

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA IDVAAC ASSEMBLING THE PIECES

An African-American perspective on community and family violence

Fall 2015

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Starting today, let's do all we can to end DV

**E**very October, we activists in the violence prevention community redouble our efforts to honor peace advocates, improve services to survivors and raise awareness about the scourge of intimate partner violence in America.



Dr. Oliver J. Williams  
IDVAAC Director

The ultimate goal, as President Obama said in his Sept. 30 proclamation, is clear and simple: The full and complete eradication of domestic violence in the U.S.

"During National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we reaffirm our dedication to forging an America where no one suffers the hurt and hardship that domestic violence causes," Obama said. "And we recommit to doing everything in our power to uphold the basic human right to be free from violence and abuse."

Of the president's compelling message, four words stood out for me: *Everything in our power.*

Yes, we activists are committed to fighting for survivors. Yes, we conduct scholarly research to better educate Americans about



October is  
National  
Domestic  
Violence  
Awareness  
Month.

domestic violence. Yes, we petition for more enlightened public policy.

But are we doing, as the president urged, "everything in our power?" It's a provocative and slightly unsettling question, to be sure.

Since the 1970s, activists have done an outstanding job of advocating for victims rights and promoting public policy against domestic violence. The change in attitudes about domestic abuse and sexual assault – within just a generation or so – has truly been extraordinary.

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## Survey to query churches on DV outreach, policy

**M**INNEAPOLIS – The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community and the African-American Domestic Peace Project are set to survey 1,000 U.S. churches this year to determine how faith leaders are responding to reports and incidents of domestic violence among their parishioners, officials said.

The new initiative, part of IDVAAC's "Speaking of Faith" project, will explore what faith leaders are doing to address domestic violence, examine how they are doing it and seek to strengthen outreach initiatives, said IDVAAC director Dr. Oliver J. Williams.

**"At the end of the day, our goal is to develop programs that help make victims safe and help build happier and healthier families and communities."**

**– Dr. Oliver J. Williams**

"Some churches may still have their heads in the sand as it relates to domestic violence, but many churches are out there doing the work – and not just teaching from the pulpit," Williams said. "Some churches are sincerely working to put their words into action so they

can be a healing balm for women, children and families within their walls."

"Our goal is to assess what evidence-based programs those churches have implemented so we can export that knowledge to other faith leaders who may want to serve parishioners facing domestic violence issues."

Surveys will be developed and distributed this fall to small, medium and large churches located in cities associated with the African-American Domestic Peace Project, Williams said. The specific goals of the outreach are to:

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# IDVAAC co-founder Linner Ward Griffin remembered for her ‘passion for service’

**G**REENVILLE, N.C. – Memorial services were held here in July for founding IDVAAC steering committee member Dr. Linner Ward Griffin, a longtime social worker and humanitarian who passed away unexpectedly on July 5 at Vidant Medical Center.

An emeritus professor of social work at East Carolina University (ECU), Dr. Griffin played a key role in establishing IDVAAC in 1993 and spearheaded several initiatives that helped advance and sustain the organization over the last 20 years, said IDVAAC's founding director Dr. Oliver J. Williams.

“Linner was a knowledgeable and caring person whose contributions to IDVAAC and our mission were invaluable,” Williams said. “Her insights, commitment to excellence and passion for service will be sorely missed.”

“We wish Mr. Robert Griffin and their children, grandchildren, family and god-children love and peace throughout this grieving process.”

A native of Charlotte, Linner Griffin graduated from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1964, where she had been among the first African Americans to integrate the student body on that campus. She recalled those first days on campus as part of an oral history project produced at the school in 2014:

“I found it tense because there were times when you were obviously in a class or associated with people who didn’t particularly want to be there with you,” she told an interviewer about the experience.

“Some of the upperclassmen... said some derogatory things that they didn’t necessarily need to say,” she said of a supposedly good-natured freshman hazing ritual. “Things they didn’t say to some of the students, just those of us who were a little different.”

“But let’s just say we all persevered – they did and we did.”

Later, Dr. Griffin received her MSW degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her PhD from the University of Houston.

Dr. Griffin joined the faculty at ECU in 1990 as an assistant professor in the School of Social Work. In 1995, she earned tenure and promotion to associate professor and served as Associate Dean for Graduate Studies within the school.

In 1999, she was appointed as Interim Dean of The School of Social Work and Criminal Justice Studies and in 2000 was promoted

to professor. During her time in the school, she was lead investigator for two multi-million dollar training grants (The Child Welfare Education Collaborative and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Grant).

In 2003, Dr. Griffin was appointed Interim Director of the School of Communication and as the Dean of the School of Social Work and Criminal Justice Studies. Two years later, she was appointed as Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs and became the permanent Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Programs in 2007.

