

# CRECER



Executive Summary 2016 - 2017

## Challenging Racism and Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research Lab

Derived from the Spanish word "crecer," meaning "to grow," the Challenging Racism & Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research (CRECER) team is a community-based participatory research team within the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies at the University of Miami committed to social justice for ethnic minorities and immigrant populations through academic research and community intervention and engagement.



Challenging Racism and Empowering Communities  
through Ethnocultural Research (CRECER) Lab  
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Dr. Marie Guerda Nicolas obtained her doctoral degree in clinical psychology from Boston University. She completed her predoctoral training at Columbia University Medical Center and her postdoctoral training the New York State Psychiatric Institute/Columbia University, Department of Child Psychiatry. As a multicultural (Haitian American) and multilingual psychologist (Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole), her research is reflective of her background and interests. Her current research focus on the integration of race and culture and well-being for ethnically diverse and immigrant communities. Some of the projects that she is currently working on includes: promoting academic excellence among ethnically diverse youth, identify development of Black youths, and empowering ethnically diverse parents to be effective parents. In addition, she conducts research on social support networks of Caribbean populations with a specific focus on Haitians. She has published several articles and book chapters and delivered numerous invited presentations at national and international conferences in the areas of women issues, depression and intervention among Haitians, social support networks of ethnic minorities, and spirituality.

## A letter from the Director

*“As we are attempting to cope with the number of troubling social issues occurring throughout the US at this moment, we hope that programs like Kulula and Strong Roots, that seek to build the identity and family systems of kids and families of color in the Miami area is making a difference”*

This issue of the Executive Summary highlights the work accomplished by the CRECER research team in collaboration with our community partners in Miami and in Haiti. It is the value of CRECER that we not produce knowledge for knowledge sake but ensure that the work we do is meaningful in the communities and the lives where we work. Thus, we value the resources and strengths of all of our partners who make the work that we do possible and sustainable. Therefore, the summaries of the work highlighted here is more a reflection of them than thus. As we are attempting to cope with the number of troubling social issues occurring in communities throughout the US at this moment, we hope that programs with our community partners such as Kulula and Strong Roots that seek to build the identity and family systems of kids and families of color in the Miami area is making a difference. They certainly serve as fuel for the CRECER team members in reducing the sense of helplessness that often accompanies such times. Thanks to our community partners and the foundations who continue to support the work that we do nationally and internationally.

We are looking for another great year of programming in the 2017-2018!

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## Meet the CRECER Team

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Amina Simmons, M.A.

Amina Simmons is a fourth year doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami. She holds an MA from the University of Missouri-Columbia in Educational and Counseling Psychology and earned her BA in Psychology and Africana Studies from Pomona College. Amina is a 2017-2018 Mitchell Trauma Fellow and is also serving her 2<sup>nd</sup> year as a doctoral student clinician at the University of Miami Counseling Center.

Her clinical and research interests include college student development and women's well-being with an emphasis on Black American women and student parents. Amina's dissertation focuses on Black American women's experience of race-based traumatic stress, psychological well-being, and treatment seeking. Through research and clinical work Amina has been able to help build connections between universities and communities, fostering a different approach to therapeutic intervention. She has worked with a wide range of populations, from infants to adults, and in various settings (e.g. hospitals, universities, residential treatment, community centers), operating from a strengths-based model of community partnership.

Amina joined the CRECER team in the Fall of 2014. She's served as the project coordinator for the Kulula Mentoring Project (2015-2017), YES! Camp (2014-2017), and Day of Dialogue (2016). For the 2017-2018 academic year, Amina will serve on the CRECER team by managing logistics and finances.

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Maxie is a second-year doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami. She currently serves as a program co-coordinator for the Kulula Mentoring program. Maxie earned her B.S. in Psychology from the University of Florida and her M.Ed. and M.A. in Psychological Counseling at Teachers College, Columbia University. Maxie's work as a Community School Director at Frederick Douglass High School II in Harlem was pivotal in focusing her research interests.

She is interested in the effects of trauma, specifically race-based traumatic stress, on the academic outcomes of Black students in public secondary schools in the US and how racial identity development might serve as a protective factor. She is also interested in the Black church's role in changing perceptions of mental illness/health in Black communities.



"Maxie" Ashley Maxie-Moreman, M.Ed./M.A.

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Noris is a third-year doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Miami. She currently serves as program coordinators for both the Kulula Mentoring program and Evaluation for Breakthrough Miami project.

