



Episode 14:

Systems change through Black-led research: A conversation with Black Thrive

Transcript

Introduction [00:00:02] Welcome to Our Sick Society. A podcast series where researchers from King's College London and people with lived experience explore together how social factors contribute to mental health problems. We'll also have some guest presenters inviting people who tell us their stories to investigate the issues that they're interested in, as well as the ones that we think are important. We want to make you think and question society's role in mental health. What are the systems and the structures which mean some people are more likely to be mentally unwell than others? And crucially, what steps should society take - from national government policies to local grassroots community organising - how can we cure our sick society?

Celestin Okoroji [00:01:07] Hello, my name is Dr Celestin Okoroji, and I am currently the Head of Research at Black Thrive. Black Thrive is a partnership organisation that brings together local communities, statutory agencies, and voluntary organisations to address the structural barriers that prevent Black people from thriving. One of the ways we do that is through high quality research, which broadly focuses on the social determinants of health and wellbeing using mixed methods approaches.

In June 2022, we led a series of events at a Festival hosted by the ESRC Centre for Society and Mental Health. The theme was "Partnering for Change" and, in particular, how we have been partnering with the Centre to complement community powered, Black led research.

In this episode, we will listen back to a panel discussion between myself, Professor Stephani Hatch of the Centre for Society and Mental Health, Councillor Jacqui Dyer – a co-founder of Black Thrive, and Natalie Creary - Programme Delivery Director for Black Thrive in Lambeth. The panel was chaired by Lela Kogbara, who is a Director of Black Thrive. Let's join the panel.

Lela Kogbara [00:00:23] I'm Lela Kogbara. I'm director of Black Thrive Global, and I'm going to chair a panel now, and I'm going to have the panel members come up and sit at

the front. And we have one of the rare species, a Black professor, Stephani Hatch. Professor Stephani Hatch, which many of you will know, a rare species! Then we've got Natalie Creary, who is Director, Programme Delivery Director for Lambeth, and then we've got Jacqui Dyer, who's the director of Black Thrive Global and also founder of Black Thrive Lambeth.

Okay. So I'm going to start off with just asking the question really about this relationship between Black Thrive and King's College London and the Centre for Society and Mental Health. I'm going to go, I think it was started between Stephani and Jacqui. So I'm going to ask you, you know, we've seen some of the things that are emerging from the partnership. And I just want to ask you, how did it all start? Oh, dear.

Stephani [00:03:34] I was trying to remember the first time I met Jacqui. I don't remember what year it was, but I remember being invited for the, what felt like the umpteenth time to go and present findings from the South East London Community Health Study, which started in 2008, if that gives you any indication about how long we've been at it, and ran until 2015. And I sort of had this running joke with a colleague of mine because we kept being invited to Southwark Council, in Lam...so this is set, it's set in Lambeth and Southwark. No other area in this... United Kingdom has as much detailed data on their communities and population. Yet we struggled to get the interest of local public health, local councils and maintain that interest. Every time we would start a relationship, the person would move on, we'd start again. So this was a hot day and I was like, I can't stop. I feel this sort of drive to be of service. I go into a room, I give the presentation looking around the table. It was Jacqui's level of scrutiny that was very apparent. And I thought, that's who I need to know. So that's my first memory.

Jacqui [00:05:09] Yes. And a memory of that room. And I'd like. How can we have this asset, this valuable asset in terms of research? In the borough of Lambeth. And we're not we're not using that. I just couldn't believe it. I felt quite disgusted, quite frankly, by our lack of engagement with academic research, contribution to what we do as a local authority, what we do as a local government, which is to respond to the diverse needs of our local population. And you can't do that, in my view, without leaning into research.

I think that there's obviously some disruption of the kinds of research that we do, so that the research is closer to the ground and engaged with the communities in the way that we're talking about wanting to pursue. But the importance of having, as they say, what research into practice or evidence-based decision making and all this kind of thing. And not actually having that, leaves you, as organisations to vulnerability of making decisions that are not really informed are maybe... the whim of a particular person that's got a particular passion for a particular aspect and it's got nothing to do with the needs of the population. I can't stand it. So, when I met Stephani and that presentation that she gave, I was utterly inspired. I knew that we are to build a closer relationship so that me as a local politician and activist could benefit our population through connecting our decision making with research.

