



Hogg Foundation
for Mental Health



Episode 151: Diversity Awareness and Wellness in Action (Transcript)

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Ike Evans: Hi, welcome to Into the Fold, the Mental Health Podcast. I'm your host, Ike Evans, and today we are delighted to bring you episode 151, Diversity Awareness and Wellness in Action. But first, some mental health headlines. The Hogg Foundation has co-signed a statement from the Ford Foundation that sharply criticizes the recent US Supreme Court decision banning the use of race conscious admissions in higher education.

The court's decision in *Students for Fair Admissions versus University of North Carolina* and *Students for Fair Admissions versus President and Fellows of Harvard College* effectively ends affirmative action in higher education. It holds that the use of race-based admissions procedures is a violation of the 14th Amendment. The Hogg Foundation joins numerous other funders and philanthropic organizations in denouncing the decision.

To quote the statement, "the ruling threatens to return this nation to a time when education and opportunity are reserved for a privileged class. It endangers 60 years of multiracial movements to challenge our nation to live up to the ideals enshrined in our founding documents. The decision erects new barriers to building a society in which everyone has the opportunity to improve their lives, communities, health and education." I will provide a link to the statement in the show description.

Obviously, this is a huge development, so I encourage everyone listening to read the statement and learn as much as they can about the ramifications of this decision. The month of July is Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. Throughout the month, the Hogg Foundation will be highlighting stories that explore the efforts of diverse communities to improve community conditions that impact mental health and what we all can do to help make that a reality. If you are interested, visit our website at hogg.utexas.edu/minority-mental-health.

And in other news, the American Psychiatric Association, the APA, has released its own statement on the Supreme Court decision that I've already mentioned, saying that the ruling will "undermine the ability of colleges, universities, and medical schools to build a workforce of healthcare professionals that can effectively treat the increasingly diverse body of patients they serve."

Building up the diversity and cultural competency of the mental health workforce has long been a policy concern of the Hogg Foundation, and the APA statement reflects the deep concern that many in the healthcare and mental health fields have about the effect that this ruling could have. I will include a link to the full story 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 signup link on our main website at hogg.utexas.edu.

DAWA, standing for Diversity Awareness and Wellness in Action, is an Austin based organization that honors, celebrates, and empowers "community frontliners and creatives of color through direct financial support, as well as culturally relevant mental health programming." In the process, they are also modeling a form of social entrepreneurship that shows how small organizations can make a big difference in ways that even a major philanthropy like the Hogg Foundation can learn from. Their founder and director, Chaka Moore, is in our studio today to tell us all about it. Well, Chaka, how's it going?

Chaka Moore: It's going great. I'm glad to be here.

Ike Evans: Our listeners would love to know more about you and what it took for you to get DAWA off the ground initially. I saw the face you just made.

Chaka Moore: Oh my goodness. Yeah, if you could see the face, I rolled my eyes, stuck my lips out. Man, it's been a journey. It has been a journey. I moved to Austin in 2009, right at the end of 2009. Me and my wife, we have a hip hop group called Riders Against the Storm, and we moved here to Austin in pursuit of a career in music. We really wanted to take our ideas and our visions for ourselves as creators, as musicians to another level. We were, at the time, staying in a place called Providence, Rhode Island. Just didn't feel like we could get done when we wanted to get done.

We wanted to move to a city where there was some music industry going on, but didn't necessarily want to go to a New York, didn't necessarily want to go to an LA, because at the time, we were both coming out of intense careers in community, like doing a lot of work with young people, youth empowerment. I was a high school teacher. I ran an after school arts program, a lot of empowerment work. I was a social worker at one point at a community college. We were both just really worn out from that work. It was a little bit exhausting mentally.

We didn't have to go to a city and hit the ground and be hustling. Austin came out of nowhere. We came and visited and everything just felt good, to be honest. It wasn't any big lightning moment where it was like aha, but we just felt a little bit of relief. We felt that something could happen here. We moved down here at the end of 2009 and started things off in 2010, and we've been rolling ever since. But around 2015-16, our careers were solid, meaning solid for those of you that haven't pursued a career in ours, it's not like you're going from gig to gig, check to check.