She earned her BA in Psychology at the University of Miami with a minor in Foreign Languages (French & Italian). During her undergraduate career she worked as a research assistant at the UM Mood and Anxiety Disorders lab.

With a mix of Dominican and Mexican roots, her research interests are focuses on issues of cultural diversity in the mental health profession. She wants to explore how culture influences perception about mental health service utilization, and the field in general.



Noris Rios



Natacha Janac, M.S.

Natacha is a doctoral student in the Clinical Psychology program at Albizu University, who joined the CRECER team in Fall 2014. She holds a M.S from Tennessee State University in Counseling Psychology and M.Ed. in Community and Social Change from the University of Miami.

Her research interests focuses on “*The Effects of Poverty on Childhood Development*”. Her clinical interests include working with ethnically diverse children, adolescents, and families, as well as behavioral and emotional disorders, and developmental disorders. A native of Haiti, she has a special interest in working with immigrants, such as those from the Caribbean region and diaspora.

She currently serves as the program coordinator for the *Mental Health Training in Haiti*.





Kimberly Ho Misiaszek, M.A.

Kimberly Ho Misiaszek is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of Miami. Her clinical interests include working with ethnically diverse children, adolescents, and families, particularly those with trauma and substance abuse histories, as well as behavioral and emotional disorders, and developmental disorders. A native of Jamaica, she has a special interest in working with immigrants, such as those from the Caribbean region and diaspora. Providing strengths-based, multiculturally competent care to all her families is central to her counseling approach.

In terms of research, Kimberly is interested in investigating factors such as migration, religion/spirituality and movement/dance and their influence on identity, well being, and various developmental domains: cognitive, socio-emotional, spiritual, and physical. Ultimately, she hopes her research will be used to inform child and family development policies and create sustainable and culturally relevant mental health prevention and intervention programs in low and middle-income countries. Prior to her entry into the PhD program, she worked as a residential therapist for adolescents with substance abuse disorders, juvenile delinquency, and other co-occurring disorders.

She also completed an internship at one of NYC's leading organizations dedicated to aiding victims of domestic violence and their children. Kimberly earned her M.A. in Mental Health Counseling and Wellness from New York University and her B.Sc. in Communications with a double major in Psychology and Public Relations from the University of Miami. A student of classical ballet since age 5, she also holds an advanced level certificate of ballet through the Royal Academy of Dance and has performed throughout the island with Jamaica's Movements Dance Company.



Tavajah Hunter

Tavajah is a second year Master's student in the Mental Health Counseling Program at the University of Miami. He joined the CRECER team in Spring 2017. Tavajah currently serves as the Evaluation Project Coordinator for the Breakthrough Miami project. He earned his Bachelor's of Science in Psychology at Florida A&M University with a minor in Philosophy.

Tavajah's research interests include work with ethnically diverse adolescents, stress management, and strength-based approaches of treatment. Upon graduation, Tavajah plans to work towards earning a Ph.D in Counseling Psychology to advance the development of research and practice pertaining to culturally effective interventions for adolescents, couples, and families of color.

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Monique is a first-year doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of Miami. She completed her undergraduate studies at George Washington University (2015) and earned a masters degree in Counseling and Mental Health Services from the University of Pennsylvania (2016), in her hometown of Philadelphia. Prior to graduate study, Monique worked for multiple youth focused non-profit organizations, including Capital Partners for Education and Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia.

Her research interests are racial socialization, racial stress and trauma, self-efficacy, and culturally relevant interventions. More specifically, Monique is interested in how racial socialization and familial support can be used to mitigate negative outcomes from social determinants like racism and poverty. At CRECER, Monique is excited to serve as co-coordinator for the Kulula Mentoring Program at the Barnyard Community Center in Coconut Grove.



Monique C. McKenny, M.S.Ed.



Esprene Liddell-Quintyn, M.A.

Esprene is a first-year doctoral student in the Community Well-Being program at the University of Miami. She earned her Bachelor's degree at the University of Guyana and a Master's degree at Penn State Harrisburg. Before joining, the CRECER team, Esprene provided compassionate care and assistance to women with mental health challenges and supported organizational development initiatives at non-governmental organizations.

Her research focuses on examining intimate partner violence (IPV) within the Caribbean. She hopes to use her research to design interventions, build community social capital and build individual efficacy to combat IPV. As a member of the CRECER team, Esprene will serve as the leader for the culturally appropriate mental health disaster resource manual.



