:04:06

Aundraea:

So, kiddos, what we're finding when they receive mental health support, they're most likely to receive it from schools. So we can beef up those services, which I think we've have. And we've seen a resurgence even around the DFW like mental health professionals working in schools. And I also think like UTA has our CAPS department, but our counseling and psychological services department where we can access those services.

00:34:04:07 - 00:34:32:12

Aundraea:

I've accessed them before as a student, they were easy to connect with and it's programs like that that closes the gap to access because everyone can get to it essentially. And then I think also just the virtual space and the safe spaces and the grassroots organizations that are popping up that are well versed in like how do we support black folks who are navigating or how do we support people of color who are navigating mental health challenges?

00:34:32:14 - 00:35:07:03

Jaelon:

I think that's pretty cool to I think that's pretty cool that, you know, that I went blank. I went blank. But I think I can remember I think it's pretty cool that, you know, um, things are starting to change in schools because I remember, you know, growing up, a lot of teachers and and people in the schools, they wanted you to be right educationally all the time.

00:35:07:03 - 00:35:23:09

Jaelon:

But like, you know, it didn't used to be a thing to care about mental health in school. And the fact that you brought up a you know, you see you see it in school, like the best way to gauge it is in a school. I think that's a very interesting fact.

00:35:23:13 - 00:35:48:07

Aundraea:

Right. Right. Yes. And some of our educators, listen, they have a hard job. They have been so integral because they see the kids every day and they're like, oh, this kid, something seems off. And they have like just a little bit of understanding. And most have gone through, like trauma informed training where they're able to, like, spot like, okay, I'm going to refer you to the counselor or just having a conversation.

00:35:48:08 - 00:36:01:07

Aundraea:

What's going on? So they have been phenomenal and connecting kiddos and families to adequate care. So schools have definitely been a supportive place for sure.

00:36:01:09 - 00:36:05:01

Jaelon:

That's great. That's great to see how that has trabsformed.

00:36:05:02 - 00:36:28:20

Aundraea:

I know you felt it was different, right? We are growing up and maybe in some places is still there, still navigating those challenges. So that's my hope that we can scale what we're doing. And some of these schools I'm thinking of mine and like how we can, you know, research that and see its effectiveness and scale it to other communities.

00:36:28:22 - 00:36:34:05

Jaelon:

Yeah, it's funny. I mean, it's good to have a bias towards a school. That means you care.

00:36:34:07 - 00:36:40:14

Aundraea:

I love what, I do. I'm one of those. I'm one of the lucky ones, the blessed ones where I love what I do every day.

00:36:40:16 - 00:36:44:18

Jaelon:

That's great. That's great. Because if you love what you do, it's not work.

00:36:44:18 - 00:36:49:04

Aundraea:

That's what they say!

00:36:49:06 - 00:37:00:16

Jaelon:

So how does, um. How does addressing mental health inequities impact communities of color on a broader scale?

00:37:00:18 - 00:37:16:17

Aundraea:

That's good. I think we have just the healing that can take place. It's needed.

00:37:16:17 - 00:37:48:15

Aundraea:

I feel like black excellence is a theme. Black folks, all people deserve healing. Because right, we all have mental health concerns. I just think black folks have gone through a lot within America, and there's some restoration that needs to take place. And on a broader scale, if we can support the well-being of black people to make sure that we reduce this access barrier.

00:37:48:17 - 00:38:26:14

Aundraea:

It's just I mean, the sky's the limit. I'm just thinking about like the students that I've worked with who have experienced just some awful things. And if they could just get plugged into the support that they need, whether it's community support or in a school, I just think about their health outcomes, their wellbeing outcomes. I think about, you know, myself as a little girl and like now, you know, I talk about struggling because I was impacted by Colorism and different things like that.

00:38:26:14 - 00:39:00:05

Aundraea:

Now, you know, I'm obviously healing and healed from that. I love my complexion the way I look and things like that. But I it was a journey that thankfully I got to experience and go on. But again, it's like this gap. Not everybody can. But if on a broader scale, we can close that gap, the healing that can take place and the restoration that can take place with other people, I just think that would that's just my life goal.