As associate Vice Chancellor, Dr. Griffin was responsible for directing university wide curriculum and program development. This responsibility included assuring compliance with academic rules and regulations of East Carolina University, the University of North Carolina General Administration and the Southern Association of Colleges

and Schools as well as mandates by the North Carolina General Assembly.

She also was the Associate Director for Educational Programs in the Center on Aging at ECU, a role in which she advised students from various academic units in the university who pursued the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology or chose the undergraduate minor in gerontology.

She developed and/or taught introductory courses in gerontology, perspectives on death and dying, group counseling for the aged, and readings classes in gerontology. Dr. Griffin’s gerontological research and publications are in the areas of elder abuse/elder maltreatment and adult protective services. She also has conducted research studies and is published in the area of organ transplantation.



Linner Ward Griffin, PhD

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# New IDVAAC staffers already ‘making a difference’

**M**INNEAPOLIS – As part of its quest to always be evolving, IDVAAC has hired two new staff members to help the organization fulfill its longtime mission of creating programs and policy to reduce domestic abuse and gender-based violence within the African Diaspora, executive director Dr. Oliver J. Williams said.

“The only thing constant in life is change – that’s the only way we remain dynamic and productive,” Williams said. “These two new staff members already are making a difference within IDVAAC and bringing new insights and renewed energy to our efforts. I look forward to seeing more of what they can do in the coming months and years.”

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



**Liz White**

**Executive administrative coordinator**

Liz White joined IDVAAC in June as executive administrative coordinator, a role in which she schedules conferences and workshops and assists with grant related activity and contract work.

Before joining IDVAAC, White was executive assistant to Dr. Bernhard Hering, the scientific director of the Schulze Diabetes Institute at the University of Minnesota. She held that position for two years, during which she arranged travel and speaking arrangements, scheduled collaborative meetings with national and internal guests and assumed project management responsibilities.

Previous positions include financial representative at COUNTRY Financial, golf programs operations coordinator at Victory Links Golf Course, event assistant/set-up supervisor at the McNamara Alumni Center, and communications intern at the Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance (MOCA).

A native Iowan, White graduated from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities in December 2012 with a Bachelor of Arts in communications with an emphasis in interpersonal communication and business management.

In April 2014, she completed the University of Minnesota’s College of Continuing Education Project Management Certificate program. Since then, she has been working towards her Project Management Professional (PMP) certification.

In December 2014, she was accepted to the Curtis L. Carlson School of Management’s Part-Time MBA program, and is on track to complete the program in 2018.



**Merhawit Girmay**

**Executive administrative office specialist**

Merhawit Girmay joined IDVAAC in June as executive administrative office specialist, a role in which she provides primary administrative support such as financial assistance, event and meeting assistance and general office support.

Before joining IDVAAC, she received a researching internship working for the Minnesota Department of Health assisting the Division Director in age-related hearing loss policy. During her research internship, Girmay helped develop initial screening standard recommendations for the state of Minnesota regarding hearing loss impairment among elderly adults (in collaboration with the Department of Health & Human Services).

A Sudan-born Ethiopian who grew up in Las Vegas, Girmay also has worked as an adolescent health paraprofessional with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Division of Community and Family Health. During her tenure, she worked on grant management and strategic planning within a state government infrastructure. ♦

## IDVAAC radio show dissects the most delicate of topics

**M**INNEAPOLIS – Whether it’s domestic abuse in the church, teen dating violence, elder abuse or sexual assault behind bars, no topic is too sensitive or too delicate to be dissected on IDVAAC’s weekly blog talk radio show, IDVAACRadio.com, organizers say.

Hosted by violence prevention activists from throughout the nation, the solution-oriented program explores a myriad of issues related to gender-based violence and sexual assault,

**WHAT:** “IDVAAC Talk Radio.com,” a weekly Internet radio show  
**WHEN:** Every Thursday, 7 p.m. (CST)  
**WHERE:** [www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac)  
**WHY:** To discuss viable solutions to domestic violence

said IDVAAC director Oliver J. Williams.

“The hour-long show provides news and information designed to educate listeners about ‘best practice’ violence prevention initiatives, strategies and approaches throughout the U.S.,” Williams said.

“At the end of the day, our mission is simple: to provide listeners with evidence-based content that enlightens, empowers and inspires.”

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# Activists meet to tackle abuse in immigrant, African communities

**M**INNEAPOLIS – Culture, tradition and religious norms must be acknowledged, examined and carefully understood before domestic violence advocates can develop effective strategies for combatting and lowering sexual assault and gender-based violence within African communities.

That was one of the conclusions drawn during an invitation-only roundtable discussion among African leaders held July 20-21 at the Commons Hotel in Minneapolis.

Coordinated by IDVAAC, the session was convened to identify procedures domestic violence advocates can implement to better treat and prevent incidents of domestic violence in African communities, said IDVAAC director Oliver J. Williams.