It's like, shoot, if I don't get a gig this week, then I'm in trouble. We're out of that phase, and we're into a phase where we have a party that we did called Body Rock where we had five to 600 people coming out every month. It was a check that we had written for ourselves. It's like when you have a job and you have an employer, the check is coming. You know it's coming every two weeks. You plan your life accordingly. When you're a creative, if you're not getting a gig or something's not coming around, you could not have anything coming in for a whole month sometimes.

There's a lot of up and down with that. Around 2015-2016, that up and down, we balanced it out and it felt good. We felt like we could think just a little more clearly. 2018, we bought a home. Reaching that milestone between 2016 and 2018, started to think more about just Austin in general. Because when you're in the middle of it, you just got to do what you got to do.

But when you get in a more comfortable position, a more privileged situation where you have free time, you have time to think, we started to look around and just realizing how unaffordable Austin was becoming, how many challenges were emerging for us. I mean, we had come out of that. We knew it, but by the time we had reached a sustainable point, Austin was still affordable when we reached our point of sustainability. We were living in a one bedroom apartment. It was like \$750.

It was right off of airport. It was affordable, but everything... I mean, it was changing since we've been here, but everything really changed drastically, I felt, from my perspective personally, around 2016-2017. The writing was on the wall where we got here, but it was like, oh wow, this is a different city now, 2016-2017. It became an entirely different city during the pandemic. I mean, I feel like after the pandemic, it was like, there's all these new buildings. There's all this new stuff.

Where did this stuff come from? But in 2018, because I had time, because this is a mental health organization... You're talking about mental health. Our mental health was really put to the test. There was a lot of anxiety that we were dealing with, because we came down here with this vision for ourselves and it took us five, six years to get there. There's even times where anxiety attacks. You're dealing with depression because money just isn't... You're not making ends meet. There was a lot of mental health things that we had to address and deal with in our climb to this point of sustainability.

But anyway, when I got there, I started to basically just say, hey, what I can do right now is put \$200 aside. If I see somebody and they seem like they're going through it, or if I don't see anybody, I could just hit somebody up every month to say, hey, do you need a little help? Or not even say that. Just talk to them and say, hey, I'm about to cash you \$200. Or not even say anything. Just talk to them and then send them money. Those were things I was doing every month.

Every month I was giving \$200 personally from our resources. But then it would be a couple people a month sometimes or three people or whatever. I would be hearing, I'd be at a spot and somebody would just be down on their luck. My car just got in the pound. I got to get to work. I live too far from the city right now. I have to have this car. Things like that. Just everyday stuff that people are dealing with. I would say, hey, I just gave away this \$200. I'm not saying this to them, but like okay, then I'm going to hit up Amani.

I'm going to hit up David. I'm going to hit up all these people and see what I can raise in a week, two weeks. I'm like, yo, just cash at me \$5, \$10. If somebody needs help, I'm just going to send it to them. I had that trust built in the community, so people would do it. Sometimes I raised 300. Sometimes I raised six, seven. That's what I was doing after a certain point. But then after about a year of that, I was just kind of like, well, why isn't there a place that people can go to when they get in this situation?

Because I'm doing this informally just on my own. Isn't there some type of organization or something that just when people are going through these financial crisis, which also cause mental health crisis? We had a friend that we lost to suicide. We had friends that were hospitalized for 30, 60, 90 days because of some of the stresses that they were under. It's like, why isn't there a place when people are going to that they know that they can just hit up, call, email, whatever, and get some money?

Pretty much that was the idea. There wasn't anything like that. A lot of programs, you got to go through something. You got to take these classes. You got to do this. You got to do that. When you need money, you need money. You can't even think. You can't even sit down and put your calendar together and show up for the meeting sometimes because you're trying to just figure out how to make ends meet. I was just like, why isn't there a place that just understands? You're a creative.

You're a social worker. You're a teacher. You're a healthcare provider. You're a service industry worker. We know what you're going through. Your work is not highly valued in our society. Come here, get a little bit of help. That was it. That was the idea. In 2019 on my birthday, I threw a party. I figured I know enough people, where if I throw a party, at least 100 people are going to come out. It could be 100. It could be 300. It could be more. Not trying to put a stress on the number, but just like, I'm going to throw some parties.

