An African-American perspective on community and family violence

Spring 2005, Volume 6, Number 2

Executive Director's Message-

IDVAAC Hip Hop conference creates common ground among diverse stakeholders

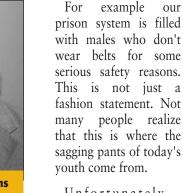
By Dr. Oliver J. Williams, executive director

Our annual conferences are always very powerful, and I'm proud of the impact they have on our audiences. Our last gathering in August of 2004 moved the **IDVAAC** experience to a whole new level. Not only was our conference on "Domestic Violence and the Hip Hop Generation: Understanding Challenges, Resources Interventions to End Violence in this

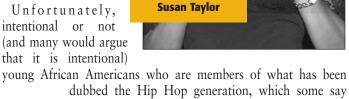


Generation" powerful, but it was extremely provocative. And it provided a much-needed forum for creating some common ground among a diverse group of stakeholders: the music industry, academics, DV practitioners, and the media.

The audience learned that there may be more to Hip Hop than what we see represented in the news media: bad language, scantily clad women, and threatening black males. We found that corporate entities direct the depiction of certain images, and the fashion industry tries to capture and borrow from the African-American culture.



Unfortunately, intentional or not (and many would argue that it is intentional)



dubbed the Hip Hop generation, which some say ranges from age 15-50 depending on your tastes, are portrayed primarily in a negative manner.

Hop and its spiritual roots. Remember Kanye West who received a Grammy for "Jesus Walks" and the poetic music of Nana Soul. We look at how music with reverent beginnings has spiraled out of control, due to commercial interests. It is very troubling that

What is often ignored is the positive side of Hip in today's global society the negative, distorted



Continued page 5

Dr. Carolyn West'Still on the Auction Block' gives historical context to sexual exploitation of black women

By Lynn Ingrid Nelson

Today's social context is rooted in history, according to Dr. Carolyn West, associate professor of psychology at the University of Washington-Tacoma. "What you see today didn't happen in a vacuum," she points out. Dr. West's presentation, "Still on the Auction Block," put the sexist exploitation of black women in a historical and social context.



During her remarks to the audience who attended the IDVAAC conference Aug. 8-10, 2004, she discussed the sexual double-bind experienced by black women today. "How do you embrace your sexuality without reinforcing stereotypes?" she asked, adding that a very narrow view of who and what African Americans are is portrayed in music videos that are projected globally. "It's very disturbing that there aren't more positive images to balance this perspective. There's a cyber auction block today."

Dr. West pointed out that today's commercialization of black sexuality has been historically rooted in commerce. "Take the breeding of slave workers," she says. "What we're seeing today is just more of the same. The larger culture has always benefited from this. Today's young blacks think: 'Why can't I? If I don't make these

videos, someone else will.""

Curbing the tide of exploitation

The best way for us to curb this tide is to become critical consumers and take the stand that I won't participate, advocates West, who is not a proponent of censorship. Taking a stand makes the biggest difference. She pointed out that some leaders in the African-American community are doing just that.

In Nelly's music video promoting the CD "Tip Drill', he swipes a credit card between a black woman's buttocks. The female students at Spelman, a women's college in Atlanta, challenged Nelly. He had planned a visit to the college to raise money for a bone marrow drive. The students warned him: "If you're coming, we'd like to have a critical discussion about your music." Ultimately, Nelly declined to come. There was no censorship, just a heart-felt challenge. "They

"We don't hold each other accountable in the same way that we hold white people accountable. You don't see the NAACP taking this issue on. What's the reluctance?"

didn't say he couldn't come," says Dr. West.

Her multi-media show featured a series of historical photos showing how black women's sexuality has been exaggerated throughout history. In a very sophisticated visual presentation, she traces the roots of violence from slavery through '50s dance queen Josephine Baker to Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake's infamous Super Bowl fiasco, where he ripped her bodice away while they sang "gonna have you naked by the end of this song" in front of 100 million viewers.

West says given the content and volume of the messages that bombard young women – particularly young black women today, she's not surprised they are often confused and in denial. The prevalence of the images alone, according to West, makes young women unaware of their own victimization.

"I'm not an advocate of censorship, but we must recognize that you can't be surrounded by these images and not be affected by it."

