

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA IDVAAC **ASSEMBLING THE PIECES**

An African-American perspective on community and family violence

Fall 2013

Executive Director's message

Journey to Kenya exports message of peace



Dr. Oliver J. Williams
IDVAAC Co-Director

For more than 15 years, IDVAAC has played a vital role in creating awareness, understanding and policy around the twin issues of domestic violence and sexual assault in the United States.

Earlier this year, we took a small step toward globalizing that mission by exporting our message of peace and gender justice to the east African nation of Kenya.

Early this summer, I joined steering committee members Dr. Tameka Gillum and Dr. Grace Mose-Okong'o on an excursion to Kenyatta University (KU) to lead a forum on gender-based violence in Kenya. We hoped to engage other African countries as well as promote gender equality and non-violence in the African diaspora.

Dr. Mose-Okong'o, a gender studies professor at Kenyatta University, said she invited IDVAAC to her native land because she wanted Kenyan men to see some of the outstanding work we're doing in America to promote efforts to end domestic violence.

"I had witnessed the work and the advocacy that IDVAAC does on behalf of the women and I thought that this would be a



Dr. Tameka Gillum and Dr. Grace Mose discuss domestic violence issues with a group of Masai women in Kenya.

very good example for men in my country because in Kenya, we normally have this work being done by women," she said. "And because of that, we are taking longer to have impact.

"So, one of the reasons I invited the Institute was to come and give a public lecture to help raise awareness that men can start embracing the issue, advocate for women and stop being violent toward women," she said. "The goal was to empower men, reduce incidents of domestic violence in Kenya, and work with the men and the women to help them understand that there is no need for gender violence in 2013 and beyond."

A tall order, to be sure. Still, we approached our 11-day journey with a mixed blend of energy, optimism and enthusiasm. And to say the experience was eye-opening would be a huge understatement. For example:

- I prepared for the forum "Engaging Men in Ending and Preventing Gender Based Violence (GBV)" expecting about 50 people to attend. Instead, the small room was packed with nearly 600 eager attendees.
- Many participants – including Dr. Grace Wamue-Ngare, chair of KU's Department of Gender & Development Studies – seemed as concerned about gender-based violence against men as they were against women.

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IDVAAC co-director Dr. Oliver J. Williams delivers a lecture on gender-based violence to the assistant vice chancellor, university provost, deans, department chairs, faculty members and students at Kenyatta University.



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Activists meet to discuss domestic peace project

Non-violence advocates from throughout the U.S. met in Chicago recently to share lessons about ending violence in their communities, solicit support from established civil rights organizations in 15 cities and finalize plans for rolling out an exciting and ambitious new community-based initiative – the African American Domestic Peace Project (AADPP).

Community activists from older and newly established AADPP sites met to hear updates on the inaugural project and make plans to roll it out in their respective U.S. cities.

The project, launched by IDVAAC three years ago, is designed to develop a coordinated, national assault on domestic violence, said IDVAAC co-director Dr. Oliver J. Williams.

“Our overall goal is to develop a public, community education and mobilization strategy to effectively address and respond to incidents of domestic violence in our member cities across the U.S.,” Williams told conferees.

“This project ultimately will become a critical tool in linking disparate elements of the domestic violence community and in identifying best practices around programs and initiatives that are making a difference around the country,” he added. “It also will provide a built-in mechanism to be able to do research, which, in many ways, is the lifeblood of our work.”

Williams said the project’s purpose is simple:

- Educate the public and mobilize local communities around community violence.
- Reach out to the community, in our own voice, about specific problems around domestic abuse and community violence.
- Network with civil rights organizations to put domestic violence on the agenda in our communities.
- Establish an interactive learning community.

The new project is not designed to replace current community-based programs across the U.S., but to enhance those efforts by engaging the African-American community at large to take an active role in reducing intimate partner violence, Williams said.

“We know there are several good organizations working hard within the community and doing a great job,” Williams said. “The

For more information about the African-American Domestic Peace Project, contact IDVAAC co-director Dr. Oliver J. Williams at 1-877 NIDVAAC (1-877-643-8222).

challenge is to develop a collaborative approach that connects these organizations and makes it easier for battered women to be informed and to access the people, programs and other resources that are available to them.”

IDVAAC will work with AADPP sites to produce newsletters, video blogs and webinars designed to profile community activists and highlight effective programs in their respective communities, Williams told attendees. Each AADPP site ultimately will host a call-in talk radio show on the IDVAAC’s new blog talk show called IDVAAC Talk Radio.com “(broadcast at 7 p.m. CST each Thursday at www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac).