Dorothy Addae

Dorothy joined CRECER in 2013 and is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program at the University of Miami. She earned her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Missouri, working with Dr. Anna Bardone-Cone and Dr. Lisa Flores. Dorothy began her graduate career at the University of Illinois-Chicago in 2012 focusing on acculturation and adjustment of immigrant and refugees prior to transferring to Miami with Dr. Dina Birman. Dorothy's work with CRECER has included assistance with the Day of Dialogue event, as well as being project coordinator of the Kulula Mentoring Project and the Strong Roots Caregiver Program.

Dorothy's international background contributes to her passion and research focus. Her interests centre around the immigration experience, acculturation, and international policy. In addition to adjusting to the new country, Dorothy is interested in the identity development of immigrant children and immigrant family processes. Lastly Dorothy desires that her work and career will help in bridging the practice research gap, in disseminating and implementing research in communities.

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Chrismerli is a second-year master student in the Mental Health Counseling program at Florida Atlantic University. Her current research interest multicultural counseling, she wants to explore the best methods to provide culturally effective therapy and becoming cultural competent therapist.

Chrismerli joined CRECER in the Fall 2016 and is involved in the Strong Roots: Children's Branch. She plans on pursuing her doctorate education and continue her research in multicultural counseling. Chrismerli holds a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in Sociology from Florida Atlantic University.



Chrismerli Rodriguez





# Program Updates

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SPRING 2017

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# THE KULALA MENTORING PROGRAM

## Quotes from the Mentees

*"I'm smart, creative and I think out of the box. I don't think just a little, I think a lot. I don't think simple, I think BIG!"*

*"I feel good about the way God made me. God made me when I was in mommy's stomach and He made me have beautiful hair and brown eyes but I wish I had blue because [that's] my favorite color."*



**Program Coordinators:** Amina Simmons and Ashley Maxie-Moreman

**Site:** The Barnyard Community Center

## Brief Overview

Kulula took place at the Barnyard Community Center for seventeen sessions during the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters. A total of seven students, five undergraduate mentors and two graduate student mentors from the University of Miami, ran weekly sessions with the mentees for an hour on Thursday evenings. Of the 28 children signed up to participate in October, there were on average a weekly attendance of 13 mentees. The mentees were divided into 4 smaller groups or jamaas (Swahili term for group or family). Mentees demographics include: 21 females and seven males ranging from 1st to 6th grade.

## Quotes from the Mentees

*“[Kulula is] a nice happy exciting place that I like to go to at 5pm. I would like to do it again. I liked talking with my mentors and my jamaa. I enjoyed doing fun activities.”*

*“I think I'm a good student. A good student tries their best to do things, they are nice to others and it doesn't matter what color they are or what their religion is. A good student respects others.”*

## Kulula Meeting Routine

As rapport between mentees and mentors grew from the Fall to Spring semester, mentors were encouraged to arrive at the Barnyard prior to the start of Kulula to spend unstructured time (i.e. playing outside, helping with homework, etc.) with their mentees and other children. These interactions encouraged the mentees to report to Kulula on time and facilitated continued relationship building between mentors, mentees, and the community.

Next, the mentors and mentees gathered to perform the opening ceremony of watering the *tambiko* (Swahili for libations) plant. This ceremony served as a unifying start to the Kulula meeting and the plant signifies thankfulness and the growth the mentees and mentors hope to gain through the program. Everyone watered the plant and responded to the prompt, “what are you thankful for?” After the *tambiko* ceremony, mentees and mentors worked in their respective jamaas for 30-40 minutes on the curriculum, joining as a group at the end of the meeting to perform the “I Love Myself” song together in closing.

On a weekly basis, the mentors and program co-coordinators gathered for a post Kulula debrief to discuss any behavior issues, concerns, or updates for the coming week. Monthly, the mentors and co-coordinators met together for a Kulula family dinner. Dinners include a time for fellowship and team building and served as a space to discuss the mentees progress, reflect over the past month’s meetings, and prepare for the upcoming month.

## Curriculum

Kulula’s Afrocentric based curriculum focuses on social relationships, identity, and academic development. The five modules throughout the curriculum address the following questions: “Who Are The People In My Life?”, “Where Am I From?”, “Who Am I?”, and “Who Do I Want To Be?”.