00:39:00:07 - 00:39:07:22

Aundraea:

It's my life's goal is to see that right. No barriers to black healing or to healing of people in general. So.

00:39:08:00 - 00:39:20:11

Jaelon:

Okay, Um, so what action steps or initiatives do you recommend for people who want to contribute to the cause?

00:39:20:13 - 00:40:01:08

Aundraea:

That's good. Individually, I want people to just know that it's okay to reach out for support and help, it's there. Sometimes there's some barriers to getting to it, but it is there and it's what they deserve. It's what folks deserve from like a structural standpoint, just businesses that are offering these services, like employers that are offering like there's an employee assistance program where you have/get access to mental health services or like a universities, you get access.

00:40:01:08 - 00:40:30:13

Aundraea:

I think that that is important. And then people who just want to get involved, like start by having conversations like this, like connecting with other people, saying, Hey, how you doing? How are you like and leaning in with a sense of wondering and not being afraid to share their own stories because there's power in that. When I share my story, that helps people to say, okay, I'm not alone, isn't wild thinking, I'm not making this up.

00:40:30:15 - 00:40:58:06

Aundraea:

This gives me sort of the push to talk about my story, too. So getting involved in like grassroots organizations, getting it, getting involved in community mental health, really in like wellbeing and wellness is a communal community-based thing. It has to be. Because if I set boundaries, I need my community to help me either follow that or if I am like, Oh, I don't want to be the only person out here walking.

00:40:58:06 - 00:41:22:01

Aundraea:

So I'm grabbing my friends like, Hey, I know we we've never hiked before, we've never camped, but let's do this right. Let's have conversations. I even went to a birthday party, one of my cohort members. It was a fabulous party. She talked all about black wellness and wellbeing and she had open dialog with a group of people, and it was powerful.

00:41:22:01 - 00:41:40:07

Aundraea:

So just stepping into those conversations and making mental health the norm, like, Oh, my back hurts, I can also say, Oh, I'm just not feeling good. Like I'm feeling anxious, I'm feeling. So just making that common language I think would be a powerful tool for folks to start doing.

00:41:40:09 - 00:41:57:04

Jaelon:

And can you suggest I know we talked about a few resources, but can you suggest any specific resources for, you know, our listeners to get. You know, involved or even just here on this campus?

00:41:57:10 - 00:42:24:21

Aundraea:

Yeah, definitely CAP services if you haven't leveraged them. Blackwellness.com is a great resource and there are so many podcasts like they're flowing in my head, but I can't think of any of them. But it's just it's just so much content out there that's quality good content for you and 988 text and listen, if you're struggling and you just need to text somebody, you can't text a friend.

00:42:24:23 - 00:42:35:14

Aundraea:

998 is great. I've even sent them a text and I'm like, Oh yeah, this is what I needed. So just not being afraid to step out on that. But there are resources there.

00:42:35:15 - 00:42:49:14

Jaelon:

Okay. And how can our listeners, um, apply the insights that you've provided in their everyday lives and in their communities?

00:42:49:17 - 00:43:14:14

Aundraea:

I think just something really you illuminated, but just like reaching out and feeling comfortable to reach out and know sometimes it can feel awkward or uneasy. I think if folks are struggling and navigating, I would say reach out and then I would also implore them to reach out and have those conversations and then just getting involved.

00:43:14:17 - 00:43:38:06

Aundraea:

There's a lot of community-based mental health networks and supports doing their own educational healing journey, learning about mental health and exploring those concepts and unlearning some things and learning some new things and just just relishing in their own healing journeys. I would encourage everybody to do.

00:43:38:07 - 00:43:55:08

Jaelon:

Yes, ma'am. Thank you. Well, I think that's all we have for today. If you want to learn more about the School of Social Work and what social workers do, please go to our website and follow our social media pages, and please be sure to give us video thumbs up, subscribe to our channel, and turn on those post notifications for more content down the road.

00:43:55:09 - 00:44:01:07

Jaelon:

As always, everyone, please be safe and make sure to check on your friends. Until next time, I'm Jaelon Jackson, signing off.