Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community

SPRING 2002 FORUM
Black Men and Domestic Violence:
What Do We Know, Where Do We Go?
May 30-31, 2002
WELCOME

Oliver Williams

We're here to hear everyone's voices to be able to respond

PROCLAMATION

Welcome from Philadelphia... the city of brotherly and sisterly love.

We, in this city, are working on teaching people respect for families and women. We appreciate all of you for being pioneers in this effort.

J. Robert Harison, Faith-based Initiatives City of Philadelphia

Engage! This is a worthwhile effort.

-Bill Riley

We need to hear voices we don't always listen to, voices we don't always even hear. Some we will agree with, some we won't. But we'll be here to support each other in our discussions.

The issue of domestic violence in African American communities is a seminal issue. You are here to help move things forward. Know that you are doing so.

Office of Human Services
Clarence Carter
Dr. Oliver J. Williams welcomed us to the IDVAAC’s conference on “Black Males & Domestic Violence: What Do We Know, Where Do We Go?” He was joined by William Riley, Clarence Carter, and J. Robert Harrison.

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  —Oliver J. Williams, Ph.D., IDVAAC

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  —Clarence Carter, Office of Human Services

- Engage! This is a worthwhile effort.
  —William D. Riley, IDVAAC

- Welcome, from Philadelphia, the city of brotherly and sisterly love! We, in this city, are working on teaching people respect for women and families. We appreciate all of you and thank you for being pioneers in this effort.
  —J. Robert Harrison, Faith Based Initiatives, City of Philadelphia
**KEYNOTE**

**VIOLANCE**
- My mother overdosed when I was 5. I was an only child.
- My sister had child after child starting at 14.
- I grew up in a violent community in Detroit, in a violent home filled with addiction, teen pregnancy, fear.
- I couldn't fight, but I could talk.
- But we cannot hide or run from our blood & bone. They are here with us, and they are dangerous. They are our sons.
- We live in difficult times.
- Armed children are killing other children.
- Drugs contribute to the violence.
- In this world of prisons & politically charged climate, how do we... Define the new Black Man?

**BLACK MOVEMENT**
- The Black Movement provided young blacks with a context to build ideas.
- It taught us critical thinking.
- It taught us to connect our reality to that of the wider, international world.
- No national Black Movement exists. We are lacking the power of ideas. We are forced with the power of ego, the power of ignorance.
- Ignorance is contagious. It's an overfed cockroach.

**IGNORANCE**
- Ignorance is delivered upon the African American community by people who have no idea about the obstacles confronting the community.
- Critical thinking is not taught.
- Information, often worthless, is provided.

**IDEAS**
- We form ideas and year after year, we hold to them, even when they are no longer useful.
- Fathers are the missing link in black families' lives.
- Black men are missing out on education, economic opportunity.

**RESPECTING OUR WOMEN**
- You can't be afraid of smart women.
- No one should feel the pain of sexual repression.
- Our women are our culture, our culture is our future.

**OUR BOYS NEED FATHERS**
- Our boys need a hug from a man, from their father.
- A kiss.
- A touch.
- A word of love.

**STREET CULTURE**
- How do we find life giving strategies for... the making of exceptional men?
Haki Madhubuti, poet, educator, and publisher, provided us with a moving keynote address that touched on many of the intertwined topics surrounding black men and domestic violence.

**VIOLENCE**
- I grew up in a violent community in Detroit, in a violent home filled with addiction, teen pregnancy and fear.
- My mother overdosed when I was 16. My sister had child after child starting at 14.
- I couldn’t fight, but I could talk.
- We cannot hide or run from our blood and bone. They are here with us, and they are dangerous. They are our sons. They are our loaded weapons.
- We live in difficult times.
- Armed children are killing other children.
- Drugs contribute to the violence.
- In this world of prisons and a politically charge climate, how do we define the new black man? How do we find life giving strategies for the making of exceptional men?

**IGNORANCE**
- Ignorance is delivered upon the African American community by people who have no idea about the obstacles confronting the community.
- Critical thinking is not taught.
- Information, often worthless, is provided.
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**IDEAS**
- We form ideas and, year after year, we hold to them, even when they are no longer useful.

**OUR BOYS NEED FATHERS**
- Our boys need a hug from a man, from their father.

- They need a kiss, a touch, a word of love, a word about no-hop, not hip-hop.
- They need encouragement.
- Fathering for most black men is learned on the job.
- Black women are having serious problems teaching boys how to be men.
- Fathers are the missing link in black families’ lives.
- Black men are missing out on education, on economic opportunity.

