

“Black Kinship Families – Unsung and Underserved”: Key Takeaways

This document presents key takeaways from a conversation between **Karyne Jones**, President and CEO of the National Caucus & Center on Black Aging, Inc. (NCBA), the country’s preeminent national organization on issues impacting minority citizens aged 55 and over, and the **Reverend Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, III**, Senior Pastor of Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas and President of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition.

The terms “grandfamilies” and “kinship families,” used throughout this document, refer to all families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. The terms can be used interchangeably to refer to these families.

Click [here](#) to watch the full conversation between Ms. Jones and Rev. Dr. Haynes.

Black kinship families are often wrongly characterized as broken or dysfunctional.

Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, III:

- ▶ “What is often mis-defined as a broken family structure in our context, there are reinforcements that are engaged in making sure that the kids are not only brought up, but the kids get to school, the kids have resources.”

Mischaracterization can lead to flawed readings of a kinship family’s stability, well-being, and fitness.

Dr. Haynes:

- ▶ “When you talk about the traditional, Americanized, even politicized view of the family, you are missing out on not only what is [a] strength of the Black community in terms of the village approach to bringing up our children, but you also end up with a lot of our kids being judged, misrepresented, and families that are totally misrepresented because we don’t always fit into the Americanized version of what a family looks like.”

Service organizations must consider that many Black kinship families' circumstances are the result of trauma such as drug use or incarceration.

Dr. Haynes:

- ▶ “Some of that is the product of a traumatic event that took place. And so the grandmother or great-grandmother is stepping in and filling a gap that was imputed on that family by trauma. For me, it goes back to the need for access to mental health services for the child, even for the grandmother.”
- ▶ “[I]f you don't have access to mental health services, I think you're missing out on the fact that sometimes there's a grandparent involved because something traumatic has happened.”

Cultural competence is essential if services and resources are to be effective and fair to Black kinship families.

Dr. Haynes:

- ▶ “If you don't have cultural competence when it comes to addressing, ministering, serving this clientele, then you can easily come across as being judge-y. And worse than that, shaming something that really should not be shamed.”

Social service agencies should publicize and promote success stories about working with Black kinship families.

Dr. Haynes:

- ▶ “[I]t is rare to hear an experience that was healthy, helpful, and healing. It's very rare. If all I've heard and all I've experienced is bad, then of course I'm going to do all I can to protect what's mine.”
- ▶ “[N]ot only is the 'system' going to have to market some positive successes that they can point to and that can get on the grapevine in the community, but ensure that in the process that there is ... cultural competence.”

Churches and community organizations should develop programs to address the needs of Black kinship families.

Karyne Jones:

- ▶ “We're hoping churches can create new ministries just for those caregivers and their families, just as they have senior ministries and Bible study ministries and other ministries within their churches that help their congregations and the

communities that are surrounding. It would be great to see our churches create these new ministries just for these caregivers and their families.”

The Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center (Network) helps government agencies and nonprofits in states, tribes, and territories work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries to improve supports and services for families in which grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends are raising children whose parents are unable to do so. For more information, please visit www.GKSNetwork.org.

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