They take a position of benevolent sexism that pits "good" women against "bad" women. "They tell themselves if you carry yourself well, they're (the rappers) not talking about me," says West. These young women are in denial at the deepest level, but this attitude allows them to control their sexuality, and enjoy the music while pretending it has no impact on them, she adds. "Unfortunately, the reality is that sexually violent images normalize this kind of behavior. I'm not an advocate of censorship, but we must recognize that you can't be surrounded by these images and not be affected by it."

The bottom line is that blacks must do a better job of holding each other accountable. "We don't do a good job of showing young people what healthy sexuality looks like," says West. "And we don't hold each other accountable in the same way that we hold white people accountable. You don't see the NAACP taking this issue on. What's the reluctance?"

Turning the tide of sexual exploitation will require an aggressive challenge by African American leaders. Given the recent leadership provided by institutions such as IDVAAC, *Essence* Magazine and Spelman College, Dr. West believes the tide is turning.

Bakari Kitwana

Corporate interests have driven domestic violence in Hip Hop music

By Lynn Ingrid Nelson

In the early days, there was no domestic violence in Hip Hop music, according to IDVAAC conference speaker Bakari Kitwana. "When Hip Hop became a corporate commodity, domestic violence began to emerge."

Prior to the music industry's consolidation in the mid-'80s, the Golden Age of Hip Hop featured more "restrained" artists, such as Queen Latifah and the Poor Righteous Teachers. "In those days you only had to sell 500,000 records to go gold. Today, you're not a success unless you sell millions," adds Kitwana.

"The corporate market doesn't take a risk if it can help it," says Kitwana, a prominent reporter, editor and visiting scholar at Kent State University. "The executives only bet on sure things. Make no mistake, Kitwana admonished the audience: "It's about the money."

And the message is that it's OK to assault women – there are minimal repercussions."

In the '90s, there were several high profile cases involving black men who assaulted black women. One involved rapper Dr. Dre, who allegedly kicked and beat talk show host Dee Barnes in the ladies room of a night club in 1991. (Her suit against him was eventually settled.) The following year, he hit a police officer at a New Orleans hotel and broke the jaw of a fellow record-producer. Three years later, Dre spent five months in a Pasadena City Jail for violating parole.

The sporadic violence and run-ins did little to dampen Dre's commercial success. It's likely his street reputation had quite the opposite effect. Album after album produced by Dr. Dre has gone platinum. His latest success was to co-produce two runaway CDs featuring white rapper Eminem. The

message to young music consumers is as clear as the rapper's explicit lyrics: Violence pays.

During the '90s, one of Dr. Dre's music industry associates, 2Pac went to prison after sharing his date Ianna Jackson with his crew, and Mike Tyson spent six years in prison after sexually assaulting a black Miss American candidate.

Hip Hop contributes to climate of violence

Out of this context has arisen "Nasty as They Want to Be" by 2 Live Crew and countless other CDs that are degrading to women and in particular to black women. The direction of Rap and Hip Hop has begun to get the attention of music industry leaders, politicians, religious and community leaders, as well as academics. In June 2001, Rush Communications CEO Russell Simmons staged the first Hip-Hop Summit in New York City.

Bakari suggested that it's dangerous to suggest that Hip Hop music causes domestic violence. Rather, it creates an environment in which domestic violence is condoned and is a reflection of attitudes affected by dramatic social changes.

He suggested that Hip Hop music is a reflection of many powerful social forces that have contributed to the attitudes of the Hip Hop Generation: Civil Rights, Black Power, globalization, crack cocaine, less time with parents, first post-segregationist generation and first post-feminist generation – not to mention the first post free-love generation. All have added up to the war between the sexes, baby mammas and baby daddies, the war on drugs, and a U.S. prison population that's fully half African American.



Countering violence perpetuated by music industry

Bakari concluded his presentation with some possible solutions for dealing with violence perpetuated by the music industry:

- 1. We need artists to be as outspoken about domestic violence as they are about other social issues.
- 2. Young people should take a cue from women at black colleges, such as Spelman, who have warned visiting rappers that they will be held accountable during their speaking engagements for their exploitation of women in their music.
- 3. Everyone must address the issue of how women are represented in music.
- 4. Before denigrating all Hip Hop, practitioners must thoroughly inform themselves about the breadth of the hip hop culture. He suggested checking out www.allhiphop.com and www.launch.com.
- 5. Recognize that this issue is bigger than Hip Hop. At the congressional level, entertainment standards must be set for what's acceptable for children. It's time to stop shoving garbage down their throats.
- 6. Stop passing black-based entertainment through a corporate filter, which magnifies how society views black people. Corporations are only too happy to blame everything that's wrong on Black America.
- 7. Last, don't let Hip Hop become a wedge between middle-aged and young people.

