The IMANI Breakthrough Project: A cultural and faith-based recovery initiative for Black and Latinx communities in response to our current Opioid crisis

August 11, 2021
Rhode Island Governor's Taskforce

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Imani Breakthrough
Imani Rompiendo Barreras
A Faith-Based Recovery Opioid Program

What is the meaning of Imani?

Imani means “faith” in Swahili.

The Imani Breakthrough is an intervention developed to target people addicted to and actively using heroin and/or other opiates and other drugs. This is a state of CT’s Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services initiative funded by SAMHSA and is part of the Connecticut State Targeted Response (CT STR) to the Opioid Crisis and the State Opioid Response (SOR) funding.
Starting with the Why?

Why are we working with churches to do this? and Can we collectively figure out a way to do something about it?

- Racial/Ethnic minorities in US are less likely than Whites to seek mental health treatment (including for drug and alcohol)

- Latinos and Black people compared with racial groups are less likely to start drug and alcohol treatment

- If they do start, they don’t really like the care they receive…Lower Treatment engagement

- This is where the Latinx and Black CHURCH can be helpful

- Religion and spirituality enable Latinos and Black people to cope with psychological distress (mind stress)

- In urban Black communities (cities) 65-80% of adults attend church regularly and in the Latino community 70% of the population attends church

- Many studies highlight the importance of church in addressing drug and alcohol use, where members seek help from clergy (pastors, deacons, deaconess)

- In addition, Latinos and Black People are often do not get help at traditional (regular) clinics
Introducing…
Imani Breakthrough

WE aim to Promote
Health and Healing
for
Ourselves and Our Communities!

How we do this…

BY:
Creating a sense of unity – WE are in this together!
Creating a sense of collective responsibility
Through a Participatory process
Our approach

**Church Liaison: Rev Robyn Anderson, M.A., LPC**

- Our process:
  1. Learning through Conversations with communities and faith-based leaders and members.
  2. Through conversations with organizing team, using suggestions from communities, to modify and develop the faith-based recovery program. Selected a model to combine the 5 Rs (Rowe, et al) and 8 Dimensions of Wellness (Swarbrick), with wrap-around coaches.
  3. Decided to add a component focused on Education sessions for churches and communities

**Collaborating with Churches and Selection of Facilitators**
Unique from other recovery programming, Imani deliberately has a strong focus on:

The importance of spirituality, known to have high cultural significance among Black and Latinx communities, through intervention groups based in churches.

- Culturally-informed opioid education and naloxone distribution (OEND)
- Addresses social determinants of health through the 8 dimensions of wellness and the 5Rs of citizenship: Roles, Rights, Resources, Responsibility, Relationships
- Harm Reduction
- Emphasizes Mutual support
- Intensive wraparound support
- Coaching in a safe and familiar environment

- Training and Curriculum based on IMANI philosophies
- Facilitators are people from the community/churches and those with lived experience of substance use.
- Imani directly addresses the barriers that impede access to the most effective pharmaco- and behavioral therapies available

The importance of spirituality, known to have high cultural significance among Black and Latinx communities, through intervention groups based in churches.
Collaborating with Churches and Selection of Facilitators

Varick Memorial AME Zion, New Haven, CT
Blackwell Memorial AME Zion Church, Hartford, CT
Mount Aery Baptist, Bridgeport CT
Burning Bush Family Life Center, Waterbury, CT

Pastor Jose church – Oasis of Blessings Christian Center, New Britain, CT
Prince of Peace Church, Bridgeport CT
Casa de Oracion y Adoracion, New Haven, CT
IAR Nuevo Comienzo (New Beginnings) Church, Hartford, CT
Overview of Imani
Breakthrough Intervention

The Imani Breakthrough intervention involves two components and takes place over 6 months:

Part 1:

A group education component:

• 12 weeks of classes and activities focused on wellness enhancement:
  
  **8 Dimensions of Wellness** (Spiritual, Emotional, Physical, Financial, Environmental, Social, Intellectual, Occupational
  
  **5Rs of Citizenship enhancement** (Roles, Responsibilities, Relationships, Resources, Rights)

• **Wrap around Support and Coaching** – provided during the 12 weeks. Coaches provide weekly check-ins and are there to assist participants towards obtaining their recovery, hopes and dreams within the scope of the 8 Dimensions of Wellness and the 5Rs.

Part 2:

• **Next Step group component** – 10 weeks mutual support (post 12 week group).
Overview of Imani

Breakthrough

Preliminary Data
### Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43% Female, 57% Male</td>
<td>74% Have experienced homelessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean age – 47 y/o (SD 12)</td>
<td>43% Have experienced childhood physical, verbal, or sexual abuse</td>
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<td>22% Latinx/Hispanic</td>
<td>50% Have witnessed physical, verbal, or sexual abuse as a child</td>
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<td>61% African American</td>
<td>65% Have experienced violence as an adult</td>
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<tr>
<td>13% White/Caucasian</td>
<td>69% Have witnessed violence as an adult</td>
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<td>78% high school diploma or less</td>
<td>47% Attend Religious/Spiritual meetings</td>
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<td>81% currently not working</td>
<td>49% Engage in religious/spiritual practice</td>
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<td>75% Have been hospitalized at least once</td>
<td>11% Are members of a club or social group</td>
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<td>44% - 3 or more times</td>
<td>67% Currently were not receiving substance use services</td>
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<td>31% - 5 or more times</td>
<td>25% report use of opioid</td>
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<td>65% Have been incarcerated</td>
<td>53% report use of alcohol</td>
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<tr>
<td>14% are currently on probation/parole</td>
<td>43% report use of cocaine and/or crack cocaine</td>
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N=808 Results – 8 Dimensions of Wellness
Imani

Dimensions of Wellness Change in Score from Baseline to Week 12

- Physical
- Intellectual
- Environmental
- Spiritual
- Social
- Occupational
- Emotional
- Financial
- Look work
- Not Working

Baseline ■ Week 12
N=808 Results – Citizenship subscales

Imani
Overview: Community Conversations with Participants

Table 1. Quotes from Imani Conversations

| Self-Actualization: “In the beginning, I was not able to recognize that things could get better. I learned from everyone here that I could be better every single day.”
|
| “...The last 15 years of my life is ... I did a lot of programs and never finished. I was super negative about life. I never had self-worth. There are other people just like me that have a lot of problems. Graduating from this program opened doors. I got my GED, and I’m going to see what my purpose is…”
|
| Autonomy: “I got to take back my control. I’m the one that makes my reality…”
|
| “This is not an obligation...You don’t have to follow the curriculum as you do in other programs”
|
| “I went to a mandatory program. It is hard when you don’t want to go to this place. You are not there. How will you talk if you don’t want to? Sometimes you want to keep barriers, and here it is okay.”
|
| Culture and Faith: “I don’t know if it is God, I don’t know if it is something else. I know that when you have a power in your heart, we are connected with something that changes your life…”
|
| “I have faith and I don’t believe in God. It is important to respect what you believe. I believe in each other.”
|
| “Spiritually is a motivation. Sometimes it is the only thing that you have. Helps me validate my feelings because I have so many thoughts and I believe that it is important. My power comes from my thoughts, my values too.”

Bellamy, Jordan and colleagues, 2020, accepted, Social Work and Mental Health Journal
Thank you for your time!