Lela [00:07:09] Thank you both. So I'm going to ask each of the panel members actually, what do you what do you think the key ingredients are for a successful partnership of this sort? So I'm going to start with you, Natalie

Natalie [00:07:27] I think we all we work. I think we have the foundational kind of trust in there. I think that that has been key and that we are also kind of two organisations very aligned in terms of the direction of travel. We may not necessarily know exactly how we're going to get there, you know, because part of this is kind of iterative. We are learning as we're going along, but I think we are ambitious and aspirational and I think that that has been key.

Lela [00:08:01] Okay. Thank you, Celestin. What would be, from your perspective, are some of the key ingredients or developments or or achievements.

Celestin [00:08:11] I think. There's one thing in general, one thing specifically so in general, respect. It's about the fact that we say we respect what you bring to the table, we respect you bring to the table. And that way it's easy to kind of get along and make things work with people. The more specific thing is also something about recognising power. You know, King's College London is not some small outfit. It's a huge university with lots of lots of resources in general. I know individual researchers would be like, I've ain't got no money, but there's like lots of resources in general and, erm, sharing and trying to help in a way that isn't about, you know, any individuals like personal brand or personal, what they go about saying we think this is a good thing and therefore we're going to add our expertise and support you and train you and and show you a path where this could be successful. And that's been really useful from Stephani and others like Craig Morgan have really been helpful in that way because we are early career researchers in our team. We're not we're not Professors. We haven't made it in the academic world. And, you know, we're getting good support from KCL around our academic research. So yeah.

Lela [00:09:39] Interesting. I think I'm going to ask Stephani and Jacqui really that, in a way I'm curious about, is this actually King's College or is it Centre for Society and Mental Health or is it... Stephani... or Craig or whoever really because sorry..?

Celestin [00:09:58] I said is a good question.

Lela [00:09:59] Yeah because yeah I'm sure that Kings KCL has its own challenges of racism. And one of the things seeing the two of you operating is about your relationship, personal relationship, actually. And I wonder whether actually if you had different people, it would work. Stephani if you feel unable to answer that for...

Stephani [00:10:22] I'm able.

Lela [00:10:27] Please answer. Please answer.

Stephani [00:10:30] Look, I I'm very clear in thinking back over my academic trajectory that if I had, you know, I came to Kings... December 2006, if I had landed with any other group, my trajectory would have been very different. My experience would have been very different. I am incredibly grateful for the colleagues that I've had. The line manager that I had, you know, the guidance. And but it would have been very different because I've watched Black academics, few as we were, come and go.

And I remember, you know, being back in the States as well, which is it doesn't turn out that much better on the data. It's only 4% in the entire United States, Black professors.

But, you know, and then when we sat down, look, I've known Craig since almost the beginning of my time at King's. And when it came time to sit down, you know, he had sort of, you know, was talking about this with with other colleagues. You know, we were on the same page about doing something different. And it was the first ESRC Centre that King's would have. And we knew the weight of that because we knew that the institution was then going to have some sort of real sense of ownership of it. But I was encouraged. But, you know, we I think we have both been consistent and our ways of working and what we wanted to do, and we're willing to take calculated risks together. So if we were going to fail, it was going to be. That was it.

Lela [00:12:23] Mm hmm.

Stephani [00:11:24] But I never intended to be here. So, you know, saying to my brother at the weekend, who's also a Black professor. Right. Like, you know, we didn't envision being here. So where we go is just, you know, so when I met Jacqui, it was just like, I'm just gonna to speak to you frankly about what this means to me. And I got the same in return. So when you ask about, like, why did it work? It's because we are very frank and open and honest, you know, and disagree, butt heads, come back together like, because we've got that respect and we've built up that trust and we're still building the trust.

Lela [00:13:14] Yeah. Thank you, Jacqui. What are your thoughts on some of the ingredients? And also, how might it have been different, for example, without Stephani or Craig or others? So this kind of Stephani's talked about the kind of internal some of the internal relationships that were necessary as well. So what have been some of the key ingredients for your perspective?

