Additional Resources

Below is a curated list of resources that clinicians can use to thoughtfully integrate **African American artistic expression** into trauma-informed clinical work. These resources are not intended to replace evidence-based trauma treatments (e.g., EMDR, TF-CBT, CPT, DBT, IFS), but to complement them by fostering identity, resilience, emotional processing, meaning-making, and cultural connection.

African American Literature

Foundational Works

- **Maya Angelou** – *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*; *Letter to My Daughter*
  - Themes: resilience, childhood trauma, identity, recovery, hope.
- **Toni Morrison** – *Beloved*; *The Bluest Eye*; *Home*
  - Themes: historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, memory, healing.
- **James Baldwin** – *The Fire Next Time*; *Notes of a Native Son*
  - Themes: racial trauma, masculinity, identity, emotional honesty.
- **bell hooks** – *All About Love*; *Sisters of the Yam*
  - Themes: healing, self-love, Black wellness, relational trauma.
- **Alice Walker** – *The Color Purple*
  - Themes: recovery from abuse, spirituality, empowerment.
- **Jesmyn Ward** – *Men We Reaped*
  - Themes: grief, structural inequality, Black male loss.
- **Ta-Nehisi Coates** – *Between the World and Me*
  - Themes: racialized trauma, embodiment, resilience.

Poetry

- **Lucille Clifton**
  - "won't you celebrate with me"
  - "blessing the boats"
  - Themes: survival, self-worth, hope.
- **Nikki Giovanni**
  - *Love Poems*
  - *Bicycles*
  - Themes: healing, family, resilience.
- **Langston Hughes**
  - "Mother to Son"
  - "I, Too"
  - Themes: perseverance and dignity.
- **Gwendolyn Brooks**

    - Themes: identity, community, resilience.
- **Audre Lorde**
    - Themes: self-definition, emotional truth, empowerment.
- **Amanda Gorman**
    - Themes: hope, collective healing, civic resilience.

Music

Jazz

- John Coltrane – *A Love Supreme*
- Nina Simone – *I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free*
- Billie Holiday – *Strange Fruit* (used carefully because of its emotional intensity)
- Pharoah Sanders – *The Creator Has a Master Plan*

Gospel

- Mahalia Jackson
- The Clark Sisters
- Richard Smallwood
- Kirk Franklin

Soul and R&B

- Curtis Mayfield
- Marvin Gaye (*What's Going On*)
- Stevie Wonder
- Donny Hathaway

Contemporary

- Common
- Kendrick Lamar (selected tracks)
- India.Arie
- Robert Glasper

Clinical uses include:

- emotional regulation
- guided reflection
- narrative exploration
- identity affirmation
- grounding

- grief processing

Visual Art

Artists

- Jacob Lawrence
- Faith Ringgold
- Kara Walker
- Alma Thomas
- Romare Bearden
- Henry Ossawa Tanner

Clinical applications:

- trauma narratives
- identity reconstruction
- strengths-based discussions
- resilience mapping
- expressive arts interventions

Dance and Movement

Traditions

- African diasporic movement traditions
- Modern dance influenced by African American culture
- Step traditions
- Liturgical dance
- Jazz dance

Important Contributors

- Alvin Ailey
- Katherine Dunham

Movement interventions can support:

- body awareness
- trauma release
- emotional regulation
- reconnection with bodily safety

Storytelling and Oral Tradition

Recommended resources:

- *The People Could Fly*
- African American folktales
- Personal narrative therapy
- Family storytelling
- Life-review interventions

These approaches align well with:

- Narrative Therapy
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Cultural Humility
- Meaning-Making approaches

Expressive Arts Therapy Resources

- Expressive Therapies
- Trauma and Expressive Arts Therapy
- Healing Trauma with Guided Drawing

Organizations

- American Art Therapy Association
- Expressive Therapies Summit
- Association of Black Psychologists

Clinical Applications

Clinicians can use these artistic modalities to facilitate:

- Identity reconstruction after trauma
- Affect regulation
- Emotional expression
- Grief and loss processing
- Cultural affirmation
- Meaning-making
- Intergenerational healing
- Development of resilience narratives
- Self-compassion

- Hope and post-traumatic growth

Recommended Reading for Clinicians

1. *The Deepest Well* — Nadine Burke Harris
2. *The Body Keeps the Score* — Bessel van der Kolk
3. *My Grandmother's Hands* — Resmaa Menakem
4. *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* — Joy DeGruy
5. *Sisters of the Yam* — bell hooks
6. *All About Love* — bell hooks
7. *The Art of Empathy* — Karla McLaren

Taken together, these resources support a culturally responsive, trauma-informed framework that honors African American artistic traditions as sources of healing, resilience, identity formation, and community connection. They can be integrated ethically alongside established evidence-based psychotherapies rather than used as stand-alone trauma treatments.