

# *Rooted in Relationship: A Guide to Mentoring BIPOC Girls*

YMAN X NMRC





## *YMAN X NMRC*

About the Youth Mentoring Action Network (YMAN): The Youth Mentoring Action Network is a youth power-building organization facilitating transformative mentoring, education, and wellness opportunities with young people across the globe.

About the National Mentoring Resource Center (NMRC): Launched in January 2014, the National Mentoring Resource Center is a comprehensive and reliable resource for mentoring tools, program and training materials, as well as access to no-cost training and technical assistance.

**Logan Shanks**

**Zyahna Bryant**

**Torie Weiston-Serdan, Ph.D.**



## *About*

### *This Guide*

YMAN developed this guide on behalf of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's National Mentoring Resource Center to advance best practices and fill research gaps related to mentoring BIPOC girls.

The guide provides more information about what BIPOC girls expressed as important in their mentoring programs. We also provide concrete resources for mentoring programs to implement best practices for supporting BIPOC girls.

Together, these tools allow organizations to align their mentoring approach with the strategies outlined in the report for creating responsive, identity-affirming, strengths-based mentoring relationships with BIPOC girls. Programs can directly utilize these materials when designing and evaluating their mentorship for greater cultural competency and effectiveness.

This project was supported by 15PJDP-22-GK-00946-MUMU awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this presentation are those of the author/s and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

## Questions?

[weiston@yman.org](mailto:weiston@yman.org)

[www.yman.org](http://www.yman.org)

[@ymanstrong](https://www.instagram.com/ymanstrong)



## *About The Process*

Youth participatory action research (YPAR) is a collaborative approach that engages young people as co-researchers to study issues affecting their lives and advocate for change. Unlike traditional research where youth are passive subjects, YPAR values young people's perspectives and involves them in the full research process from design to dissemination.

This report summarizes a YPAR project focused on mentoring needs and preferences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) girls nationally. The project was led by a team of 10 BIPOC girls and young women ages 14-25 in partnership with the Youth Mentoring Action Network. The youth researchers designed interview guides, recruited participants, conducted focus groups and interviews, analyzed data, and devised recommendations.

45 BIPOC girls ages 14-25 participated in the project as interviewees and focus group members. The youth researchers' insights and recommendations are grounded in the lived experiences of BIPOC girls in their community.

Centering their voices was crucial for developing mentoring initiatives that authentically meet the needs of young women of color. This report outlines the project process, key findings, and ideas for action to guide effective, culturally responsive mentoring programs.

*Introduction*

06 - 07

*Listening to BIPOC Girls*

08 - 11

*Recommendation from BIPOC Girls*

12 - 15

*Tools*

16 - 21

*Resources*

22 - 30





chapter one

## *Introduction*

It is imperative to highlight that this guide was made in conversation with the young BIPOC women and girls. We hold space to acknowledge and thank them for being vulnerable with us by sharing their stories.

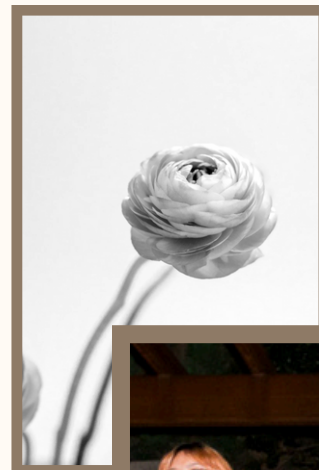


# Introduction

As we challenge society to become more inclusive and equitable for people of color and other marginalized groups across dimensions like class, gender, and sexuality, we must equip BIPOC women and girls with the tools that they need to thrive. Their unique life perspectives and experiences are assets that can help transform society. By supporting BIPOC women and girls, we allow their voices to shape and elevate the public discourse. This lifts up new ideas and narratives that more accurately reflect the diversity of human experiences.

We participate in group exclusion when we mindlessly place marginalized communities in spaces that are different from their home life without preparing them to self-preserve and transgress bias and discrimination and be successful in their respective fields.

Many stories were stories of girls who were formally in mentorship programs, but failed to have mentors who fully showed up for them as mentees. Some participants were brought to tears and urgently expressed the timeliness of this study on increasing the effectiveness of mentorship relationships and mentorship programs for BIPOC women and girls. Overall, inclusive mentoring helps build a society that values everyone's humanity, knowledge, and skills.





chapter two

*Listening to BIPOC Girls*





# Key Themes and Insights

**Safety:** Proteges expressed difficulty feeling safe with mentors who don't share their identity, having experienced mentors failing to understand their struggles as BIPOC girls.

