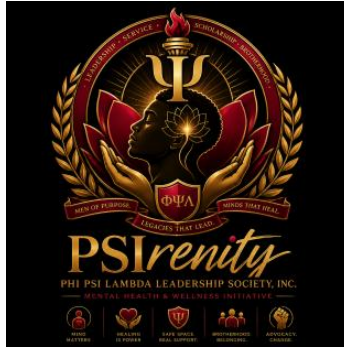




FEATURE ARTICLE

The Work After Survival

Inside PSIrenity's "War on Black Men Part 2: Healing. Brotherhood. Rebuilding."

Phi Psi Lambda Leadership Society, Inc. | November 11, 2025

By Phi Psi Lambda Leadership Society, Inc. National Communications

OPENING SCENE

The second night did not arrive as a sequel. It arrived as a decision.

On November 11, 2025, PSIrenity, the national mental health and wellness initiative of Phi Psi Lambda Leadership Society, Inc., reconvened its audience for "War on Black Men Part 2: Healing. Brotherhood. Rebuilding." One week earlier, the Society had named the battlefield: violence, educational barriers, mental strain, and the disappearing leadership pipeline confronting Black men and boys. Part two asked the harder question that comes after truth: what does restoration require?

Hosted again by Alfred Lewis Jr., International Vice President of Media Relations and External Affairs, and Joel Lewis, National Vice President of Community and Public Relations, the webinar moved with the weight of a community conversation and the clarity of an action plan. Joel Lewis opened by naming the transition plainly: Part One began with truth and moved toward healing, but this session was about rebuilding "our communities, our brotherhood, and our peace." Alfred Lewis Jr. framed the space as PSIrenity's work at its best: reflection, education, healing, and collaboration in service of men of color who deserve more than crisis response.

The featured panelists returned with the same depth that made the first conversation urgent. Dr. Lloyd M. Talley, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Hampton University and a scholar of Black male identity, resilience, and flourishing, brought the architecture of developmental psychology into the room. Dr. Victor N. Ukwu, board-certified Family Medicine physician and Founder and Executive Director of Maven Community Health, Inc., brought the voice of medicine, public health, and community-rooted wellness. Together, they offered language, structure, challenge, and a map.

"Tonight was about rebuilding our communities, our brotherhood, and our peace. — Joel Lewis"

THE FIRST MEDICINE WAS A MIRROR

The first answer of the night was not policy. It was not fundraising. It was not even community programming. It was self-reflection.

Asked where the work of restoration begins, Dr. Talley did not let the audience hide behind the violence of the outside world alone. He acknowledged the war surrounding Black men, but then turned the question inward: how do we stop contributing to the wounds we are trying to heal? It was not victim-blaming. It was accountability without denial.

"The first step in any healing process is self-reflection," Dr. Talley said. Restoration, in his view, requires Black men to take stock of their choices, relationships, coping strategies, silences, reactions, and emotional inheritance before asking the world to change around them.

Dr. Ukwu extended the frame from the individual to the community. If restoration begins with the self, reclamation must also include community healing hubs and narrative repair. Black men are often handed narrow scripts: athlete, entertainer, threat, provider, survivor. Rebuilding means changing the story in public and in private. It means placing new images of Black male life before the community: thinkers, physicians, educators, fathers, organizers, artists, entrepreneurs, brothers, and builders.

This is where PSIrenity's significance becomes larger than one webinar. Phi Psi Lambda was not convening a conversation to admire the problem. It was modeling what restoration looks like when young leaders, scholars, clinicians, and brothers gather with the courage to name harm and the discipline to build a response.

"The first step in any healing process is self-reflection. — Dr. Lloyd M. Talley"

HEALING IS NOT A HASHTAG

In an age where grief can be posted, summarized, remixed, and buried under the next trending topic within hours, the panelists insisted that healing is not a moment of visibility. It is a practice. It is not a caption. It is a commitment.

Dr. Ukwu compared healing to recovery and to medicine itself. A person does not go to therapy once, feel one breakthrough, and declare the work finished. Recovery is active. Medicine is practiced. Faith is practiced. Leadership is practiced. Healing, he said, must be approached like a marathon: training, endurance, pacing, consistency, and humility before the distance still ahead.

Dr. Talley deepened that point through the lens of Black psychology and African-centered thought. “Knowledge of self is the highest form of knowledge,” he reminded the audience. Without knowledge of stressors, triggers, emotional history, wounds, motivations, and patterns, a young man may keep moving without ever becoming self-determined. He may perform strength while remaining estranged from his own interior life.

