

Lifecourse  
and the  
Invisible African American Male

W. Curtis Marshall

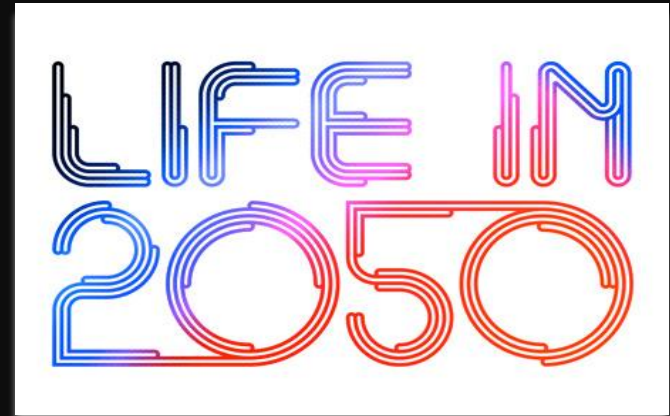
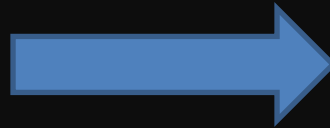
# What is Life Course?

Roadmap depicting how individual, interpersonal, social, and cultural factors influence the health of individuals and populations.



# KEY LIFE COURSE CONCEPTS

Today's experiences and exposures influence tomorrow's health (Timeline).

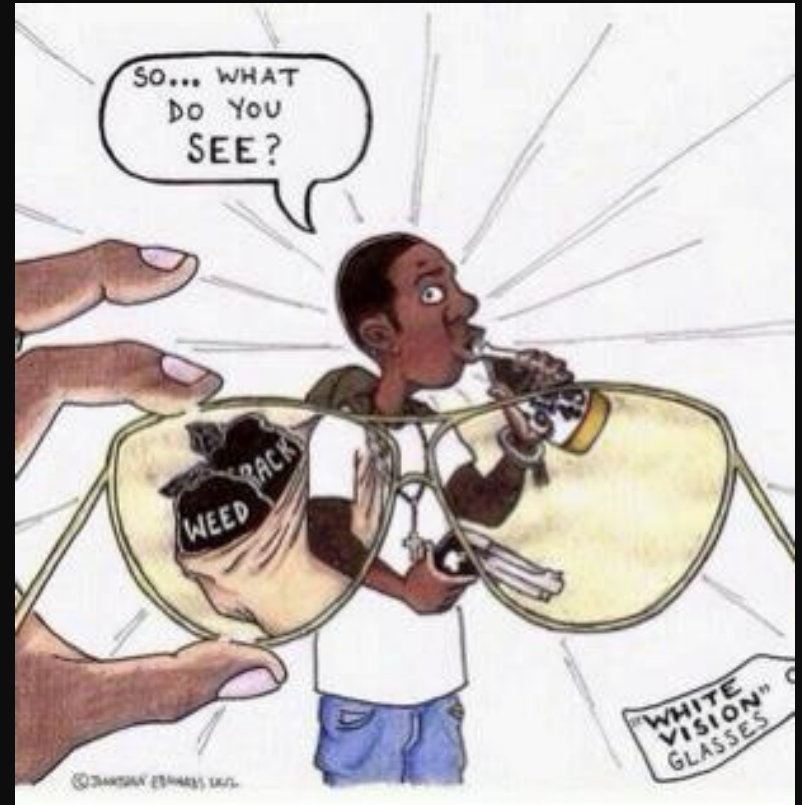


*“All the population, everybody of every age were all at one time children. And they bring to their maturity and old age the strength and scars of an entire lifetime.”*

