

### ONE WOMAN'S STORY

#### Betty Olmeda shared a very moving story about her journey out of domestic violence.

From 11 to 18 years of age, I was molested by a man who I thought was my father. It turns out he was my stepfather. I was so confused. I respected, loved and needed him as if he were my father. I tried to escape by getting married. But instead my husband used my past against me and he too was violent. He said horrible things to me. He told me I was damaged goods and that nobody wanted me. He even told me that God would never grant me children. I didn't try to leave, I kept it in the privacy of our home.

We did have a daughter and still the violence continued. I loved him so still I didn't try to leave. It wasn't until my daughter was three and my husband hit her that I knew something had to change. I knew I had to leave but it took five tries.

I know that some women will stay forever, or until it's too late. But we must educate them. Help them build a safety plan so they too can leave. Teach them to see the red flags of an abusive man.

Today, I am a strong, intelligent woman who's raising two strong, beautiful daughters. I know I have a very high wall around relationships. I sometimes feel like I add a brick wall each time I attempt to enter a new relationship.

Remember, do not EVER lower your goals for someone who cannot accept you for who you are. Marriage is a contract...change it or leave if there is violence.





## YOUTH

Joyce Thomas introduced us to Joseph White, Ph.D., Leo Hayden, and Robb Carter who all spoke on the intersection of youth and domestic violence.

# CHALLENGES FACING OUR YOUTH Joseph White Ph.D.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO A DREAM DESTROYED?

How can I be powerful, strong, and respected in the world of adults.

#### CHALLENGES

#### Identity.

- Who am I?
- Where am I going in my life?
- How am I going to get there?
- What's important to me?

#### Intimacy.

- Need to be connected.
- This need for intimacy is provided by: extended family, male peers, romantic relationships, and mentors.
- But what is missing in the black community is hands-on male involvement.

Coping with residuals of racism. Finding a source of strength.

- Improvisation If you live in a country that doesn't give you a range of opportunity, you've got to improvise.
- Resiliency Ability to recover from a setback.
- Connectedness to others.

- Spirituality Soul power we believe in soul power!
- Emotional vitality.
- Gallows sense of humor Well, I've been…but I'm still here!
- Healthy suspicion of white folks.

# BRINGING CHANGE FULL CIRCLE Leo Hayden

#### TRUTH

- We must teach youth that every truth passes through three stages.
  - 1. It is ridiculed.
  - 2. It is opposed.
  - 3. It is regarded as self-evident.

#### CRACK COCAINE

- Has been the scourge of our community.
- And when our youth and women return from prison, the community has forgotten them.
- Very few ever make it into college.
- Instead, they carry handguns in their childhood.

#### TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

We must take responsibility because young black males are born, raised, and made in America. Don't teach me to fish, teach me to organize with others so we can change our world!

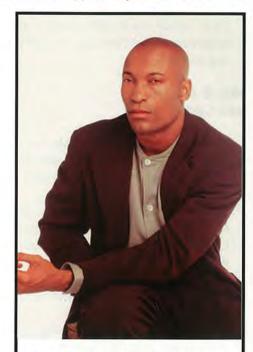
#### THIS IS A CALL...

Robb Carter

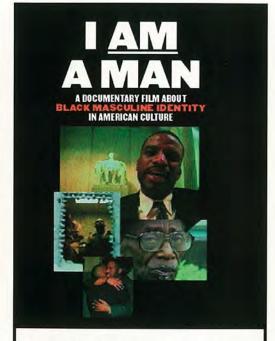
- This is a call for peace. Mother Father God, bless us so we may see the nature of complimentary, the male and female in each of us.
- Our true station is about love, about reinforcing each other's dreams.
- Learn the rituals of the youth you work with. Help them learn how to touch one another.
- Our children are just a reflection of the larger drama we put on.
  - Our black youth don't see love beaming back at them.
- Let's help our children to heal. Let's listen; let's give them a sense of hope that comes from within them; let's see their goodness first.
- Be delighted in what you do, and remember children are watching you.