For Black boys, Talley argued, the work must begin early. Emotional socialization cannot wait until crisis. Boys must be taught how to express feelings, how to say no when they are overtaxed, how to ask for help, how to lean into discomfort, and how to separate their identity from extrinsic rewards like money, status, athletic recognition, and performative masculinity. Healing is one part of the journey; building well-being is the other.

That distinction matters deeply for Gen Z and millennials. These generations are more fluent in the language of anxiety, burn out, boundaries, trauma, and wellness than many before them. But fluency is not freedom. A young man can know the words and still not know the way. PSIrenity gave language structure. It translated mental health into manhood, not as weakness, but as maturity.

“Recovery is active. Recovery is a present thing. — Dr. Victor N. Ukwu”

VULNERABILITY AS LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

The evening’s most intimate turn came when the panel confronted vulnerability. The question was familiar: how can Black communities redefine vulnerability as strength instead of weakness? Dr. Talley answered by refusing the premise. Vulnerability, he suggested, is not something men must manufacture. It is part of being human. The deeper struggle is shame.

“We are ashamed of our human beingness as men,” he said, naming a wound that rarely receives such plain language. Black men are not invincible by design. They are human beings moving through environments that often require armor. The problem is not that they have needs. The problem is that too many have been taught to feel diminished by needing anything at all.

Dr. Ukwu reframed vulnerability as leadership capacity. Men who refuse to ask for help do not only endanger themselves, he argued; they endanger those who depend on them. Leadership requires emotional literacy: the ability to identify what one feels, name what happened, understand the environment, and connect a reaction to its source before damage spreads. Anger may be the emotion many men know best, but anger is rarely the whole truth.

For young Black men, this is revolutionary because it disrupts a cultural myth: that the only respected man is the man who carries everything without asking for help. PSIrenity offered a stronger image. The leader who can say, “I am not okay,” before he breaks is not weak. He is disciplined. The brother who can hear another man say the same and remain present is not soft. He is sacred infrastructure.

Joel Lewis gave that truth generational weight when he reflected on his own evolving definition of manhood. He named the inherited model of the provider who works, earns, comes home, and suppresses everything else. But then he asked what else makes a man. Emotional literacy. Vulnerability. Sensitivity. Community. Brotherhood. Presence. These are not side traits. They are survival skills.

“How do we normalize emotional literacy? — Dr. Victor N. Ukwu”

BROTHERHOOD AS GUARDRAIL

If the first half of the webinar examined healing, the second half built a case for brotherhood as one of the most practical forms of public health Black men have.

Dr. Talley identified four gifts that brotherhood can provide: consistency, relationships, modeling, and skill development. Brotherhood, he said, offers a structure where a young man can “aspire and fail” in the presence of people who want to see him grow. That phrase named what many Black boys and young men are missing: a place where mistakes are corrected without humiliation, where ambition is witnessed, where critique is not an attack, and where older brothers become proof that a future can be reached.

Dr. Ukwu called attention to the same reality through sports, Greek-letter organizations, and the social architecture of teams. Brotherhood teaches men how to fail forward. It creates a space where struggle becomes shared, where correction becomes care, and where the fall does not become the identity. Even gangs often draw young men through the promise of belonging. The question is whether healthier institutions are willing to build brotherhood with equal seriousness and better purpose.

The conversation then turned from brotherhood as a feeling to brotherhood as a habit. Dr. Talley argued that trust takes time. It is not built through one panel, one flyer, one meeting, or one moment of public vulnerability. It is built through repeated presence. It is built when men sit with no agenda except honesty. Consistency, not performance, creates safety.

That is why Phi Psi Lambda’s work lands with such force. The Society’s leadership model is not simply about titles; it is about formation. Alfred Lewis Jr. and Joel Lewis spoke not as distant moderators, but as young men being formed by the very brotherhood they help lead. Joel spoke of brothers who ask how he is really doing. Alfred named the difference between being a brother and knowing how to be a brother. Brotherhood is not a word worn on a jacket. It is a discipline practiced when no camera is on.

“Brotherhood provides the structure for you to both aspire and fail. — Dr. Lloyd M. Talley”

REBUILDING THE PIPELINE BEFORE THE CRISIS

The webinar’s title promised rebuilding, and the panelists refused to treat that as metaphor. Rebuilding requires systems. It requires coordination. It requires pipelines that begin before emergency.

Dr. Ukwu spoke as a physician who wants to see more Black male physicians, educators, and community health leaders. The work cannot begin in medical school, he said. It must begin much earlier, with a sixth grader who can imagine becoming a doctor twenty years before the white coat. Mentorship must restore the pipeline by exposing young men to possibility before the world teaches them to narrow their dreams.