**Community:** Intentionally building community spaces fortifies the mentorship experience. Community is built through vulnerability - when mentors model vulnerability, proteges can also be vulnerable.

**Mental Health:** Academic-focused programs are not sustainable without mental and emotional care.

**Networking:** Mentorship aids networking skills with peers and professionals.

**Peer Support:** Proteges get more support from peers than other adults.

**Respectability Politics:** Mentors encouraged youth to assimilate into the dominant culture for success.

**Self-Advocacy:** When self-advocacy fails, it damages self-esteem. Mentors must respond to proteges' expressed needs to affirm this skill.

**Confidence:** Mentors encouraging proteges directly boosted confidence in achieving goals.



Quote 1

## *Sustainable*

“ I really want an actual sustainable mentorship program to be carved out. There isn't a start and an end because I feel like that's something else too. I feel like mentorship is also a village. It's not just one person. You could tag team, have one person come in, and then another person comes in, but all the mentors know each other and the student is the case project.



Quote 2

## *Understanding*

“ The way BIPOC girls move through the world is very different than how White men move through the world. And to be able to have a mentor that knows what you're going through and is able to help you and have a mentorship relationship tailored to your identities is super important.



Quote 3

## *Safety*



I think genuine authentic mentorship for me means someone that looks like me or someone that has been through similar struggles, creating a safe space for me to be able to have a healthy mentorship, not it just being transactional, but a relationship where I can feel emotionally safe to kind of ask for help and kind of ask for my needs.



Quote 4

## *Thoughtfulness*



She had texted me and she was like, "Hey, did you get the package?" So I went to go get the package. And she had sent me a satin bonnet, some candy that she knew that I liked. She had written me a little card of encouragement. And it's just little things like that, that my family didn't even do.



chapter Three



*Recommendations from BIPOC Girls*

# General Recommendations

A program mission that expresses a commitment to anti-racism and acknowledgment of racial achievement gaps.

Hiring BIPOC practitioners to deliver comprehensive training for mentors.

Hiring BIPOC researchers to evaluate quantitatively and qualitatively the effectiveness of mentorship programs.

Hiring BIPOC researchers to conduct case studies on BIPOC communities to name needs and areas of growth.

Creation of a holistic mentorship program that pairs BIPOC girls with multiple mentors (academic, career, social, and emotional/mental).





## BIPOC Girls Mentoring Needs

Mentorship should be reimagined and not only limited to traditional models. The act of mentoring does not have to be between two people, but can also be in community. A program with multi-variations of mentorship can produce dynamic outcomes for proteges.

Proteges expressed the need for holistic mentoring approaches that focus not only on academic and career outcomes but also on mental, social, and emotional needs as well. Proteges also prefer mentorship dynamics that encourage self-empowerment through equipping BIPOC women and girls with tangible skills and resources to achieve their personal goals.