“Our work in domestic violence over the last 15-plus years has consistently shown that the ways men subordinate women is different in each culture – whether it’s in South Africa, South America or south-central L.A.,” Williams said. “This reality significantly impacts our mission to prevent gender-based violence in America and throughout the African diaspora.”

“If we are sincere in our mission of creating domestic violence programs that meet the needs of Africans and their descendants in

the U.S., we must develop a more intimate understanding of the social, cultural, ethnic and religious mores that influence interpersonal behavior,” he added. “This is critical to our ability to take our level of engagement and effectiveness to the next level.”

The two-day session began with Wondimu Yirga, a Nevada-based public health specialist, setting the stage for the discussion with a review of the literature addressing domestic violence in Africa.

Yirga’s presentation concluded that while 35 percent of women worldwide have been victims of some form of domestic violence, that number is significantly higher in many African countries, including in Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa.

There are several risk factors for this, Yirga said, including early marriage or forced marriage, low levels of education, lower socio-economic status, cultural and familial system of male dominance and religious norms enforcing male dominance.

The consequences of higher incidents of domestic abuse are dire, he said, including:

- **Low birth-weight babies**
- **Higher levels of abortion and depression**

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African activists pose for photographers following an invitation-only roundtable discussion among African leaders held July 20-21 at the Commons Hotel in Minneapolis.



IDVAAC director Dr. Oliver Williams poses with members of the African Women Project, a network of women from various African nations who are committed to reducing gender-based violence within immigrant communities.

## African Institute to serve as centralized resource center

**M**INNEAPOLIS – Keeping with its goal of reducing gender-based violence within African immigrant and refugee communities, IDVAAC has helped launch the African Institute for Community Advancement (AICA) to create a centralized resource bank for advocates serving those communities.

The resource center will provide data and information about evidence-based practices that have been effective in treating or reducing incidents of domestic violence in various parts of the country, said IDVAAC director Dr. Oliver J. Williams.

“Often times, locally run programs have proven to be effective in curtailing domestic violence, but people in other cities don’t know about them,” Williams said. “This new institute will give us a platform and venue to promote these initiatives so other communities can benefit.”

“Basically, we’re trying to spread the word about effective evidence-based practices so advocates serving other immigrant communities don’t have to reinvent the wheel,” he said.

The new initiative was developed in conjunction with IDVAAC’s African Women Project, a network of women from nearly 20 African nations who are committed to reducing gender-based violence in immigrant communities, Williams said.

The African Women Project has three key goals, organizers said:

- Provide a platform for African women in the field of domestic violence to educate stakeholders about the unique needs of battered African immigrant women.
- Advocate for better funding opportunities geared toward issues in the African immigrant community.
- Inform providers serving battered African immigrant women about culturally specific approaches to serving the immigrant and refugee communities.

“We’re seeking to be a voice that speaks to the challenges of immigrant and refugee communities across the U.S. and to create educational, intervention and prevention programs that can resonate and be effective in these communities,” Williams said.

The unique domestic abuse challenges facing African immigrant populations began to surface some years ago during roundtable discussions on the subject, prompting IDVAAC to create culturally specific outreach initiatives, Williams said.

Although heightened awareness of domestic violence has led to better services for many American women, many immigrant populations aren’t quite as fortunate, he said. For African immigrant women, accessing services can become difficult for various reasons, ranging from a difference in language to a difference in cultural norms.

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## **AND HE RESTORETH MY SOUL: AN EXTENSIVE VIEW OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON SURVIVORS AND SOCIETY.**

# Christian-based book helps survivors heal, find peace

**R**ISING SUN, Ind. – Be it sexual, physical or emotional, abuse is one of the most heinous crimes imaginable, in part because the aftermath and residual pain stays with the abused long after the act has ended.

The Christian-based book, “And He Restoreth My Soul” – written by abuse survivor Darlene J. Harris – is being lauded as a powerful resource for counselors, pastors and domestic violence experts to help counsel survivors through the recovery process and help them restore peace in their lives.

Drawing on a myriad of contributing experts – including pastors, abuse counselors and psychologists – And He Restoreth My Soul “provides a guide for those helping abuse survivors who are struggling to put the pieces of their lives back together in the wake of abuse,” Harris said.

Utilizing the insights of more than 30 contributors, the book offers training needed to protect the abused and counsel the abuser, she said. Contributors include physiologists, prevention experts who work with the elderly community, and ministers who’ve experienced offensive acts in their congregations.

“Sexual violence is very real in our society. The goal of ‘And He Restoreth My Soul’ is to provide information and heighten awareness in order to bring restoration to the ones who have been sacrificed for selfish reasons,” publishers say. “This guide’s primary intention is to help victims to realize that what happened to them was not God’s will.”

