

Civic Coalition to Save Lives

www.savephillylives.org

February 2024

Black Men Heal: Our Motto: “Healed men, heal men.”

While all communities face mental health challenges, Black communities often deal with more stigma and discrimination.

That’s why, in 2018, Tasnim Sulaiman and Zakia Williams launched Black Men Heal in Philadelphia, making mental health care more accessible and culturally relevant for those disproportionately affected by trauma and violence. What began as an all-volunteer and donation-based organization with just a handful of clinicians contributing their time, professional services, and unused office space has grown to provide more than 3500 free therapy sessions and served close to 500 men.

“We wanted to create a safe and supportive space where Black men can openly address their mental health concerns without fear of judgment and with professionals who understand the cultural differences and lived experiences of Black men,” said Sulaiman, a licensed psychologist, and the nonprofit’s executive director. “While we see all men, our emphasis is on helping Black men heal because that helps heal Black families, and eventually Black communities.”

“We live in a world where Black men feel devalued, and we want them to know that we hear them, we are there for them, and most of all, we love them. When they feel empowered to address the mental health effects of trauma, they become positive examples in their families and community.”

Tansim Sulaiman

With the emergence of telehealth talk therapy during the pandemic, Black Men Heal expanded its capabilities to offer virtual sessions, providing increased flexibility and swifter access to assistance. This also allowed them to launch Kings Corner, a virtual weekly meetup group for men of all ages to listen, share, and empower each other.

“There was a need to meet the demand for therapy,” said Black Men Heal’s Chief Operations Officer Zakia Williams. “Especially for people of color who were looking to speak with someone who can relate to their own unique cultural experiences.”

Today, Black Men Heal has 67+ paid licensed and pre-licensed therapists on staff across 13 states, including Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York, providing free trauma-informed counseling, group therapy, community events, workshops, and discussions to promote, destigmatize, and provide affordable and accessible mental health care in the Black community.

In February, Black Men Heal was awarded a contract to provide behavioral health services for [Pushing Progress Philly \(P3\)](#), an intensive outreach intervention program for young men identified as very high risk of resorting to or falling victim to gun violence.

P3 helps to disrupt the relentless cycles of trauma and violence through one-on-one support, including behavioral healthcare, transitional employment opportunities, and job training services.

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“We are thrilled to be part of P3 in providing direct intervention support for this population who are deemed high risk,” said Black Men Heal’s Chief Operations Officer Zakia Williams. “It’s no secret that there are significant disparities in mental health care access that disproportionately affect communities of color – the same places where trauma and violence are rampant. Trauma-informed care like what we provide through Black Men Heal is a powerful antidote to violence because it helps shift mindsets and shapes new patterns and behaviors among who are very high risk.”



Zakia Williams
COO

The organization is also helping to build the next generation of culturally sensitive therapists. Black Men Heal offers opportunities for pre-licensed practitioners to accumulate supervised clinical hours needed for licensure and help pair newly licensed clinicians with clients to start building their private practices.

Sulaiman says at least 65% of Black Men Heal clients continue therapy with their original clinicians, and the group often receives thank you letters from clients and clinicians.

Many clients return with offers of help. One of the men who completed the Individual Therapy Program built the Black Men Heal website for free, and others have shared powerful testimonials about their therapeutic experience that have attracted new clients and affirmed the organization’s mission at fundraising events.

“Our motto is, Healed men heal men,” said Sulaiman.

“We live in a world where Black men feel devalued, and we want them to know that we hear them, we are there for them, and most of all, we love them.



Tasnim Sulaiman, LPC,
Founder & Executive Director

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To learn more about Black Men Heal and how you can support their work, please click the logo below.

