



***UPLIFT* Volume 4, No. 4 Winter 2023/2024** **CRESTSprgram, LLC**



Embodying the Spirit of *Sankofa*: **Reaching Back & Fetching Something From the Past** **in Order to be Prepared/Armed for the Present and/or Future**

Transitional periods are ideal times for reflection. As we transition from 2023 into 2024, it is worthwhile to reflect on the meaning of Sankofa: an Adinkra symbol that represents the need to "go back and fetch it". At this time, let's reflect on what has been the keys to our success, survival, and resilience when we encountered life challenges in the past. It is important for each of us to identify what these keys have been for us, for our families, for our communities. These keys have been "tried and true" methods of coping that we have implemented on multiple levels - personally, collectively, and historically.



As we reflect on these coping responses, it is imperative that we critically review them to determine which of them will help us to effectively cope with our current and future challenges. First, those that no longer serve us should be left behind, despite their prior usefulness. Second, those that continue to be effective should be retained.

In some instances, the past has been so painful that we are tempted to throw it all out and start anew. Yet, there are always some gems hidden amongst the pain from the past. It would serve us well to go back and fetch them so that we will be better armed to withstand current and future challenges.

It takes tremendous courage and support to search for these hidden gems. In addition, it takes a considerable amount of discernment and wisdom to judge which aspects of our past should be left behind versus brought forward. As educators, parents, mental health clinicians, and other professionals working with Black youth, it is important to know which coping responses are congruent with African-American culture *and* foster racial and cultural identity development. Having this knowledge will improve our educational and emotional outcomes with Black youth.

CRESTSprogram is here to enhance your knowledge and understanding related to cultural coping and transgenerational resilience through our *Videos on Demand* library, tailor-made training programs, coaching, mentoring, and other services. Together, we can embody the spirit of Sankofa for ourselves and the children whose lives we impact.

This issue of UPLIFT contains information about CRESTSprogram's *Videos on Demand* library, customized training programs, and activities (past, present, and future). Additionally, this issue contains an important article about the emotional aspects of the November/December holiday season and an article summarizing our recent staffing changes.

Because you are a valued member of the CRESTSprogram family, we are committed to providing you with consistent updates. We hope that the information contained in this newsletter is beneficial to you both personally and professionally, and revolutionizes how you view and intervene with Black youth as you transition into 2024!

Holiday Connections



Holidays are not always times of cheer and coming together. For some of us, the holidays are a reminder of loss and grief. It can be very stressful to be in the midst of parties, celebrations, gift exchanges, and upbeat music when we don't feel hopeful. This is a time when holidays can trigger sadness, loneliness, and anxiety.

As we prepare to spend time with friends and loved ones, let us not forget to reach out to those around us who may not have the social support that they need. We can reach out by calling, texting, or if appropriate, stopping by. We can invite our neighbors or colleagues to community events. And, sometimes, it can be helpful to just genuinely ask someone "how are you doing?" and really mean it. Plus, we need to wait for the response to let others know that we care and are actively listening.

Finally, as this is a time of gift giving, we need to realize that not all gifts are tangible or material. Some gifts can be of our time. Let's take a moment now, and think of someone who might benefit from our time, our talents, or our wisdom and give generously.



OUR SERVICES

CRESTS-Achieve provides services at a variety of levels, including:

- **INDIVIDUAL LEVEL LEARNING: VIDEOS ON DEMAND**
- **ORGANIZATION LEVEL: Training, consultation, assessments, technical assistance, and coaching to help build skills and support system-level change**

- **MERCHANDISE** and products to encourage, inspire, and remind you of your devotion to supporting black youth
- Quarterly **NEWSLETTER**: Stay up to date with **CREST happenings**
- Free **RESOURCES** (concept papers, videos, podcasts, and factsheets) to keep you inspired and learning

Dive into the CRESTSprogram Communiversality!

CRESTS-Liberate Credential Course



CRESTS-Liberate is an emancipatory research credentialing program designed to inform anyone engaged in research about culturally marginalized communities on how to address the inherent Eurocentrism and bias in conventional research methodologies.

[Enroll Now to Decolonize Your Approach to Research!](#)

Build Your Knowledge and Skills Courses



Click on a topic or topics to learn more.

- [Putting the \(R\)ace in ACES" \(Parts I & II\)](#)
- [Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Black Mothers: Even the Strong Get Weary](#)
- [5 Africentric Parenting Skills That Correlate to High Academic Achievement](#)
- [Unseen & Unheard: Rising Suicide Rates Among Black Children](#)
- [Decolonizing Mental Health Training to Effectively Work with Black Youth](#)

- [Culture-Centered Mondays](#)
- [African-centered Counseling Theories](#)
- [Resiliency in the Midst of Uncertainty](#)

Pre-Order CRESTS-Achieve Credential Courses



Whether you are mental health professional, parent, or educator you can be among the first to immerse yourself in a culture-centered, trauma-informed care professional development program. CRESTS-Achieve is designed to better equip educators, parents, and mental health professionals to promote academic excellence and emotional well-being in Black youth and other children of color.

Our most unique feature is that CRESTS-Achieve *places culture at the center of trauma-informed care*. It is specifically designed to decrease intergenerational trauma and enhance resilience, including healing from race-based trauma and other types of trauma unique to Black youth (and other children of color).