Jacqui [00:13:38] Sharing the same ambitions for our for our people. For the people that are for diverse populations. But particularly for this agenda for me, which is attacking so understood around racialized communities being shafted for generation after generation in this country. And that local experience for me of like Lambeth, the data has been there for however, however long and it's like blind eyes turn its back on those experiences when actually public services are meant to be responding to that, but only truth, to respond to us in terms of detention, exclusion all day, and having that similar level of passion and passion and commitment to that agenda. I respond. So it makes me trust the person.

And building that on that trusting relationship means that we can work. I know we're going in the same direction because we're attending, attending to what really, really matters. So then, that then makes me want to build relationships with other members of your team. All people that Stephani works with that just you there from trust in the ones that you trust. Therefore, I'm going to open myself to work in those kind of life relationships as well, but also meeting some of the other members of the team. I'm like, Whoi the energy is hot! We can do things with these people. These people care. And for me, actually, the most important ingredient is that you care, if you care, because I care deeply and I care deeply because of my own lived experience where people haven't really cared, the system hasn't cared enough, and I've suffered significant loss, the loss of two brothers as a result of a system that doesn't care. And so those are the ingredients.

And the the the the sort of commitment to be at the top of your game, not no dibby dibby low level, just trying to get a 9 to 5 and your dollars and your pound signs, but actually that you are prepared to stretch yourself to the best of your ability in in your role as a

participant in the collaboration in this partnership to yield the optimal results for our people. That's what I found when I met some of the colleagues from from King's, from Stephani's. That then reflected to a degree with my relationships that I have with the Black Thrivers. So who I know operate from that, from that place. And so you've got the meeting of minds and souls on this agenda. So for me we haven't even realised what is possible yet. We've only just started on this journey. But as far as I'm concerned, it's transformational and it's about completely changing the trajectory of, of, of, of the Black experience.

And I firmly believe with this kind of partnership it can be done. And I think that you also have to really believe that if you don't believe it, it's not going to happen. So I firmly, firmly believe and so every every choice that we make and every I carry, I carry Stephani around with me everywhere. So let's just be true now. I carry it everywhere because I also feel much more as a Black woman, as a racialized woman, it's hard in a world which is White supremacist because that's what it is. It's the White frame, it's the White racialized frame. That's what we're the context that we're operating in, always standard. And so I'm not confident in that, you know, not my own self. I need support. So some of the places where I navigate in actually the resistance to me wanting to advocate on behalf, is it's just constant, relentless, ongoing. It's always been that kind of a journey. But now when you have other people like alongside with you, it's like even though you might be in the room sometimes with you by yourself, they're also with you. So you become more confident. And that's kind of so I think that where we go is like you, you know, people think is really impossible for me. Nah, it's possible. Not in the no, impossible. Everything is possible. But it takes a united, consistent, sustained perseverance, kind of like effort whereby you've got people that want to operate at the top of their game, with care and heart and commitment, all working together.

Lela [00:18:53] Thank you. So I'm going to open up to the audience in a minute and quite a few of the questions relate to the presentations we've heard. So I'm going to ask the panel a bit to comment on what we heard in the presentations. That whole idea of a different lens to look at either what's there already or the approach to getting information that I was hearing quite a lot about the kind of privilege of knowledge, and how that is used and so on. So if you think about whether it's stop and search or some of the work in Birmingham around the Mental Health... trust and the questions being asked when you when you think about that Black lens question specifically say in relation to say stop research in mental health. What are the...different...what what what does that bring up for you?

Celestin [00:19:46] Okay. Yeah. So there is something about lenses. And my sort of training, my background is as a cultural psychologist, which requires one to kind of think from different positions. And there's so I think, Jacqui, there is a kind of White supremacist hegemonic position, which is that the way we live here and now is the only way to live and is the right way to live. And it's the normal way to live. Therefore, deviations from that normal are policed, sectioned, [...], excluded, othered. And, it's interesting, you know, because people who are immigrants to this country or immigrants to this country from elsewhere will know that there's some other way to live because you've lived in a different way in another place, right, there is another kind of normal that you've experienced. Some of what we're doing is about taking normal for us, right, Which might be a kind of Black cultural experience in the U.K., or it might be a cultural experience from elsewhere and

applying it to the way we operate in this country. This is something about sort of turning the lens away from ourselves, turning the lens outwards.