It's going to be about this. I'm going to call it DAWA. DAWA means medicine in Swahili. We're just going to be about this medicine, giving medicine to these people that are healers in our community. I threw the party. I raised \$3,000 at the first party. My plan was to get to \$10,000, give it away, and just keep doing it. That was just the general idea at first. I set up an account with the Austin Community Foundation. I set up a WIX page, like a website, just telling what it's about, just some general information.

I set up an Instagram page and a Facebook page, and that was it. People knew that if they donated, this wasn't going to me. It's the Austin Community Foundation. It's a vetted organization. Just took care of that. I was like, we'll see what happens. I'll throw these parties and we'll going to see what happens. But that was September 2019. Life happened. I just couldn't quite figure out what my next thing was going to be. I was like, all right, we'll figure it out. And then the pandemic happened.

In between September 2019 and the end of 2019 maybe, yes, \$6,000 from me just posting on Facebook or posting on IG and just generally just saying, this is what we're doing. Pandemic happened. Before I knew it, we had 40, \$50,000. It was in three months, like boom. In between that time and when we did our first distribution in June, I got a group of people together for a nonprofit space, art space, different spaces of people that understood this mission, and I just asked them to guide me, help me figure this out.

It's very informal, but they were really influential in getting us ready to do that first disbursement. We did that in June of 2020. We gave out \$40,000 in June. Since June of 2020, we distributed \$263,000 in under four years. We became a nonprofit in 2022. That was not my intention at all. There's definitely a burden and a weight that comes with that. We have now five part-time employees. There's like an increased need to raise money and to bring in income, not just to distribute it, but to pay for people's livelihoods.

We're looking at moving into a space. There's rental costs. There's a lot of costs now that I wasn't envisioning when we started. But in order to have the impact that we want to have is you have to take these steps. It's a catch 22 for somebody that really just wants to give away money. That's basically what I wanted to do from the beginning. We're doing that now, but we also have three other programs. We have a studio downtown where people of color can come and create podcasts like these for free.

We also have a program called the Black Live Music Fund, which we've been doing a residency in Antone's for the last month celebrating Black Music Month. The Black Live Music Fund is just about creating space for Black music and Black musicians to thrive in Austin. And then we have a program called Vision:8291, which is a partnership with South by Southwest and other companies to elevate and empower the grassroots organizations in Austin that are led by people of color.

Ike Evans: Thank you. Thank you very much. Is my mic level too low? It might be.

Chaka Moore: Okay.

Ike Evans: It looks better. I couldn't help notice the t-shirt you're sporting there. Community is our greatest technology.

Chaka Moore: That's right.

Ike Evans: Could you expound on that a little bit?

Chaka Moore: I mean, before we had the stuff called technology, we relied on each other more. Yeah, I use technology. I set up a Instagram page, I set up a website, but really it was about community that built this thing. It was my relationships with people. It was their relationship with not just me as a person, but what I'm doing in Austin that allowed DAWA to exist. We want to just understand fully the power. Sometimes we put power in other things, but we want to start to understand the power that we have within our own persons to shape whatever realities that we see or experience.

Community to us is first and foremost. One of the key components of community that we really stress and is embedded in everything we do is that we see you. If you live in a real community, people witness you, the good and the bad. But when you're down or you need something, they know who you are and they know how to speak to who you are. Because I think in our society what happens is if you make a mistake, then you are your mistake. We only see your mistake.

But when you live in a community, people say, "Ah, I know you made that mistake, but that's not who you are. I've been seeing you. You've shown other things. We want to focus on that. We want to feed that. We don't want feed the mistake." That's where community comes in. If we have strong community, then we have less of these challenges, the mental health challenges. One of the tribes or one of my mentors, his name was Molly Domaso May, the Dagara tribe.

