

## SYNOPSIS - EPISODE 4

### WOUNDED PLACES: Confronting Childhood PTSD in America's Shell-shocked Cities



PTSD doesn't only afflict combat vets and survivors of rape and natural disasters. Too many of our children, especially children of color living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, show the effects of unrelenting structural racism, street violence, domestic instability and other adversities. And their symptoms look a lot like post-traumatic stress disorder. Except for many, there is no "post."

*Wounded Places* travels to Philadelphia and Oakland where a long history of disinvestment and racial exclusion have ravaged entire neighborhoods and exposed children to multiple adverse childhood experiences (or ACEs). We meet families and some remarkable young people who have been traumatized not just by shootings, but by fear, uncertainty and a sense of futurelessness.

As Stanford physician and researcher Victor Carrion explains, "If we are crossing the street and we see a truck is coming at us, we can manage that situation, get scared, jump, and move quickly. Unfortunately, many children in our society feel like a truck is coming at them all day long, for more days than not, and this really takes a toll."

We watch as Caheri Gutiérrez, Antonio Carter, Javier Arango and other young people from Oakland wrestle with their hyper-vigilance, sudden rages, nightmares, inability to trust and difficulty concentrating in school. Now they themselves are counseling others, helping them to "own" their trauma. Yet police, teachers, the media, and even social service workers often make things worse, pegging traumatized children not as injured and in need of healing but as "bad" or "impaired."

For instance, in 2012 in Connecticut alone, 2,000 children aged six years and under—overwhelmingly black and Latino—were suspended from kindergarten and preschool, dramatically increasing their risk of eventually dropping out of school and being sent to prison.

But we also meet doctors, community organizers and peer counselors blazing a new model of trauma-informed care, including MacArthur Fellow John Rich, MD, Ted Corbin, MD, the director of Healing Hurt People, Dr. Sandra Bloom, the founder of the Sanctuary Model, and Youth UpRising! director Olis Simmons.

Rather than ask, “What’s wrong with you?” they ask, “What happened to you?” and “How can traumatized individuals and neighborhoods heal?” The implications of this simple shift can be transformative—for those suffering from trauma, for neighborhoods and even for the providers themselves.

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