So in relation to stop and search, for example. Okay. One way of looking at this question is to step back from the issue of stop and search itself and go to the issue of crime or the cost of crime for example. We may then ask ourselves, if stop and search is so ineffective, why do we continue to put lots and lots of money into stop and searching for people on the street? Like, what is that for? What does that do? And we want to come up with some different kinds of answers as to what that is for. So that might be for its purpose might be, to subjugate certain kinds of communities, which you think are, think should be sort of outside of, the outside of the polity. And if you look into the history of stop and search, we do see a lot of that actually, a lot of the places where stop and search has taken place where there are immigrant communities which are seen as bad or negative or or outside of our norms. So, yeah, it's just about taking a different kind of angle on on these questions. And seeing whether that bears fruit. It may not. Okay. We need to be open to that too, maybe, you know, maybe this kind of like super objective angle is is the right one. But we need to try something else because what we're doing now is not working, so.

Lela [00:22:43] Okay.

Natalie [00:22:44] Erm just kind of following on from Celestin, I think it's there is something about how you start to look at a problem from or challenge, or an opportunity from a different perspective, but I think through the stop and search project that we're trying to do, it's also kind of, also trying to get us to think differently about what knowledge we consider to be credible and often what we consider to be evidence is, is stuff that's produced by academics. And that way of producing knowledge is prioritised more so than the knowledge that people have just because they live. And so what we were quite keen to do through that project was really about ensuring that voices of communities are also part of that process. Similar to what Tamanda was saying, is that actually we can we might have a question. We kind of know what the answer is going to be before, but we kind of had to go through the process because our own existence in terms of how we experience things, is generally not enough for White folk generally who are commissioning this this work. And so I think that that is also, I think, an important part for us to kind of really question what knowledge we consider to be important and why that is. And largely, it's just because it keeps us all in jobs.

Lela [00:24:06] Yeah, I'm going to some of the audience members have popped some questions up there, but I'm also going to give people an opportunity to just speak from the floor because I'm kind of looking at questions and whatever, but anybody can ask your question straight up might be as easy or anybody else in the audience who's got an answer to any of the questions up there, feel free to join in. We don't you don't have to. You can give an opinion as well as ask a question.

Audience member [00:24:31] Thank you. I just wanted to jump in because, five of those are from me. So I need to condense it so other people get a chance! So one of the things that, I would consider myself an independent researcher. I recently completed my Master's and it was on mental health management in the Black community, about co-designing and making sure that, you know, you bring the voice people to the forefront of conversation. You know, on paper, I think got a lot of praise, but in practice I was quite frustrated because I was an independent researcher. I didn't feel like, I felt like I had to be really

careful with how I approached it. I had done lots of research on the subject area and I saw that this was going back 30 plus years. I had to bring something new and meaningful to the people that I was approaching to be a part of this, because those same issues they were talking about, about Black people feeling like research happened and then nothing comes of it. It's really important to be mindful of and I see a lot of people like me who are doing this research as independent people, but we're kind of limited in how we can take it forward to make change. And it's one of the frustrating things, I think that as a someone based in the community, you're almost limited in that you can't promise too much. But you also want to be a part of making that change happen. So how can we work with organisations like yourself, who have more clout, more money, more influence to bring our research to that conversation in a meaningful way and respect the people that we're doing research with.

Lela [00:26:02] Yeah, yeah. Good question. Thank you. I'm going to go to Stephani.