Published by WestBow Press, the book includes:

- Methodologies from experts in their fields
- Case histories, narrating the impact of sexual abuse on victims of all ages
- Testimonies from survivors – including children, elders, the hearing impaired and churchgoers – who describe their experiences and explain why sharing their stories is both educational and therapeutic

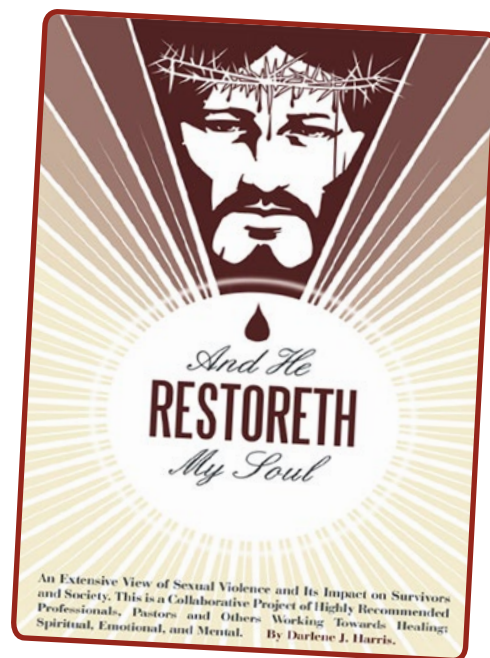
Essentially, experts say, it is an anthology resource guide that takes a poignant look at sexual violence and how spiritual intervention can “restoreth” one’s soul.

“This informative and comprehensive guide moves one beyond the identification of sexual abuse to the healing path of God’s redemptive love,” said Paula Silva, president of FOCUS Ministries, Inc., a religious-based domestic violence agency headquartered in west suburban Chicago.

“As believers, this book provides useful tools to understand, to minister, and to offer hope to the hurting of sexual abuse,” she added. “Since sexual abuse is a component of domestic violence, we will incorporate And He Restoreth My Soul as a practical and valuable resource within FOCUS Ministries.”

Janie Eldridge, an adjunct professor at Indiana’s Ivy Tech Community College, called And He Restoreth My Soul “an insightful book that will assist a large range of professionals on a very difficult subject.”

“The personal testimonies helps understand the obvious difficulties for individuals that have experience this trauma,” she added. “God Bless Ms. Harris for the research, writing and sharing



this information for to help the rest of us understand.”

Using case studies, survivor accounts and evidence-based data, the book addresses different types of abuse, how they are defined, the affects they can have on the abused and how best to go about aiding survivors in their recovery. It also addresses issues of abuse with in ethnic groups and how those groups define and deal with abuse.

And He Restoreth My Soul also does not limit itself to the “traditionally accepted” forms of abuse, as physical and sexual abuse can happen anywhere to anybody at any time, publishers say. It goes so far as to address the abuse of boys, children in group homes, men, the elderly, deaf, the disabled and others.

While it is a guide for Christian counseling, And He Restoreth My Soul recognizes that there are occasions when more help is needed. As such, the book includes a chapter on recognizing when help from outside the spiritual community may be required and how to go about seeking it.

Dr. Gladys Olsen calls the book “detailed, encouraging, and professional

– a wonderfully positive approach to a very diverse problem.”

“This resource provides hope, knowledge, love, and caring for God’s direction,” she said. “Most of all, it is meant to provide insight into the haven of unrest and a spiritual and emotion covering for healing.”

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



By age 18, Darlene Harris had a secret: she had been raped twice.

It is that experience, her desire for the church to be involved in the healing process and her desire not to see others victimized that inspired her to write “And He Restoreth My Soul.”

“I don’t want anyone to hurt like I did,” she once told an interviewer.

Since that harrowing experience, Harris has vigorously educated herself on the topic and about how to enlighten more people about it. Her strength lies in her ability to reach out to experts in order to gain their participation and help with presenting the best information possible.


Writing “And He Restoreth My Soul” is the outcome of one of those successful moments, she says. She also speaks to women and teens on how to deal effectively with sexual abuse issues and designs healing workshops and retreats for women.

Harris is a certified mediation-dispute resolution counselor in California and served on the planning committee for The Institute of Violence Abuse and Trauma

Conference for two years. She was a longtime volunteer advocate for Project Sister Family Services/Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Center where she served as a member of the Speaker’s Bureau, participated on sexual abuse panels, and petitioned city council for grants and community training.

She worked for The Center for Community Solutions and served as a crisis counselor a member of the domestic abuse response team and sexual assault response team. As a member of these teams, she worked with law enforcement agencies on domestic violence calls as well as accompanying rape survivors to the hospital for special exams.

Today, Harris says she’s excited about the woman she is becoming and wants this same excitement – and sense of peace and awareness – for all other survivors who had a “secret” in their life.

*For more information, visit [www.andherestorethmysoulproject.org](http://www.andherestorethmysoulproject.org), a website that provides updated information about domestic violence and features various writings on a variety of abuse topics.* 

## IDVAAC radio show CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Recent hot-button topics on the weekly, call-in show included:

Culturally specific domestic violence services for Christian women; enlisting men to help end domestic violence; domestic abuse and the faith community; a survivor’s testimony; domestic violence on black college campuses; trauma and healing; working with the African immigrant and refugee community, and Stephen A. Smith’s commentary: Are batterers provoked?

