Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community

Detroit Mini-Forum

Winter 2003 Forum
Conference
Proceedings
February 21, 2003

HEALING THROUGH
THE ARTS &
THE MEDIA

University of Minnesota
Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community

College of Human Ecology

United States Department of Health & Human Services

Ending Domestic Violence in the African American Community
FOREWORD

Artistic expression—be it music, literature, television, or movies—as displayed through various media plays a profound role in shaping our perceptions of our environment—the people we meet, the decisions we are confronted with, and the situations we face. In view of that, it can be argued that artistic expression through the mass media can significantly contribute to the formation of behavior patterns and responses to the circumstances we encounter. For example, recent studies have associated aggressive, malevolent behavior with repeated listening to and observation of violent words and images through popular culture. On the positive side, evidence also suggests that using uplifting and enriching expressions that are stylistically consistent with today's popular culture can potentially counter the effects of popular culture's negative messages, and consequently, can serve as effective educational and preventive tools in mitigating domestic violence among African Americans.

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community's Spring 2003 mini-conference, *Healing Through the Arts and the Media: Ending Domestic Violence in the African American Community*, held in Detroit, Michigan, took a closer look at how the arts and the media, through popular culture, are being used as primary prevention and intervention strategies to address domestic violence in our communities. Through convincing presentations from respected scholars, practical examples from experienced practitioners, and moving performances and compositions by nationally renowned and local artists, the Detroit mini-conference substantiated the use of the arts and the media as viable and effective vehicles for primary prevention and intervention that can, in fact, alleviate the incidence of family violence among African Americans.

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community stands firm in its commitment to examine alternative, culturally competent practices that can effect positive change in responses to the incidence of domestic violence among our people. It is our desire that the Detroit mini-conference served as an inspiration to move beyond traditional approaches and to pursue creative strategies that employ artistic expression and the media as practical approaches to addressing family violence concerns. May this information strengthen the impetus of a continued effort toward mitigating domestic violence in the African American community.

Oliver J. Williams, Ph.D.

Executive Director
Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community
The arts have long been used as a medium that often evokes strong emotional responses. Particularly in the African American community, the arts—whether music, poetry, illustration, or drama—have historically served as vehicles of expression to unify, encourage, and impassion. Similarly, the media generally serve as the gatekeepers of information, determining what we see and hear, as well as how this information is communicated. From politics and morality to fashion and entertainment, the media play a notable role in helping us form opinions about our environment. This influence can contribute to the formation of attitudes concerning critical issues, which, in turn, affects behavior. What's more, the pervasiveness of popular culture renders a convincing representation of how the arts and the media are being used to communicate specific messages and reflect many of the realities faced by today's younger generation.

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community's Spring 2003 mini-conference, Healing Through the Arts and the Media: Ending Domestic Violence in the African American Community, examined the arts and the media as effective instruments to address domestic violence. Scholars, practitioners, and advocates, as well as members of the arts and media communities, shared research, practical examples, and personal experiences that focused on how the arts and the media can be and have been implemented as positive forces to prevent domestic violence and to treat victims of abuse. Conference attendees were graced with live performances and demonstrations of artistic expressions, all of which in some way addressed domestic abuse.

As participants watched and listened to these poignant performances and exhibits—some laced with hurt, tragedy, and despair, while others resounded of courage, confidence, and hope—the overarching message was clear: the arts and the media are powerful tools that not only can facilitate healing and transformation for victims of domestic violence, but can also serve as proactive measures to communicate positive messages that may, in fact, deter the incidence of abuse. While we continue down the path toward ending domestic violence, we must consider alternative prevention and intervention strategies that are relevant to those whom these strategies are intended to serve. As you read these proceedings and reflect upon the conference, do so with eye toward applying the insight gained from this event to harness the power of the media and the arts as viable instruments to respond effectively to victims of domestic abuse, and moreover, to prevent its occurrence.

William D. Riley

Program Officer
Family Violence Prevention and Services Program,
Office of Community Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Dear Colleagues:

It is a pleasure to share with you the proceedings of the “Healing Through the Arts and the Media” Conference. The conference was a wonderful opportunity to explore healing and preventing violence through art. It is important for the public to better understand the gravity of violence in our homes and communities.