When somebody was dealing with something, because this happens in Indigenous communities, in all communities, people have breakdowns. They lose themselves for a moment. If that person went off and just felt like maybe they were suicidal, maybe they didn't want to be here anymore, maybe they just felt lost or confused or misunderstood, then they send somebody to that person to talk with them. If that person can't bring them back, they send another person. If that person can't bring them back, they send another person.

If they have to send the entire village to let that person know that they're loved or whatever thing it is that they're dealing with, then they're going to do that. Well, we live in a society, this technological society where nobody has time for

that, right? But if we did, what a difference it would make. Really community is our greatest technology.

Ike Evans: DAWA stands for Diversity and Wellness in Action.

Chaka Moore: Diversity Awareness and Wellness in Action.

Ike Evans: Okay, okay, thank you. We hear a lot about diversity and wellness nowadays. What does DAWA offer that's unique or scarce in the community?

Chaka Moore: Well, we just make the connection. Because one of the realities that we've created with these systems is that in order for me to have shelter, I need money. In order for me to be clothed, I need money. In order for me to be fed, I need money. In order for me to get healthcare provide, I need money. Money is what runs a lot of things. It really doesn't. We really do. But at the end of the day, I can't show up and just say, "Hey, I'm a good person. Will you feed me?" People are going to look at you crazy.

Or you can't say, "Oh, well, I'm a teacher. I work with all these kids in the community. Can I have lunch today?" No, they want money. Wellness has to involve money. It has to involve financial investment and resources. If we don't apply that and take that out, then it's not dealing with the reality. The reason that a lot of people end up trying to escape through drugs or maybe some addictions, any type of addiction, maybe it's video games or whatever, just trying to escape, the reason that they do that is because they don't feel a connection.

They feel isolation. A lot of that has to do with access to resources a lot of times. One of the most important resources that we need is money. If we're not going to provide housing, if we're not going to provide food, then we need to provide money. Wellness, you can't take money out of the equation. You see these people, these self-help gurus and everything, they talk about self-care. Well, there's a lot of things that I can't do.

There are things that I can do, and we don't believe in just being a victim because you can find it if you want it, but it's challenging when you're under a lot of stress and you don't know where to go. You just don't feel like anything is possible. Money doesn't necessarily change all that, but it helps. I've just had that experience personally, because I have a master's degree. That doesn't mean that I'm smarter than anybody else. But at the end of the day, I'm not somebody that's just trying to freeload or just trying to take from anybody.

But there's been times where I just needed money and people didn't understand that. They would just say, "Get a better job. Why are you taking that low paying job doing that community stuff?" It's like, no, this is my passion. I really enjoy this and I'm having an impact. Could you help me out with some money? People have this connection with it where it's like you're lazy, or you're

not working hard enough, or just get a better job. These are the things that I heard. This is me personally, so I know what it's like for others that don't have the privilege of a master's degree or a college education.

These are just the things that I faced and having faced them, just wanting to do my part to make things a little better. I think a lot of my mental health struggles, the bottom line was money, like me not being able to feed myself. We had people come into our house and literally fill our refrigerator with groceries. Community. If they didn't do that, they would give us money. Because what they were saying at the end of the day is, "I see you. You are important. You are doing something important in our community, and you not having money doesn't mean that you're less than."

It doesn't mean you should be ashamed. It just means that you don't have money right now. Here's some money. Here's some food." But most people don't have that community. They don't have those people looking out for them. That's why we feel like that's where DAWA comes in and says, "No, we understand. You don't have to explain anything. No. Just come and get it."

Ike Evans: The Hogg Foundation recently awarded DAWA a \$25,000 grant to support the DAWA Fund. What kind of difference are you aiming to make, or in general, whenever you receive any kind of cash infusion like that?

Chaka Moore: Right. With anybody listening, hopefully you've gone to the website or you're going to the website and learn more. We just gave out \$90,000 in May. We opened the application on Monday, and within 48 hours, we had over 400 applications. We had to shut the application down because we only had 300 slots. We're giving away \$90,000, \$300 each. There's a tremendous amount of need out here. The challenge that we face is that specifically with foundations, people don't want to give you money to give away money. They want to give you money for a program or this or that.

