



Ending Our Silence

The Semi-annual Newsletter of the African American Domestic Peace Project - Greenville

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A Look at Greenville, MS
This predominately African American southern city grapples with the stressors of high unemployment and poverty.

Spotlight - Bishop Roderick Mitchell
An adult survivor of family violence uses his testimony and platform to lead a movement to end violence against women.

AADPP - Greenville
Project Lead Dr. Patricia Davenport works toward equipping the community with tools to address domestic violence.

A Word from IDVAAC's Co-Executive Director
Dr. Oliver J. Williams, Co-Executive Director of IDVAAC, shares his vision for the AADPP both locally and nationally.

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The African American Domestic Peace Project: Bridging the Gap

AADPP Underscores Communities Domestic Violence Responsibilities While Connecting Local Populations with Resources

IT'S JUDGEMENT DAY. And for Ebony Jenkins, a 35-year-old mother of two, today is bittersweet. Two years ago, Ebony's husband shot her in the head. And for two years, Ebony has also lived in the same community, without family, otherwise alone, and with no "safe haven" from this volatile situation. Ebony's husband has also continued to live unsanctioned in the community. Although law enforcement and the advocacy community are both aware of her situation, Ebony has received no help or support and has lived in fear for her life. Indeed, she is fortunate to be alive.

Today, Ebony will face her husband in court. As she enters the courtroom alone, Ebony's emotions intensify as she sees the first two rows filled with supporters who have come out to offer encouragement - not for her, but for her husband. Feeling intimidated, helpless, and confused, she nervously makes her way to her seat, just a few

feet from her husband and a short distance from his company of family and friends.

Although the specifics have been changed, this scenario is based on an actual event and is all too common for victims of intimate partner violence. Unaware of the resources around them, many battered women in the African American community do not receive the assistance they so



desperately need and have no one to help them navigate the systems and supports that may already exist. For some, these supports can be the difference between life and death.

Fortunately for Ebony, there was an advocate present who witnessed her plight and contacted the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC), which was able to connect her with people who could advocate on her behalf, link her to existing supports nationally and within her community, connect her to legal systems, and help her develop a plan. Sadly, there are countless other battered women who have not been able to make that connection. Ebony's case illustrates a very real challenge facing many battered women of color: Although many communities have a coordinated community response for victims of domestic violence, these "mainstream" systems and services - whether intentionally or inadvertently - often do not reach into the African American community or other communities of color.

The African American Domestic Peace Project (AADPP), a recently launched IDVAAC initiative, seeks to help communities bridge the gap for these women. The brainchild of Dr. Oliver Williams, Ph.D., IDVAAC's Co-Executive Director, the AADPP's

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mission is to develop a community education strategy to address domestic violence within African American communities across the country. The AADPP does not intend to replace current community based efforts. Instead, it aims to enhance these efforts through engaging the local African American community at large to take an active role in reducing intimate partner violence. "We know there are several good organizations that are working hard within the community and doing a great job," says Dr. Williams. "The 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 resources that are available to them."

A hallmark of the AADPP is its inclusive approach to developing a coordinated community response that specifically addressed the needs of African Americans. "Every community should have a comprehensive, well-publicized, and easily accessible system of supports for African American women and families," Dr. Williams asserts. Although the AADPP will connect with traditional domestic

violence programs to participate in the initiative, outreach efforts will also target a range of community stakeholders, including churches; health and mental health providers; community leaders and other individuals, service providers, and organizations that aspire to create healthier environments and desire to mitigate violence in their communities.

In launching the initiative, IDVAAC has identified seven locations as the first communities for the AADPP: Birmingham, Alabama; Dallas, Texas; Detroit, Michigan; Greenville, Mississippi; Hartford, Connecticut; Memphis, Tennessee; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; Oakland, California; and West Palm Beach, Florida.

In addition to collaborating locally, the AADPP will partner with other national organizations that are concerned about the well-being of African Americans and all people of the African Diaspora. Within the next five years, Dr. Williams expects to extend the AADPP to 50 cities across the country and become a viable conduit for meeting the needs of African American battered women in communities nationwide.

For more information about the AADPP, contact Dr. Williams at 1-877-NIDVAAC (1-877-643-8222).