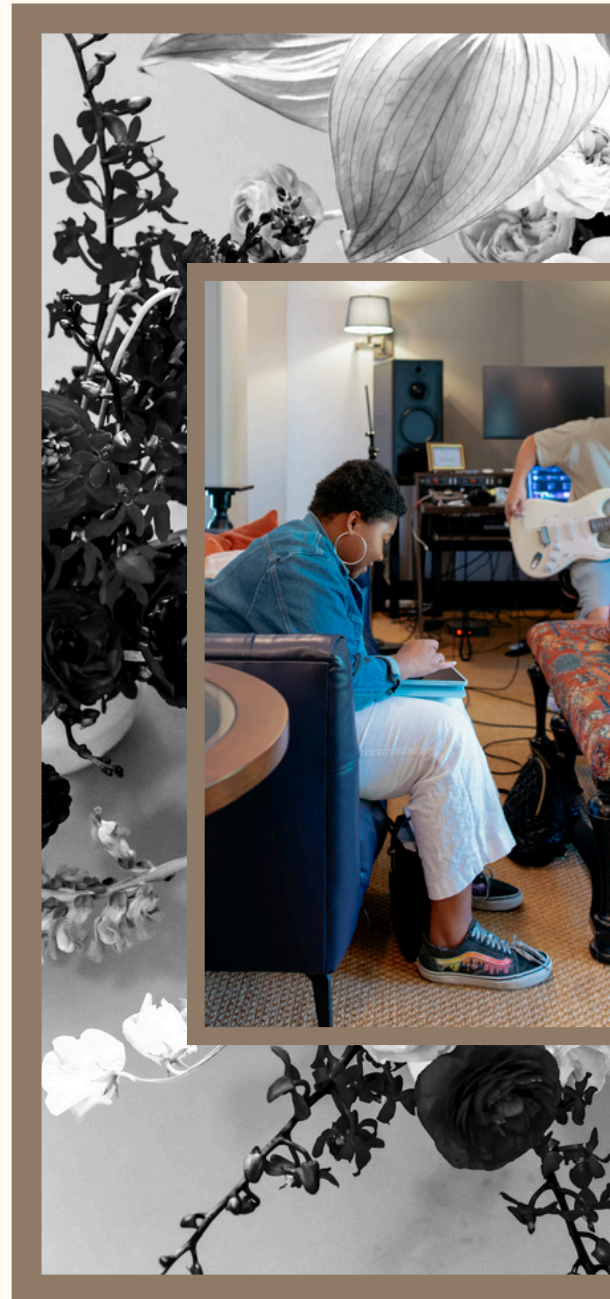
# Suggested Program Elements

Youth-equity-based leadership conferences and councils to give youth the opportunity to strategize with one another and advocate for needs.

Personalized and Holistic Mentorship “care plans” catered to the needs (academic, career, social, and emotional/mental needs) and goals of each individual protegee.

Community-based events and service projects created by mentors and proteges to encourage civic engagement and social justice and engage families and communities (i.e Community Block Parties, Back to School Drives, Voting Registration Drives, Community Book Drives, Community Book Clubs).

Weekly and monthly large community group check-ins to discuss struggles and achievements.





chapter four

*Tools*







## A Sample Mission Statement

Our organization's mission is to empower BIPOC girls through identity-affirming mentoring relationships that foster healing, self-determination, and collective action. We recognize historical and ongoing systems of oppression that marginalize BIPOC communities, and we are committed to undoing racism and racial inequities through our mentoring approach.

By centering the voices of BIPOC girls, providing a safe space for truth-telling and agency, honoring their intersections of identity, and equipping them with the tools to dismantle injustice, we nurture their holistic development as change-makers and leaders. Our staff and mentors reflect the lived experiences of the youth we serve. Together with our proteges, we cultivate the knowledge, skills, and solidarity needed to achieve a racially just world where all BIPOC girls can thrive.





## A Sample Pre/Post Survey

### **Pre-Program Survey**

- On a scale of 1-5, how much do you feel you belong in your school community?
- On a scale of 1-5, how empowered do you feel in your ability to achieve your goals?
- What are your top 3 goals you want to achieve through this program?

### **Post-Program Survey**

- On a scale of 1-5, how much do you now feel you belong in your school community?
- What about this program contributed to your sense of belonging, if at all?
  
- On a scale of 1-5, how empowered do you now feel in your ability to achieve your goals?
- What about this program contributed to feeling empowered, if at all?
  
- Were you able to achieve the goals you set at the beginning of the program? Why or why not?
  
- What was most meaningful about this program?
  
- What could be improved about this program?
  
- How likely are you to recommend this program to a friend?

The pre-survey establishes a baseline on mentees' sense of belonging, empowerment, and goals. The post-survey measures any changes on those dimensions that may have resulted from the program. The open-ended questions allow gathering feedback on what program components did or did not work for mentees' development. Together, the quantitative and qualitative data allow evaluating the program's effectiveness in fostering empowerment, belonging, and goal progress for BIPOC girls.

**Measuring Love is another useful survey tool.**



## A Sample Activity

### **Cultural Identity Art Collages**

Materials: magazines, scissors, glue, paper, markers

1. The facilitator will lead a brief discussion about the different parts of our cultural identities - including ethnicity, race, language, traditions, values etc.
2. Each girl will receive a piece of paper and magazines to flip through and cut out words, images, or symbols that represent their cultural identity.
3. Girls will then collaboratively create a large collage by gluing the cutouts from their individual papers onto a big piece of paper or poster board.
4. Once the group collage is complete, the facilitator will invite each girl to share about the cultural elements they contributed and why they are meaningful.
5. Facilitators should highlight similarities and differences across the collage, guiding girls to appreciate both the diversity within the group and common experiences.
6. To close, girls can reflect on what they learned about themselves or others that they didn't know before. How did this activity build community?

