


***The Church
and
Healing Victims
of
Domestic Violence
Part II***


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Mission

***"Bring, Hope, Help, and Healing to Victims of
Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault,
Dating Violence,
And Stalking
in the
African American Community."***



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Culturally Specific Interventions

1. Advocacy applicable to serving their lived experiences, in their language, according to their expected outcomes, respecting their expertise.

2. Any other culturally specific direct service practice can result in unintended consequence and revictimization.

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African American women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence in the United States having experiences that statistically report to be almost 37% higher than White women and 2.5% higher than other ethnicities (www.ldvaac.org).

Since COVID-19, incidences of domestic violence have spiked by 43% across the United States according to the National Network to End Domestic Violence (www.nnedy.org).

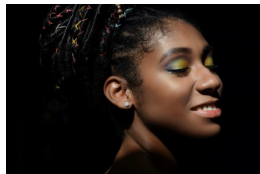
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For African American women statistics reflect and all-time high. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), while African American women only make-up 8 percent of the population, they make up 22 percent of homicides because of intimate partner violence and 29 percent of all victimized women in the U.S. This makes it one of the leading causes of death for African American women ages 15 – 35 years old.



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African American women are remarkably faithful to the church, 83% scoring high regarding their frequent attendance, prayer, belief in God, and the significance of religion (Cox & Diamant, 2018). African American women generally make-up 70% of African American congregations (Carter, 2020). With this level of religious involvement amongst African American women, there is no surprise that they turn to faith as a coping mechanism for trauma, personal and spiritual guidance, including intimate partner violence (Nguyen, 2018; Gillum, 2009).



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The Church is a Spiritual Trauma Center

Slowly evolving discussions are emerging around intimate partner violence and African American churches, many regarding the lack of training and uninformed practices for victims' safety. Others asking how can we address the age-old problem of Domestic Violence, Faith and the Church?

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Historical Trauma. *Historical trauma* refers to cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences. Understanding historical trauma means recognizing that people may carry deep wounds from things that happened to a group with which they identify, even if they did not directly experience the event themselves. Historical trauma follows from events such as the colonization of generations of Indigenous Peoples, the enslavement of Africans and their descendants, and the losses and outrages of the Holocaust. While the term refers to events that occurred in the past, it is important to remember that for many communities the trauma or oppressive conditions associated with the historical trauma have been institutionalized and are ongoing (Packard, 2012; BigFoot, 2000; Willmon-Haque & BigFoot, 2008; Braveheart, 1999).


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Life on a Slave Ship

[LIFE ABOARD A SLAVE SHIP | HISTORY \(YOUTUBE.COM\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11o10101010)



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5. **Insidious Trauma.** *Insidious trauma* refers to the daily incidents of marginalization, objectification, dehumanization, intimidation, et cetera that are experienced by members of groups targeted by racism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, and groups impacted by poverty. Maria Root, who coined the term insidious trauma described the concepts as follows: "Traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit." (Root 1992; Brown & Ballou, 1992)

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Ways that the Black church can provide greater leadership to eradicate domestic violence include:

- enhancing training for clergy so that they can adequately address domestic violence,
- creating a sustained and collective faith-based effort to respond to domestic violence, strengthening domestic violence ministries and their role in the church,
- continuing to use sermons and biblical interpretations that encourage survivors to become empowered and seek help,
- Holding batterers accountable,
- increasing public education efforts through the Black church and partnering with social work professionals and others to address and support their work in this area.

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Why should your church include outreach about domestic violence and faith communities?

- Partnerships are very important for churches providing domestic violence prevention services. Outreach connects agencies, advocates, and faith communities to resources that may not have been readily available or identified before.
- This creates a synergy for faith and mainstream providers and gives holistic resources to victims. Outreach also assists faith institutions in areas of prevention they are not trained in and creates relationships that may have never been formed before to assist victims.
- "Let brotherly love continue; Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Hebrews 13:1-2.)


This means that God can use anyone unbeknownst to us to perform His work of healing

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Measured Outcomes:

In the first ever attempt to document empirically the characteristics of men who sought assistance from a faith-based batterers' intervention program in the United States, we analyzed over 1000 closed case files. Comparing this data to men in secular programs revealed that the faith-based program had a higher proportion of men who had witnessed or experienced abuse in their childhood homes, while rates of alcohol abuse and criminal histories were similar (Nasou-Clark et al., 2006).

Another finding to emerge from this data is the role of clergy in encouraging or "mandating" men who seek their spiritual help to attend a faith-based intervention program. In fact, men who were clergy-referred were more likely to complete (and graduate from) the 26-week program (followed by the six-month monitoring phase, making a total of 32 weeks) than those whose attendance was mandated by a judge (Fisher-Townsend et al., 2008).



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Perspective on Causation

One primary model views IPV through the perspective of family violence (Jewkes, 2002). When violence is perpetrated, experienced, or considered normative within a family, individuals are believed to learn patterns of behavior or take part in a family system involving pathological and perpetual violence. This perspective links child and parent spousal abuse to the perpetuation and justification of violence for those who were survivors or witnesses to abuse in the home (Straus & Gelles, 1986).

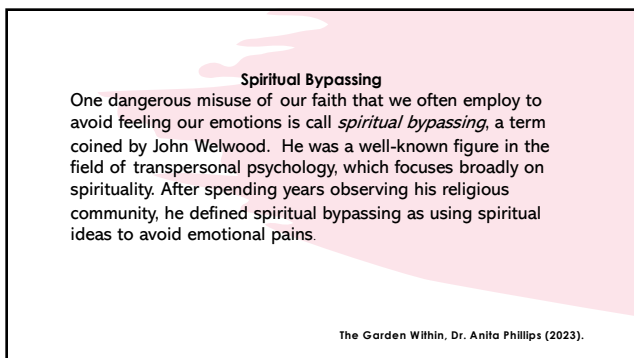


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Spiritual Bypassing

One dangerous misuse of our faith that we often employ to avoid feeling our emotions is call *spiritual bypassing*, a term coined by John Welwood. He was a well-known figure in the field of transpersonal psychology, which focuses broadly on spirituality. After spending years observing his religious community, he defined spiritual bypassing as using spiritual ideas to avoid emotional pains.

The Garden Within, Dr. Anita Phillips (2023).



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Healing and Support: Understand that healing looks different for each survivor.

- Once victims self-disclose abuse, believe them.
- Never ask a victim or survivor "Why did you or Why didn't you).
- Be Informed around Faith & Spiritual resources for clients.
- Know that safety plans are key and extremely important.
- The victims are always the expert in their own abuse, walk along beside them.
- Encouraging their choices and paths to resiliency.
- Never insist on a path for a victims.
- Know your states agencies for violence prevention.

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13. **Resilience.** Resilience is our inherent capacity to make adaptations that result in positive outcomes in spite of serious threats or adverse circumstances. Experience working with survivors and research on resiliency show that there are some factors that appear to support and enhance our resiliency. Having a supportive community, whether through one's family, neighborhood, school, church, sports activities, or hobbies, is one factor that supports resiliency. A feeling of being valued and belonging is important, as well as being able to engage other people in positive ways, whether through one's ability to relate to others or through one's capacities and talents. For children, factors that support resiliency include the response of caregivers and other caring adults, namely having at least one person who takes an interest in the child and their development, sees them as a separate person, and helps them develop their ability to cope (Masten, 2001; Masten, 2009; Masten & Wright, 2009).

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