Each jaama began the new semester with the 3<sup>rd</sup> module “Who Am I?” which encouraged the mentees to examine the perceptions about themselves phenotypically, including standards of beauty, negative judgment, and self-esteem. Other projected module(s) for the Spring 2017 semester included: “Who Do I Want to Be?” Mentees completed journal activities and discussed positive and negative images of themselves and representation in the media. Mentors emphasized building positive images of self through creation of self-affirming collages and encouraged future-oriented discussions (i.e. deciding to pursue college). Other themes and topics discussed included: leadership, achievement, values, and community change.



## Civic Engagement Project

A key piece of the Kulula Mentoring Program is the Civic Engagement Project. In this project, mentees identify an issue in the community that they would like to see changed, and suggest ways in which to address it. Kulula’s curriculum hopes to use this project to encourage youth to engage in both first order change: implementing a plan of immediate or present action, and second order change: encouraging youth to call for a sustainable plan of action from community officials and stakeholders.

For the 2016-2017 academic school year, the mentees identified and decided to address the issues of “Homelessness in their Community” as a program. This year the youth organized a Talent Showcase including: multiple performances, tabling and petitions about issues in their community, and a toiletry drive. Held during the End of The Year Celebration, attendees were encouraged to bring suggested toiletry items to be donated to a local church or shelter serving the homeless population in their community. Mentees and mentors also organized a tabling effort, presenting showcase attendees with a variety of critical community issues (i.e. violence in K-12 schools). Mentees provided information about their concerns, relevant policies, and county-level administrators; inviting attendees to write a postcard or sign a letter of concern to be mailed to various county officials.

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## Impactful Moment of the Year

The Kulula meeting held after the November 2016 election seemed to be one of the most impactful moments from the 2016-2017 academic year. Prior to the meeting, mentors and co-coordinators developed activities to foster an understanding of the electoral college and United States voting process, as well as allow space for mentees to



process and share their emotions. Mentors facilitated a “mock voting” activity and allowed mentees to illustrate their emotions about the current political climate and election decision. Many mentees expressed anger, sadness, and discouragement, specifically related to views and beliefs expressed about various racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, which lead to a discussion about action steps and coping skills. Mentees identified speaking with

family, friends, and healthcare professionals, as well as, participating in peaceful protests as sustainable and adaptive coping methods.

## Data Collection

### Mentees

Previously, the Kulula Mentoring Project has utilized various quantitative methods to evaluate the core components of the project. These validated measures were selected for use with a target demographic that included youth from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. However, with 14 of the mentees enrolled in first through third grade, the co-coordinators consulted with the Principal Investigator (PI) about the revision of the data collection process. Under the supervision of the PI, the project co-coordinators developed a brief qualitative version of the original quantitative evaluation measures.

The newly established measure was revised to account for a broader age range of students (e.g. kindergarten through middle school), participant fatigue, and utilizes developmentally appropriate language. The University of Miami Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the revised measure and implementation took place in May 2017, following the end of the academic year for the university. Similar to previous pre/post program measures, literature on the Adolescent Racial and Ethnic Socialization Scale (ARESS; Brown & Krishnakumar, 2007), the Multi-Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM-R; Phinney & Ong, 2007), the Self-efficacy Scale (SES) for Children (SEQ-C; Muris, 2011), and the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (CASSS; Malecki & Demaray, 2002), informed



24% (n=4) of the mentees identified their race as Other, and one of the mentees identified their race as Mixed. Additionally, 12% (n=2) of the mentees stated, “*I don’t know what race I am*”, and 12% (n=2) of the mentees stated, “*I don’t know what race is.*” When asked to share the color of their skin, 65% (n=11) of the mentees identified their skin color as brown, 24% (n=4) identified their skin color as black, and 12% (n=2) identified their skin color as tan.

the development of a brief qualitative measure to assess participants: basic demographics, knowledge about race and ethnicity, social support, and academic self-efficacy.

Administered at the close of the Spring 2017 as a post-assessment to 17 mentees, basic demographics were as follows: mean age of the mentees was 8.41 years old, with 76% (n=13) of the mentees identifying as female and 24% (n=4) of the mentees identifying as male. When asked to identify their race, 47% (n=8) of the mentees identified as Black,



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2016-2017

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# STRONG ROOTS



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# STRONG ROOTS

**Project Coordinator:** Nicole Crooks

**CRECER Coordinator:** Dorothy Addae

**Site:** The Barnyard Community Center

## Program Goals and Objectives:

The Strong Roots Parent and Caregiver Program was developed as one of the few family-based programs designed to target racial socialization within ethnic minority families. A parallel child program, the Children's Branch, was also created to complement the goals of this parenting program and to facilitate parent involvement in the overall program. The integration of these two programs created a multilevel intervention that features both joint and separate activities with the ultimate goal of fostering cultural knowledge and psychological well-being within parents, children, and the family system.