Stephani [00:26:08] Yeah. No. So back in 2010, we started the HERON Network, I think it was 2010, partly for that reason. So we wanted to level this idea. That's when we really started to push. That's when I felt like I had enough seniority to start having the conversation about who's generating evidence. Why do we only value evidence that's generated by academics when we know that they are flawed, just like any other researcher, right? But they're protected behind these names, especially when it's these sort of big names. So we started the HERON Network so that we made sure that there were different voices coming into the room. Now we did, we went about, you know, really trying to figure this out. And, you know, there are ways of working really important to us then and it's even evolved now. But one of those things is to always invite people such as yourself to come into those spaces and to have a voice in those spaces and to really think about if you if you want to disseminate and you want to disseminate in a certain way, because I only you know, I've got expertise in one thing, right? And they've got it, you know, Black Thrive has expertise and another way of doing it, we're trying to join up to think about how do, we sort of disrupt and do things in a slightly different way. So if you want to come along with that, there are spaces like our you know, we've got our health inequalities research group that meets and we just sort of hash out things in progress, there's peer support within that. You know, anybody is welcome. Like it shouldn't be just the people who are, you know, if you've got that time.

But I'm always worried about, you know, when someone comes to me and they're like, I'm an independent researcher, my first thought is, I need to find some money to pay you, right? Yeah. Like this is. But that's just that's on me, that's on my shoulders. And that's something that I'm grappling with because it also creates a tension for myself, but it's because we've been, you know, we've been so undervalued and the topic areas that we that, you know, we're looking into have been so undervalued, I can't tell you that before 2020 and Black Lives Matter, the number of times the articles got kicked back because they had race or ethnicity in the title, when we took it out, it was a different, you know. So it's just like, I know the reality of the situation, but there there are spaces for you to come into. And as Jacqui said, we're there to lift each other up. So going back to the point that Jacqui makes, I think this is really important as we try and get better together. Right. Every I'm still learning. I constantly feel like I am just a student of all of this. Right. And and there's so much more that I want to learn from people around me on my team. And, you know, but I'm also going to give, you know, give in the same way with that. So if you send me a proposal, you send me a paper, I'm gonna go in, not because of any sort of, but

because I know what you you know, where the potential is and how to uncover that. And I've had, you know, amazing mentors over my career who have, you know, really instilled sort of basic things that they don't teach you on a master's course. They don't teach you in undergrad, and it is really about the culture of research and the culture of, you know, whatever environment you're in. And I experience both with organisations, you know, I worked for. Now, you know, I don't even know how many years, but I think about the Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies in New Orleans. Also Black led, been around for nearly 30 years and they are still one of the few in all of the United States that are funded to do similar work. And so it's about, you know, where if you come to me, I'm going to try and get you over there so that you can see another model. I'm going to try. You know, that's the kind of so the possibility is there. It's just you know, and the one thing I learnt very early on in my career, if you don't ask, you don't get it. So just get, you know, be in touch.

Audience member [00:30:36] I just don't want to pester, and I thought...

Natalie [00:30:37] Oh no, pester away!

Lela [00:30:39] Yeah. Yeah. I kind of see that. But there's also something it's interesting because one of the things I'm observing related to that question is that we're all kind of working, using, bringing ourselves to work. Do you see what I mean? And our passion to work. And I wonder whether that's there's something about how to find yourself in a space where you can bring it every day, what you believe in, what you want to do, what you've researched and who you are and how, I know that's a privilege. I guess? Just curious about.

Jacqui [00:31:12] Can I also talk from a practical way in terms of. What's the purpose and the impact that you're trying to make? You know, like and I think that we have to ask ourselves in relation to that, about our contribution, and then that helps us to align with what can help to activate moving that, that kind of forward. So I yeah, so I say that and I suppose I say that from a perspective of being a politician, sorry, I've got heartburn, and sorry I'm like that - so it's nothing to do with you's - it's me going through – ooh. Yeah. As a politician and I'm the deputy leader of Lambeth Council and my, and I've come from being a councillor in a ward, to navigating my way through because I'm seeing that other people, that fellow politicians are in positions of power as cabinet members, the leadership team and whatever, and, are doing diddly squat in relation to some of the most vulnerable population.