**RESPECTING OUR WOMEN**
- You can’t be afraid of smart women!
- Our women are facing a losing battle in building stable families.
- No one should feel the pain of sexual repression.
- Women say, “I’m tired of shacking up.”
- Men need to ask themselves, “Do I love, care for, and respect the women in my family just like the men? Am I willing to be an advocate for women?”

**BLACK MOVEMENT**
- 1960s – The Black Movement provided young blacks with a context to build ideas. It taught us critical thinking. It taught us to connect our reality to that of the wider, international world.
- Today – No national Black Movement exists. We are lacking the power of ideas. We, instead, are faced with the power of ego, the power of street culture.
**RELIGION**

- If you truly believe that your faith tradition is the one, the greatest test is to study other faith traditions. It enlarges you to do this.

- River of Marriage
  - Find the weather of the person you love. Monitor it as you swim upstream together, but remember it's not a swimming contest.
  - Each woman is her own color, her own stream, and have her own weather report.
  - Women keep us in balance and on course.
  - Seek these strong women. They think in long distances. They carry their children close to the heart and the smiles of their men there too.
  - If Black women do not love, we no longer exist.
  - If Black men do not love the shining stars, prison stars, and women grow gardens by themselves.

**BREAK A HABIT, NOT A HEART:**

- Teach your children to dance on water.

**WHO AM I?**

This question is answered by Art!

- It inspires, informs, and generates response.
- Children find themselves in the art of discovering. Art defines, expands. It is a prodigious energy force. Magnify your children with art.

**MY TEN COMMANDMENTS**

1. Know more about other cultures.
2. Use effective action, not loud words.
3. Honesty is best policy.
4. Be prepared.
5. Nothing virtuous about poverty.
6. Nothing worthless is free.
7. Avoid...that which... 
8. Work hard for balance: physical, mental, spiritual.
9. Control your anger.
10. Learn to understand leadership.
Mr. Madhubuti ended his keynote address with a rousing call to bring art into the lives of our children.

**RELIGION**
- If you truly believe that your faith tradition is the one, the greatest test is to study other faith traditions. It enlarges you to do this.

**RIVER OF MARRIAGE**
- Find the weather of the person you love. Monitor it as you swim upstream together, but remember it’s not a swimming contest.
- Each woman is her own color, her own stream, and has her own weather report.
- Women keep us in balance and on course.
- Seek these strong women. They think in long distances. They carry their children close to the heart and the smiles of their men their too.
- If Black women do not love, we no longer exist.
- If Black men do not love, the shouting starts, prison starts, and women grow gardens by themselves.
- Think in bright possibilities!

**MY TEN COMMANDMENTS**
- Know more about other cultures.
- Use effective action, not loud words.
- Honesty is the best policy.
- Be prepared.
- There is nothing virtuous about poverty.
- Nothing worthwhile is free.
- Avoid...that which...
- Work hard for balance: physical, mental, and spiritual.
- Control your anger.
- Learn to understand leadership.

**TEACH YOUR CHILDREN TO DANCE ON WATER**
- Who am I? This question is answered by art! It inspires, informs, and generates response. Children find themselves in the art of discovery. Art defines and expands. It is a prodigious energy force. Magnify your children with art.

**Break a habit, not a heart.**
COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

WILLIAM OLIVER

WHERE DOES IT BEGIN?

Most black men who are killed are killed by other black men.

Two consequences of disproportionate violence:

- Shortages ofurableable, African American men.
- Incorporation increasing.

Intersection & community & domestic violence

Structural context

Black male racial oppression

Black male gender oppression

Combined with economic underdevelopment has led to major frustration.

Cultural context

Black males construct alternative or very frustrated ideas of what it is to be a man. They are raised in a social structure that punishes men for superior acts.

Community violence disproportionately occurs among lower class black males.

Women in these violent communities tend to be isolated and cannot easily access help.

Alternative roles in the culture that continue to result in violence to solve disputes.

Situational context

Crack cocaine use may stimulate violence due to pharmacological reasons.

The presence of using marginal resources to buy cocaine often results in violence.

Recruitment of persons involved in violence who are drug dealers can lead to violence.

Member of cocaine-using households are socially isolated from the family or informal support.

It's important to name intimate partner violence as unacceptable.