While eradicating violence remains an elusive goal, many dedicated scientists, health professionals, and compassionate citizens are working toward this end. By focusing additional public awareness on creative ways to prevent the spread of violence in communities, we can end the inter-generational effects of violence and save thousands of lives.

I commend the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community and the citizens of the Detroit Metro-Area for working together to bring greater visibility to this serious national health problem. I encourage everyone to get involved in this important cause and work toward a day when all our homes and communities are safe.

Sincerely,

Wanda K. Jones, Dr.P.H
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health
WELCOME to Healing through the Arts Conference

Dr. William Oliver

Art moves people in a way different way
It moves them from the heart.

We have to put change in our consciousness so we can make a difference...

We have spent about 1 year in each community to find the voice and collect data to help us move forward.

Welcome to DETROIT!

There are different approaches to influencing change in domestic violence.
ART is one of them.

Art is about healing. It is about how we can help people who are abused and who are abusive.

We will work towards the day when ALL of our communities and ALL of our homes are safe.

I am so appreciative of the support Detroit has shown us! I hope this is a start to the continued effort to eradicate violence in the African American Communities.

Art moves people in a way different way.

The Use of Popular Culture as an Intervention Strategy

Dr. William Oliver

One size does NOT fit all.

Not all approaches work for everyone. There must be multiple ways to address differences in people and their situations.

Higher Incidents, lower rates of intervention among African American people...

But there are an increasing number of researchers & organizations.

What is Popular Culture?

How can Popular Culture be used to help?

We have to have it available where our people can hear it.

It is the people, things that forms the fabric of everyday life...

It reflects the deeply embedded feelings & culture found in everyday life.

GOSPEL MUSICAL PLAY
This is a cultural experience for the black culture.

- It can be taught to educate.
- They can be used to demonstrate anti-violence & communication skills.
- The characters are immediately recognizable.
- It is FOR us, BY us and ABOUT us.
- The battlefield is all around us. We must find appropriate ways to address and overcome the domestic violence in our communities.
WELCOME

Dr. Oliver J. Williams, Executive Director, IDVAAC

- Art moves people in a very different way, it moves them from the heart.
- We have to put change in our consciousness so we can make a difference.
- We have spent about 1 year in each community to find the voice and collect the data to help us move forward.
- There are different approaches to influencing change in domestic violence; art is one of them.
- We will work towards the day when all of our communities and all of our homes are safe.
- I am so appreciative of the support Detroit has shown us!
- I hope this is the start of a continued effort to eradicate violence in the African American communities.
- The use of popular culture is an intervention strategy.
- One size does not fit all!
- Not all approaches work for everyone.
- There must be multiple ways to address differences in people and their situations.
- There are higher incidents, lower rates of intervention among African American people.
- There are an increasing number of researchers and organizations.

POPULAR CULTURE

Dr. William Oliver, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

- What is popular culture?
- It is the people, things that forms the fabric of everyday life.
- It reflects the deeply embedded feelings and culture found in everyday life.
- Gospel music play is a cultural experience for the black culture.

- How can popular culture be used to help?
- We have to have it available for our people to hear it.
- It can be taught to educate.
- They can be used to demonstrate non-violence and communication skills.
- The characters are immediately recognizable. It is for us, by us, and about us.
- The battlefield is all around us.
- We must find appropriate ways to address and overcome the domestic violence in our communities.
Back row standing left to right - Dr. Oliver J. Williams, Kelly Mitchell-Clark, Dr. William Oliver, Dr. Linner Ward-Griffin, Dr. Robert L. Hampton. Front row sitting left to right - Joyce N. Thomas, Shelia Hanks, Dr. Esther J. Jenkins, Antonnia A. Vann, Dr. Beth Richie
Art & The Media Award
Presented to
Gregory J. Huskisson
The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community recognizes your contributions and efforts that inspire and empower African Americans to confront domestic violence within the African American community through Art and the Media.
February 21, 2003

Media Award
Presented to
Beverly (Bev) Johnson
The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community recognizes your contributions and efforts that inspire and empower African Americans to confront domestic violence within the African American community through the Media.
February 21, 2003