Although the new initiative will involve traditional domestic violence programs, it also will target community stakeholders such as churches, civic groups, community leaders, health and service providers and others committed to reducing community violence, Williams said. This will not only link community efforts, he said, but also expand the reach of each AADPP site.

The inaugural AADPP sites include: Boston, MA; Cleveland-Greenville, MS; Dallas, TX; Detroit, MI; Hartford, CT; Houston, TX; Memphis, TN; Minneapolis-St.Paul, MN; Montgomery, AL; New Orleans, LA; Norfolk, VA; Oakland/San Francisco, CA;; Tacoma, WA, and West Palm Beach, FL.

Williams said the AADPP also will partner with other national organizations committed to the health and vitality of the African-American community. In the coming years, Williams said he expects more cities to join the AADPP program, making it a powerful ally in the struggle against gender-based violence.

“At the end of the day, we’re stronger together than we are apart,” Williams said. “We believe this initiative will go a long way toward helping to create healing among suffering and struggling people and creating healthier communities across black America.

“We need to find a way to heal our community – and reducing domestic violence is a critical element of that healing.”



Members of the IDVAAC steering committee and the African American Domestic Peace Project were among the attendees for a trauma conference for African American and African women in Chicago this fall.

Web radio show launched to export message of peace

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC) is partnering with domestic violence advocates across the country to host a weekly Internet radio show designed to export a message of non-violence throughout the U.S.

The hour-long show, which launched in September, provides news and information intended to educate listeners about effective domestic violence initiatives and approaches taking place across the U.S., said IDVAAC co-director Dr. Oliver J. Williams.

“A friend of mine once told me that black people are not as much divided as we are disconnected,” Williams said. “We believe this show will help us connect the dots about exciting non-violence initiatives going on in America and help encourage people to see peace as a viable alternative to domestic and community violence.”

WHAT: “IDVAAC Talk Radio.com,”
a weekly Internet radio show
WHEN: Every Thursday, 7 p.m. (CST)
WHERE: www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac

The call-in show, called IDVAAC Talk Radio.com, will be hosted by various domestic violence activists each week, Williams said, and typically will feature at least one guest. It will feature a rotation of shows hosted by IDVAAC, the Women of Color Network and the African American Domestic Peace Project.

Topics such as “Speaking of Faith: Engaging Churches to Address Domestic Violence,” “Understanding and Responding to Domestic Violence in African Communities,” “Engaging Men and Boys,” “Teen Dating Violence,” “Empowering Women” and “Domestic Violence: A Journey to Healing” are among those

already scheduled through July 2014, Williams said. Suggestions for other show topics are welcomed, he said.

The show broadcasts at 7 p.m. CST every Thursday at www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac. Shows will be archived

on the website and can be reviewed or downloaded.

The program is produced by IDVAAC, in collaboration with the Women of Color Network and the African American Domestic Peace Project. It is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Administration for Children and Family, Family and Youth Services Bureau, and Family Violence Prevention and Services Program.

For more information about the show, including a list of hosts, guests and show topics, visit www.idvaac.org. ♦

Islamic leaders meet to discuss domestic violence

Several leaders and activists from the Islamic community participated in an invitation-only roundtable discussion July 17-18 to address a critical issue impacting many faith communities – domestic violence.

Coordinated by IDVAAC, the session was designed to understand how African American and African Islamic leaders could effectively lower the rate of intimate partner violence and gender abuse in Islamic communities.

Dr. Oliver J. Williams, co-director of IDVAAC, said the session was convened to identify strategies Islamic leaders can implement to more effectively respond to incidents of domestic violence in Islamic faith communities.

“Christians, Muslims and others in the faith-based community are looking for leadership to help deal with the challenge of domestic violence from a spiritual, philosophical and functional perspective,” Williams said.



“The purpose of our forum was to identify specific steps to determine how Imams and Mosque leaders might respond to and support those who might be victims of domestic violence and how that leadership might engage Islamic men and women in overcoming gender-based violence – whether it’s in the Islamic

community or elsewhere within the African diaspora.”

Several roundtable participants acknowledged that domestic violence and suppression and abuse of women are rampant throughout much of the Islamic community and that many Imams and other Islamic leaders are ignorant on the issue, woefully indifferent or generally insensitive to issues facing women and children.

