

A photograph of three Black women in a dimly lit room. The woman on the left has curly hair and wears glasses and a dark green t-shirt. The woman in the middle has braided hair and wears a dark green t-shirt. The woman on the right has curly hair and wears a dark green top. They are all looking towards the camera. The background is dark with some colorful lighting, possibly from a stage or event. A large, semi-transparent orange circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and author's name.

# Weary: The Mental Health of Black Women

Miracle Matthews



The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women's Leadership's website at <http://iwl.rutgers.edu>.

# Goal Statement

My SAP, *Weary, The Mental Health of a Black Woman, Walking in faith without looking at where you're going*, was created to showcase the daily struggles Black women face mentally. I have used scholarly articles focusing on the issue beyond personal experiences from my close ones and me. Multiple studies focus on the effect racism has on Black women and how the quality of care is different because of race. I hypothesized that Black women are more likely to be misdiagnosed within the mental healthcare system because of the stigma surrounding how mental illnesses look on Black women. As a result, Black women are less likely to seek treatment, identify their struggles, and receive treatment than their White counterparts. This issue has strained the Black community's overall mental wellness, especially for Black women. My website, *blkweary* includes blogs focusing on topics ranging from stereotypes, racial trauma, maternal mental health and the impact culturally competent care has on the Black community. I also allowed my community to make blogs on the website to share their own mental health journey.



“Women experience depression at rates twice that of men. But Black women are only half as likely to seek care as their White counterparts.” (John Hopkins Medicine)



**Black Women**  
are among the most  
**undertreated groups  
for depression**  
in the United States.

— *Research in Nursing and Health*, 2009, and *JAMA Psychiatry*, 2010

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#BlackHealthFacts

# Foundations

## Mistrust/Distrust

Black women are not always accounted for in clinical trials. Hence, they often go underdiagnosed, misdiagnosed, and undertreated. (Holden et al.) As Alexandria Okeke's (2013) research paper shows, the advancement of healthcare started with the experimentation of Black and Brown women

## Stigma

Certain beliefs about mental health are upheld within the Black community and often ignored. In Faye A. Gary's (2009) study, stigma creates barriers for minority groups, impeding treatment and well-being and developing preventable mortalities and morbidities. Family stress, work-related stress, racism, and discrimination are positively associated with psychological distress within minority populations.





# Angry Black Woman



(Illustration by Noa Denman)

# Jezebel



Mickalene Thomas  
2006.ALEXANDRIA MUSEUM OF ART

# Strong Black Woman



(nadia\_bormotova/iStock, Getty Images)

# Timeline



First started to think about what I wanted to do, produced an idea.

Spring 2022

Had a photoshoot, took pictures that I thought would compliment my website, displayed some emotions Black women feel amidst this struggle.

July 2022

August 2022

Purchased the domain for the website and started to talk to a website creator about what I wanted mine to look like

October 2022

November 2022

Conducted a survey, asked my community how they felt about the current state of the mental healthcare system. Made sure this was an issue worthy of discussing.

Completely 180 in terms of the dissemination of my project, decided I wanted to do a Website instead of the zine, started working on that.

November & December 2022

Website and Instagram goes live!

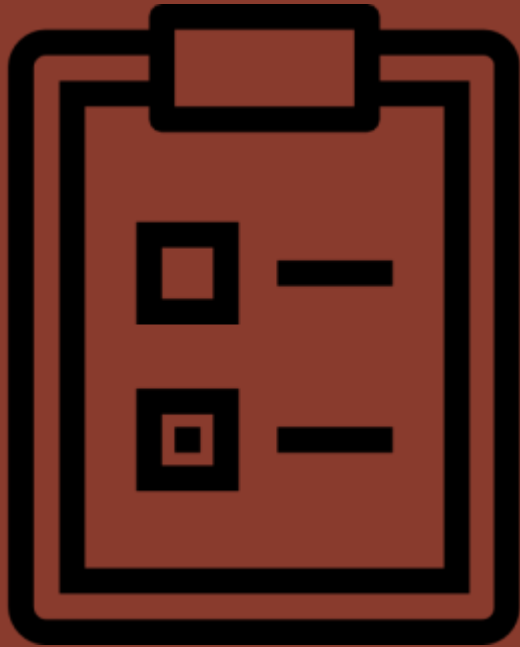


"We want to present ourselves as strong women. We want to be there for our families. We want to wear all the hats. We want to be successful. We want to put on a brave face."

