



Hogg Foundation
for Mental Health



Episode 149 | Tune In: Music Therapy for Kids (Transcript)

Ike Evans:

June is Pride Month. Throughout this month on both the Hogg Foundation website and on our social media channels, you will find links to content related to LGBTQ+ mental health. Something that you will especially want to check out is the statement on LGBTQ rights that we released last year. You can find a link on the homepage of our website, hogg.utexas.edu, and I will also provide a link in the show description for this episode. The Hogg Foundation has recently published an op-ed titled "Listening to All Uvalde Voices will Promote True Healing in the Community." In it, we argue that despite the influx of funding and attention that has been given to the community of Uvalde since the Robb Elementary School shooting last year, there really has not been a consistent effort to engage with the community to listen to their voices and recommendations on what they see as their most pressing needs.

I've included a link in the show description, but you can also find a portion of the op-ed on our blog at hogg.utexas.edu. The blog portion has a link to the full version on the Dallas Morning News website. And in Texas news, the state of Texas has become the second state in the country to ban diversity, equity, and inclusion offices at public universities. Senate Bill 17 was approved by both chambers of the Texas legislature at the end of May and was signed by Governor Greg Abbott earlier this month. The law says that universities cannot create diversity offices, hire employees to conduct DEI work, or require any DEI training as a condition of employment or admittance to the university. To put it mildly, this has been controversial. Some have hailed the new law as striking a blow for freedom of speech and a welcome return to a focus on merit and achievement over what they see as a left-wing ideological agenda.

Others see it as a huge step backward in the effort to make campuses more welcoming to students and faculty of all backgrounds. And if there's any confusion, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health remains committed to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, as spelled out on our website, if you care to have a look.

This summary is taken from a recent article by "Texas Tribune," which I will include a link to in the show description, and that does it for mental health headlines. Don't be left out of the loop. Become a Hogg insider by subscribing to mental health headlines. You can find a sign-up link on our main website at hogg.utexas.edu. On today's "Into the Fold," we're talking about Juneteenth, that day on June 19th that commemorates the day in 1865 that the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect in Texas, also known as Emancipation Day. It is now a national holiday, and for us, it is an occasion to celebrate African-American mental health and resilience. Helping us do that is Tracy Yvette Green, a mental health advocate and life coach based in Dallas who is also a member of the Hogg Foundation Contributors Circle. Tracy, how's it going?

Tracy Green:

Going well, thank you. How about yourself?

Ike Evans:

I'm doing all right. Thanks for asking. So first, I think our listeners would love to know a little bit more about you, including how you and I first met, if you don't mind.

Tracy Green:

Not at all. So I am a woman of color and a woman of faith, and I will celebrate my 40th wedding anniversary with my best friend later this fall. I am the mother of two biological children, plus their mates, and I am very proud to be a grandmother of four beautiful grandchildren, and I am a mental health advocate. I am very passionate. I was diagnosed about 30 years ago with a mental illness myself, and it was devastating, and there wasn't a lot of support or resources available to me. And so as I was able to matriculate through the system of getting help, I learned a lot along the way. I was very attentive to pay attention so that I could help others not have to go through that sense of isolation that I did. So a year or so ago, the Hogg Foundation offered a writing contest that I entered called The New Voices Showcase, and I was one of the winners that was selected, and that started the contributor circle. And that's how you and I met and got to know each other.

Ike Evans:

Yeah, she ain't lying. And as a member of the contributor circle, she actually, in fact, had the opportunity to in effect co-produce this episode so that the Juneteenth theme is all her idea. So thank you for that, Tracy. Yeah. So about the essay that you submitted for the New Voices Showcase, it was entitled, "Triggered by Lights: Red, White, and Blue." What were you trying to get across in this piece?