Other participants went as far as to say that many Islamic men and leaders manipulate or recklessly interpret the word of the Qur’an to control and abuse women (a fact which some participants said many Christian men do when interpreting the Bible).

“Unfortunately, many of our brothers have a skewed view of women’s issues and a skewed interpretation of certain ayats in the Qur’an,” said Abdus-Salaam Musa, president of the American Islamic Indigenous Clinical Pastoral Education

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Journey to Kenya *Continued from front cover*

- The mission to explore, understand and end gender-based violence is exacerbated by this simple fact: There apparently is no word for “domestic violence” in many African languages.
- Educating people about the struggle against domestic violence is complicated by the fact that in many patriarchal African nations, there is no law against spousal violence.

These realities aside, we prepared for our fact-finding mission with two goals in mind: 1) To get men engaged in the struggle against gender-based violence, and 2) to conduct research to learn more about gender-based violence in Kenya from the perspectives of Kenyan women and men, survivors, service providers and community members.

“It also was intended to immerse ourselves in and experience the Kenyan context to help guide us in our understanding of the issue and interpretation of the data,” Dr. Gillum added. “The data gathered will be used to help inform GBV services for Kenyans and intimate partner violence services for Kenyan immigrant communities in the United States.”

During our journey, we worked with the African Women’s Foundation to interview men and women about the causes, consequences and solutions to GBV. Drs. Gillum and Mose-Okong’o conducted research at the Nairobi Women’s Hospital – one of the few centers treating victims of domestic violence. We also interviewed people of the Masai tribe in the majestic regions of the Serengeti in scenic southwestern Kenya.

All of us found the trip enlightening and instructive.

“We learned a great deal from this trip, including the fact that there is much work to be done around gender equality and addressing gender-based violence in Kenya,” Dr. Gillum said. “The oppression of women is still so great, and entrenched patriarchy has made for slow progress in addressing this issue. Services are lacking and cultural norms around acceptance of GBV are prominent. These issues are present in urban areas, but rural women are even more disadvantaged.”

‘Pockets of Optimism’

Despite these challenges, however, we all experienced pockets of optimism.

For example, I was impressed with the fact that despite the level and types of violence women experience, it didn’t feel like a civil war between the genders. Women were working to help other women, but they also wanted men to be restored and to be fixed, too – including the abused and the abusers.

Because there is no law against domestic violence in Kenya, many women want assistance and protection, want abusers to be confronted and want the country to treat domestic violence as a crime. But these women also want there to be a pathway to change and redemption for abusers and for men to rejoin the tribal community, if possible. They also want to develop an approach to engage him in changing, if possible, much like many African American women report.

Also encouraging was a “glimmer of hope,” Dr. Gillum said she saw when speaking to young people in Kenya.

“They appear to be on a fresh and new path towards viewing GBV as problematic and seeing a future towards gender equality, though the road is a long one still,” she said.

The pockets of hope we saw were encouraging but, more importantly, the international experience also gave me fresh insights on the work we do at IDVAAC.

For one, the experience confirmed something I’ve said for years: The ways that men subordinate women is different in each culture. In many parts of Africa, for example, an entrenched level of dominance still exists, giving men a significant position of privilege that’s buoyed by generations of history and custom. Second-class stature for women, therefore, is something relatively common in many African nations, and control of women – which frequently includes physical control – is far from uncommon.

These realities have significant influence on our work to educate about and prevent gender-based violence in America and around the globe, whether it’s among African-Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, or one of the thousands of distinct, ethnically different tribes in any of the 56 nations in Africa.



A Masai leader explains culture and history to IDVAAC co-director Dr. Oliver

Valuable lessons

All of this taught me a valuable lesson: If we are serious about developing social service programs that meet the needs of Africans and descendants of Africa within the United States, there are things that we have to understand tomorrow that we don't understand today. A greater understanding and respect for customs, culture, ethnicity and history, for example, are critical if we are to take our level of engagement and effectiveness to the next level.

We must become expert at responding to the needs of people in our service community whose realities may be different from ours, but who also are connected to us. Providing services to a broad community means we need to do the kind of research and provide the kind of sensitivity that makes people feel treated and served, for sure, but also feel understood, loved and embraced.

If we fail to cultivate that kind of respect for culture, experience, custom and ethnic realities, we will be guilty of doing to other peoples what the dominant culture did to us for hundreds of years in America.

And, of course, none of us wants that.

These are the challenges we must face as we explore this journey to extend our impact here and around the globe. We must continue to work hard on broadening our reach and scope by expanding our awareness and understanding of cultural differences. And we must use this knowledge to develop new programs and initiatives that better address the cultural needs of various communities.