Nina Westbrook



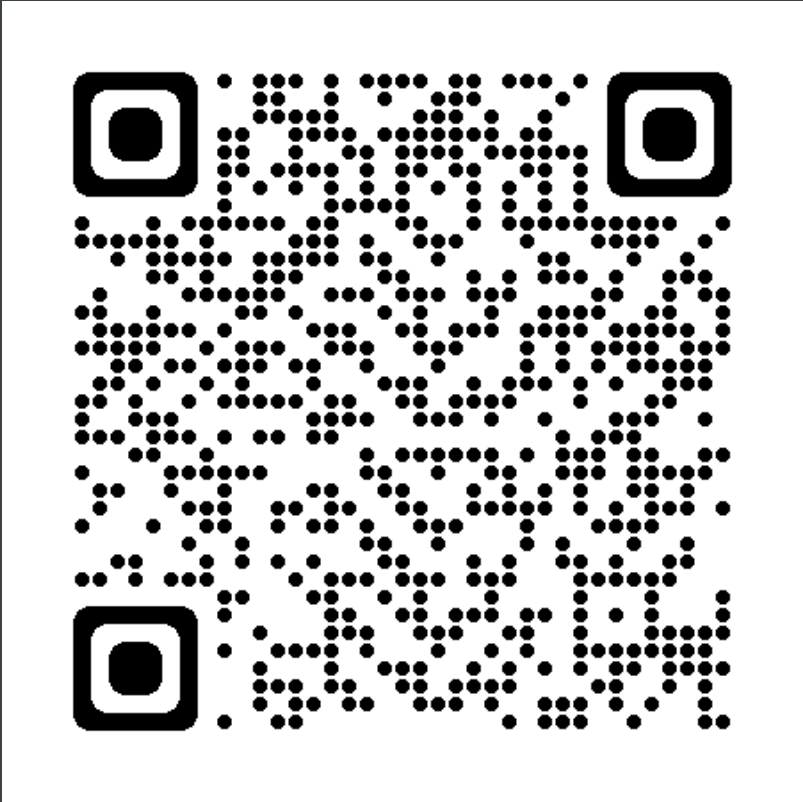
# Components



Created a survey asking if those within my community felt as if there was a bias within the mental healthcare systems and if this affects treatment seeking.

Conducted the photoshoot, allowed friends to share some of the struggles they have encountered during their mental health journey

Used the website to share blogs detailing problems within the mental healthcare system and the Black community. Also allowed others to submit their thoughts and feelings they have felt throughout their journey.



blkweary



**Blkweary** she/her/hers

Personal blog

A website dedicated to strengthen the relationship between mental health wellness and Black women.

IG: @mironce.m

RU-NB

[www.blkweary.org](http://www.blkweary.org)



Liked by [\\_bdalambert](#) and others

**blkweary** The term "survival mode" (Chambers, Tashia, Clinical Social Worker) is often used when discussing the turmoil black women face daily and how they have to just 'keep pushing' through it. According to Psychiatric Times, women are 2x more likely to face a major depressive episode than men. Even more jarring, Black Americans are 20% more likely to develop mental health issues (nami.org) Despite this, black women are less likely to seek mental health care because of various factors such as lack of access to resources and the harmful 'strong black woman' stereotype that masquerades itself as a positive characteristic but in reality leaves little room for vulnerability.

Together we hope to lessen the stigma and disparity of mental health resources for black women.

Submit your story to the link in bio or paste the link below!

Website url: <https://www.blkweary.org>

credits: @jackieg.\_\_\_\_

models pictured (from left to right): Cynthia,



Liked by [\\_bdalambert](#) and others

**blkweary** Hi! My name is Miracle Matthews; I'm a senior at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, a Criminal Justice major double minoring in Psychology and Africana Studies, and the creator of [blkweary.org](http://blkweary.org)!

Self-care and mental health wellness have always been important to me because of things I have struggled with. I'm constantly advocating for inclusive mental

You can't move forward  
with thoughts that hold  
you back.

the mind: a home for peace.



Liked by [\\_bdalambert](#) and 45 others

**blkweary** As a Black woman, I constantly feel the thought of the imposter syndrome phenomenon. Being in spaces where I am the only Black person in the room creates feelings of inferiority and the consciousness that "I am not qualified." Even in events or classroom spaces, being the only Black person amplifies my emotions of thinking I am incapable, incompetent, or even unfit. However, I must not forget that I must trust myself, think for myself, and speak for myself no matter where I am. I must overcome the consciousness and feelings that hold me back from achieving and loving myself for who I am. The thought of not being good

*to healing*

just when i never would,  
i woke up and felt a little  
less pain.

i walked a little faster,  
stood a little taller,  
smiled a little wider.

just when i thought i  
never could,

i put myself back  
together.



Liked by [\\_bdalambert](#) and 41 others

**blkweary** Healing comes in many forms that bring out the best in us, even if it is small. For example, sometimes, slow healing causes me to realize that I need to be more kind to myself and focus on the things I love. The energy I spend being angry, sad, or frustrated with myself needs to stop. Instead, it is crucial to channel that energy I did have into taking care of myself. "Healing isn't linear." Sometimes during healing, we face obstacles or problems that make us



# Future Implications

## What I hope for

- Reducing stigma surrounding seeking mental healthcare treatment within the Black community, specifically for Black women.
- Allow more conversations around mental illnesses.
- Highlight the importance of culturally competent care and how this can impact minority communities.
- The need for healthcare specialists of color

## What now?

- Keeping up with the website, continue posting blogs and updating them.
- Continuing posting on the Instagram
- Reach out to other organizations with the same message

# Inspirations



# Lessons Learned



Confidence



Patience



Gratitude



Activism



# Acknowledgements

- Professor Trigg, Sasha, Elizabeth and everyone involved with IWL
  - My SAP advisor Dr. Maxine Davis
    - Solange Knowles
- My family and friends (Nailah, Jenilee, Jackie, Lilian and Cynthia)
  - My boyfriend (Brandon)
- And most importantly.... All of you!!

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