## FILM SCREENINGS

We had the opportunity to view three films during the forum.



Academy Award nominated movie director John Singleton presented his short film documentary, *Drama*, on Thursday evening. The director of *Boyz 'N The Hood* and *Baby Boy* takes an unconventional look at domestic violence among African Americans in his latest film project.



I am a Man: Black Masculinity in America, a 60-minute award-winning documentary video that capture the thoughts and feelings of African American men and women from more than 15 cities and towns across America was screened on Friday. In the video, Northeastern University Quarterback Byron Hurt examines complex issues facing black men. The video links black men from various socioeconomic backgrounds with some of Black America's most progressive academics, social critics and authors.



Aishah Shahidah Simmons, African American feminist, lesbian, independent-filmmaker, writer, lecturer, and activist presented the groundbreaking documentary feature film *No!* for screening during the Friday afternoon workshops. The film looks at the continual sexual violence against African American women and girls, exposing the silence that occurs in the African American community when black women and girls are raped.

## WORKSHOPS

To close the forum, we participated in four workshops. A screening of No!, Batterers' Intervention, Schools/Violence/Substance Abuse/HIV-AIDS and Faith-Based.

#### NO! VIDEO SCREENING AND PANEL DISCUSSION

#### **Discussion Panelists**

Aishah Shahidah Simmons, African American feminist, independent filmmaker, writer, lecturer and activist.

Michael Simmons, International Human Rights Activist
Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, Ph.D., Islamic Scholar/Activist

#### **Facilitator**

Esther Jenkins, Ph.D., Institute Steering Committee Member

NO!, a groundbreaking documentary feature film that looks at continuing sexual violence against African American women and girls, was presented for screening by Aishah Shahidah Simmons, writer, director and producer of the documentary. The film, which looked at the silence that occurs in the African American community when black women and girls are raped, featured interviews with a number of rape victims and activists attempting to stop and prevent the incidents. Interviews with each of the panelists also were featured as part of the film.

Following the screening, Ms. Simmons stated that work on the project began eight years ago, however the documentary remains a work in progress due to a lack of funds to purchase copyrighted music and historical footage, which she described as "economic censoring." The documentary has been a grassroots effort with filming occurring across the country, gathering the voices and "herstory" of black women from different parts of the community. Ms. Simmons stated that she experienced some resistance from black women with a lack of knowledge concerning black women's herstory and the

violence black women have experienced at the hands of black men. Some black women felt discussion of the issue would somehow make them traders to the race. The reaction caused Ms. Simmons to revisit the documentary and to include black women's involvement in the liberation, black feminist, civil rights, and black power struggles in this country as an additional focus of the film, with those stories seen through the eyes of black women.

Much of the audience discussion concerned funding for the project. It was stated that about \$60,000 more is needed to complete the film. Money for the documentary thus far has not come from traditional filmmaking sources but instead has come from women's and community-based foundations and other organizations that fund women's projects, as well as black public television. Some suggested strategies for fundraising were as follows:

- Ms. Simmons should seek funds from the Office of Violence Against Women; statistics should be added to the documentary to make it more appealing to the agency
- Conference participants should invite Ms. Simmons to their various schools, programs, and organizations to do creative, grassroots fundraising
- The film should be packaged as an educational tool and educational television should be explored as a source of funding

A critical point in the discussion involved the decision by the filmmaker, who is a lesbian and feminist, to focus the documentary on heterosexual rape and not to include same sex rape and sexual assault. Ms. Simmons stated that both

men and women survivors of same-sex partner violence, rape and sexual assault approached her about discussing their experiences. She stated that the *NOI* documentary was made in response to several incidents of heterosexual rape that occurred in several cities around the country. She made a conscious decision to focus the documentary on heterosexual rape and sexual assault. She considered the idea of including same-sex rape and sexual assault in the film but realized the issue and its complexities, such as homophobia, treatment of lesbians in shelters, lack of shelter placement for gay men and other issues, would need greater space than allowed in the current documentary. Other important points of the discussion included the following statements:

- The film was very creative, powerful, thoughtful and, in a complex and yet simply and profound manner, raised the issue of rape against black women; however, the addition of statistics would enhance the documentary
- Child sexual abuse was not addressed in the film, although there is much available information concerning child sexual abuse that should be included
- The intended audience for the film should be more narrowly identified, which may better determine where funds are sought. It had been previously stated that black women were the target audience
- One of the more striking points of the film was the story of a woman who had to bear her son as an incest survivor
- Men need to become more vocal against rape in their conversation with other men and with perpetrators
- The statement that rape victims wear enticing clothing is too often used as an excuse for the behavior of rapists. The excuse also is used in cases where children are raped

#### **BATTERERS INTERVENTION**

#### Presenters

Ulester Douglas, M.S.W., Co-Executive Director and Sulaiman Nuriddin, M. Ed., Men's Intervention Programs Team Manager, Men Stopping Violence

Men Stopping Violence (MSV) male batterers program uses a psychoeducational, culturally competent curriculum to engage its predominantly African American participants in achieving responsibility and accountability for their abusive behaviors. During the course of the 24-week program, mentoring, written and oral critiques, and displacement through pop culture (e.g., the film, What's Love Got To Do With It") are examples of techniques employed for inspiring participants to reflect and speak candidly about their feelings and situations. While the program assumes a level of cultural competence among facilitators, it does not extend that assumption to participants. Instead, each participant is considered from his personal reference point on the responsibility-accountability continuum.

The program adheres to four principles for achieving its goals, which are summarized below:

Principle 1: The work must be informed by the voices and experiences of African American women—Through articles, poetry, and other media, women interject their voices into the male batterers' experiences, forcing them to listen, ponder, and share with the class their feelings, and eventually, appreciate the female perspective. At this juncture, barriers such as literacy surface, and although some course content is recorded, men are expected to act accordingly, to rectify such deficiencies. Also, women's presence is minimal, leaving men free to challenge each other to "unlearn" their sexist, violent, and aggressive responses to women since men receive their direction and messages from other men.

Principle 2: Accountability and Responsibility (If you cannot claim it (i.e., abusive behavior), you cannot change it.) — Notwithstanding the fact that 60% of program participants are self-referrals, they perceive the class as a source of their problems (e.g., taking time from work; losing their reputations or families; going to jail), and therefore, facilitators immediately diffuse potential hostilities by requiring men to acknowledge their worst incidents of battering, while the facilitators validate the experiences that lead men to rationalize their abusive behaviors. The exercises focus on the function of the abuse rather than its cause because the latter obscures the batterers' decision to abuse by allowing him to claim victimization and render his victim invisible. Focusing on the function of the abuse reveals its seminal causes domination, power, and control. To prepare for the exercises, potential enrollees observe a class prior to enrollment; then, upon enrollment, each man identifies a consequence intended to deter him from choosing abusive behavior in the future. The exercise has proven effective in addressing not only physically abusive behavior, but emotionally and mentally abusive behaviors as well.

Principal 3 — Race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are imperative and must be factored into the intervention experience.

In the African American community, race occupies the top rung of the oppression hierarchy and therefore, the program focuses not on the psychosocial contexts offered by Madhubuti, Richie, and others, but instead considers each participant's cultural framework.

The connection between *function* and culture is profoundly demonstrated by an exercise in which men list stereotypes about African American women, followed by their lists of stereotypes about African Americans, but from the perspective

of white men. The lists are identical. This exercises exposes the fallacy of decrying racism while simultaneously exhibiting battering behavior because their functions are identical—domination and control.