Listeners apparently are

finding the program valuable, according to one listener’s response to a recent IDVAAC program on teen dating violence, hosted by Dr. Patricia A. Davenport and Felecia Thomas of Our House Inc. and their guest, LaMorris Allen, a sexual assault prevention advocate:


“As a young man and ecstatic [listener], I would just like to say I am proud of you all and thanks for instilling so much wisdom and knowledge into me and into the communities.” He said. “It was an awesome show! Love you all so very much!”

The program, which launched in 2013, broadcasts at 7 p.m. CST every Thursday at [www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac). Shows will be archived on the website and can be reviewed or downloaded.

Upcoming program topics include: the impact of bystander Intervention in domestic

violence issues; holiday blues; immigration and domestic violence; media portrayals of domestic abuse in communities of color; working with African men against domestic violence, and prisoner re-entry and domestic violence.

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.

To tune into the program or listen to past shows, visit [www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/idvaac). For more information, including a fuller list of hosts, guests and show topics, visit [www.idvaac.org](http://www.idvaac.org). 





# Peace activists meet to discuss outreach strategy

**S**AN DIEGO, Calif. – Activists associated with the African American Domestic Peace Project met here in August to share lessons about reducing violence in their communities and discuss strategies to more effectively export their message of non-violence within their communities and throughout the U.S.

The two-day session, attended by administrators of eight AADPP cities, was intended to establish ways to create or enhance partnerships between domestic violence advocates and activists from faith-based or community-based organizations in America, organizers said.

“We know there are various sectors within the black community that are doing outstanding work in addressing gender-based and intimate partner violence,” said IDVAAC director Dr. Oliver J. Williams. “Our goal is to do a better job of collaborating with these groups so that we can learn from their experiences while bringing our own insights and expertise to bear.”

One such outreach initiative, an extension of IDVAAC’s “Speaking of Faith” project, will survey how faith-based leaders address the issue of domestic violence within the church, Williams said.

Starting this fall, faith leaders in eight AADPP cities will be asked to complete a survey about their church’s views and/or programs

on domestic violence. Once that research is compiled and analyzed, IDVAAC will create a digest of evidence-based domestic violence programs within the church that can be disseminated to other churches around the country.

The initiative is designed to raise awareness in the faith-based community about domestic violence, evaluate any programs that address domestic abuse assault, and share best practice information that faith leaders can use when approached for support and services, Williams said.

Peace project activists also discussed establishing or strengthening relationships with civic and community-based organizations that have programs addressing community violence, gender-based violence and/or domestic violence.

For example, Williams said he would like to partner with the National Urban League, which operates 25 national programs through its affiliate network – some of which directly speak to the social health and welfare of families and communities. The Urban League’s youth outreach, women’s empowerment, male responsibility and mature Americans programs are well suited to export messages of peace and community health, he said, and would make great platforms for a partnership.

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Members of the African American Domestic Peace Project pose for photographers after meeting in San Diego to develop and discuss shared strategies for reducing domestic abuse in their various communities and in cities across America.



## Linner Ward Griffin CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

A professor in the School of Social Work in the College of Human Ecology, Dr. Griffin has more than twenty years' experience in social work practice with individuals, families, and groups in health, mental health, and geriatric settings. She has presented training about elder abuse/elder maltreatment among African Americans and about adult protective services in Korea, Japan, and Puerto Rico, and in 43 of the 50 states in the United States.

In 2010, Dr. Griffin's title and area of leadership changed to Associate Provost for Academic Program Planning and Development. Dr. Griffin retired from her duties at East Carolina and was granted Professor Emeritus status in July 2013.


She was a member of statewide task forces on aging service programming rural interdisciplinary health care, mental health planning, and public health service delivery in North Carolina. She is a founding member of the UNC Institute on Aging, the North Carolina Gerontology Consortium, served on several statewide inter-university planning boards and wrote several articles on aging, elder abuse, domestic violence, child welfare and substance abuse.

As a social worker, Dr. Griffin worked at Guilford County Department of Social Services and several health care settings. She held academic appointments at West Virginia University, Temple University and East Carolina University. She authored several publications on aging and health, elder abuse and domestic violence.

She was a faithful member of the First Presbyterian Church in Greenville where she served as a Deacon and Elder, Moderator of the Education Ministry, a Tuesday morning office volunteer and a member of the address angels.

She enjoyed traveling with her husband to exotic places around the world and was preparing to travel to China in December 2015. She was an avid reader and knitter. She will be remembered as a compassionate, giving person who was a friend and mentor. She was an advocate, a skilled negotiator and an ethical decision-maker who expected the same behavior from others.

