

ENDING OUR SILENCE

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

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 Boston 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 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 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.

Continued on Page 2

INSIDE

City's 'Justice Center' Page 2

Editor's Message Page 3

Publisher's Message Page 4

NEED HELP NOW???

Call 877-785-2020 or
1-800-799-7233



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

Continued from Page 1

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).

City's 'Justice Center' serves abuse victims

Is there someone in your life who is violent or controlling toward you? Have you been sexually assaulted by a stranger or someone you know? Are you concerned that your child may have been abused?

Whether you are looking for help navigating the legal system and understanding your rights, trying to find out if your child has been harmed, or seeking help to stay safe and start anew, the Family Justice Center (FJC) of Boston can help you.

At the FJC – a program of the Boston Public Health Commission – you can talk about your experiences and get the help you need. All services are free, and childcare is provided during your visit.

The FJC has many on-site partners available to assist individuals and families affected by domestic abuse, sexual violence or exploitation, including the Boston Police Department's Family Justice Group, which includes the following units:

Crimes Against Children Unit

CACU investigates reported incidents of physical and sexual abuse of children, as well as crimes involving child pornography and internet enticement of minors. CACU detectives can be reached at 617-343-6183.

Domestic Violence Unit

DVU detectives investigate incidents of abuse among intimate partners or family members. Abuse can include physical violence, threats, stalking, intimidation, verbal abuse, and other behaviors used by one person to control another. DVU detectives can be reached at 617-343-4350.

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

Civilian domestic violence advocates also are assigned to several police stations in the city, and can help domestic violence victims with safety planning, crisis intervention and referrals to a myriad of services, including legal assistance and housing relocation. To speak with an advocate, contact your local police station or call the DVU for more information about advocates.

Sexual Assault Unit

Detectives assigned to SAU investigate reported incidents of rape, attempted rape or indecent assault. SAU works closely with another on-site partner at the FJC – the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center – to provide a victim-centered response to sexual-based violence. The Sexual Assault Unit can be reached at 617-343-4400.

Human Trafficking Unit

HTU detectives work with the MA State Police and the FBI to investigate alleged crimes in which a person or group of persons uses force, fraud, or coercion to obtain or maintain a person in service, labor or commercial sexual exploitation. HTU detectives can be reached at 617-343-6533.

The center also has several on-site partners to help provide insight, direction and services.

The FJC is located in the Brighton neighborhood at 989 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. It is open Monday through Friday from 9AM to 5PM. No appointment is necessary. If you are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1 for police or medical assistance.

For more information, simply drop in, call (617) 779-2100, or visit the official FJC website: www.bpdnews.com/fjc/

– Source: City of Boston



Safe Haven's mission is to strengthen the ability of diverse faith communities to play a role in a community-wide effort to respond effectively to domestic abuse. *(Courtesy photo)*

Safe Havens is 'bridging the gap' in Boston

By Rev. Traci Jackson-Antoine
Editor-in-Chief



Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence (Safe Havens) is Boston's lead organization on domestic violence and faith.

The alliance has been working in Boston's African American community for more than five years, and is honored to join the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community's (IDVAAC) African American Domestic Peace Project (AADPP).

Founded in 1991 by Rev. Dr. Anne Marie Hunter, Safe Haven's mission is to strengthen the capacity of diverse faith communities to play a role in a community-wide effort to respond effectively to domestic violence. Working as a bridge between faith communities and social service providers, Safe Havens provides education, resources, advocacy and technical assistance.

Safe Havens is culturally responsive to African American faith communities and has well-established connections with African American church leaders.

For example, in 2007 and 2009, Safe Havens hosted Mothers' Day events, which brought together local pastors' wives and female clergy to begin a conversation about domestic violence. These were consciousness-raising events that created opportunities for education and engagement.

In October 2012, Safe Havens gathered clergy and service providers to honor National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. In August 2013, IDVAAC's co-director, Dr. Oliver Williams, joined me for an event entitled, "Speaking of Faith."

This event brought together more than 80 participants for the screening and discussion of IDVAAC's "Speaking of Faith" video. The video showcases clergy from around the country who speak of their own experiences and what they have done in their congregations to respond to domestic violence. Following this event, Dr. Williams invited Safe Havens to lead Boston's AADPP-Team Boston.

Project partners include Darnell Williams, President and CEO of the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts; LaTeisha Adams, Sergeant Detective, Boston Police Department, and Rev. Gary Adams, Chaplain and Faith-Based Liaison to the Commissioner, Boston Police Department.

In collaboration with the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-

Continued on Page 4

'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.

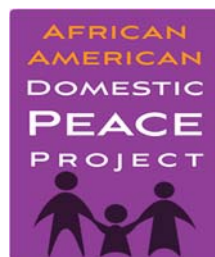
One challenge has been raising awareness of the issue among social service providers, as well as getting the attention of policy and civic leaders, and obtaining funds to maintain existing programs. Another hurdle is that some members of the black community do not want to acknowledge that domestic violence 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.



Safe Havens mission: 'Bridging the gap'

Continued from Page 3

American Community (IDVAAC), the AADPP provides support for outreach and consciousness-raising within African American churches.

In September 2013, Darnell Williams and Gary Adams joined me in a 3-day training session led by IDVAAC.

Since then, monthly newsletters, conference calls and radio blogs have allowed the Boston partners to remain connected with the other AADPP cities across the U.S. and to raise awareness in Boston area churches about DV in the African American community.

My motto for this unique initiative is simple: "No one person can do this work alone, we are better together."

Rev. Traci Jackson-Antoine is director of Boston's African American Domestic Peace Project.

ENDING OUR SILENCE

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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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