As part of those outreach efforts, we are developing several Africa initiatives as an extension of work we started years ago with our first roundtable discussion among women from 16 African nations in May 2011. Those initiatives include:

- Research conducted in Kenyan on gender-based violence will be replicated with U.S. Kenyan citizens and within immigrant communities in the U.S. to determine if and how geographical differences affect perceptions about the causes, consequences and solutions to domestic violence.
- Two DVDs focused on domestic violence among African women will be completed and released next year.
- Providing webinars and technical assistance materials on addressing domestic violence among African women.
- Providing technical assistance in African communities within the United States.
- Developing and publishing a special issue journal next year on domestic violence in Africa.
- Returning to Kenya next year – with a group of ministers who address domestic violence through their churches – to engage Kenyan ministers to accurately understand and respond to domestic violence within their congregations (similar to work we've done with African American clergy in the U.S. through our project, "Speaking of Faith"). On this trip, we will continue to work with the African Foundation for Women, as we did in our previous trip to Kenya.

Three of our newest steering committee members will help execute and advance these initiatives: Dr. Obianuju "Uju" Obi, a second-generation Nigerian American who joined the steering committee last year; Dr. Mose-Okong'o and Ms. Fatima Porgo, who both joined the committee this summer. In 2014, they will be collaborating on producing a second roundtable discussion involving African women and gender-based violence.

At the end of the day, our means may vary at times, but our 21-year mission remains the same: To end violence among African peoples and, ultimately, help create a nation and a world where all people are free to explore their fullest human potential. ♦



IDVAAC co-director Dr. Oliver Williams pauses to capture a Kodak moment with Masai Mara game reserve rangers in southwest Kenya. The rangers accompany tourists in the reserve to protect them from wildlife that roam the Serengeti.



Drs. Williams, Gillum and Okong'o discuss domestic violence issues with a Masai leader.

New steering committee members primed to serve

IDVAAC's national steering committee, a panel of experts who help direct the group's policy and programming, has added several new members to help expand its outreach, inspire new ideas and create new partnerships, co-director Dr. Oliver J. Williams said.

These newly appointed members reflect the organization's new direction toward broadening its scope and developing a definitive international focus, Williams said.

"We are excited about the youthful energy and enthusiasm these new members are bringing to the steering committee and we are convinced that their collective passion and involvement will go far toward helping IDVAAC end gender-based violence in America, Africa and throughout the African diaspora," Williams said.

Ms. Fatima Porgo



Fatima Porgo knows the tragedy of domestic violence all too well. She was a victim of marital rape and sexual assault for more than 14 years while living with her ex-husband in Saudi

Arabia and in her native Burkina Faso.

Determined to be free, she sought the assistance of the InterAfrican Union of Human Rights and, since her escape, has dedicated her life to preventing abuses against women.

Having achieved many goals in her career in Governmental Services in Burkina Faso, and Multilateral Diplomacy at the United Nations, Ms. Porgo since has become active in community organizing, protection of women rights and gender abuse programs.

Currently a New York-based domestic violence advocate, she represents the African Council of Imams on issues related to domestic violence and women and, for the past year, has dedicated herself to supporting community-based and

"We are excited about the youthful energy and enthusiasm these new members are bringing to the steering committee."

— Dr. Oliver Williams

grassroots organizations in New York.

A passionate advocate for women's rights, Ms. Porgo worked for nonprofit groups specializing in domestic violence before becoming an independent activist focused on raising awareness on this issue in her community. In recognition of those efforts, the African Diaspora in the USA granted her with an African Community Award for 2011 and IDVAAC granted her with an award in August 2012.

In February 2012, she returned to Saudi Arabia and set up three domestic violence support groups in two cities, Riyadh and Madinah, and a focus group for girls in Riyadh. That group supports women who've been exposed to domestic violence at home and teaches them how to avoid becoming victims of gender-based violence.

Ms. Porgo, who has consulted with IDVAAC over the last five years, studied International Affairs and Contemporary Diplomacy in Burkina Faso and Malta, and received her Master's degree in International Affairs.

Dr. Obianuju "Uju" Obi



A psychiatry resident at Columbia University, Dr. Obi graduated magna cum laude from Harvard University – with both her undergraduate degree and

medical degrees – from the history and science departments and from the Department of Mind, Brain and Behavior.