We face that continuously in this environment in Austin, where they give you money for a program for staff or rent or whatever, whatever, but people don't want to just give you money to give it away. That's a challenge. The Hogg Foundation is stepping up and saying, "Here's \$25,000." That \$25,000 is going to go to, it's \$300 each, 80 people, 80 plus people. That's what's going to happen. What we want to do is never have to shut down our giving. Those 80 people, we gave the 300. I know that we already have 80 people on a waiting list.

Those are the people that are going to get... We're not going to reopen it and say there's money here just to get people excited. We're going to go down that list, the first 80 on the list, 80, whatever, 82, 83, whatever it is, are going to get that \$25,000. We're going to keep talking and keep telling our story and keep letting people know that we don't want to have to shut down our giving. We've done four rounds no., but every time we give it away, we got to wait to the build it back up.

Ike Evans: You seem to have an affinity for the term community frontlines as a catchall for the people you're trying to reach. What does that term mean to you?

Chaka Moore: Community frontliners are people that are going to do the work regardless. When there's a crisis, these are the people that run towards it. These are the people in the community that are going to be doing the work regardless. We also put creatives in that role because... Why do you have singing in church? Because it does something for your spirit. It does something that just talking can't do. Just the sound of someone's voice, it does something for us, and that's why it's not going anywhere. These are people we need. We need them, right?

The role that they play in terms of touching our spirit and giving us inspiration as creatives, as musicians, they're on the frontline, the social workers, the teachers, the people when the electricity goes out, the water, something happens, these are the people that are going to HEB buying as much wire as they can and they're handing out of their trunk, or they're going into neighborhoods checking on people, seeing what they need. These are the type of people that we feel like are undervalued.

They haven't created some widget or some type of thing that they could sell that makes them important, but they are essential to the wellness of our community. We feel like if we look out for them, then our community is healthier. If they are struggling, then we're... I mean, we already know there's a lot of mental health stuff going on. We already know that. That's just documented. We all feel it, pressure, anxiety, depression. These are things that is happening. Who helps us with those things?

That's the community frontliners, the teachers, the social workers. The people that are going to stop and actually say, "You know what, are you okay? You know what I mean? Do you know about this? Do you know about that? Can I help?" That's the community frontliners.

Ike Evans: It's almost like whenever I hear the term compassion fatigue, one way that you can reinterpret that is that there is a community frontliner who's not getting what they need. But then rather than see the issue as systemic, it gets personalized as compassion fatigue. It has a lot of currency within social work, that term.

Chaka Moore: Exactly. A lot of times people talk about self-care and it's like self-care so they can go back to work. Man, if it was up to me, these people would get paid so much more, and I think we would have such better results. Because at the end of the day, what you get, and I face this myself, in these roles is like you start to question, is this worth it no matter what? You can't make ends to meet in a city like Austin where everything is rising. They just had a KUT article that said you have to work like 170 hours or something if you have a minimum wage job to pay for a one bedroom apartment.

The wages are not rising at the cost of living, in step with the cost of living. If it was up to me, man, these people would get paid the most. When things happen, when someone has a breakdown and there's a shooting, or there's this, or there's that, everyone wants to talk about everything, except the fact that people aren't getting what they need and they're suffering from mental health. The people that care about those things, they don't get the pay that they deserve.

It just is what it is. I'm doing my part, and I'm working to develop relationships with organizations like The Hogg Foundation and continue to say, "Hey, let's continue to work together. Hopefully this isn't the last time that we work together, and we can find ways to create a more healthy Austin." Finances are a part of that.

Ike Evans: What do you consider to be the most joyous, as well as the most frustrating aspects of being a Black Austinite?

Chaka Moore: Well, the most joyous, I think, is I have a son now. He brings me joy every day.

Ike Evans: How old?

Chaka Moore: He's 16 months now.

Ike Evans: Oh my.

Chaka Moore: He brings me joy, just watching him just light up. I think that he reminds me that all these things, all these labels, everything is made up. It's really like we all come here with what people may call a soul or a spirit. We all come here with an energy that sometimes a lot of times it's oppressed or suppressed or controlled. We lose our way from our original what we come here with just through rules. People tell, oh no, you can't be that. You got to be this, da, da, da. People impose their limitations on you.