Tracy Green:

Thank you for asking. So the red and blue lights symbolize a police car. I was abruptly taken from my home in the middle of the night, and what stood out to me were the lights. That was very triggering for me. And then the white light represents the hospital. I was taken to the hospital. I just remember a bright light in my face, and again, it was a traumatic experience. And so what I was trying to get across in telling this story, and even the title is that children are very perceptive, even though we don't often recognize that or acknowledge that that children are impacted and can be traumatized as well as adults. And so things that are going on in society or things that we're hearing on the news, we have to be aware that that information, as triggering as it can be for adults, is also triggering for children too. So we need to be sensitive to that fact.

Ike Evans:

I thought that I would give our listeners a bit of the flavor of the piece by just reading an excerpt from it, the first paragraph, in fact, and hopefully this will also serve as a nice little teaser for those who might be interested in reading the entire thing. "What I remember most were the blinding red and blue lights. At four years old, I was very frightened as a police officer took me from my home. There were so many lights that I could not see anything else other than the officer who put me in the police car. Since they did not look like me, I had no frame of reference for what would come next. Usually during the night, I knew what to expect." So what kind of emotions come over you just hearing your own words like that?

Tracy Green:

That was very powerful to hear you read that. I almost feel like I was back in that space. I remember the paralyzing fear that I felt at that time. And even now, as an adult and knowing I'm in a safe space, I still have that sense of fear in my gut about the unknown from that time.

Ike Evans:

And I can't help but just wonder about, yeah, yeah. If you ever encounter any more, anything that kind of takes you back to that place and how you cope with that.

Tracy Green:

Absolutely. So it's a part of the title, being triggered, and the first time I was stopped by a police officer for something benign, driving too fast or something, or I think it was, I didn't have my lights on or something, it was a big trigger for me. And even after he just was assured that I wasn't a drunk driver, that I was safe, and I just hadn't put my lights on and he pulled off, I just had to sit there for a minute and regather my composure because it shook me to my core. And so, yeah, it's not as bad anymore. I've done a lot of therapy work since that time until now, and so it's not as triggering, but there are still oftentimes triggers that you just don't expect until they happen. But because of the therapy work I've done, I have tools in my tool belt that help me to be able to ground myself and get back composure and do some self-talk.

Ike Evans:

Okay, wonderful. So getting to our main theme, let's talk Juneteenth. I think it's come to mean an awful lot to Black people, I think increasingly others as well, and at least here in Texas, it stands out as the closest thing that we get to a true 4th of July that's just ours. So what thoughts, feelings, or memories do you associate with Juneteenth?

Tracy Green:

Quite honestly, I had never heard of Juneteenth until I was an adult. I did not grow up in Texas, but I came as fast as I could, and I do love being here, but I was not aware of that. So the only holiday I was familiar with was the 4th of July. And so like you said, I do now equate Juneteenth with at least Southern African Americans' 4th of July, if you will. And I know it's now a national holiday. And I love that. I just regret that I didn't learn about it sooner or that it wasn't a part of my schooling. And I was in a primarily African-American community. So it's just tragic to me that I went from primary all the way up through high school and I hadn't heard of it, of the account of Juneteenth.

Ike Evans:

But even late in coming to it as you were it, I can't help but think that it opens up so many possibilities for just kinds of fellowship, for Black folks are always well needed, right?

Tracy Green:

Absolutely. Absolutely. So for me, Juneteenth is kind of bittersweet, and I'm sure it is for a lot of people, because it actually acknowledges that we did learn about the emancipation of slavery until two years after it had been established. So that's not good. But it's also the sweet side of it is that it is an opportunity for us to celebrate. And there have been so many firsts in the African-American communities since then, even in Texas, and not just first, but things that have been accomplished despite having the slow start, I guess.

Ike Evans:

And also, and in prep for this episode, you have been immersing yourself in some of the rich history that Juneteenth also summons forth. And I'm just curious as to things that you've uncovered that particularly resonate with you.