Her training includes positions as a Public Health and Epidemiology Fellow for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

where she conducted epidemiological research on developmental disabilities (autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disabilities) in the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD).

Dr. Obi also served as a Special Assistant to the Assistant Surgeon General at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where she served as a Research Assistant in the Office of Global Health Affairs and served on U.S. Government Task force to the International Health Regulations Revising effort. (The new regulations were adopted by the World Health Organization in May 2005).

A second-generation Nigerian, Dr. Obi's core interests include work with the international community of public health scholars and practitioners to prevent violence and to control its traumatic effects on immigrant communities.

She has received several prestigious honors, including the Leah J. Dickstein, M.D. Award and the Zuckerman Award. She also was a Susan Blumenthal Scholar at Harvard Medical School.

Before joining IDVAAC's steering committee, Dr. Obi had been an IDVAAC research assistant since 2006.

Dr. Grace Mose-Okong'o



Dr. Mose-Okong'o is a professor in Gender Studies at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya and a relentless activist in the struggle to overcome gender

inequality and domestic violence in the United States and in Kenya and other African nations.

A native Kenyan, Dr. Mose-Okong'o is founder and director of the Foundation for African Women, a charitable organization



Bottom left: Karma Cottman, Antonia Vann, Beth Richie, Tameka Gillum, Fatima Porgbo

Top left: Gretta Gardner, Johnny Rice II, Uju Obi, Oliver Williams, Grace Mose Okong'o, Robert Hampton.

Not present, Joyce Thomas



dedicated to the elimination of gender disparities through civic education, economic empowerment projects, and programs to end gender-based violence in Africa.

As a counselor and fervent advocate for women, Dr. Mose-Okong'o brings a rich history of work on women's issues. She also works as Director of the Diverse Communities Health Initiative (DCHI) of the Education Fund of Family Planning Advocates in New York, where she organizes conferences and provides trainings in culturally and linguistically appropriate services to health care providers and other human service providers.

Before joining DCHI, Dr. Mose-Okong'o worked as director of Domestic Violence Hotlines for the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. She also worked as a part-time instructor at the State University of New York at Albany in the Department of Women's Studies and has worked as a Legislative Aide for New York State Assemblywoman Barbara Clark.

A renowned public speaker at local, national, and international forums, Dr. Mose-Okong'o also works with family planning centers to develop and implement best practices, including action plans and organizational assessments related to culturally and linguistically appropriate services. She's also conducted research in harmful health issues confronting women in Africa and has published a book on female genital mutilation.

Dr. Mose-Okong'o holds a Doctorate in Women's Studies from University at Albany-State University of New York.

Ms. Karma A. Cottman



A staunch activist for women's rights, Ms. Cottman is executive director of the Washington, D.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCCADV), a

group that works to strengthen domestic violence prevention and intervention efforts in D.C.

In that role, Ms. Cottman leads a membership agency for the 12 primary purpose domestic violence agencies in metro D.C., providing leadership designed to respond effectively to the needs of domestic violence survivors and their children.

A Washington, D.C. native, Ms. Cottman has worked with several national partners to address emerging issues in domestic violence service provision and worked closely with national policy partners to strengthen federal legislation to effectively respond to the needs of domestic violence survivors.

Ms. Cottman also worked with federal agencies to enhance violence against women programming and provided training and technical assistance to state and territorial domestic violence and dual domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions across the nation.

From 2000 through 2010, Ms. Cottman worked at the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) where, as Vice President of Policy and Emerging Issues, she directed the agency's policy agenda and supervised its state coalition and housing technical assistance projects.

Before joining NNEDV, she served as co-director of the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Rural Diversity Initiative, where she helped develop a community assessment tool used to identify service gaps in several local communities and spearheaded efforts to address those service gaps.

Gretta Gardner



Ms. Gardner is the Safe Havens Grant Director for the Travis County Counseling and Education Services in Austin, Texas, where she is directly responsible for

the Safe Havens grant for supervised visitation and safe exchange funded by the Office on Violence Against Women. She also chairs the Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force and is a member of the Travis County Fatality Review Team. An attorney by training, Ms. Gardner enjoyed a career as an assistant state's attorney in Baltimore City and Montgomery County, Maryland, where she successfully prosecuted legal cases involving misdemeanor and felony domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and elder abuse.

Ms. Gardner also was Managing Attorney for the Washington, D.C. office of the Legal Department of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In this capacity, she managed four national projects – the STOP Violence Against Women Grants Technical Assistance Project, the Legal Assistance Providers' Technical Outreach Project, the National Center on Full Faith and Credit, and the Battered Women's Justice Project – Civil.