Principle 4: Individual change must be within the context of both community change and social change —MSV male batterers' program leverages individual instruction to reach the community by requiring that each man bring to class two men from his community. This exercise benefits the community by:

- Crystallizing the participant's responsibility and accountability goals by making someone else aware of his abusive behavior and his related work with MSV
- Prompting visitors to examine their intimate partner relationships
- Exponentially raising community awareness about domestic violence

The manifold channels for achieving program goals engage participants in dialogue that confidentiality issues in traditional clinical-based programs would prohibit. Ongoing classroom interaction produces men who learn to accept accountability for their behaviors and make responsible decisions that reduce and ultimately prevent them from battering woman. Prevention is the ultimate goal of the MSV male batterers' program.

SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH

#### **Presenters**

Michael Vann, Program Director, Open Gate, Inc. Michael Vann II, Certified Abuser Treatment Specialist, Asha Family Services, Inc.

Mr. Michael Vann and Mr. Michael Vann II spoke on the dynamics and cultural elements that characterize African American youth within the context of providing successful prevention, intervention, and treatment to this diverse and often neglected population. The workshop presenters placed specific emphasis on two areas: (1) substance abuse and its impact/influence on violent behavior and (2) the development of community-, school-, and faith-based programs that will engage African American youth.

#### Substance Abuse

Discussion in this area focused on three substances: alcohol, marijuana, and PCP. Central points to the discussion are categorized and outlined below.

#### Alcohol

- Contrary to media portrayals, the number one substance choice for youth across ethnic groups is alcohol.
- Alcohol is the drug that is most associated with violence in America.
- Ingestion of alcohol is not a cause of violence, although it often may be a situational factor and may impact the outcome of a confrontation or violent event.
- Alcohol is a sedative; it literally sedates certain parts of the brain and limits the user's ability to function. The first section of the brain that is sedated is the part that controls the ability to think and reason. Long before a person

- shows any visible evidence of alcohol consumption his/her ability to think/reason has been hampered.
- Alcohol is marketed differently in the African American community, and youth in this community use alcohol differently. In the African American community, alcohol is associated with power and control as evidenced by the formal and "street" names of alcoholic beverages ("malt liquor" vs. "beer"; "Mad Dog 20/20").
- Despite laws and regulations prohibiting the sale and distribution of alcohol to minors, alcohol is easily accessible to youth.
- The younger a person is when he/she starts to consume alcohol, the more likely he/she is to become an alcoholic. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) statistics indicate that a person who starts drinking before the age of 13 has a 40% probability of becoming an alcoholic.<sup>1</sup>

#### Marijuana

- Marijuana is the second drug of choice for African American youth.
- Marijuana is a hallucinogen, not a depressant, as commonly believed.
- America seems to be in denial concerning the detrimental effects of marijuana, especially when associating its use with aggression. Some of its principal effects are:
  - Distortion of perception, thinking, and reality, which is why people use it (many users are under the *illusion* that they perform better under the influence of marijuana),
  - Difficulty in forming concepts and thoughts,
  - Poor concentration,
  - Mental confusion.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Specific citation/reference for this statistic was not provided.

- Loss of motivation,
- o Wide mood swings, and
- o Aggression and hostility.
- The effects of marijuana are often unpredictable; two people can share the same "joint" and behave differently.
- Marijuana stores itself in the fatty tissue of the body (the fattiest organ in the human body is the brain). The THC (the element of marijuana that alters brain functioning) is still in the body long after the "high" is gone.
- Federal government tests concerning the effects of marijuana are flawed because it cannot use the "street variety" to run its tests. Instead, the government grows its own marijuana that is of less quality/potency than the kind of marijuana one purchases illegally.