## Meetings

Meetings were typically bi-weekly and were coordinated around school and holiday schedules.

- 1 open house/program orientation session
- 9 parent/caregiver group meetings
- Kwanzaa celebration
- End of the year celebration

## Participants:

- 13 caregivers have participated in the group sessions, with 9 caregivers attending sessions on a regular basis
- Majority female, 1 male participant
- Majority African American or Caribbean Black
- Small number of caregivers of Hispanic descent



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## Curriculum

Caregiver sessions were facilitated by a community parent coordinator, who is a veteran Strong Roots participant and previous co-facilitator. Caregivers discussed interactions with larger systems and how it related to their children such as criminal justice and policing (Module 1: racial socialization), the medical system and medical professionals (Module 3: well-being), and navigating the educational system to advocate for their children's support and services (Module 2: interactions and communication) Measurement:

Two measurement sessions were conducted pre- and post- program implementation. Measures assessed participant demographics, family dynamics and quality of family relationships, ethnic identity, socio-economic, and overall life satisfaction. Measures were administered by the CRECER coordinator.

## Participants Feedback:

Participants expressed enjoying and valuing the program overall.

Specifically, attendees expressed an appreciation for the atmosphere of support and camaraderie the group provided particularly with issues that were of a sensitive nature or challenging. Caregivers stated they benefiting from the dissemination of information related to issues of concern for them, whether research based knowledge, updates of community events or resources, and collaborative problem solving and strategies.

## Coordinator Reflection:

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience leading the Strong Roots program. I'm grateful for the opportunity to hone my facilitation, communication, and problem-solving skills. It has challenged and enabled me to grow personally. There is a different connection now that I am facilitating a group of parents where my own child attends. It feels more like family"

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## Lessons Learned:

- Caregivers noted that their attendance is strongly influenced by their children's interest/desire to participate
- Inquiring about subject areas the parents want to discuss and basing topics in the curriculum facilitates parent engagement
- Transitioning to a parent coordinator has challenges particularly in the area of multiple relationships; connecting with CRECER Team meetings provides an additional support and facilitates updates.



## Future Directions:

Contribute to the sustainability of the Strong Roots Project within the West Coconut Grove community and the Barnyard Community Center, a focus group will be held with participants in the summer to discuss their experience of the program, curriculum, parent coordinator and future areas of focus.

2016-2017

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# CHILDREN'S BRANCH



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## CHILDREN'S BRANCH

**Project Coordinators:** Chrismerli Rodriguez, Kimberly Ho

**Volunteers:** Amela Xhepaj, Geraldine Cadet, Vidhya Keerthi Tirumalaraju, Jesenia Felipe, Maria Palma

**Site:** The Barnyard - Coconut Grove Cares, Inc

### Program Goals/Objectives

The Children's Branch is the child component of the Strong Roots program. In this portion, projects and exercises focus on children's individual and community identities (with particular focus on their racial and cultural identities), and relevant practices of dialogue and communication.

### Progress Report for Fall 2016-Spring 2017

#### Sessions:

Meetings were typically bi-weekly and were coordinated around school and holiday schedules.

- 1 open house/programme orientation session
- 10 Sessions
- Kwanzaa celebration and end-of-the-year celebration



#### Participants:

Across the program, 36 children have participated in the group sessions, with approximately 17 children between the ages of 2 to 12, attending sessions on a regular basis. Participating children primarily were of African American or Caribbean Black, backgrounds in addition to a small number of Hispanic descent.

### Fall 2016 Curriculum and Children's Feedback:

#### Module One (Fall 2016):

The goal of the first session in Module One was to establish rapport between all members of the program – the children, the volunteers, and the staff, and to introduce the program. The first session had 13

children who showed up with their parents. We began in a circle and said our name and what we were thankful for. The children then stood up in a circle and said their names to a beat, as form of an icebreaker. Afterwards, we gave each child a name tag to write their name on and decorate. The children drew a variety of pictures including rainbows, superheroes and trees.