You travel on the 159, bus from Waterloo all the way down to Streatham and you can see actually it's not hidden. Those that are in poverty, in distress, excluded, in desperation, it's visible, like I can see them. Sometimes I have to close my eyes as I'm going along that bus ride because it's too painful. So for me it's about how am I going to get to make it different? And so moving towards then being deputy leader, where I have responsibility for an inclusive economy so that people can get access to opportunities that whereby they can have more of a chance to have flourishing lives and responsible for the whole organisations around the equalities, the inequity agenda. So I lead on those and all the time I'm thinking, how am I going to get a more research culture embedded into the whole system of decision making of the local authority that will then help to generate the kind of transformative outcomes that that we're trying to work for.

So one of the, this is about being strategic and systematic and determined, right? So one of the recommendations within, one of our manifesto committed commitments, I led on the manifesto development of the manifesto commitments. So positioning yourselves in positions where actually you can help steer the direction of travel. And one of those manifesto commitments is a commitment to work with Black Thrive and to further strengthen the partnership between Black Thrive and the and King's College London in order to improve outcomes for Black African and Black Caribbean populations of Lambeth. That means right across the board. So you see, it's also for me which hands are which research and which which stakeholder, which citizen and how are you contributing and helping that agenda to take it forward? And for me, therefore, research is purposeful and not about just being some academic paper that's published. It's about how it's going to assist service development, resource flows that then better cater for the needs of the populations that need it to actually really be at the top, top of our game in our thinking and doing.

Lela [00:34:57] Yeah, I think that it's, you know, we're coming to the end. So, so but I, I think that, that, that it's interesting that kind of academia coming together with real life and that is the sense of the partnership that I think feels quite strong. There's a kind of there's academia and real life and often they don't meet. And I do feel that this partnership kind of offers that opportunity. I don't know if any more questions from the audience before I ask the panel for their final thoughts on ambitions for the future. Giving you a heads up if you need to make notes of yeah, ambitions for the future.

Audience member 2 [00:35:40] Hi, thank you so much. This is really inspiring. I work in nature conservation and environmental policymaking and a lot of the questions that you're exploring around knowledge production is really useful and important as well as environmental science. And the question I had is actually on the screen, which is how are you all taking care of yourselves as individuals and your mental health? Um, knowing the work that you do and the context in which you're working in I'm sure has a lot of strength that you get in solidarity. But, you know, the work you're doing is challenging. The status quo, which does not want us to exist. So how are you? What are your practises and for your taking on as individuals to take care of yourselves?

Lela [00:36:28] Thank you. That's a good question actually to probably close on and I think good point. The system isn't waiting there to be changed, you know, indeed quite the reverse. It's pushing back all the way. So how do we take care of ourselves? I'm going to start with you, Natalie, then Celestin.

Natalie [00:36:42] You can probably answer that question for me Lela.

Jacqui [00:36:44] Yeah, I can answer that for you.

Natalie [00:36:45] You want to answer for me then? Go on.

Jacqui [00:36:47] Soca.

Natalie [00:36:49] Soca music and carnival [...] That's how I look after my mental health.

Lela [00:36:56] I thought you might say that. Uh, well, what's that song that you like? What was it? What?

Natalie [00:37:02] Kes The Band – Wotless. I say no more.

Lela [00:37:07] It was like we were looking for a deep, meaningful, like, what's your song? What's a song with speaks of your dreams, ambitions, and she goes Wotless. Haha okay Celestin.

Celestin [00:37:15] Good question. I haven't been, but don't do as I do. If I could, I'm trying to fix it. But my advice is don't take on too many things. I have been doing too many things for too long. Sorry. I think Black Thrive is going to be my thing, so I'm going to have Summer off and then I'm going to come back refreshed. But listen, and I'm sure this is happening to you as well. When you're the first at something, everyone wants a piece of you. Okay. This happens every single Black person that ever ends up in some strange position that they're not supposed to be in, everyone will want to grab you. Everyone wants your time. Everyone wants you to be on some equality and diversity board. I'm finished. I've had enough. So I'm going to decline a lot going forward, and focus on, and I think it's really come through strongly from Jacqui and Stephani, to focus on what is really important to you, what you can say, you know, if I retire tomorrow, I'll be happy that I was involved in that thing and being involved in that thing so, yeah. Don't do like me, don't join up to all these boards. They're mostly useless, so. Yeah. So I haven't been looking after myself, but I will in the future.