#### **PCP**

- Over the past 10 20 years, there has been a significant decline in PCP use among African American youth. This drug is, however, still somewhat popular in California.
- PCP comes in liquid and powder form and can be consumed several different ways: snorted, smoked, and inserted intravenously.
- The intended use of PCP is that of an animal tranquilizer; however, when ingested by humans, its effects can be the reverse of what is expected. It produces:
  - o Sudden mood swings;
  - Feelings of disassociation, disorganization, and confused thoughts;
  - Unpredictable aggression and the propensity for violence;
  - Feelings of vulnerability toward perceived threats; and
  - Willingness and ability to withstand considerable pain (pull teeth out, fight police, endure pain from broken bones).

## Miscellaneous information on Substance Abuse among African American Youth

- African American youth are not likely to use drugs intravenously or use drugs other than alcohol and marijuana.
- Contrary to popular belief, African American youth, as a whole, do not use crack cocaine, heroine, or PCP.
   Nonetheless, they will sell crack cocaine, if they think they can make money.
- African American youth do not consider marijuana addictive. They do, however, consider people who use "harder" drugs, (i.e., crack, heroine) to be "dope fiends."

#### **Providing Services to African American Youth**

Oftentimes, practitioners expend a great deal of effort developing programs that *they* think will benefit African American youth. When the programs are launched and presented to the youth themselves, they have no interest because they do not have any "buy-in." Unfortunately, some agencies do not follow through because they do not feel serving African American youth is worth the extra effort or financial burden.

Persons who work with African American youth must possess a variety of qualities: candor, genuineness, respect for the youth, high "shock" threshold, flexibility and openness, humor, patience, empathy, and love for the youth. Persons who are working with youth to "get them straight" generally are not effective.

The most important elements in serving African American youth are to (1) understand that this population represents a very diverse, challenging, and hard to reach group and (2) involve them in developing the programs that will serve them. Presenters offered the following suggestions, comments, and observations predicated upon the aforementioned elements:

- Many African American youth are referred for services but do not show up. The first issue practitioners must consider when receiving a youth referral is "How do I get this child into the program?" This necessitates a high level of creativity and innovation on the part of service providers to make services appealing to the prospective client. First, try to engage the adult/parental figure in the home. If that doesn't work, move to the probation officer (lighting a "fire" under the youth to get them to come). Sometimes the practitioner must go to the youth. This builds trust as well as motivates and engages him/her.
- The practitioner's first contact with the youth is very important. The youth will determine, at that first interaction, if he/she intends to continue services.
- African American youth want a "voice" and a sense of belonging. Rather than setting up a program and taking it to them, engage youth in developing the program—let them name it, determine the activities, and set the rules. They are more likely to come to something they have created and are more likely to abide by and hold each other accountable to rules they set.
- Since African American youth are difficult to reach, programs need to be easily accessible and set up where youth are: schools, community centers, churches, etc.
- In setting up youth groups, practitioners should endeavor to achieve diversity of participants in terms of motivation, commitment, and level of awareness/acknowledgement of the problem. Having all "negative types" in the same group will be counterproductive, as participants tend to "feed" off of each other. Programs for boys and girls should be set up separately; boys act differently around girls, and girls act differently around boys.

In closing, the presenters asserted that experts in the field of domestic violence and youth development have neglected to work with African American youth to teach them about domestic violence—why it is not good and what happens to both parties. Further, the community as a whole must start this teaching process with young boys, thus focusing on prevention rather than treatment.



#### FAITH-BASED WORKSHOP

#### Presenter

Rev. Young opened the workshop by describing the ministry of The Healing Center—a faith-based counseling center that provides a variety of health and social services, including services to battered women and to men who batter. The Healing Center employs a holistic approach to service provision, which addresses the body, soul, and spirit.