The next session had a higher attendance, with 23 children and focused on the booklet called “All About Me”. The booklet explored key characteristics about the children’s identities, such as their physical identity, their community identities, their family tree, and their favorite things. The children were able to identify most of these characteristics and discuss them with the volunteers.

The third session aimed at working on the Kwanzaa celebration and planning out what the children will perform. The children started by being given their choice of which of the Kwanzaa principles they would like to perform. The children worked in groups to discuss how their principle related to faith, family, unity and community. Then they began writing and planning their



performances. Some children decided to perform a skit, complete artwork or a dance that reflected these principles. The volunteers emphasized the theme of community work, bond with family and unity.

The last session had a lower attendance, which allowed the children to work in smaller groups with the volunteers. The goal of the session was to help children build self-esteem as well as help children identify how they feel about themselves. In addition, this session aimed at helping children identify how other people view them and their reactions to this perception. Furthermore, this activity promoted a discussion in listening to others while they are speaking as well as respecting their peer’s responses. The children shared their ideas with their peers and the volunteers emphasized positive self-view.

## Module Two (Spring 2017):

After winter recess, six sessions were held that covered the remaining material of Module one and Module two. In the fifth session, the children discussed how others view them and what they think about themselves. Each child picked a label from the fishbowl, each containing a statement regarding their self-view. For instance, some labels stated: Something I can do all by myself is \_\_\_\_\_ or I am really good at \_\_\_\_\_.

Responses ranged from “I am really good at basketball” to “Something I can do all by myself is write.” The children enjoyed being able to pick a statement from the fishbowl. The following session the children explored their view on skin color and emphasized that his/her skin color is special and beautiful. The session



started with a reading of “The Skin I Live.” The children discussed the book among each group with positive responses on the pictures and theme of the story. Afterwards, the children drew an outline of their own body on butcher paper. Throughout the activity the children were fully present and expressed feelings of contentment. The next session children discussed with the volunteers who they can turn to for support. The children used Popsicle sticks, each represented a member of their support system.

For the following session, the goal was to discuss friendship and healthy communication styles. The children made cards for their parents and friends to express their gratitude. In addition, each child played “emotions charades” where they selected an emotion card from a fishbowl. The child would then act out the emotion while the other children guessed the emotion. The children indicated that they enjoyed this activity as noted by the smile on their faces. The remaining sessions focused on exploring how to resolve conflict positively, gratitude and how to deal with bullying. As a closure activity, one of the volunteers created a banner that contained the hand-print of the children and their parents. The children expressed the desire to complete this activity again in the future.

An end-of-the-year celebration was hosted with children and parents in attendance. The children were required to perform a dance or skit that demonstrated what they learned in the Children’s Branch program.

### **Summary and Lessons Learned:**

The goal for the 2016-2017 cycle was to revisit the curriculum and modify the lessons to incorporate more hands-on activities. The “All About Me” booklet was enhanced to include colorful animated pictures. The children enjoyed sessions where they were able to demonstrate their talents and creativity. This was encouraged when discussing the topics of communication, family, identity and school. The volunteers indicated the need for more activities within the session along with presenting a reward as an

initiative. In the future, the goal would be to modify the curriculum to include more interactive technology. Lastly, being able to implement assessments to understand the impact and effectiveness of the curriculum.

### **Our takeaways were:**

- Upon reflection, we had several takeaway points from this year. The first was introducing a new activity where children traced their silhouette on butcher paper as a self-portrait. This served as an engaging and creative addition to the curriculum. We found dividing children into smaller groups with the volunteers allotted for more one-on-one attention. In addition, creating a balance between interactive activities and discussions increased children involvement and participation. Having five volunteers helped meet the children's needs and increased productivity. Our recruitment goal for the following year is to have an equal male-female volunteer ratio in the future. Lastly, completing activities outdoors served as motivation to stay on task and garnered the children's attention.





2016-2017



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# BREAKTHROUGH MIAMI

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# BREAKTHROUGH MIAMI

**Project coordinator:** Tavajah B. Hunter

**Site:** University of Miami, Coral Gables Campus

**Program Goals and Objectives:** Breakthrough Miami is an eight-year tuition-free academic enrichment program for under-resourced middle and high school students in Miami-Dade County. Breakthrough Miami uses a student-teaching-students model to provide middle and high school opportunities and support, as well as ensuring students graduate from high school on time and attend college. Students enter the Breakthrough Miami program during their 5th grade summer and can continue in the program up through high school graduation. Breakthrough Miami's College Bound School Year program prepares high school students for the challenges of college and beyond, with advanced academic support, guidance on college selection and experiential learning that develops life skills. The program is held monthly on Saturdays at the University of Miami Coral Gables campus.