A Look at Domestic Violence in Greenville

GREENVILLE, NAMED AFTER the American Revolutionary War hero Nathaniel Greene, is the largest city in northern Mississippi. With a population of 35,764, Greenville is located in Washington County and is approximately 92 miles from Jackson, Mississippi, and 116 miles from Little Rock Arkansas.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, African Americans represent the largest racial/ethnic group in Greenville at 78% of the city's population. Whites living in the city represent 20% of Greenville's residents, with other racial groups and mixed race people representing approximately 2% of the city's inhabitants. Residents of this majority African American city have an estimated media household income of \$30,040 according 2010 Census data, compared to a median household income of \$38,718 for the state. The city's unemployment rate in November 2012 was 11.9%, compared to 7.5% unemployment statewide during the same period. The share of city residents with incomes below the poverty level in 2010 totaled 36% .

Greenville's violent and property crime levels were reported as being much higher than the state and national average. The city's overall crime index for 2006 was reported at 6,694.5 per 100,000 people, while the national average was 4,479.3 per 100,000, according to city tabulations based on the 2006 FBI Crime Reports. The city ranked higher than the national average in murders, rapes, burglaries, and larcenies/thefts.

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Survivor of Childhood Family Violence Leads Movement to End Violence Against Women

BISHOP RODERICK MITCHELL is no stranger to domestic violence. He vividly, yet peacefully, recounts his childhood experiences of seeing his mother mercilessly abused at the hands of his father. Bishop Mitchell is the founder and pastor of New Life Church, which is based in Renova, Mississippi. He is married to Dr. Mary B. Mitchell, who is the Administrator of the church's Perfected Praise Day Care Center. They have an anointed son, Isaac, who has won several awards for science and music.

As an adult survivor of childhood domestic violence, Bishop Mitchell has spoken to thousands about the effects of domestic violence on children and the repercussions experienced by those children as they grow into adulthood, through his addresses at more than 200 schools, churches, and community sites. Bishop Mitchell is also a licensed counselor who holds three doctoral degrees. In 1990, he started the first crisis hotline for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in Bolivar County, Mississippi; and he is co-founder of Our House, Inc., located in Greenville Mississippi. In addition, Bishop Mitchell helped start Men Against Spousal Harm, the

Did You Know...

In the Mississippi Delta, law enforcement officials have reported receiving over 3,000 calls a year related to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking incidents combined.

first batterers program in Greenville. Bishop Mitchell's philosophy is that the only way to end the generational curse of domestic violence is by providing services to the whole family - including the victim, the batterer, and the children.

The Bishop has ministered to thousands of domestic violence victims through his engaging and enlightening Sunday morning messages at The New Life Church, and while serving as guest preacher at hundreds of other churches. He strongly believes it is the role and job of faith-based leaders to address domestic violence from the pulpit.

"The only way to end the generational curse of domestic violence is by providing services to the whole family..."

-Bishop Roderick Mitchell

As founder of Exodus School of the Bible, Bishop Mitchell is determined to raise awareness about domestic violence and to equip ministers and lay leaders to help victims. In fact, he has mandated that all Master's level students take a series of four different victimology courses as a graduation requirement. The course topics include Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Child Abuse, and Crisis Intervention.

Notably, Bishop Mitchell was recognized for his work and dedication in the domestic violence movement with a victim advocate award presented to him in 1993 by former President Bill Clinton. Since then, he has received numerous awards from the Mississippi House

of Representatives and the State Senate for his efforts to end violence against

women. The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community recently filmed his personal story of recovery from domestic violence.

One of the powerful messages that Bishop Mitchell shares with victims concerns forgiveness. Through his



sermons, Bishop Mitchell relays his personal testimony about his difficulty in forgiving his father for beating his mother, as well as how he came to forgive his mother for staying in the relationship. He believes that forgiveness not only benefits the other person, it is also necessary for the healing of the person doing the forgiving. "Forgiveness is remembering the pain and letting it go, Bisho Mitchell says, adding that time is the greatest healer.

To learn more about Bishop Mitchell's work, visit The New Life Church, Inc.'s Website, at www.thenewlifechurch.us, or contact the church by phone at 662.846.1119, or by e-mail at nulifechurch@aol.com.

To address these challenges, Our House is involved in a collaborative partnership with the Washington County District Attorney's Office, the County Domestic Violence Task Force, and the Greenville Police Department to serve as a catalyst for domestic violence victims and their families to receive effective legal and social intervention. The groups also provide community awareness projects to enlighten residents about the pervasive and devastating effects of domestic violence.