Tracy Green:

Thank you for asking. One of the biggest things, and it's not necessarily just Texans, but because I am a mental health advocate and I have a passion for teaching about mental health, one of the most interesting factors that I have discovered is that, and it's kind of unusual because I do live with this mental health diagnosis. I have been diagnosed for more than 30 years, but it took going to the Central Texas African-American Family Support Conference in Austin, Texas that happens every year in February to recognize that sometimes, those diagnoses, our symptoms as African Americans or Black people, are different than the book. And I got to looking back and noticed that the psychology and having those researchers, they're all white people, and it never occurred to me before that maybe our experience is different than theirs. And so I'm profoundly excited that I learned about Francis Cecil Sumner, who was the father of Psychology for Black people, and Joseph White who is considered the godfather of Black psychology.

And I'm especially excited about Dr. White because he only passed away, what, eight years ago, in 2017. But he had written an article in "Ebony" back in 1970, dispelling the illusion that Black people are inferior. And that's very powerful to me. Very. One of the quotes was that these contributions by both of these great men allow Black people to heal in a safe and therapeutic relationship. It is true that untreated mental health negatively impacts society, thus we all heal, all of society heals when we are healed. And so I have found that very powerful and very encouraging and inspiring for me as a mental health advocate. And to frame it in that way.

Ike Evans:

And I've made the point on the podcast before that there is absolutely a connection between mental health and historical memory. And so one thing I'm wondering is if you have ever had the experience of feeling as if your own wellbeing were bolstered by some connection to the past or some active memory, even if it's just your own personal family tree, and if you've ever had memory kind of come to the aid of your mental health in that sort of empowering way?

Tracy Green:

Absolutely. I feel very proud of our rich history as African Americans, and one of the things that I celebrate is I have purchased *The Unapologetic Guide to Black Mental Health* by Rheedra Walker. She was a speaker at the North Texas African-American Family Support Conference. And one of the things she talks about is our survival and our resilience and even the advancements we have made since that time. And I know for a fact that, when I did my own DNA test, our ancestry, I am 32% Nigerian. And so looking back to some of the history that has come from there, I could be very proud of who I am and where I've come from and the positive advancements that have been made along my family tree from that time until now. And so I absolutely draw back from the historical contributions of African Americans collectively, but my family tree specifically.

Ike Evans:

So do you have any special plans for Juneteenth? And what sorts of things do you do for your own wellness in general?

Tracy Green:

So my husband and I will be joining some friends. They have some property that is up in North Texas. We're in North Texas, but in North Texas, and they have some historical property. And on Juneteenth, they celebrate and they invite the community. I'm not a family member, but I'm an adopted family member now. And so that's where we will be in celebrating this year. And then for my own wellbeing, what I like to do is to have a quiet place. People see me as very extrovert, but actually I am introvert by nature. And so I enjoy meditating on the word of God and reading books and just being out in nature. Give me a book and sit me out as long as there are no bugs there around. And I will sit there for hours and just read. And that really ministers to me because I do give out a lot being an advocate. So I'm busy a lot, but that is my time. And when I get to just look inwardly and be healed.

Ike Evans:

You live in the Dallas area, we've established. What would you like for our listeners to know about what's going on in your community as far as mental health and wellbeing are concerned?

Tracy Green:

One of the things that we are doing, July has been set aside by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which is NAMI, as the Bebe Campbell Moore Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. And so I'm very excited that I am hoping to spearhead an event in an African-American community here in the Dallas area at Four Oak Cliff. That's the name of the facility or the campus that we will be at, part of NAMI, bringing awareness and celebration of mental health awareness for the African-American community. In addition to that, one of the things that I'm very excited about is the CEO of NAMI is a Black man. His name is Dan Gillison, and he's brought some tremendous programs, new programs to NAMI, called Sharing Hope. And it's a part of a series, and it's cross-cultural initiative to de-stigmatize mental health in racially and ethnically diverse communities.