Her experience includes her role as Director of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and Project Manager for the Allstate Domestic Violence Program with the National Network to End Domestic Violence. She also served on the Board of Directors for Women Empowered Against Violence, Inc. and the National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault.

Dr. Tameka L. Gillum



Dr. Gillum is an Assistant Professor at the School of Public Health and Health Sciences, Department of Public Health, University of Massachusetts in Amherst, where her

research interests are exploring and addressing intimate partner violence within racial/ethnic minority and sexual minority populations.

A key element of her focus is developing and evaluating culturally specific prevention and intervention efforts, clinic-based intimate partner violence

interventions and the intersection between HIV and IPV.

Her current research project is a study that explores dating violence among sexual minority youth and its relationship to physical and mental health outcomes.

A native of Philadelphia, Dr. Gillum has published extensive works about perceptions of black women in society. One notable example is her work "Exploring the Link Between Stereotypic Images and Intimate Partner Violence in the African American Community," where she created a "Perceptions of African-American Women Scale" used to measure the extent to which stereotypic views African-American men have about African-American women – including the matriarch, the jezebel, etc. – frequently are used to belittle, subjugate and objectify women.

As a community psychologist, Dr. Gillum conducts community-based research, where her work has led to connections with other civic organizations, including: Tapestry Health, an agency dedicated to providing health care to under/uninsured people in Massachusetts; House of Ruth, a women's domestic violence center shelter in Baltimore, and the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

Dr. Johnny Rice II



Dr. Rice is senior program associate for the Supervised Visitation Initiative (SVI), Center on Victimization and Safety at the Vera Institute of Justice.

Before joining Vera in 2010, he worked as a public administrator for the Maryland Department of Human Resources, overseeing its various programs on family violence and victims of crime.

A longtime advocate for low-income fathers and families, Dr. Rice has focused much of his work on responsible and stable fatherhood and on the safety and stability

of the communities where they live. He has worked for years to address family violence, serving in various roles for nationally recognized domestic-violence entities.

Dr. Rice formerly served as director for the Office of Grants Management (OGM) at the Maryland Department of Human Resources and Special Assistant in the Office of the Secretary at DHR, which administers and provides oversight for statewide domestic violence efforts. He also served as Chief Operating Officer for Communities Organized To Improve Life, Inc. a community development corporation in Baltimore, and as Chief Operating Officer and Director of the nationally recognized Men's Services Program for the Center for Urban Families (CFUF).

In addition, he also served on the Family and Relationship Panel for the National Domestic Violence Hotline's Decade for Change Summit and served as a national faculty member for the first Institute on Fatherhood, Visitation, and Domestic Violence for Supervised Visitation Grantees sponsored by the Family Violence Prevention Fund.

Dr. Tricia B. Bent-Goodley



Dr. Bent-Goodley is Professor of Social Work and Chair of the Community, Administration and Policy Practice Sequence at Howard

University's School of Social Work.

A tireless advocate for families, her research and writing has focused on violence against women and girls, HIV prevention and building healthy relationships. She has developed culturally competent and faith-based interventions in domestic violence and relationship education with a focus on building solutions to improve the safety and viability of black families.

New IDVAAC staff members settling into new roles

As part of its mission to always be evolving, IDVAAC has added several new staff members to help the organization fulfill its mission of creating programs and policy to reduce domestic violence and sexual assault within the African Diaspora, co-director Dr. Oliver J. Williams said.

“In order to remain fresh and vibrant, we must always be changing,” Williams said. “These new staff members already are bringing new insights and energy that I believe will continue to help us get to the next level.”

Listed here is a short biography on each of the new members:

Ms. Shelia Hankins



Ms. Hankins is the recently appointed co-director of IDVAAC, a role in which she provides key leadership in working with national and local projects dedicated to

ending domestic violence among Africans Americans and Africans throughout the diaspora.

A native Detroit, Ms. Hankins has 30 years of leadership experience and is

recognized nationally for her work in domestic violence prevention. Additionally, Ms. Hankins provides training, meeting facilitation and consulting services nationally.

Her role at IDVAAC includes administration, policy, community education and awareness, community organizing and developing, and the provision of technical assistance to federally funded and other non-profit organizations.