During the course of the workshop, participants discussed a myriad of barriers to the faith community's response to domestic violence:

- Traditionally, the church has dealt only with the Spirit; however, successful ministry must address spirit, soul, and body.
- Black pastors have not effectively identified the spiritual, mental, or physical conditions of their congregants.
   Evangelist Young estimates that only one third of the members of most churches is "whole." The other two thirds are hurting, either in body, soul, or spirit. Pastors need prioritize identifying what "maladies" they have in their churches.
- Within the Black church, there exists a perception that pursuing professional counseling (or services outside the walls of the church) is an indication of spiritual weakness; thus, it carries a stigma of shame.
- Clergy have isolated themselves and their congregations from professionals in the counseling and psychiatric fields. Some clergy communicate that pursuing such services is "of the devil." Some attribute this attitude to clergy's desire to retain power over their parishioners.
- Oftentimes, clergy lack training in specific areas of counseling, including domestic abuse, substance abuse, and other issues. Instead, they rely solely upon their "interpretation" of the Bible in dealing with these issues.
- Although the Black church, as a whole, has developed programs, partnerships, and referral sources for services such as healthcare, tutoring, food and nutrition, and child care, it has not done so for domestic violence and family/marital counseling. Churches should link to direct service providers if they do not have their own programs.
- There is still silence in the church concerning domestic violence. This is especially a problem among victims who are pastors' wives. They are afraid to seek help for fear of their "business" being made public.

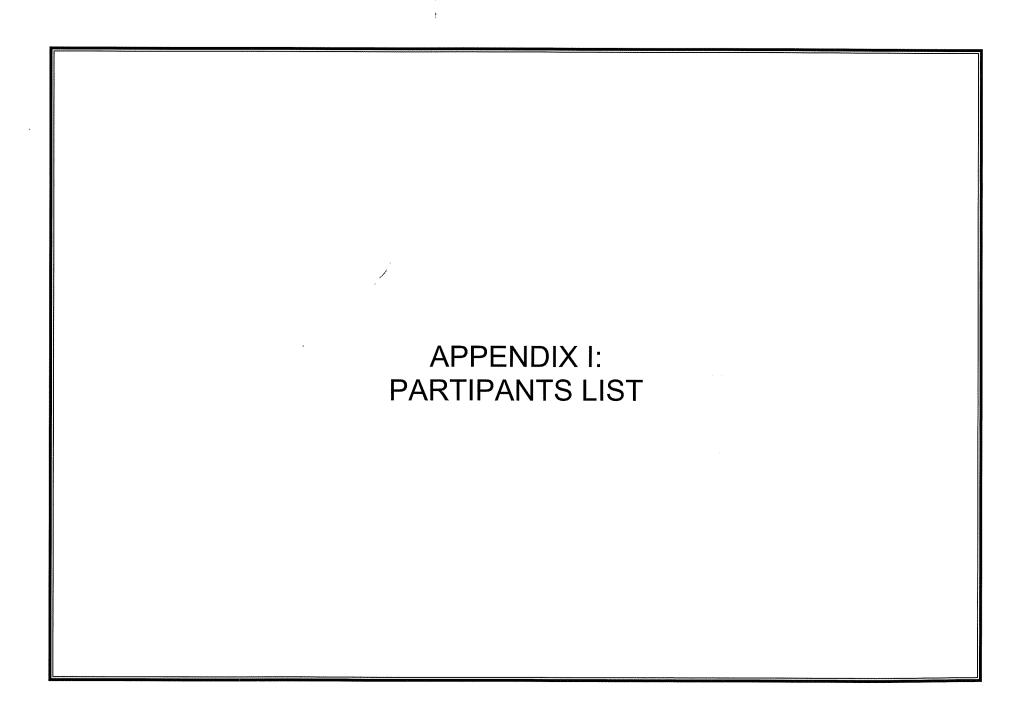
In addition to barriers, participants also listed opportunities for churches and faith-based ministries to address domestic violence and other issues:

- In most Black communities, the church is still considered a "refuge." Many Blacks find it easier to go to church and share than to go to a counselor because of the stigma attached. Thus, the church can open the doors for many people who, otherwise, might not acknowledge their problems.
- The high cost of private services often prohibits Blacks from taking advantage of professional services. Churches and faith-based programs can address this need by offering such services to their congregants free of charge or at lower rates.

