

ENDING OUR SILENCE

The semi-annual newsletter of the African American Domestic Peace Project – Tacoma

New 'Peace' initiative linking community resources

Today is Judgment Day. And for Ebony Jenkins, a 35-year-old mother of two, this day is bittersweet. Two years ago, Ebony's husband shot her in the head, leaving her for dead.

And for two years, Ebony has lived in the same community, without family, otherwise alone, and with no "safe haven" from this volatile situation. Ebony's husband also has 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 details have been changed, this scenario is based on an actual event that occurred in the U.S. And it's an all-too-common occurrence for victims of intimate partner violence.

Unaware of the many resources at their disposal, many battered women in the African American community do not



The African American Domestic Peace Project, a campaign launched by the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC), is helping hundreds of women in Tacoma heal, recover and reclaim their joy. *(Courtesy photo)*

get the help 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 support systems and help her develop a plan.

Sadly, there are countless other battered women who have not made that connection.

Ebony's case illustrates a very real challenge facing many battered women of color: Although many communities have

a coordinated response system for victims of domestic violence, these "mainstream" systems and services often do not reach into the African American community or other communities of color to address the needs of battered, disenfranchised women.

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NEED HELP NOW???

Call 253-798-4166 or
1-800-562-6025



The African American Domestic Peace Project is developing a community education strategy to address domestic violence within black America. *(Courtesy photo)*

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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 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," Williams says. "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 coordinate response that specifically addresses 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," Williams said.

Although the AADPP will connect with traditional domestic violence programs to participate in the initiative, outreach efforts also will target many community stakeholders, including churches, health and mental health providers, community leaders and other individuals, service providers, and organizations that want to create healthier environments and seek to mitigate violence in their communities.

The AADPP also will partner with other national organizations that are concerned about the well being of black people around the globe. Boston currently is one of several U.S. cities that are part of the groundbreaking initiative.

Within the next five years, Williams said he hopes to extend the AADPP to more cities 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. Oliver J. Williams at 1-877-NIDVAAC (1-877-643-8222).

Healthy relationships, community safety key to 'Courage' campaign

COURAGE to End Domestic Violence is an initiative that the City of Tacoma and its community partners launched in 2014 to renew partnerships and build momentum around the movement to:

- Create community safety
- Grow a culture of healthy relationships
- Help drive recognition of the impact domestic violence has on all community members – men, women and children.

Early this year, The City of Tacoma's Human Services Division convened a leadership team comprised of service providers, community members, policymakers and city departments such as police and fire. Workgroups focused on the continuum of the domestic violence spectrum: Awareness, Education, Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and Healing.

The City of Tacoma envisions a network of domestic violence resources that are integrated, so no matter where someone is in the process there are resources available to help those impacted by domestic violence.

Awareness

The City of Tacoma invites its community members to gain an understanding what domestic violence is and to acquire skills to recognize the signs of DV to help friends, neighbors and loved ones escape the cycle.

Education

The City of Tacoma invites its community members to help stop the cycle through modeling and fostering healthy relationships and having the **COURAGE** to end domestic violence.

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*Continued from Page 2***Prevention**

The City of Tacoma recognizes that preventing domestic violence is about using the educational tools in your toolbox to end domestic violence before it starts. In an effort to build up the community's toolbox, we want community members to know what a healthy relationship looks like and feels like.

Intervention

The City of Tacoma recognizes that leaving a domestic violence relationship is dangerous. Our city and its community members should be prepared with the knowledge of where to turn to get help when a friend or a loved one is ready to seek safety.

Healing

The City of Tacoma knows that Healing and Recovery are important steps in the process. To that end, resources are available to help victim-survivors transition, heal and recover.

The City of Tacoma invites its community members to get connected to learn more about domestic violence and resources to end domestic violence by engaging with our community Partners: The Crystal Judson Family Justice Center, The Korean Women's Association, The Oasis Youth Center, The Rainbow Center, The Family Renewal Shelter, Our Sister's House, The YWCA of Pierce County, Puyallup Tribe of Indians, Community/Family Services Program, Joint Base Lewis-McChord Family Advocacy Program, Hope Sparks Family Services, Sexual Assault Center of Pierce County, and Tacoma Community House.

For more information on the City of Tacoma **COURAGE** Initiative, contact Pamela Duncan, Human Services Division pduncan@cityoftacoma.org or (253) 591-5057.



Domestic violence will not end unless we discuss this serious, deadly issue in all of the places we live, learn, socialize, recreate and worship.

(Courtesy photo)

Coordination key to ending domestic abuse

By Sherina James
Editor-in-Chief



Ms. James contributed to this article in her personal capacity. The views expressed do not necessarily represent the views of the Washington State Department of Corrections or the Pierce County Commission Against Domestic Violence.

As a liaison between victim-survivors in the community and Washington State Department of Corrections, I have seen and heard firsthand how prisoner re-entry affects our community. The Washington State Department of Corrections Victim Services Program has established a partnership with IDVACC and the AADPP to look closely at these issues.

Statistics show that African American women experience higher rates of domestic violence, but are least likely to access community services. In fact, all African Americans face a unique set of challenges related to this issue.

Studies show that about 4 out of every 10 African American women have experienced rape, physical violence and stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime – about 35 percent higher than that of white females, and about 2.5 times the rate of women of other races. African American women ALSO experience higher rates of domestic violence homicide.

African American youth also are at risk. The Centers for Disease Control reports that Black youth are overrepresented as victims of teen dating violence. The reality of racism, fear of police response and mistrust of the criminal legal system are keeping the voices of African American victims in the margins.

I am reminded of Oprah Winfrey's popular refrain and monthly magazine column "What I Know for Sure" from her magazine. As an advocate working to lessen the impact of domestic violence in ALL communities I know for sure:

We cannot END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE without discussing this serious, deadly issue in our homes, places we recreate, sister and brother circles, churches, faith groups, schools, and in our fellowship and affinity groups.

I know for sure that communities of color need solutions to hold perpetrators of violence accountable that are not limited to the criminal legal system.

I know for sure we cannot solve this problem by failing to hold perpetrators of violence accountable.

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'Peace' project goals: Engage, enlighten, inform and empower our community

By Dr. Oliver J. Williams
Publisher/Editor



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AFFECTS all races, but 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 percent higher than their white counterparts; and in 2005, African Americans accounted for almost a third of intimate partner homicides nationally.

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 battered Black 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 civic leaders, and obtaining funds to maintain existing programs. Another hurdle is that some members of the black 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.

At the end of the day, this is our fight to win – let's go out and win it.

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.



Coordination key to ending abuse

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I know for sure that domestic violence does not stop just because someone is arrested or incarcerated. Verbal and emotional abuse often continues after arrest and is equally as harmful as physical abuse.

I know for sure we can expand this movement and effect change best by including men's voices and ideas when developing strategies to end domestic and sexual violence.

I know for sure that despite what we may think, children see and hear everything and they need us to model how to treat each other with respect.

Sherina James is a victim liaison with the Washington State Department of Corrections and Chairperson for the Pierce County Commission Against Domestic Violence.

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Ending Our Silence is published semi-annually by the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC) for the African American Domestic Peace Project (AADPP). AADPP is an IDVAAC initiative aimed at developing a community education strategy to address domestic violence within African American communities across the country.

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