Taraji P. Henson Launches Foundation to Address Mental Illness Among African Americans

The *Empire* star's organization honors her late father who struggled with mental health issues.

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Add Taraji P. Henson's name to the growing list of celebrities working to address mental health in the Black community. The actress launched a foundation in honor of her late father to help end mental health stigma and support those living with mental illness, reports PEOPLE.

"I named the organization after my father because of his complete and unconditional love for me; his unabashed, unashamed ability to tell the truth, even if it hurt; and his strength to push through his own battles with mental health issues," said Henson in a statement.

The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation (BLHF) will offer mental health services to youth in urban schools, combat recidivism in the prison system and provide scholarships to Black students seeking a career in the mental health field to help boost the number of African-American therapists in the United States.

In 2006, Boris Henson died of liver cancer at age 58.

According to Henson, her father was a Vietnam War vet. But when he returned to the United States postwar, she said, her dad was "broken, and received little to no physical and emotional support."

Added Henson, "I stand now in his absence, committed to offering support to African Americans who face trauma daily, simply because they are Black."

BLHF plans to partner with school districts to furnish mental health therapists, social workers and counselors to Black children in need of assistance. In addition, the organization will collaborate with nonprofit organizations that offer mental health services.

On September 22, a special fundraising event called Taraji's Boutique of Hope will kick off BLHF in Los Angeles. Monies raised are designated to secure resources that increase mental health support in urban schools.

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