Rev. and Evangelist Young also addressed the issues of healthy and nurturing familial relationships as well as the importance of bestowing blessings and communicating positively:

- The missing link to many Black men is the absence of a healthy nurturing relationship from a father or father figure. Through the Youngs' experience ministering at a local prison, they discovered that the majority of imprisoned young Black men harbored unresolved pain or anger that was directed toward their fathers or emanated from their relationship with their fathers.
- Words can have a dramatic effect on a person's behavior; they can be used to hurt or to heal. Rev. Young cited the scriptural example of Isaac's blessing of Jacob—Isaac told Jacob that his "name will be great," and those words came to pass in Jacob's life. Many Black men have not heard that type if encouragement from their fathers nor from their pastors. Instead, they have been bombarded with negative words that have helped to shape their futures.

The Youngs closed the session with a short prayer, and invited participants to exchange information and network with each other.



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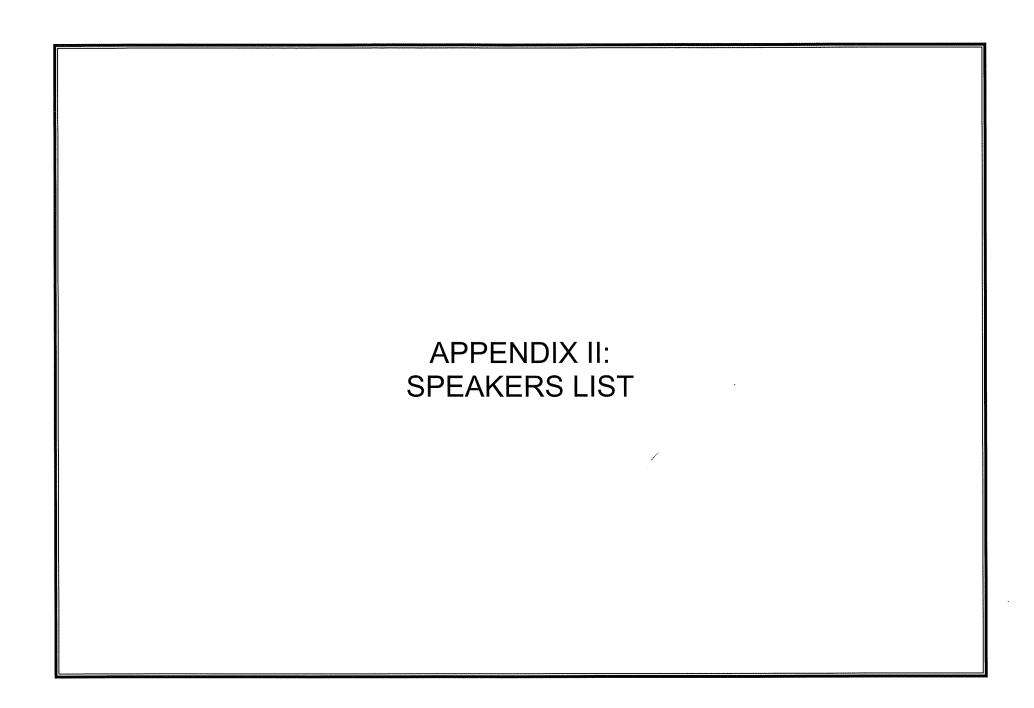
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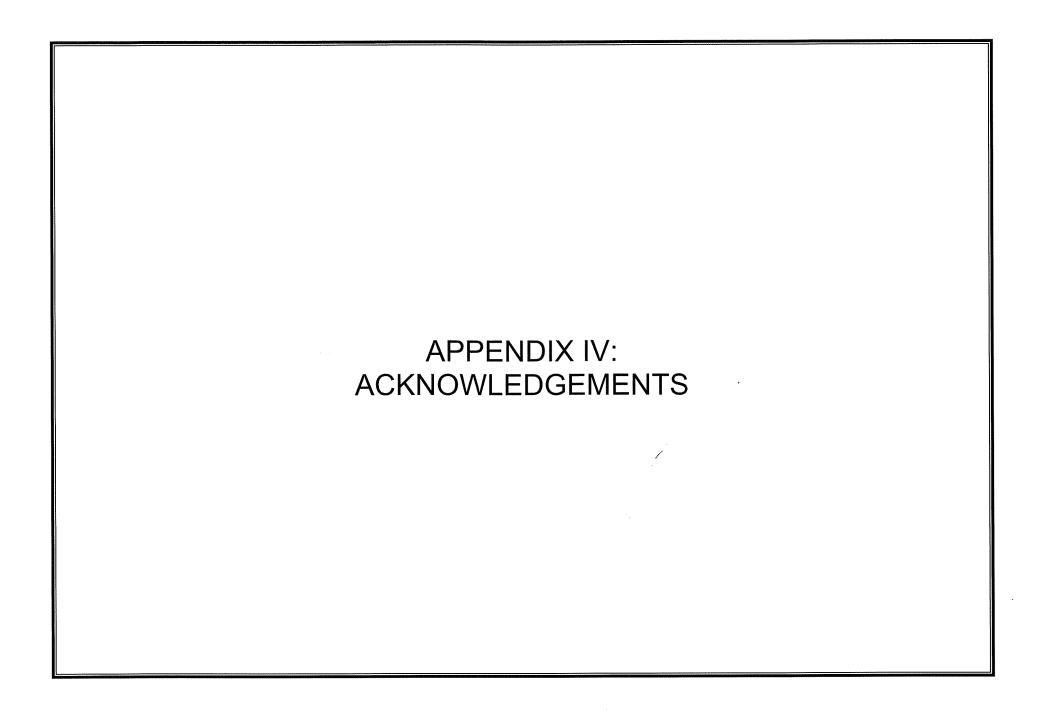