Media Award
Presented to
asha bandele
The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community recognizes your contributions and efforts that inspire and empower African Americans to confront domestic violence within the African American community through the Media.
February 21, 2003

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community • February, 2003 Mini-Conference • February 21, 2003 • Detroit, MI
"Using the Written Word to Encourage, Inform & Transform"

- Women are put on trial as if they have done this to themselves.
- Sexuality is rarely spoken about in black communities in a non-embarassing way.
- Locker room talk... amongst men, women are rarely talked about as 'intellectually' stimulating or partners.
- Women are viewed as... ownership, objects, commodities.
- It is easy to condemn on a grand scale. It must be brought back down.

- Men only know their sisters, mothers, grandmothers. We need to educate them about respect...
- Ignorance is contagious.
- Am I willing to support the women as I am the men to reach for their dreams?

- Music kept me off the streets.
- It is easy to condemn on a grand scale. It must be brought back down.

- We are in emotional prisons.
- Individuals in our homes & communities have to make the shift...
- Poetry is the river of life.
- There is a call for men to move beyond tradition.

- We must question the status quo.
- We must each look into our own hearts, to change our views of women.
- We don't have fathers. Children need fathers. Sons need fathers. They need good examples.
- We have a fatherless nation. It needs to change.

- ART can be affirming. It is critical.
- Young people need something else to think about... give them poetry & art.

- We need to take ownership of ourselves.

"The power of the Word."
"Using the written word to encourage, inform and transform in the case of poetry and reporting."
Dr. Haki R. Madhubuti, Chicago State University, Founder and Publisher, Third World Press.

RESPECT FOR OUR WOMEN

- Women are put on trial as if they have done this to themselves.
- We are in emotional prisons.
- Sexuality is rarely spoken about in black communities in a non-embarrassing way.
- Locker room talk...among men, women are rarely talked about as intellectually stimulating partners.
- Men only know their mothers, sisters, and grandmothers. We need to educate them about respect.
- Women are viewed as
  - ownerships
  - objects
  - commodities
- It is easy to condemn on a grand scale. It must be brought back down.
- I am willing to support the women, as I am the men to reach for their dreams.
- We must look into our own hearts to change our views of women.
- There is a call for men to move beyond tradition.

IGNORANCE

- Ignorance is contagious.
- If you are confused, you confuse everything you touch.

OUR BOYS NEED FATHERS

- Our children get sunshine from us.
- Never stop listening to their words and teach them of yours.
- We don't have fathers.
- Children need fathers.
- Sons need fathers. They need good examples.
- We have a fatherless nation. It needs to change.

MOVING FORWARD

- Individuals in our homes and communities have to make the shift.
- Poetry is the river of life.
- Music kept me off the streets.
- We must question the status quo.
- Art can be affirming. It is critical.
- Young people need something else to think about. Give them poetry and art.
- We need to take ownership of ourselves.
- Peace begins in you. Breathe deep and smile.
ENDING the SILENCE
- asha bandele

I spent my life in VIRTUAL silence.

It is safe to go
into the world
as a black person.

I was 16 years old...
In the library I found a book.

This book was about me.

This changed my life.

We have a visceral need to UNDERSTAND ourselves & our environment.

It told me of HONOR.
It taught me about my voice.

I was given a way to tell my stories that were inside me... had I not been given this I would have DIED... quite literally.

It released my ADDICTIONS and they in turn released me.

I have to say dangerous things even if it is scary.

Without TRUTH there are no real WORDS...

We deal with lies all the time - it is everywhere. Who really believes that WAR will create PEACE?

Our silence will testify us through the marrow of our children...

Be afraid of a man who confronts himself.

Panel Question & Answer

What you are doing in your communities is critical, but do not forget that there are men who can help also, even though we are the perpetrators of the violence.

What do you see the role of the Black Church has?

It is the most important part of a community.
We would not be here if black churches could do it alone.

Why have we been so reluctant to challenge black media?

We've always had a difficult time doing that - I think we see it as 'access to power.' When you have so little, a crumb seems like a meal.

We hope if were quiet we will get out of the feniments.

We are lacking a collective agenda. Children make choices within parental boundaries.