I think race is something that's been opposed on us as an idea that somehow being born with melanin is a limitation. But I see it as just like... It's beautiful. When I look at my son, I see myself. I see my ancestors, my grandfather, my great-grandfather, just my whole lineage. It brings me a lot of joy knowing that we're here, we're strong, we're contributing to the next generation, and just enjoying that. That brings me a lot of joy. My son, obviously he's Black, my wife is Haitian. He brings me a lot of joy.

I think what was hard maybe about being Black in Austin is I found that there's a lack of leadership. What I mean by leadership, a lot of times we want to say, "Well, white supremacy or patriarchy are the issues," but I think there's a lot of things that we do within our own community, which are related to those things and learn from those things. There's just a lot of people playing roles and not really leading. When I think about some of the challenges that I faced, it's

people not really creating opportunities for the ideas and the visions that I have. All I do with that is I don't do that in my life.

When I see someone young that has ideas that may be a little disruptive or a little different, or maybe even loud or whatever, or obnoxious to some people, I want to move towards that, because that is something that's going to change what we're dealing with. Change isn't comfortable. It's not about sitting in your bubble and going to brunch and feeling good every day. You have to feel like things aren't right to change something. I feel like a lot of the leadership here are very comfortable, and there's a lot of different reasons for that, but I found that to be very challenging.

A lot of people may think, well, white people don't want to hear what you have to say because you're talking about people of color. You're talking about the failures of the system. You're talking about these things, but there's also Black people that don't want to hear what I have to say either and don't create opportunities for me either because they are fine the way things are. That's been a consistent challenge of feeling like...

I'm someone that's done a lot in the city and felt like sometimes they don't want me in the room, but that's okay because Black, white, or otherwise, people want me in the room. It's just about a coalition of the willing of the people that hear what I'm saying and just working with that. Talking about something, I forget the word that you used, joy and the other word, but that's been a frustrating thing for me, is just knowing that we could do so much more if the leadership was different.

Ike Evans: It sounds like you've got a lot going on. How do you make time for your own wellness? What does that consist of for you?

Chaka Moore: That is something that's a work in progress. I think for me, I'm definitely built different than most people. I think I can do more than most people. I have a capacity that's different, and I think I realized that early on. But there's challenges that come with that. Sometimes you take on too much. When I do feel like I'm going beyond my capacity, first of all, I have a wife that's always checking me. She's always making sure like, are you sure about that? Do you really have time for that stuff? Just really making sure I'm looking at myself. But whenever I feel like I'm kind of overloaded in my capacity, I rest.

That's the main thing that I do is I rest. I do yoga. I'll go hiking. I'll go just in the water. Water does a lot for me, just being immersed in water, swimming, just hanging out. There's a lot of different water holes in Austin that are really great. Those are things that I do. I'll just go out to eat by myself, just have a nice meal. Recently in the last three months, I started taking Fridays off completely from work. I just worked Monday through Thursday, so I have a long weekend, because I'm in control of my schedule.

I'm constantly checking in. I think there are times when I'm doing very well and there are times when I'm doing not so well. I think when you're not doing so well, the best thing is just to be honest with yourself. Don't lie to yourself. I think that I'm very honest with myself. I know when I'm not doing well. Sometimes it's not immediate. Sometimes I just got to recalibrate and get back to healthier practices. But one of my main things is just rest. Just taking the rest that I need and making sure I'm getting to sleep, because that's when things start to get hard when I'm not sleeping enough.

Ike Evans: Where can people go to learn more about your organization and how they can help?

Chaka Moore: I would love for people listening to this podcast to go to [dawaheals, D-A-W-A-H-E-A-L-S, .org](http://dawaheals.org). You can find us on Instagram at [@dawaheals, D-A-W-A-H-E-A-L-S](https://www.instagram.com/dawaheals). I would just encourage y'all to make a donation, become a subscriber. You can do that through the donation, a monthly subscriber. I want to just say that one of the slogans for the Black Live Music Fund is there is no Austin without us. That's about Black music being the main... Just being the fuel for the city, blues, rock and roll, jazz, all those genres and everything really built the city and made it a music city.