She is survived by her husband, Bobby G. Griffin, one daughter, Jannifer Ituah and husband Martins of El Paso, Texas, two sons, Jeffrey Franklin Griffin of Indianapolis Indiana, Donald Burks and wife Wanda of Hollis Maine, three granddaughters; Linner, Caitlyn and Tori and three grandsons; Donald, Jr., Martins and Roberts, one sister, Minnie Ward Allsion of Charlotte, North Carolina, nieces, nephews, and a host of friendship and professional networks.

Donations may be sent to the ECU School of Social Work Scholarship Fund. Checks may be sent to the ECU Foundation, 2200 S. Charles Blvd., Suite 1100, Greenville, N.C. Please indicate the purpose of the donation. Cards and condolences can be sent to: Mr. Bobby Griffin, 311 Beech Cove Drive, Grimesland, N.C. 27837. 

## Churches to get DV survey CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- Gauge the attitudes of church leaders and key stakeholders about the issue of domestic violence.
- Assess what various churches are doing at a primary, secondary and tertiary level – if anything – to address the issue of domestic violence.
- Help strengthen those programs – or encourage the development of programs – by providing insights, analyses and training or orientation from violence-prevention experts.
- Help foster partnerships between faith leaders and domestic violence advocates in the public and non-profit sectors.
- Help develop quantitative research to determine the effectiveness of church outreach initiatives around domestic violence.

Once the research is compiled and evaluated, IDVAAC will create a digest of evidence-based domestic violence programs within the church that can be exported to other churches around the country for implementation, Williams said.


"Essentially, we're looking to help churches create or advance effective outreach programs around domestic violence," Williams

said. "At the end of the day, our goal is to develop programs that help make victims safe and help build happier and healthier families and communities."

The new initiative was developed as an extension of IDVAAC's "Speaking of Faith" project, which is designed to 1) raise awareness in the faith-based community about domestic violence and 2) to share best practices faith leaders can apply when victims approach them for support and services.

"Speaking of Faith" also explores how faith leaders and the faith-based community can respond to victims when gender-based violence produces a crisis of religious faith, Williams said.

"Many people turn to their church for help when domestic violence occurs, some who may begin to wonder why God would let this happen to them," Williams said. "Faith leaders must be prepared to respond with useful and accurate information about safety and support and to provide an authentic explanation of faith and scripture that helps the victim understand that God did not want this for them."

*For more information about the upcoming survey or about IDVAAC's "Speaking of Faith" initiative, call 1-877-NIDVAAC.* 

# African Institute CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

For a recently relocated family, for example, the stress of learning a new language, adapting to a new culture, finding jobs and helping children adjust to new schools can be very stressful and can lead to violent conflict, Manna Techlemariam of the African Community Health Institute said during a roundtable discussion on the subject.

“There are a lot of stressors that are connected to the pressures the family is under and this can lead to domestic violence,” she said. “A lack of adjustment can cause stress, which can lead to more violence. When all of these stressors start adding up, it can create a difficult situation in the family.”

Further, words and concepts like “domestic violence,” “shelter,” “female genital mutilation” and “mental health” may have no meaning or different meanings within immigrant communities, Williams said, meaning that culturally specific outreach strategies must be cultivated and implemented.

The African Women’s Project was created to help develop such strategies, said group member Fatima Porgo, a native of Burkina Faso.

“For the first time ever, a meaningful platform is being offered to African women at the national technical assistance level to speak for themselves and to provide information on culturally specific approaches to service providers assisting battered African immigrant women,” said Porgo, an IDVAAC consultant. “This is significant.”

The African Women’s Project has worked to identify and create such strategies at several conferences in recent years, including:

- The 2015 ThinkTank Talanoa meeting with the Pacific Women and Indigenous Network in Honolulu, Hawaii.
- The Institute on Violence Abuse and Trauma (IVAT) Conference in 2014 on the challenges of African immigrant and refugee women in the U.S. court system.
- The IDVAAC 2013 Conference on the challenges of African immigrant and refugee battered Women.

“For the first time ever, a meaningful platform is being offered to African women at the national technical assistance level to speak for themselves and to provide information on culturally specific approaches to service providers assisting battered African immigrant women. This is significant.”

– Fatima Porgo



Fatima Porgo

- The U.S. Conference on African Immigrants’ Health: Capacity Building: African Immigrant Organization Partnering with Cultural Specific Organizations.

The group also has organized roundtable discussions on domestic violence with African-American religious leaders and African Imams and with women and men from African nations. It also organized and participating an African Women Listening Session at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and a female genital mutilation listening session sponsored by the White House.

It also has spoken out against forced marriage at various conferences, including those sponsored by the White House Council on Women Girls, the U.S. Department of State Office of Global Women’s Issues, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime and Office on Violence against Women.

The group is planning several new outreach and educational initiatives later this year and next year to advance its mission of reducing gender-based violence within African immigrant and refugee communities, Porgo said.