The hands-on art activity allows girls to explore their identities and share stories from their cultures in a creative, engaging way. They gain exposure to each other's backgrounds, deepening understanding and connection. The collaborative process enables community building, as they contribute individually but create something collectively.



# A Sample Training Curriculum Outline

## **Module 1 - Implicit Bias**

- Defining implicit bias vs. explicit prejudice
- Understanding origins and impacts of implicit bias
- Identifying our own biases through reflective exercises
- Strategies for recognizing and mitigating implicit bias

## **Module 2 - Cultural Competency**

- Defining cultural competency and cultural humility
- Exploring mentee cultural assets and experiences
- Learning about BIPOC girl identity development
- Building authentic relationships across differences
- Advocating for mentees navigating systems

## **Module 3 - Restorative Justice**

- Principles of restorative vs. punitive justice
- Using healing-centered approaches
- Responding to harm with accountability
- Facilitating peacemaking circles
- Developing mutual understanding and restoration

## **Module 4 - Trauma-Informed Care**

- Understanding trauma prevalence and impacts
- Creating physical and emotional safety
- Empowerment, choice, trustworthiness
- Managing triggers and preventing re-traumatization
- Supporting healing through mentoring relationships

This curriculum provides mentors with the critical knowledge and practical skills to build equitable, compassionate, and empowering mentoring relationships with BIPOC girls. It fosters self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, and effective responses to conflict that align with the program's mission.



## A Sample Care Plan

Individualized Care Plan for [Girl's Name]

Background:

- Age, grade, interests, family context
- Reasons for needing additional support

Goals:

- Academic - Improving math scores, completing science fair project
- Social/Emotional - Building self-esteem, managing anxiety
- Career - Exploring interests in technology/engineering

Supports:

- Weekly 1-on-1 meetings with mentor focused on building trust, listening without judgment
- Connecting with BIPOC women mentors in STEM fields
- Creating safe space to process experiences of discrimination/racism
- Providing academic help with math assignments
- Encouraging participation in coding camp & robotics club

Culturally Responsive Strategies:

- Incorporating arts, music, storytelling from her cultural background
- Contextualizing struggles in larger sociopolitical & historical contexts
- Drawing on the knowledge, resources, and lived experiences in her community
- Ensuring mentor is culturally competent and uses trauma-informed approach

Family Engagement:

- Monthly meetings with family to update on progress
- Soliciting input from family on culture, values, goals
- Providing family with community resource guide
- Partnering to support goals at home

Evaluation:

- Monthly check-ins on goals and adjust supports as needed
- Pre/post surveys on self-esteem, anxiety, attitudes about school
- Tracking academics, attendance, behavior as quantitative data

This outlines an individualized approach tailored to her specific needs and culture.



chapter three

## *Resources*



## Articles & Books

[Allies and Advocates Are Great, But BIPOC Women Want BIPOC Mentors, Too](#)

[The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma-Informed Care to Healing-Centered Engagement](#)

[The Black Girl Pushout](#)

**We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom by Bettina Love**

**Unearthing Joy: A Guide to Culturally and Historically Responsive Teaching and Learning by Gholdy Muhammad**

**Cultivating Joyful Learning Spaces for Black Girls: Insights into Interrupting School Pushout by Monique W. Morris**



# Podcasts

[Therapy for Black Girls Podcast](#)

[Latinx Therapy Podcast](#)

[Reimagining Youth Work](#)

[Co-Conspired Conversations](#)

[All My Relations](#)

[Mic Check! Podcast](#)





# Videos

[Black Girls Self-Care](#)

[Critical Mentoring Ted Talk](#)

[Bodies As Resistance](#)

[No. You cannot touch my hair!](#)

[The urgency of intersectionality](#)

[Every kid needs a champion](#)



# Model Programs

CodeSwitch

I Be Black Girl

Heart





## *Conclusion*

By understanding these aspects, practitioners can create inclusive and effective mentoring services that empower and uplift BIPOC women and girls, ensuring their voices and unique experiences are acknowledged, respected, and supported.



YMAN X NMRC



Need more insight & support?

## *The Rooted in Relationship Video Guide*



In our video guide, you can hear about the mentoring experiences of BIPOC girls and listen to some of their recommendations as well.

[Watch The Video Guide](#)