[CRESTS-Achieve: For Individual Mental Health Professionals](#)

[CRESTS-Achieve: For Individual Educators/Parents](#)

2024 ESEA Conference: We're Heading to Portland!



The CRESTSprogram team will be attending the 2024 National ESEA conference in February. Our team will be heading to Portland to attend this conference for our third time! *What's new* about our 2024 conference participation? **Dr. West-Olatunji (CRESTSprogram CEO) will give an *invited lecture*, "Hidden in Plain Sight": Giving Voice to the Experiences of Minoritized Children" on 02/07/2024 at 4:15 p.m.** Immediately after her lecture, Dr. West-Olatunji will host a "Meet the Author" session. **We encourage you to bring your copy of Pediatric Counseling Workbook to have her sign it.**



As before, Dr. Constance West and other key members of the CRESTSprogram team will be accompanying Dr. West-Olatunji to this conference. We will have a booth in the exhibit hall, where we will meet conference attendees, host giveaways and contests, and answer questions. **Additionally, we will have several resources on hand, including copies of our CRESTSprogram concept papers, newsletters, resource lists, etc.** 2024 is just around the corner! We hope to see you in Portland in February at the 2024 national ESEA conference!

UPCOMING EVENTS

CRESTSprogram's Winter 2023/2024 Training Schedule



Promoting Academic Success in Black Children: Pre-K to High School Graduation

Date: Tuesday, January 9, 2024

In this FREE webinar, Dr. Cirecie West-Olatunji and Dr. Constance West will share research findings on the cultural factors associated with academic excellence in Black children and other youth of color. In addition, the presenters will identify culture-centered, trauma-informed interventions to promote academic excellence in Black children. Please join us for this very important training event that should be useful to you personally and professionally --- whether you are an educator, parent, student, advocate, mental health professional working with Black children.

[Register Now, Space is Limited!](#)

Save the Date

Winter/Spring 2024

JANUARY 9

ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN BLACK CHILDREN: PRE-K TO H.S. GRADUATION

FEBRUARY 20

HISTORICAL RESILIENCE IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY: BACK TO OUR ROOTS

APRIL 16

GRIEF & LOSS IN BLACK CHILDREN

MAY 21

BLACK MOTHERS: THE BENEFITS & COSTS OF SUPERWOMAN-HOOD

JUNE 18

BLACK MEN, BOYS, & FATHERS

RECENT EVENTS



We've been very busy since publishing our last newsletter over the summer. Our fall lineup of workshops included webinars on, "*Your Grief Ain't Like Mine*," "*Working With Afro-Latino Youth*," "*Black Girls/Women and Hair*," and "*Infusing Black History & Culture Into Your Holiday Events: Part III*." The webinar on grief and loss was well attended; we had 257 registrants. There was lively discussion and genuine sharing amongst the attendees.

For the training on Afro-Latino youth, we were fortunate to have Dr. Edil Torres Rivera, who is currently serving as president of the American Counseling Association to participate as a panelist. We learned quite a bit about the unique concerns of Afro-Latino schoolchildren.

By far, the webinar on Black hair was extremely popular with 350 registrants. So many stories were shared about how Black women are marginalized and traumatized in society. We look forward to scheduling a Part II of this topic in the future.

We ended 2023 with our third annual presentation on ways to promote Black excellence and wellbeing during the holidays. This *show and tell* event was rewarding, with participants sharing ways to celebrate during the holiday season that support Black children's growth and development.

**CONGRATULATIONS to the Winners of
CRESTsprogram's 2023 Holiday Gift Baskets!**



CRESTSPROGRAM hosted its 3rd annual holiday training event, "Infusing Black History & Culture Into Your Holiday Events: Part III" on 12/12/2023. This year's event was *sold out* with people on the waitlist, as it has been every year!

At this year's event, we gave away two holiday gift baskets (randomly selected from attendees, who had to be present in order to win). **Congratulations to our lucky winners!**

The holiday gift baskets included CRESTSPROGRAM merchandise, including our fleece blanket and first aid kits (that include bandages in assorted brown skin tones). In addition, these baskets included a variety of holiday-related items. If you didn't win a basket this year, please plan now to attend next year's holiday training event!

If you want to order the CRESTSPROGRAM blanket, first aid kit, or other items (for you, your program, family members, or friends), please visit the : [CRESTSPROGRAM Liberation Store](#). Let the shopping begin!

Staffing Updates



We are very pleased to introduce you to our newest staff member, Bill Brighton Laideson who is serving as our social media intern. Bill Brighton is an enthusiastic and creative individual who is passionate about social media and its ever-evolving landscape. He is excited to bring fresh ideas, a knack for engaging content, and a deep understanding of online trends to the team. Bill Brighton is a master's student majoring in Data Analytics at Robert Morris University, where he is not only honing his academic skills but also developing a keen interest in the power of social media to connect, inform, and inspire. Check out Bill Brighton's posts on the CRESTSPROGRAM social media platforms!

We encourage you to “like,” and repost to your network.

We Welcome Your Support!



We welcome your financial support to encourage the growth of our mission and activities to promote academic excellence and emotional well-being in Black children and adolescents.

[Donate Now!](#)



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