**Evaluation Objectives:** The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the academic and psychosocial impact of the program. The current evaluation focuses on 9<sup>th</sup> graders participating in the Breakthrough Miami College Bound program. Students participating in the evaluation completed assessments at the beginning of the program and at the end of the academic year. This progress summary details the results of both the pre- and post- assessments.

## Evaluation Participants:

- Participants: 28 students (grade 9)
- Demographics:
  - 16 Female, 12 Male
  - Ages 14-15
    - Ethnicities represented:
  - Hispanic- 10
  - White-Hispanic- 2
  - White- 1
  - Black- 12
  - Black-Hispanic- 2
  - Asian- 1
    - Student Born in the US: 27
    - Mother born outside the US: 12
    - Father born outside the US: 13
    - Countries parents were born in: Mexico, Argentina, Nicaragua, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Philippines, Bahamas, Haiti

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## Assessment Results

Students are engaging in quantitative pre- and post-testing which evaluates a number of areas related to achievement, psychological and social variables, and college readiness factors. Specifically, areas of focus include:

**Self-efficacy.** Students' sense of self-efficacy was measured in terms of social, academic, and self-regulatory/ coping abilities. Higher scores reflect positive youth personal adjustment.

**Racial and Ethnic Socialization.** Students completed a questionnaire on coping with racism and discrimination, promoting cross-racial relationships, ethnic heritage, cultural values, and ethnic pride. Higher scores indicate higher racial and ethnic socialization.

**Leadership.** Leadership skills were measured in terms of achievement, planning, utilizing language to reflect leadership, and the use of debate or discussion. Higher scores indicate positive leadership skill perceptions.

**Social Support.** Students' level of social support was measured through items that assessed levels of support from family, friends, and other special persons in the student's life. Higher scores indicate higher levels of social support.

**Civic Engagement.** Students' sense of civic engagement measures student's sense of self-efficacy in terms of taking civic action to solve a problem in their community. Higher scores indicate a higher sense of civic engagement.

| Average Scores on Pre- and Post- Assessments |                                     |                   |                    |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Variable                                     | Range of possible scores attainable | Average Score PRE | Average Score POST |
| Self-efficacy                                | 21-105                              | 72.46             | 73.42              |
| Racial and ethnic socialization              | 0-38                                | 19.82             | 19                 |
| Leadership                                   | 26-130                              | 58.46             | 62.06              |
| Social support                               | 12-84                               | 56.61             | 55.42              |
| Civic engagement                             | 8-40                                | 26.74             | 26.53              |

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### **Pre/Post Comparison**

For the students who completed both the pre and post assessments, there were no significant differences in their scores from pre to post on any of the psychosocial variables assessed. Scores were maintained throughout the academic year.

### **Lessons Learned and Future Directions**

Obtaining consent and assent from students seemed to be the strongest barrier to getting a large sample size for the evaluation. Moving forward, the consent and assent forms have been incorporated into Breakthrough Miami registration paperwork, in the hopes of increasing the ease of the consent process and increasing the number of students who participate in the evaluation.

During the summer, rising ninth graders attend a six-week intensive academic enrichment program that prepares them for high school and also focuses on college readiness skills.

To date, 94 students have completed parental consent and student assent to participate in the Summer 2017 College Bound Summer Institute evaluation, which should be a more representative sample.

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2016-2017

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# HAITIAN MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING



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# MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

**Project Coordinator:** Natacha Janac, M.S/M.Ed.

**Site:** University of Miami, School of Education

## Program Overview

The School of Education and Human Development at the University of Miami collaborated with Rebati Sante Mental and the Musée Ogier-Fombrun, to implement the Mental Health Training program that aims to provide training to teachers on mental health issues. The overall goal of the program is to equip the teachers with the knowledge and support that will enable them to address the socio-emotional needs of the students they teach. Our Mental Health Training Program is grounded in a community empowerment and sustainability framework that seeks to meet the follow key objectives:

- Increase capacity and sustainability of mental health in Haiti by training health professionals, teachers, religious leaders, and community members in psychosocial programming and implementation that is culturally grounded in the Haitian culture.
- Train health professionals, teachers, religious leaders, and community members to recognize signs and symptoms of mental health issues in children and adolescents.



