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# Clinical Associate Helps To Erase The Stigma Of Therapy In Chicago

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Blame the phobia African-Americans have of medical professionals on the yellow fever scandal or the Tuskegee experiment. Maybe the issue is therapy not being covered under health insurance plans. Or maybe it's easier to divulge worries to a church pastor. And still others have no qualms about therapy or seeing medical professionals regularly.



Photo Courtesy of Misty Major

However, according to MentalHealthAmerica, 63 percent of African-Americans view depression as a sign of weakness and only 31 percent consider depression to be treatable. But for African-American patients who would prefer an African-American therapist for fear of being culturally misunderstood, the choices have risen. Chicago therapists such as Misty Major, AMFT, want to help make therapy more embraced within the family structure.

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"As a black woman, mental health is a stigma in my community, and it is so important for me to work to decrease that stigma," said Major, who is a clinical associate at Coyne Counseling Center and completes substance abuse counseling at Youth Outreach Services.

The Howard University alumnae used her own family issues as inspiration to move on to earn a master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy in 2012.

"I have always felt like everyone is an imperfect being, so I wanted to learn how to be in a relationship, as well as help others be in a relationship with imperfect beings. Many people have a misconception about therapists and think their lives are close to perfect simply because we're therapists. I bring my authentic self into the therapy room, and that's what makes a good therapist."

Out of all of her classes, a Self course was the most beneficial for Major in her career field. Learning who she is and how people function is essential for her own networking, and Major believes it'll be the catalyst in other psychology students and graduates.

"Create positive relationships with people in your undergraduate or graduate programs so when it is time to seek employment, you will be able to network. Allow yourself to learn to be challenged and receive feedback about your work. It will help you learn and grow as a therapist and as a person. Never stop your education. Never stop learning."

*Shamontel L. Vaughn is a professional journalist who has work featured in AXS, Yahoo!, Chicago Defender and Chicago Tribune. She's been an Examiner since 2009 and currently writes about 10 categories on [Examiner.com](http://Examiner.com).*