## **IDVAAC STEERING COMMITTEE**

Back row, left to right: Oliver J. Williams, Ph.D. Kelly Mitchell-Clark William Oliver, Ph.D. Linner Ward Griffin, Ed.D., MSW Robert L. Hampton, Ph.D. Front row, left to right: Joyce N. Thomas, MPH, RN Shelia Hankins Esther J. Jenkins, Ph.D. Antonia A. Vann, CDVC Beth E. Richie, Ph.D.



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community gratefully acknowledges the valuable services rendered by the following corporations and organizations in support of the organization's Spring 2002 Forum, held May 30-31, 2002 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Department of Health and Human Services

Ford Motor Company

LCG, Inc.

MEE Productions, Inc.

National Clearing House for the Defense of Battered Women

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

The Penn Women's Center at Penn

Philadelphia Advisory Committee

University of Minnesota

University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work

Women Against Abuse, Inc.

The following groups and organizations welcome the INSTITUTE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY to Philadelphia

We support the work of the Institute and look forward to working with the Institute in the future:

AFSCME District Council 33

American Friends Service Committee Woman's Program

**Books Through Bars** 

Congreso De Latinos Unidos

Defender Association of Philadelphia

Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Rosalind Dutton, LCSW

Euphrasia House, Inc.

Institute for Safe Families

Institute for Violence Research and Prevention, St. Joseph's University

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

The Legal Clinic for the Disabled, Inc.

Lutheran Settlement House – Bilingual Domestic Violence Project

Menergy

National Clearing House for the Defense of Battered Women

Nattiel & Associates, P.C., Attorneys At Law

New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence

The Pennsylvania Prison Society

People's Emergency Center

Quality Community Health Care, Inc.

Sisterspace of the Delaware Valley

Turning Point of Lehigh Valley, Inc.

Violence Against Women

An International, Interdisciplinary Journal, Claire M. Renzetti, Editor

Women Against Abuse, Inc.

Women in Transition, Inc.

Women Organized Against Rape

Women's Law Project

YWCA of Philadelphia