Before assuming her current position, Ms. Hankins held the following leadership positions: Project Director of the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board, Vice President of Programs for HAVEN in Oakland County, Michigan; Project Director for Laurel Consulting Group in Laurel, Maryland; and Administrator of the STOP Violence Against Women Grant for the State of Florida's Governor's Task Force on Domestic and Sexual Violence in Tallahassee, Florida.

She also provides training and consulting services nationally and has served as the Administrator of the Violence Against Women Grants Office for the Florida Governor's Task Force on Domestic and Sexual Violence. Ms. Hankins also has held the position of Executive Director of Detroit Women's Justice Center, and of the Downtown and Northwest Branches of the YWCA of Metropolitan Detroit. She is also a co-founder of IDVAAC with Dr. Oliver J. Williams, Antonia Vann and Bill Riley.

Dr. Esther J. Jenkins



Dr. Jenkins is a Professor of Psychology at Chicago State University and a Senior Research Associate at the Community Mental Health Council in Chicago.

A former steering committee member, Dr. Jenkins currently serves as ad hoc research director for IDVAAC. Her current research interests are trauma and grief among African American children and youth and HIV risk behaviors among African American women.

She received her B.A. degree from Northwestern University and her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Social Psychology from the University of Michigan.

Ms. Mao Yang



Ms. Yang is executive administrative coordinator for IDVAAC, a role in which she helps coordinate conferences, workshops, focus groups and roundtable discussions.

She began her work in domestic violence in 1999 by as a Public Relations & Media Assistant at the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV), where she later became a Policy Associate focused on strengthening legislation and policies.

In 2001, she moved to metropolitan Washington, D.C. and later joined the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) as a Senior Technical Assistance Specialist.



Dr. Oliver Williams meets with leaders and activists from the Islamic community in an invitation-only roundtable discussion July 17-18.

Read more on page 3.

Book explores genetic revival of race in 'post-racial' America

Editor's Note: Each issue, IDVAAC's newsletter will invite an author, activist or program executive to compose a piece about her or his book, program, initiative or organization.

*This month, we are featuring **Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-first Century**, written by Dr. Dorothy Roberts, George A. Weiss University Professor of Law and Sociology and Director of the Program on Race, Science, and Society at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA.*

BY DR. DOROTHY ROBERTS
University of Pennsylvania

“Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-first Century” examines how the myth that human beings are naturally divided by race is being revived in genetic research and biotechnologies and continues to promote inequality in a supposedly “post-racial” era.

Race is an invented political system, not a natural biological division. The Human Genome Project confirmed that the human species cannot be divided into genetically distinguishable races. Race is a political grouping created to support slavery and colonialism and its boundary lines have shifted over time and across nations to suit political ends. The U.S. Census Bureau, for example, has changed the rules categorizing people by race more than 20 times since the first U.S. census in 1790.

Yet scientists are once again resuscitating a false biological concept of race using cutting-edge genomic research and technologies. Despite the scientific and political evidence, some scientists are attempting to modernize the myth that race is a biological category.

For the last three centuries, science – from 18th century typologies to 20th century eugenics – has been instrumental in justifying the concept of biological races. This century’s genomic science is no different. What’s new today is that racial science claims to divide human beings into natural groups with more accurate precision and without the taint of racism.

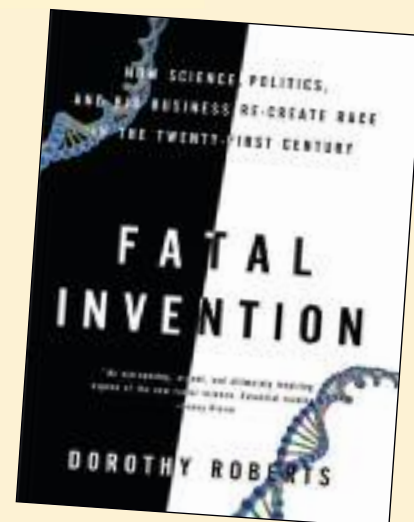
Myths about racial differences in disease result in deadly medical stereotyping in the doctor’s office. Perpetuating a long history of defining disease in racial terms, racial inequities still plague medical care, and medical students still are taught to treat their patients according to race.

In fact, studies show that blacks are less likely than whites to receive pain medication for the same injuries, more likely to wait much longer to be treated for a heart attack and more likely to die while waiting for a transplant.

Scientists are searching for genes to explain racial disparities in health that are actually caused by social inequities. Many scientists routinely use sloppy, inconsistent and ambiguous definitions of racial categories in biomedical and genetic research and leap to genetic conclusions before ruling out more logical social explanations for health disparities.