*For more information on the African Women’s Project or the African Institute for Community Advancement, call 1-877-NIDVAAC. ♦*



# African activists meet **CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

- **Higher incidents of HIV-AIDS**
- **Higher incidents of substance abuse**
- **Psychological trauma and mental health problems**
- **Higher incidents of disability and death**

Better intervention strategies, stronger community mobilization and improved orientation about domestic abuse and its consequences are critical to solving the problem, Yirga said. Programs and strategies to empower women, improve education and modify cultural norms also are key to improving conditions facing women in Africa, he said.

Williams said among the challenges facing prevention advocates is that there is very little information about domestic violence among the 54 countries in Africa.

“For example, we don’t fully understand the culture and traditions of the various countries and we don’t understand how some U.S. models for prevention or intervention may translate to African countries and cultures,” he said.

“Further complicating our challenge is that the laws or lack of laws may encourage violence and abuse without support and protection for victims,” he added. “In some parts of Africa, there is also the trauma of war, poverty and the lack of social services and in other parts, there actually is no word for domestic violence.”

In an effort to begin to better understand those challenges and create solutions, Williams presented a study outlining the perspectives of Kenyan men regarding the causes, consequences and solutions to gender-based violence in Nairobi.

Kenyan men in the study agreed that social norms define men as dominant in the community and as key decision makers in the household. This perspective is learned and enforced by the culture, tradition and family, they said.

“Women can play an important role and contribute ideas but men make the final decision unless he defers and lets her have a say,” one respondent said.

Because he is the household leader and breadwinner, men have certain roles and rights, respondents said, including household disciplinarian, conjugal rights on demand and cooked meals every day. He also has the right to demand that his wife attend to him and their children, be at home when he returns from work, answer any queries from him immediately and pleasantly, and use any money given to her for its intended purpose.

Abuse can occur when these rights are not honored, respondents said. Other factors that contribute to gender-based violence include: Poverty, misunderstanding, extra-marital affairs, drunkenness (from either party), conflict caused by undue influence of female friends, or “sleeping with jeans on so you can’t touch her.”

Physical and emotional abuse also can occur when women feel their needs and rights are not being honored, respondents said, such as the man failing to provide food, clothing, education, housing, entertainment for the family.

Women sometimes abuse men too, respondents said, especially when the man is drunk “because he is more helpless then.” Other abuse can occur when women feel they are oppressed – by their men and by oppressive cultural norms. Such abuse can have a negative impact on children and the health and stability of the home.

Men can reduce or prevent domestic abuse by working more diligently to overcome patriarchy and cultural oppression, respondents said. They also can strive to create healthy relationships in which both parties feel vested, valued, appreciated and loved. Other suggestions included:


- **Educate men and women about healthy conflict resolution**
- **Develop and support anti-violence programming**
- **Help end joblessness (many arguments are about money and food)**
- **Avoid oppressive cultural norms, traditions “she should be able to live beyond cultural traditions”**
- **Empower women to question or challenge men who believe their rights are being violated**
- **Consider the negative impact on children and families**

Roundtable participant Samuel Aymer, associate professor in the school of social work at Hunter College in New York, said one of the biggest challenges facing change agents is developing a strategy to maintain the integrity and value of culture and tradition while still acknowledging the negative impact of certain practices, such as female genital mutilation.

Williams said intervention programs that examine cultural norms – coupled with public and community education campaigns – can start the process of building a new paradigm that respects the rights of women, reduces violent conflict and builds healthy, productive communities.

IDVAAC consultant and steering committee member Fatima Porgho agreed, adding that reducing domestic violence throughout Africa should begin with changing how young people are acculturated.

“If we sit down in our communities and we brainstorm the way we raise our boys and the way girls are raised, we can clearly show them that you don’t have to traumatize the girl” to create a healthy environment of peace, she said.

*To read the full report on the roundtable discussion, visit [www.idvaac.com](http://www.idvaac.com).* 

# Forum seeks to involve men in DV prevention

NEW YORK – International domestic violence advocates pose for photographers at the Botswana Embassy (below) prior to a presentation at the U.N. entitled “Real Talk/Real Action: Engaging Men and Boys in Prevention and Intervention Strategies that Address Gender Based Violence.”

IDVAAC director Dr. Oliver J. Williams spoke at the forum, which was based on the premise that “the role of men and boys is critical in any effort aimed at the complete elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women,” organizers said.

The symposium, sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Botswana to the

United Nations and the Presbyterian Church (USA), was part of the United Nations’ 59th Commission on the Status of Women, a two-week conference that focused on the progression of women’s rights across the globe. the Presbyterian church.



Dr. Oliver J. Williams is pictured here with U.S. and U.N. representatives of the Presbyterian church and of the Botswana government.

## Peace activists meet in SD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Partnering with the National Urban League on these and other outreach programs would help AADPP administrators broaden their outreach and bolster their effectiveness, activists agreed. They also said that associating with other established civic, health and community-based organizations would help promote their collective message of non-violence.