Lela [00:38:51] Okay, Jacqui.

Jacqui [00:38:54] I'm the worst person on this one, but I'm learning. I'm learning. So I'm learning to say no to some of these, these events where everybody wants you to talk there to inspire them people and ting it's like, nope, so I'm saying no. I, in fact, I'm very proud of the fact that I'm saying no, to like my PA now knows that say no to all of them, but I still try and get a little sneak and see oh there might be one or two of I was willing to, but she's now says no! And it's like, ooh, okay, so that's one of them.

Somebody asked me the other day about how do I take care of myself and and actually, I couldn't answer. Like straight, straight. And and er that just showed me I need to even dig deeper in in dealing with that. So I am. So one of the things that I do love around when I do take care of myself is, is exercise. I love, like doing aerobics to hardcore garage music. Right. I mean, like really do a real fling down on it. And I'm at the front of the class, in front of the mirror, like sweating and loving it and getting just some heavy endomorphines in my brain that just make me feel really happy.

And so it was funny that after a long time, I hadn't seen that crew that I've trained with, at Brixton Rec. And one guy saw me, and I was so happy to see the man because it made me just remember about how much enjoyment I get from that. And then I was like, I'll be back soon. I'll be back soon. I'm just organising my programme so that I can build that back into my programme. So there's things that I do enjoy, like.

Like I love Opera right? And so I have started incorporating, where before because none of my friends really like Opera. So I'd have to go by myself so I don't go. So, like, now I'm going, even if I'm going by myself. And so I book like a year ahead, like, for example, that and other things that I love to do. So that my calendar now is starting to be made up of things that I like, as well as my work so I can do a 24/7 hardcore on my work. But I know at

the end of the week, like the end of this week, on Friday, I'm going to see Madame Butterfly, for example. So it's like that, you know, you have to put effort into it. The taking care of yourself just doesn't come just like that.

Lela [00:41:50] And Stephani.

Stephani [00:41:52] A couple of things. So nature is key. Like, I love trees. So every morning I go on a walk and that is, after these last several years, it's non-negotiable. Everything gets moved around my morning walk because that brings me joy. The trees and and my birds that I talk to. I have an allotment. I like to dig in the dirt. It's a great way to relieve stress. Music – every Friday night in my house is a deep, soulful house dance off. Like that, you know, I've got all sorts of playlists for anything. So the first thing I ask someone when they're about to do something big, what's on your playlist? Get it together. Get your costume. You know, hook it up. So music's really important to me. The lyrics of my favourite people constantly play over and over in my head. And then finally surrounding myself with people who are honest with me and call me out when I slip back into that bad behaviour. Right. And I'll get angry at them, I might lash out a bit. I just feel like proper temp, you know, temper tantrum. Yeah. But like, that's who I want around me. And they hold me up, you know, and they're people that are close to me on my team and I, yeah, I'm incredibly grateful for a very tight, small group of friends, you know, all over the world that check in. So that's to me how I look after my mental health.

Lela [00:43:43] Well, that, I think is a good note to end on. Relationships and the importance of good relationships for mental health and for delivering the transformation that we will see. We will see. Okay. So thanks everyone for coming. Thanks for making it. Thank you.

Celestin [00:44:15] Since the panel took place, the Black Thrive Research Institute and Observatory have been working on a range of research projects, including an innovative healthcare intervention focusing on hypertension case findings in the older Black population, expanding our methodological thinking in relation to community-owned data and community conceptual resources. We have also received a grant from Wellcome, to develop our work exploring the impact of stop and search on young Black people's mental health.

To stay up to date with the work of Black Thrive, you can visit our website, at www.blackthrive.org or find us on whichever social media platform you use, just search Black Thrive. Thank you for listening.

Verity [00:45:06] If you want to know more about our guests or any topics discussed in this episode, please visit the episode description for links and helpful resources. This podcast is funded by the King's College London ESRC Impact Acceleration Account. Our producer is Verity Buckley.

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