

Cultural Report

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The African-American culture has impacted the world in a multitude of ways despite its abhorrent origins. For context, Africans were forcibly taken to the Americas between the years of 1500 and 1860 (Gates, 2022). “This largest forced migration in human history relocated some 50 ethnic and linguistic groups” (Gates, 2022). As one can imagine, this dispersed the African culture throughout the world. To hone in on the positives of such a travesty, the focus will be on how modernized African-Americans (in relation to the Champaign/Danville area but not limited to) still connect to their roots with religion, healing beliefs, food, and family. The latest 2020 census data revealed that Champaign, IL has almost 16,000 African American residents (Census Bureau, 2020). That is about 17% of its total population (Census Bureau, 2020). Danville trails not too far behind with 10,000 African American residents (Census Bureau, 2020). That constitutes for around 14% of its population (Census Bureau, 2020).

According to a conducted survey, studies show that about 97% of African-Americans believe in God or a higher power, and majority are Christians (Mohamed et al., 2021). Research also shows that African American women are 10% more likely to believe in God than African American men (Mohamed et al., 2021). The common widespread belief by African-Americans, is that God is a powerful entity that engages with the world directly (Mohamed et al., 2021). About 54% of the participants state that belief in God is required in order for a person to be deemed morally good (Mohamed et al., 2021). Spirituality is linked to healthcare as it can affect the patient’s outcomes.

African Americans face many health disparities that unfortunately involves discrimination and implicit bias within the healthcare system. This leads to the mistrust of providers. In relation to labor and delivery, African American women “prefer to have a Black woman provider to increase their comfort and improve their healthcare experiences” (Thorpe et

al., 2022). Research shows that African American women are over three times more likely to die during childbirth/ postpartum, than their white counterparts (Population Reference Bureau, 2021). Back in the 19th century, midwifery was the primary form of prenatal care amongst the African American culture (Fung & Lacy, 2023). Women would share traditional healing practices and knowledge amongst midwives within their communities (Fung & Lacy, 2023). The midwives were seen as healers because they were there to assist the new mother through all the highs and lows of postpartum (Hill, 2023). There is also an ancient tradition called belly binding. Belly binding is what the American culture took on as belly wraps/girdles. However, it was traditionally practiced with the usage of hot oils, warm heat, and water for a full 40 days postpartum (Monroe, 2020). This particular form of belly binding would help heal the mother's abdominal muscles, strengthen her back, reshape the waist, and ground her (Monroe, 2020).

In regards to family life, the African American culture adopted the traditional structure of a simple nuclear family (Gutierrez et al., 2023). This consists of two parents and a child of one or more living within the same residence. African Americans respect, prioritize, and cherish the elderly within their families. Many African-American households will take on the caregiver role and have their elders live with them (Jacobs, 2021). African American elders are seen as indispensable resources for their wisdom and guidance (McCoy, 2023).

For simplistic measures, communication styles can be categorized into high and low context (Krumrey-Fulks, 2022). Low context messages are based on straightforward communication, and high context messages are based on body language, tone, and interpretive form of communication (Krumrey-Fulks, 2022). The African-American culture is appointed the high context form of communication, and they tend to talk with emotional expressive language.

The culture is heavily relationship oriented, so they tend to sought out personal connections with communication (Krumrey-Fulks, 2022).

The African-American culture has a legacy of many cultural foodways that has been passed down thru generations (Hillier, 2023). One type in particular is called soul food, and it is an integral part of the culture. Soul food contains a variation of foods such as grits, cat fish, collard greens, black-eyed peas, and many more. Soul food is usually cooked with pork products and trans-fat, which is not healthy under regular consumption and lack of consistent physical activity (Hillier, 2023). This could impact hospitalization if the pregnant mother is going into childbirth with several comorbidities due to diet.

Considering African American women have the highest mortality rate in America, mainly due to medical racism and neglect, many are rightfully fearful of the birthing process. It is imperative that as healthcare professionals, we dimmish those experiences. Some interventions that can be utilized when working with pregnant African American women are by providing unbiased care, listening to their needs while actively applying solutions, and having good communication skills. There is no reason they should be receiving a different level of care due to the color of their skin. If the patient states she is in pain or is having complications, it is her healthcare team's duty to advocate for her. If the patient has comorbidities prior to her hospitalization, they should be monitored during the entire childbirth process. It is also significant that the patient feels heard. As a nurse, you can provide that trusting relationship with your patient not just with actively listening, but also eye contact, open body language, and personable conversation.

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