Pauline Stitt, 1960

# Concepts of African American Men

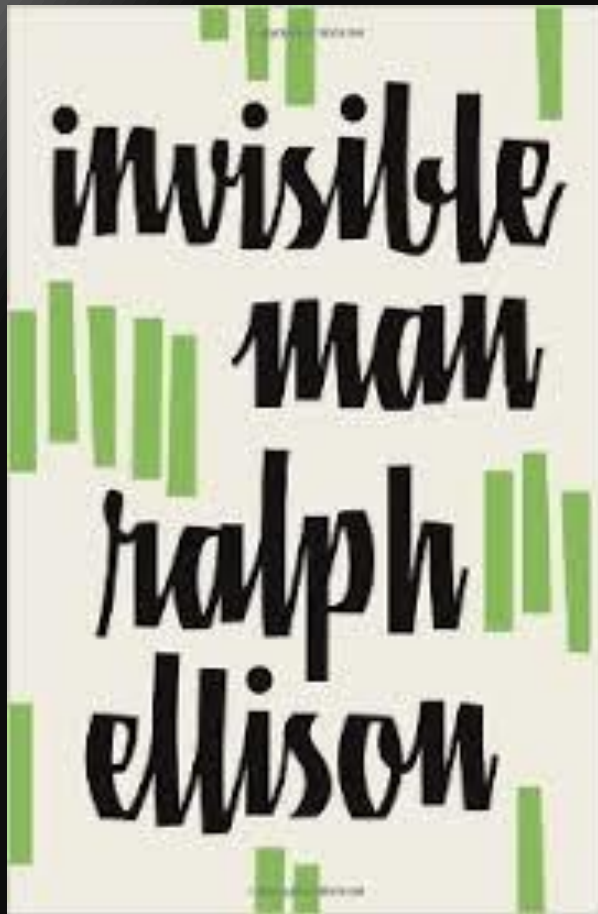
- Historically, black men in America have experienced a dual cultural consciousness
- W.E.B Du Bois (1903) spoke of this duality as a “twoness”,
  - Feeling part of America and its’ values, yet excluded from full participation in mainstream America.



## Defining Invisibility

*“An inner struggle with the feeling that one’s talents, abilities, personality, and worth are not valued or even recognized because of prejudice and racism”*

Franklin, 1999



*"I am an invisible man...I am invisible. Understand. Simply because people refuse to see me. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me." Chapter (1 p.3)*

*Seems Like I Gotta Do Wrong*  
*Whispers, 1965*

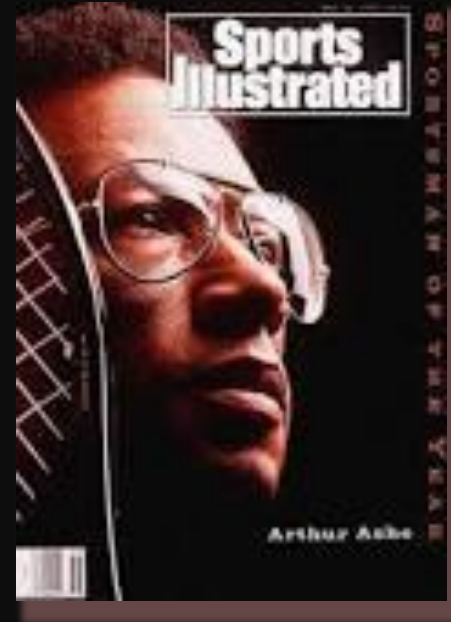




# Managing the Stress of Invisibility

*“Race has always been my biggest burden. Having to live as a minority in America. Even now it continues to feel like an extra weight tied around me.”*

Ashe & Rampersad, 1995,



# Discrimination Persist Milwaukee

The study found that it was easier for a white male with a felony conviction to get a job than a black male whose record was clean.

# Analysis of Invisibility Among African-American Males

Seven African-American middle-class males

- Ages:  
34-47
- Education:  
Two high school and four master's level and one doctorate level
- Family Status:  
One single, five married with children, one in a committed live-in relationship

# Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews
  - Face-to-face or telephone (90 minutes)
- Questions focused on invisibility experiences (i.e., have you every felt invisible?)
- Ability to cope with invisibility,
- Behaviors results from invisibility syndrome
- Potential counseling to improve and/or nurture identify development

## Participant #2

*“I probably feel invisible the majority of the time. It’s just part of my reality, but a times it’s stressful. I’m a faculty member at this university and certain people know me in classes and in my college, but as soon as I walk out of the building I don’t perceive that people see me as a professor.”*

# Study Conclusions

## All Participants

- Strongly support African-American men defending who they are in public
- Did not think the process of feeling invisible would soon dissipate.
- Encouraged learning how to cope with invisibility.

# Solutions and Recommendations

# Suggested Invisibility Counseling Strategies Participants

- Authenticity
  - *“Avoiding politically correct statements and hiding behind real feeling and thoughts”*
- Unconditional positive regard
  - *“Counselors should support my experiences regardless of myself”*
- Empathetic understanding
  - *“Listening and being open to the experiences of African-American males and moving beyond book information about African-American males, but instead seeking contact with the group, is important in broadening counselor empathy and understanding”*



# Bring an Equity Lens to Collective Health Impact and Create Visibility

- Common agendas
- Shared measurement
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Backbone support



# The End

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