As part of its community awareness efforts, Our House staff interviewed 951 African American youth last year, asking them to share the types of abuse they had been involved with. The average age of those interviewed was 14. The percentage of youth who reported witnessing acts of violence or domestic violence at home, in the community, and at school consistently ranged from 70% to more than 80% for each category. The survey also showed that more than 20% of the youth had experienced rape/sexual assault, sexual violence at home; physical abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, or had been threatened with a weapon. In each of the categories surveyed, about 10% of the students reported having themselves committed an act of domestic violence.

AADPP Greenville



WHILE AMERICANS AFFIRM the importance of healthy homes, families, and relationships, the ugly facts about domestic violence and abuse in our nation persist. They may even be more frighteningly close to home for African Americans.

For more than 15 years, Our House has worked to bring the nightmare of domestic violence to an end. Every day, people come - often desperate and terrified - to find shelter, love, counsel, education, and encouragement at this oasis of hope and peace. Our House is in the business of mending broken lives, broken marriages, and broken homes - and even preventing these situations from ever occurring. Our House programs work to stop domestic violence. The shelter provides women and their children a confidential place where they can receive shelter, counseling, and tools needed to begin a violence-free life. Perhaps most importantly, these women gain access to the tools necessary to develop and sustain healthy relationships.

Our House programs are making a difference in or sons' and daughters' attitudes toward family violence by forging relationships with school systems, faith-based organizations, and civic groups to cement these changes. Recognizing that domestic violence is often repeated from generation to generation, Our House continues to work toward breaking this generational cycle of family violence by providing workshops on healthy relationships. These events have been attended by more than 10,000 youth.

It is with pleasure that we join the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC) in collaborating with African American leaders in communities across the United States to address violence against African American women. IDVAAC's African American Domestic Peace Project (AADPP) will develop a community education strategy to address domestic violence within African American communities across the nation.

In the Mississippi Delta, the majority of the local cities and townships consist of over 60% to 80% African Americans. We have found over the past 15 years that the rates of reported cases of interpersonal violence are higher in the African American community; yet, the resources are limited or nonexistent.

Our intent in this partnership is to enrich the community with tools, skills, resources, and knowledge through a coordinated community response. We hope you will join us in this effort.

Patricia Davenport, Ph.D., is the CEO of Our House, Inc., P.O. Box 3956, Greenville, MS 38704. Learn more about Our House at www.ourhousenewbirth.com, or contact the staff by e-mail at ourhouse@ourhousenewbirth.com or by phone at 622-33House (334-6873). FOR immediate or crisis situations, call the Love Hotline, at 662-332-LOVE (5683) or 1-888-884-LOVE (5683)



Engaging Our Community to Help Battered Women

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AFFECTS all races; yet, African Americans face a unique set of circumstances related to the issue. Statistics show that African-American women experience intimate partner violence at rates 35% higher than their white counterparts; and in 2005, African Americans accounted for almost one-third of intimate partner homicides nationally (www.idvaac.org/press/factsheets.html).

Although there are conventional systems currently in place to address domestic violence, such as police departments, hospitals, and domestic violence organizations, frequently the African American community is not strongly or positively connected with these systems and often views them as last resorts. In addition to the high incidence of domestic violence among African Americans, there are several major challenges the community faces in reaching Black battered women and providing them with services that are relevant to them. One challenge has been raising awareness of the issue among social service providers, as well as getting the attention of policy and community leaders, and obtaining funds to maintain existing programs. Another hurdle is that some members of the community do not want to acknowledge that domestic violence is an issue for African Americans. Furthermore, many directors of shelters and other related programs do not always want to devote meager resources to cultural sensitivity.

The African American Domestic Peace Project (AADPP) seeks to engage and inform our community about domestic violence and the community's responsibility to take ownership of the problem - both locally and nationally. Locally, we will focus on mobilizing the African American community in affiliate cities to improve responses to domestic violence by acknowledging the problem, taking ownership, and using our collective voice to reduce violence; creating and supporting "safe spaces" for battered women; developing leadership around the issue; and encouraging partnerships with allies, programs, and systems. Nationally, the project will endeavor to develop learning communities that speak to how African Americans address domestic violence.

The project also helps to continue IDVAAC's efforts to prevent and raise community consciousness about the impact of domestic violence on African Americans; and to educate and connect our communities on this important issue.

Dr. Oliver J. Williams is Co-Executive Director of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community and Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul.

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