IDVAAC 2004 CONFERENCE AWARDS

PRACTICE AWARD MS. LEAH ALDRIDGE

Associate Director Youth Violence Prevention Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women Los Angeles, CA

RESEARCH AWARD MR. IVAN JUZANG

CEO MEE PRODUCTIONS Philadelphia, PA

MEDIA AWARD MR. BYRON HURT

Founder
God Bless the Child Productions, Inc.
Central Islip, NY



Leah Aldridge





THE SHELIA AND PAUL WELLSTONE HUMANITARIAN AWARD MS. SUSAN L. TAYLOR

Editorial Director Essence Magazine New York, NY

Susan Taylor of *Essence* receives the Shelia and Paul Wellstone Humanitarian Award

This award is given to the individual who has demonstrated the ideals of the Minnesota senator and his wife. This year's receipient, Susan Taylor, is the editorial director of ESSENCE magazine. She directs all the editorial operations of the magazine and writes the popular column, "In the Spirit". She also oversees the content of all the divisions of the mulimedia organization and is launching a new magazine. In addition, she is the author of three books: In the Spirit: The Inspirational Writings of Susan L. Taylor, Lessons in Living and Confirmation: The Spiritual Wisdom That Has Shaped Our Lives.

Executive Director Oliver Willams says Taylor was chosen as the recipient of this award because of her dedication to healing and health of black people in the United States and around the

world. "She is a great role model," says Williams. "She not only talks the talk; she walks the walk."

She has received a host of editorial awards and is an avid supporter of groups dedicated to advancing the black community. She also works on initiatives to assist disadvantaged women and teenagers in becoming independent. Taylor is the co-chair with Danny Glover of a capital campaign to raise money to build housing in rural areas of South Africa.

Williams added that he is grateful to Taylor for her commitment to IDVAAC and the work the Institute is doing. "She took time out from her vacation to attend our last conference. Her extraordinary support has been a real gift."



Meet Ivan Juzang

Founder of communications firm that focuses on urban and minority audiences

By Gloria Delgadillo

While completing his MBA at The Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania and preparing for a career on Wall Street, Founder and President of MEE Productions Ivan Juzang began working on another plan. He started developing a business plan for a communications and marketing research firm.

"Wall Street didn't have the spirit or values I was interested in," said Juzang. "I also knew I wanted to be an entrepreneur."



Juzang focused on developing a business to help urban and lowincome populations living in atrisk environments. The result came in 1990 with MEE (Motivational Educational Entertainment) Productions, Inc., a Philadelphia-based firm that develops communications strategies for reaching and positively influencing urban and minority audiences. The company now has offices in Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and Los Angeles.

Soon after the company's beginnings, Juzang found a

valuable partner in the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC). This new relationship helped MEE Productions disseminate its research to a broader audience. Juzang's production company was also able to tape IDVAAC conferences for later use. Soon DVDS will be available via the IDVAAC Web site.

Juzang says that the ongoing partnership between MEE Productions and the Institute has allowed both organizations to establish connections with others working to find solutions and to gain a better understanding of domestic violence.

The value of partners

MEE Productions recently partnered with Men Stopping Violence (MSV) of Atlanta, a social change organization working with men who batter. Juzang met MSV through the Institute.

Juzang believes that working with the perpetrators (who are often DV victims as well) is as important as working with the victims. He also points out that it is one thing to have a woman tell a man that violence does not have to be a part of the relationship, but it is quite another to have a man give another man the same message. Involving men in the process has a different impact on those who batter. MSV brings men together to re-examine their notions of manhood and relate to each other in a serious manner.

Research, core of company

All of MEE Productions' communications campaigns address health and social issues impacting inner-city audiences, and are supported by extensive research. Juzang has moderated hundreds of focus groups and serves as a primary researcher in all of the company's national studies on health and social issues affecting urban populations.

The company strives to gain an inside perspective directly from those living in the community and facing the issues. Juzang emphasizes the importance of listening to the audience. He also incorporates the voice of young people by having them write some of the company's productions.

MEE Productions has been nationally recognized for its leadership and success in addressing key issues facing inner city audiences. And Juzang was recently acknowledged for his groundbreaking work with a research award from the Institute.