BABY BOY

This film has helped foster dialogue about how we are armed with so many Black men who are baby boys still.

Victims

It's easier to find violence "acceptable" when we dehumanize people. There are images of black men that are dehumanizing.

We assume that if a black male is victimized by violence he is also a perpetrator. In fact, he may be powerless and traumatized by violence.

VICTIMS

I've got to listen. You've got to listen.

I'm tough. I'm a gangster.

John Singleton

Boyz 'n the Hood

"I wrote this film as a catharsis."

There is wisdom from my father in it. He taught me the difference between being a leader and a follower. "If everyone jumped off a cliff, would you?"

This generation - the hip-hop generation - has gone through crack cocaine - a drug that made women turn away from their children.

As confused as these lives of the hip-hop generation are, we're still standing.

John Rico

Racism

Three types:

- Institutional
- Personified/individualized
- Internalized.

The police can bring help but also harm when they come. This goes to my questioning on the part of those trying to call for help and black males to believe the police will help them. How can we bring people into the conversation of domestic violence?
COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

John Singleton, film director, linked issues surrounding community violence to his two films, Academy Award nominated Boyz 'n the Hood and Baby Boy. He was joined in discussion on this topic by William Oliver, Ph.D., and John Rich, M.D.

JOHN SINGLETON

BOYZ 'N THE HOOD
■ I wrote this film as a catharsis.
■ There is wisdom from my father in it. He taught me the difference between being a leader and a follower. “If everyone jumped off a cliff, would you?”
■ This generation – the hip-hop generation – has gone through crack cocaine – a drug that made women turn away from their children.
■ As confused as these lives of the hip-hop generation are, we're still standing.

BABY BOY
■ This film has helped foster a dialogue about how we are faced with so many Black men who are still baby boys.
■ Can we create positive dialogue in the media where we have control, for example, black radio?

WILLIAM OLIVER, Ph.D.

WHERE DOES IT BEGIN?
■ Most black men who are killed, are killed by other black men.

INTERSECTION OF COMMUNITY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Structural Context.
■ Black male racial oppression and black male gender oppression, combined with economic underdevelopment, have led to major frustration.

Cultural Context or Community.
■ Black males construct alternative or very frustrated ideas of what it is to be a male. They are raised in a social structure that maintains men are superior over females.

■ Community violence disproportionately occurs among lower class black males.
■ Women in these violent communities tend to be isolated and cannot easily access help.
■ Alternative roles condone violence to solve disputes.
■ I’m tough! I’m a gangster. I’m a hustler.

Situational Context.
■ Crack cocaine use may stimulate violence due to pharmacological reasons.
■ The process of using marginal resources to buy cocaine often results in violence.
■ Prostitution to purchase cocaine can lead to violence.
■ Members of cocaine-using households are socially isolated from formal and informal support.

JOHN RICH

RACISM
■ Three types: institutional, personally-mediated, and internalized.

VICTIMS
■ It's easier to find violence “acceptable” when we dehumanize people. There are images of black men that are dehumanizing.
■ We assume that if a black male is victimized by violence that he is also a perpetrator. In fact, he may be powerfully traumatized by violence as a child.
■ The police can bring help but also harm when they come. This causes second-guessing on the part of the victims to call for help and black males to believe the police will help them. How can we bring police into the conversation of domestic violence?
■ It’s important to name intimate partner violence as unacceptable.
Q & A on Community Violence

1. Post-traumatic stress disorder vs. Post-traumatic Slave disorder: can you comment on this?
   - Need a deeper understanding of Post-traumatic stress disorder in terms of the effect of long-term trauma & the day-to-day micro-aggressions encountered by blacks.
   - Some of the numbness we see in our people could be a result of PTSD. You become numb to fear and to love.

2. What is your view on the relationship of White supremacy and patriarchy?
   - I believe that White supremacy and patriarchy issues are commingled.
   - Let's not forget that Black men often experience their first violent acts from their mothers.
   - "Oh! Oh! Oo!"

3. Can you say more on sexual violence, particularly as it relates to children?
   - My work isn't in that area, so I really can't speak to it.

4. Say more about the physiological implications of witnessing violence?
   - We are just beginning to understand this. The fact that children are growing, developing perhaps "ups the ante" on the implications.
   - We need to take care that we don't just think medication will take care of this.

5. What is the definition of probable cause?
   - It's an evidentiary standard that influences how the police do their job.