And so a few of the things that he has brought to the table that we are expanding all over the country but specifically here is there is the Black and African ancestry meal, mental health. There is the Sharing Hope program that is for people of African ancestry or immigrant ancestry that's talking about their mental health. There's also Compartiendo Esperanza; that is for the Hispanic Latin American. They've added a couple of more for South Asian. There's Chai and Chat for the Filipino, Filipinx and Philippine. There's [inaudible 00:23:16]. So, and then there's Faith Net. So very excited about these new programs that are just being more inclusive of different cultures and societies, and I'm thrilled about that. And we have that here in North Texas as well as other affiliate offices across the state and across the country. I'm very excited about that, if you couldn't tell.

Ike Evans:

So you just rattled off a number of different organizations and things that are happening in your community. So I wanted to put the question a little bit more explicitly, just things that you are involved in or causes that you support, for our listeners who would like to learn more and maybe give some support themselves?

Tracy Green:

Absolutely. So the things closest to my heart are, of course, mental health. That's why I'm an advocate. And the programs offered through NAMI are free to the community. Everything that we offer, which are educational classes, as well as support groups, everything is free. It can be found through the NAMI North Texas website, or NAMITexas.org website. I'm also involved with the Central Texas African-

American Family Support Conference. That, again, I mentioned, happens in February of every year. And it's not just for African-Americans. It's just got a focus of being presented by African-Americans and about African-American culture but also other--Because it's about across the board. I am also involved in the Mental Wellness Interfaith Alliance here in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. And finally, RAINN, which is the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, which is out of Washington, D.C., but I am on the Speaker's Bureau for that and just did a training for the speaker's bureau members on being a survivor and your mental health. So like I said, I'm very busy, and this is my passion, and so I hope that comes across because that's what it's meant to do.

Ike Evans:

Yeah, it sure does. Well, Tracy, at the risk of sounding selfish, you have been a great friend to Hogg Foundation's Communications just through your involvement with the New Voices showcase. Her wonderful essay is on our website, and I will be sharing a link in the show description for any of y'all listening who'd like to check it out. And also your membership in the contributor circle, which led directly to this podcast episode. So I am most grateful to have made your acquaintance in these recent months. Thanks and good luck with everything.

Tracy Green:

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Ike Evans:

During the month of May, we celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month. I want to take this opportunity to give one final salute to all of those who submitted videos on the theme: what mental health means to me. I've put together this short montage of some of the submissions, which I hope that you enjoy.

Speaker 3:

I think by not overlooking the importance of mental health, we will not only be able to connect with one another better, but we'll also build a happier, more positive environment.

Speaker 4:

Mental health means being able to manage my emotions, being able to manage my daily stresses, my challenges that I encounter every single day. Now, this is not an easy task. It requires me to be very intentional in my actions, very intentional in how I approach in the decisions that I make.

Speaker 5:

Mental health is important because it affects our overall wellbeing and quality of life. It refers to the emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing that impacts how we think, feel, and behave. Good mental health allows us to cope with daily stressors of life, form and maintain healthy relationships, make some decisions, and achieve our goals.

Speaker 6:

Mental health is the difference between thriving and surviving with the recipe of adding in a little resiliency and self-care and removing the stigma and lack of resources.

Speaker 7:

Mental health is about taking care of ourselves. We sometimes just need to allow ourselves to be able to let loose and be who we are. We need to stop the judgment that goes along with the stigma associated with mental illness and understand that it's okay to be who you are or even taking that time out that we need sometimes.

Speaker 8:

Mental wellness is community wellness. We all went through the pandemic together, suffered losses together, and we're still dealing with the aftermath together.

Ike Evans:

I've included a link to the full playlist in the show description, and that does it for this episode. We're so glad that you could join us. Production Assistance by Anna Harris, Kate Rooney, and Darrell Wiggins. Just as taking care of ourselves enhances our ability to help others, so it is as well that by helping others, we enhance our own resilience. Thanks, as always, to the Hogg Foundation for its support. And please leave us a review and subscribe to us on the podcast app of your choice. Taking us out now is Anna's Good Vibe. Taking us out now is Anna's Good Vibes. Thanks for joining us.