To share the knowledge and insight gained from the research, MEE Productions also publishes a monthly newsletter, The *MEE-zine: Snapshots of Urban Life.* "It is a way that people can have access to the leading-edge research," says Juzang. He hopes that this newsletter will cause awareness of the issues and that others will use the research to develop their own programs.

To subscribe to the newsletter, visit www.meeproductions.com.

Executive Director's Message

continued from the front page

images of young black people from the United States are transmitted all over the world.

In this issue, you will learn more about the content from our conference last summer in New York City, with excerpts from author Bakari Kitwana and Professor Carolyn West's presentations. We had an all-star cast of speakers, including Lateefah Simon, executive director of the Center for Young Women's Development in San Francisco, and Susan Taylor, editorial director of Essence Magazine.

We're pleased that *Essence* has launched a campaign to challenge sexism in rap music. The editors claim that this is a women's issue, but it's a black women's issue first, because of the prevalence on music videos showing "bikini-clad sisters gyrating around fully clothed grinning brothers like Vegas strippers on meth." The topic was featured in the Dec. 2004 issue of *Essence* and the March 2005 issue of *Vibe* Magazine. We are pleased that sexism in music is finally getting the attention it deserves.

These are highly charged issues that affect deeply the prevalence of domestic violence in the African-American community. We are pleased that IDVAAC has had the opportunity to undertake a leadership role in examining issues related to the intersections of Hip Hop and domestic violence and recommending solutions.

No Secrets, No Lies shows victims how to help themselves

Five impressive themes are depicted in *No Secrets*, *No Lies*. These include the uplifting and positive tone of the book, the culturally sensitive words that indicate the author's knowledge of the black community, concern with the impact of sexual assault on female and male children, suggestions about how black people can utilize the criminal justice system, and the multiple resources provided for the children and adults who experience the emotionally destructive acts associated with sexual assault.

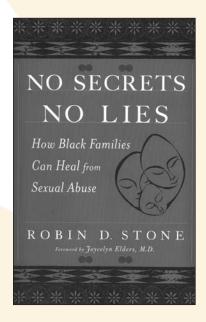
However, it is the writing style of the author that is most intriguing. Stone employs her impressive writing skills acquired as an editor of *Essence*, the New York Times and the Boston Globe to write realistic vignettes, stories told to her in great

detail by Black victims of sexual assault, to create an air of authenticity to her work.

It is important to describe/examine the five features of the book that this reader finds noteworthy. First, one is struck by the positive tone exhibited by the author throughout the book. Each of the book's eight chapters ends with a segment entitled, "Help Yourself:..." Repeating this two-word charge at the closing section of each chapter encourages the reader to "acknowledge what has happened to you, get the help you need to face the repercussions of your experience, and look to your future."

Chapter one begins with a definition of the subject matter, sexual abuse. Also in the first chapter, Stone describes her sexual assault by a family member. In the remainder of the chapter she presents vignettes, which she uses to explore myths and to examine the signs of victimization. She ends the chapter by focusing her theme of self-help. She identifies questions to be asked of victims and families and proposes ways that victims can be encouraged to help themselves.

Second, the author writes in a culturally sensitive way – expressing her understanding of African-American ethnicity and culture from the perspective of one who was reared within it. She speaks about the roles of African-American men and women. She describes the roots of the silence that is accepted and encouraged among blacks intent on presenting both gender of their race (males and females) in positive ways.



The author describes the ceremonial importance of kin and non-kin familial relationships; she describes the hurt and enormous anger experienced when the abuser is a trusted relative; she also describes the tenuous support given to victims by other family members. Stone concludes chapter four by describing the importance of getting African-Centered healing — achieving reconciliation — the act of restoring and making harmonious.

The third feature exemplified is the text is Stone's concern with the welfare of children. Because she was victimized as a black child, she is keenly aware of the hurt, embarrassment, and guilt that reveal themselves in damaging ways for children. Throughout *No Secrets*, *No Lies*, she

admonishes parents to be protective of their children against predators, most of whom are family members who cannot be easily recognized.

When sexual abuse is disclosed, the author encourages parents to not become consumed in guilt and blame, but to concentrate on "acknowledging and responding in a way that protects and helps the child" (p. 123). In the Help Yourself segment at the end of chapter 5, Stone instructs the reader about how to become a proactive parent, how to respond to a child's disclosure, and how to complete and enact The Child's Bill of Rights.