Recent studies, for example, have unscientifically pointed to genes as the cause for higher rates of infant mortality, breast cancer, high blood pressure, and asthma among blacks, while more promising research shows the unhealthy effects of everyday racial discrimination.

Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical and biotech industries are exploiting race as a convenient but unscientific proxy for genetic difference as a way to market new drugs. While waiting for the promise of gene-tailored medicine to materialize, race has become the linchpin for turning the vision of tomorrow’s personalized medicine into today’s profit-making drugs.



In 2005, the federal Food and Drug Administration approved the first race-specific drug, a heart failure therapy that was targeted at black patients for commercial reasons. All Americans are increasingly expected to become “bio-citizens” who assume full responsibility for their welfare through the consumption of gene-based goods and services.

A popular ancestry testing industry gives customers false hope that a cheek swab can trace their racial roots to four “major population groups” or to a specific African, Native American or Jewish tribe. By splitting the consumer’s ancestral origins into racial percentages, genetic genealogy companies reinforce the myth that human beings originally were divided into pure races that are written in our genes. These technologies are not only plagued with scientific errors, but also misplace identity and political consciousness in genetics.

State and federal authorities are amassing giant DNA databases that increasingly make innocent individuals permanent suspects and disproportionately place black and Latino communities under genetic surveillance. Although DNA has helped to exonerate more than 200 wrongfully imprisoned people in America, there is no evidence that massive collection of DNA

Continued on top of next page

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Assembling the Pieces is published by the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC). The publication is written and edited by Dr. Oliver J. Williams and Gregory J. Huskisson 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 1-877-643-8222 toll free or 612-624-5357 locally. *Assembling the Pieces* is made possible from a grant from The Administration for Children and Family, Family and Youth Services Bureau U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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from people who are merely arrested or convicted of minor offenses makes us any safer or is worth the cost of expanded government surveillance, laboratory errors and backlogs, and reinforcement of racial stereotypes.

The new racial science promotes a new "biopolitics" that makes race more significant at the molecular level at the same time it appears less significant in a supposedly "post racial" society – ultimately obscuring the escalating brutality against minority communities.

Meanwhile, conservatives who espouse a color-blind ideology and liberals who believe in a post-racial America have embraced the genetic definition of race and

biotechnological solutions for social inequality. This is dangerous path that clearly diverts from the goal of social justice.

Rather than embrace this false and damaging notion of race, we should affirm our shared humanity by working to end the social injustices preserved by the political system of race.

Only then can we hope for true democracy in America.

To read more about *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics and Big Business Recreate Race in the Twenty-first Century* (New Press, 2012), visit www.fatalinvention.com. Now in paperback. ♦

Islamic leaders meet *Continued from page 3*

organization. "They feel that it's justified to beat her if she disrespects him, either publicly or privately. This is not Islam."

Dr. Sunni Rumsey Amatullah, a consultant and longtime gender rights advocate, put it even more bluntly:

"We have to differentiate between what is Islam versus what is Hislam," she said, coining a phrase that refers to a reckless, male-centric interpretation of the Qur'an and of Islamic dictates.

At the end of the day, men and Islamic

leaders must understand that power is something to be shared and not something to be used to abuse and control women, participants agreed.

"The most powerful man is the man who opens his heart and exhibits compassion," said Dr. Khadijah Matin, a longtime servant in the areas of history, health and faith-based education.

To read the full report, which includes a list of recommendations for what Imams and mosques can do to address domestic violence, visit www.idvaac.com. ♦



Islamic leaders meet to discuss domestic violence.

New survey planned to identify solutions to violence

Starting this fall, IDVAAC will pose regular questions about gender-based violence to advocates around the nation to solicit ideas or strategies that might help treat, fight or solve the problem of violence in our relationships and in our communities.

These questions will be posed on our Web site, www.idvaac.org, and on IDVAAC's new internet radio program, "IDVAACTalkRadio.com" (broadcast at 7 p.m. CST each Thursday at www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac).

To help prime the pump, IDVAAC is soliciting potential questions from domestic violence activists throughout the country. Please send any recommended questions to newsletter co-editor Gregory J. Huskisson at gjhusk@aol.com.

For more information, contact IDVAAC co-director Dr. Oliver J. Williams at
1-877 NIDVAAC (1-877-643-8222).



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Podcast topics for download on IDVAAC Talk Radio • Meet community members doing the work to address domestic violence in their cities • Book review, discussion of new curriculums, DVDs, video products and training products from IDVAAC

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