Attendees also shared evidence-based practices around several local programs – including those involving battered women, youth & dating

violence, faith-based initiatives, male batterers and incarcerated men and women – that they believe could strengthen outreach initiatives and help reduce gender-based violence.

Such strategic plans are critical to effectively addressing domestic abuse, Williams said, because they produce a collective commitment to support a common mission and to engage in community-based actions to reduce violence.

### ‘A COORDINATED NATIONAL ASSAULT ON DV’

The African-American Domestic Peace Project was developed by IDVAAC three years ago to develop a coordinated, national assault on domestic violence.

It’s overall objective is to develop a public, community education and mobilization strategy to effectively address and respond to incidents of domestic violence in member cities across the U.S.

It is a critical tool in linking disconnected elements of the domestic violence community and in identifying best practice initiatives that are making a difference around the country. It also provides a built-in research mechanism,

which helps to better understand the problem and, therefore, develop more effective solutions.

The project currently has affiliates in eight U.S. cities: Austin, TX; Boston, MA; Dallas, TX; Detroit, MI; Greenville-Cleveland, MS; Oakland, CA; Tacoma, WA; West Palm Beach, FL. It’s key objectives are 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 civic, political and religious stakeholders to put domestic violence on the agenda in our communities.

- Establish an interactive learning community.

AADPP also works with IDVAAC to produce newsletters, video blogs and webinars designed to profile community activists and highlight effective programs in their respective communities.

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). ♦



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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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## Let's do all we can to end DV

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

But much of that success, particularly in recent years, has been firmly entrenched within the sacred walls of the violence prevention community. The challenge for us in the next phase of our struggle is to more effectively promote our cause outside those walls.

The question for the next generation of advocates – particularly in the black community – is this: How do we engage average citizens to export our message of peace and healthy living? And how do we effectively link family violence to the myriad of other socio-economic problems afflicting much of black America?

We know, for example, that family violence and sexual assault spring from or lead to other toxic issues in the black community, including: HIV and AIDS, child abuse, homicide, suicide, teen dating violence, unemployment, poverty, inadequate education, homelessness, financial instability, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, high prison rates and father absence. With these issues in mind, how can we begin to craft a message that makes that connection clear? And then, how do we develop a strategy to overcome these challenges?

First, we need to develop stronger alliances with people and organizations with which we have something in common. If our ultimate goal is healthier families and communities, aren't there hundreds of organizations out there with similar "ultimate objectives?" Why could we not collaborate with these groups to identify what we have in common and develop a collective strategy to make peace a public policy objective in black America? Ultimately, to be more effective, we must develop a comprehensive, integrated approach to prevention that fully accounts for ethnic, cultural and socio-economic factors.

Second, we must develop initiatives that treat the cause of the problem and not the effect. If we know, for example,

**"If we know that hurting people hurt people, shouldn't we be developing a vaccine to prevent the pain instead of administering a narcotic to mask it?"**

that hurting people hurt people, shouldn't we be developing a vaccine to prevent the pain instead of administering a narcotic to mask it? Bottom line, we must develop a proactive strategy to end domestic violence rather than a reactive one.

Third, we must learn to focus less on pathology and more on creating healthy, loving relationships in our communities. As tough as it may be, history has proven that people *can* change. Relationships *can* change. Reality *can* change. We need to explore ways to facilitate that change and create intervention strategies that empower us to implement it.

Finally, we've got to get everyone in the game. As effective as the domestic violence community has been in advocating for victims and survivors, our struggle is still widely perceived as "women's fight" waged almost exclusively by women. We must get everyone engaged in this fight by convincingly connecting the dots between domestic abuse and the health, vitality and prosperity of our community.

At the end of the day, we know that the consequence of conflict should not be violence – it should be conflict resolution. All of us, including men, should help export that message. And all of us, including women, should urge men to join the crusade to promote a collective mission of peace, wellness and healing.

So starting today, let's raise our game. Starting today, let's focus on creating and celebrating healthy relationships, healthy families and healthy communities.

Starting today, let's do everything in our power to end domestic violence. ♦

# Just the Facts

- On average, nearly 20 people per minute are victims of physical violence by an intimate partner in the United States. During one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men.
- 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime.
- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.
- One in three adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds rates of other types of youth violence.
- 1 in 7 women and 1 in 18 men have experienced stalking victimization during their lifetime in which they felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed.
- On a typical day, there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide.
- In domestic violence homicides, women are six times more likely to be killed when there is a gun in the house.
- Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime.
- Intimate partner violence is most common among women between the ages of 18-24.



**next  
issue**

Retiring IDVAAC director Dr. Oliver J. Williams pens his final message as co-editor of *Assembling The Pieces* • African American Domestic Peace Project expanding its reach • Steering committee members examine IDVAAC's past, present and future • DVDs, videos and other training products available.

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