Helping boys and men

Chapter 6, "Helping Boys and Men," stands out in this book because it acknowledges that boys and men also are victims of sexual assault. While most of us know this to be true, often it is not discussed because of political concerns or concern about male social images. Black male victims can be especially difficult to help because of the impression that boys and men "don't want or need help," they should be "able to deal with it and get over it" without help. Nothing could be further from the truth. Young males experience extreme confusion and fears about becoming "gay" once they have been victimized. Homosexuality is especially feared by black male youth.



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Assembling the Pieces is published biannually by the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community (IDVAAC). The staff includes Dr. Oliver J. Williams, executive director; Dawn York, associate administrator; and Lorraine Haley, executive secretary. The publication is edited by Dr. Oliver J. Williams and Lynn Ingrid Nelson and designed by Derek Brigham. The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status or sexual orientation. This publication can be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities. Direct requests to the Institute at 612-624-5357.

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The fourth impressive feature of *No Secrets, No Lies* rests in how the reader is introduced to the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system is the vehicle utilized to punish sexual abusers; however, "the system. . . is far from perfect: bias, overwhelmed child protective services agencies, insensitivity to survivors, inconsistency in prosecution and sentencing" (p. 194).

The author describes in great detail the intricacies of criminal prosecution and civil suits as legal remedies for African Americans. In the Help Yourself segment of chapter 7, she writes about the difficulties of finding a lawyer, preparing to work with an attorney, and information about the Statutes of Limitations. To aid the reader, Stone provides web site information and information about national legal referral sites that can assist a reader who wishes to secure legal assistance.

In chapter 8, which is entitled "Reconciliation...and Moving On," Stone addresses a victim's needs for confrontation, accountability and responsibility, and finally faith and forgiveness. She reiterates and describes how important "justice" and "punishment" can be to emotional resolution and reconciliation by the victim, again using vignettes to make her points in a most effective manner.

The fifth and final feature of *No Secrets*, *No Lies* is the wealth of resources provided in the book's last chapter. Stone provides contact information and brief descriptions of programs and organizations that can assist victims. She provides referral sources for those who seek therapeutic help of various kinds (art, music, dance, mental health, hypnosis, etc.) to help with the repercussions of sexual abuse. The chapter concludes with a bibliography of books that provide understanding and support for African-American sexual assault victims.

This well-written book is "easy reading", and highly recommended. It should be read by everyone concerned with domestic violence and with sexual violence, since the two phenomena often walk hand-in-hand in the lives of victims and their families.

Reviewer Dr. Linner Ward Griffin is a professor at the School of Social Work at East Carolina University in Greenville, N. C.

10 Steps Toward Healing

Author Robin Stone presents Dr. Rhonda Wells-Wilbon's Aya Model in chapter 8 of her book *No Secrets, No Lies.* Wells-Wilbon is an associate professor of social work at Morgan State University in Baltimore, MD.

1. Go natural. 6. Speak your truth.

2. Form circles. 7. Practice reciprocity.

3. Incorporate water. 8. Find order.

4. Incorporate fire. 9. Know who you are.

5. Practice aromatherapy. 10. Find your purpose.

International conference on family violence set for Sept. 16-21



IDVAAC will do a pre-conference symposium/affiliated training on the intersections of African-American community and family development in the aftermath of domestic violence. The Family Violence & Sexual Assault Institute (FVSAI) will host the 10th annual International Conference on Family Violence Sept. 16-21, in San Diego, Calif. The collaborative nature of this event brought 1,300 people together from multiple disciplines in 2004. Over 18 countries were represented.

This conference brings together professionals, advocates, researchers, policy makers, and others from major organizations together to examine the various strategies being used to prevent and address family violence. The conference covers all aspects of family violence prevention. For more information, visit www.fvsai.org.

IDVAAC plans to co-sponsor two more conferences this fall, one on fatherhood and domestic violence with the Center for Family Policy and Practice (www.cffpp.org), and another on Hip Hop and HIV with Asha Family Services of Milwaukee. Visit the IDVAAC website for updates at www.dvinstitute.org.



IDVAAC partners with Vera Institute on Safe Return Initiative
Healthy recoveries from DV • Book review of Demon Chased, Angel Watched
Visitation centers in communities of color • Meet Lori Crowder

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