But also there's no Austin without us, those that are taking on these roles, the teachers, the social workers, the healthcare providers. If your life has been touched by someone like that, whether they be a person of color or not, consider that. Take a moment and understand that specifically Austin is displacing people faster than any other city in the country. It's one of the most economically segregated cities in the country. We're not going to shift any of that without investment.

One of the things that we believe in doing is being creative about how we do that, but we're going to need more investment and more support so that we can give back to this specific community. Check us out, dawaheals.org. Email us, dawa@dawaheals.org. We hope to hear from you. We hope you'll get involved. We hope that this resonates with you and that we can work together to make a better Austin.

Ike Evans: Okay, great. And that's a wrap.

Chaka Moore: All right.

Ike Evans: This isn't the first time we've explored the mental health needs of community frontliners. In episode 69, we took a look at some community frontliners who are especially dear to Austin, and that is musicians. Musicians regularly encounter situations that strain their mental health.

The late nights and the venues can be difficult on the body and the mind, especially for those who already have issues with substance use. Add in the lack

of job security and stability, work-life balance is practically non-existent. Family support can be little or strained. Here is one local musician's take on the situation.

Vanessa Lively: I think there's some figure, like 100 people move to Austin every day, and many of them, I know a lot of artists and musicians are moving to Austin daily because they want to partake in this wonderful, vibrant community that we have here and the opportunities that exist and the organizations that support musicians. But what that makes happen in the real feet on the ground what's happening in the city of Austin with musicians is that there are a lot of musicians that are wanting places to play, and they're more and more frequently willing to pay for almost no money, that sort of thing.

And so then the people that have been living here maybe as a professional musician for many years, it's almost like there's a little bit of a displacement that can happen. If someone's too expensive, well, they're like, we don't need to pay that much for your band anymore. We're going to go ahead and get this other band who's willing to play for whatever the tips might be.

Ike Evans: People are still putting out damn good work on the cheap.

Vanessa Lively: Exactly and they're funding their own records. Oftentimes there's very little money coming into a musician, but musicians are almost paying to be a professional musician because they have to get funding through other sources like their families and their friends and their fans. It's obviously a job that does not have any job security. There's no stability with it, and you're always having to work.

Patsy Bouressa: I think the thing that I personally have learned as a clinician and as a music lover, I never really gave much thought to the fact that it's so stressful and it's a constant ever present thing of having to be out there. I go to concerts before I was a clinician and was just like, okay, I'm going to go see so-and-so.

It never dawned on me that at Antone's or at Continental Club or whatever, when you got a band of five or 10 people, you're not walking away with very much money. It's an expensive town to live in. It's incredibly stressful to stay here, yet they want to because they love this community and they love what they do.

Ike Evans: The voices that you just heard belong to Vanessa Lively, an Austin musician, and Patsy Bouressa, clinical director at the SIMS Foundation, an Austin based nonprofit that provides mental health support to area musicians and their families. I've included a link to the full episode in the show description. You can go straight to it from your device. Finally, and in the spirit of DAWA, let us tip our hats to the community frontliners in our lives. The mission of the Hogg Foundation is to transform mental health in everyday life. There is a phrase that we are fond of using to capture that possibility.

And that is, the places where people live, learn, work, play, and pray. Well, honoring that commitment means holding space for those who do the work of building those spaces, whether it's teachers, coaches, civic leaders, barbershop employees, faith community leaders, and yes, the behavioral health professionals that we are all familiar with, the social workers, the psychologists, the counselors. This July for Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, I implore everyone to either seek out or renew acquaintances with the community frontliners in your life.

Find out what it is that they need and how it is that you can support them. And that does it for this episode. We're glad that you could join us. Production assistance by Kate Rooney, Darrell Wiggins, and Anna Harris. Music provided courtesy of Chaka Moore and DAWA Studios.

Just as taking care of ourselves enhances our ability to help others, so it is that by helping others, we enhance our own resilience. Leave us a review. Subscribe to us on the podcast app of your choice. Taking us out now is Anna's Good Vibes by our friend Anna Harris. Thanks for joining us.