Dr. Talley pressed the point further. Having participated in programs from youth development spaces to rites of passage, he asked why there is no national model and curriculum for Black manhood. Why, in an era of technology, can a young mother not find one coordinated, accessible pathway for her son? Why are organizations not pooling resources, sharing curriculum, and creating a common set of developmental experiences that teach life skills, civic participation, ancestral grounding, emotional literacy, leadership, and purpose?

His challenge was direct: fragmentation is one of the tools of power. If Black communities remain scattered, duplicating effort without coordination, young men pay the price. If the pipeline is going to be rebuilt, it must be built intentionally, collaboratively, and at scale.

This is where PSIrenity's connection to Gen Z becomes particularly important. This is a generation that understands platforms, networks, links, livestreams, digital rooms, and shared resources. It has watched harm travel quickly. It can make healing travel quickly too. Phi Psi Lambda's opportunity is to turn digital fluency into institutional power: a living network of young men, mentors, elders, professionals, and brothers who can be reached before crisis and walked with after it.

"We have the technology. The question is: what is our barrier from coming together? — Dr. Lloyd M. Talley"

FROM HEALING TO THRIVING

The final movement of the webinar lifted the conversation from restoration to flourishing. Healing, Dr. Talley argued, is necessary, but it cannot be the end point. A person can heal from trauma and still lack a vision for what comes next. Black men must be invited not only to recover, but to dream.

He asked the audience to imagine thriving with measurable benchmarks. What would it mean to collect more positive narratives of Black men living whole everyday lives? What would it mean to plan beyond survival, beyond the next week, beyond the immediate danger, beyond the small dream forced by a hard environment? To thrive, he suggested, Black men must begin healing and planning at the same time. A healed-to-thriving lens does not lead from competition; it leads from communality. If one brother is thriving, that thriving belongs to the whole body.

Dr. Ukwu seized on the word thrive and pressed for definition. What does thriving actually look like? How do we make it sacred? To treat thriving as sacred is to protect it, pour into it, measure it, sustain it, and pass it forward. It is not a vague aspiration. It is a standard a community can organize around.

Then Dr. Talley introduced the language that brought the evening full circle: post-traumatic growth. Black men are often discussed through the lens of post-traumatic stress. The panel did not dismiss that reality. But Talley asked what might happen if Black men also interpreted trauma through the desire for growth it can create. "Healing trauma is not forgetting trauma," he said. It is reframing the experience so that a man can move forward because of what he has survived, not remain imprisoned by it.

Dr. Ukwu completed that thought with a definition of courage fit for the entire evening: courage is not the absence of fear; it is moving with the fear. Leadership from a healed place does not pretend the wound never existed. It learns the code of the wound, builds guardrails around the backslide, and pours into others because the outpouring becomes greater than the fear of falling back.

"The trauma didn't go away, but I'm not dwelling in the disorder. I'm dwelling in the capacity for growth. — Dr. Lloyd M. Talley"

THE ROAD THEY CHOSE TO BUILD

By the end of "War on Black Men Part 2," the word rebuilding no longer felt like an abstract theme. It felt like an assignment.

Rebuilding begins when Black men look in the mirror without shame and without denial. It continues when communities repair the narratives that have reduced Black male possibility to entertainment, labor, danger, or survival. It deepens when young boys are taught emotional language before silence becomes reflex. It strengthens when vulnerability is reclaimed as human beingness. It becomes real when brotherhood stops being ornamental and becomes consistent enough to hold grief, correction, ambition, and failure.

Phi Psi Lambda Leadership Society, Inc. stands in that work with urgency and imagination. Through PSIrenity, the organization is building a language of wellness that does not ask young men to choose between strength and tenderness, leadership and healing, masculinity and scholarship, brotherhood and accountability. It is showing Generation Z and millennial men that leadership is not only a title; it is how a man learns to carry himself, how he refuses to disappear, and how he reaches back for another brother before the pipeline narrows again.

The most powerful part of the webinar was not that it named the pain. Pain had already been named. What made the night matter was that it moved beyond diagnosis. It placed restoration in the hands of people willing to do the work: hosts young enough to speak the language of their generation, panelists seasoned enough to frame the crisis with wisdom, and an organization bold enough to build the room where truth and healing could meet.

One webinar cannot end the war. But it can gather the builders. It can name the tools. It can remind a young Black man that asking for help is not surrender, that brotherhood can be a guardrail, that thriving can be sacred, and that the future has not vanished when a community still has the courage to rebuild it.

"Purpose. Healing. Brotherhood. Leadership."

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