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## Participants

For the program year 2016-2017, the Mental Health training took place in Saint Marc, Arcahaie and Montrouis. A total of 7 trainings were provided from the months of August 2016-May 2017. Each of the training was conducted by a region coordinator. Four participate that exhibited great knowledge of the material both verbally and written was chosen to join the team. A total of 28 trainers were selected for the fiscal year of 2016/2017 and over 318 professionals participated in the training.

## Activities

- "My Flag Is my Identity" conference hosted 3 local schools with over 800 students.
- Walk-ton for "Mental Health Month" had over 900 attendees.

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# DAY OF DIALOGUE

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## DAY OF DIALOUGE

Often, scholarly endeavors about community-based work focus narrowly on methodology with regard to implementation of interventions or outcomes of proposed projects and partnerships. While this work is valuable, it seems that there may be an integral piece of the process that academics, organizers, and communities can easily overlook. The building of partnerships is the cornerstone of community work, yet rarely do we see scholars talking about what that process looks like. This process of bringing community entities that often have very little contact with one another, although they serve many of the same community members is about both intentionality and careful facilitation of a dialogue.

### Summary of program:

Day of Dialogue is a community driven event that the Challenging Racism and Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research (CRECER) team has been facilitating in Miami since 2006. Started at Boston College and moving to the University of Miami, under the guidance of Dr. Guerda Nicolas, Day of Dialogue provided community organizations with the opportunity to come together to both identify and take action to address the needs of the community. Six dialogues have been hosted in Miami, with various topics including: racism, tolerance, promoting youth engagement, Native American communities, building bridges across cultures, and addressing the needs of Blacks in Miami. This year, the collaborative partners hosted the eighth day of dialogue that focused on facilitating racial dialogue in various settings.



During our eighth day of dialogue we held a dynamic discussion with a variety of community organizations as well as community members in which we facilitated workshops on facilitating racial dialogue in various settings. The workshop sections consisted of youth, clergy, counselors, and educators. An extensive anti-racism toolkit was developed to assist community members with facilitating both informal and formal racial dialogue in their unique setting. The toolkit can be accessed at [racerelationsmiami.com](http://racerelationsmiami.com).





# Challenge. Empower. Grow.

## Selected Articles and Books from the CRECER Lab

Nicolas, G., St. Louis, G., & Lancet, C. (Authored; Under contract with Nova Science Publishers, final product due December 2015). Building mental health capacity in Haiti through collaborative partnerships. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers.

Gustemable, G., & Nicolas, G. (Authored ; Under contract with Educa Vision, Caribbean Studies Press, final product due September 2016). conséquences psychologiques de la pauvreté extrême an Haiti. Coconut Creek, FL: Caribbean Studies Press.

Streets, B., Nicolas, G., & Wolford, K. (2015). Pause...before rushing in: examining motivations to help in trauma impacted communities internationally. *International Research and Review*, 4(2), 15-31.

Nicolas, G., Byer, K., & Ho, K. (2015). Guiding principles for implementing mental health programs internationally. *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health*, 8(4), 446-457.

Nicolas, G., Bejarano, A., & Lee, D. (Eds.). (2015). *Contemporary parenting: a global perspective*. Abingdon, UK: Taylor Francis (Routledge Press).

Nicolas, G., Wheatley, A., & Guillaume, C. (2014). Does one trauma fit all? Exploring the relevance of PTSD across cultures. *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health*, 8(1), 34-45. doi:10.1080/17542863.2014.892519

Smith, L., Bernal, D. R., Schwartz, B. S., Whitt, C. L., Christman, S. T., Donnelly, S., Wheatley, A., Guillaume, C., Nicolas, G., Kish, J., & Kobetz, E. (2014). Coping with vicarious trauma in the aftermath of a natural disaster. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 42(1), 2-12. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2014.00040.x







# Get Involved!

If you are interested in developing competencies in community-based, culturally-informed research, are interested in bringing a CRECER program to your community, or would like to make a donation, please contact us by any of the following ways below.

Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/umcrecer>

Twitter:  
<https://twitter.com/umcrecer>

Email:  
[umcrecer@gmail.com](mailto:umcrecer@gmail.com)



We are always looking for individuals and organizations who share our commitment to social justice and our dedication to enhancing cultural identities and promoting health and wellbeing amongst ethnic minority and immigrant individuals and communities.

Get Involved! Email us at  
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