

Healing for the Mind, Body & Soul

News Notes from California Black Women's Health Project

Volume 1, Issue 2

California Black Women's Health Project Kicks off Los Angeles Town Hall Series

By Erica C. Robbins

On September 5, 2002, the California Black Women's Health Project hosted "What's Race Got To Do With It?" Black Women, Violence and Racism, the first in a series of Los Angeles town hall meetings that address the physical, mental and emotional health concerns of Black women.

The discussion led, in part, by Dr. Gloria Morrow, focused on how violence and racism play a part in the lives of Black women in ways most never dreamed. Dr. Morrow talked about how violence can affect people in more than just the obvious ways. Violence not only takes its toll on women physically but also often delivers a deep emotional blow. She talked of how violence can render a once strong, capable woman into a state of complete and utter helplessness. So many people suffer and never speak up. It is the institutionalized racism that Black women endure that often keeps them silent. Residual feelings of worthlessness resulting from the legacy of slavery take their toll on Black women and often facilitate accepting abuse. Further, systematic racism, combined with other forms of abuse, serves to dehumanize and rob Black women of their self-worth leading some to suffer from mental illness. In addition, some Black women suffer physical maladies as a result of abuse and others may actually take their own lives. Dr. Morrow urged everyone to

get involved to help stem the tide of abuse. She spoke of pushing the problem to the forefront by making it everyone's business. Noticing the signs, learning about the effects, passing the information on, or simply showing concern can build a network of assistance for the women in our lives. If these efforts can stop just one women's suffering, it will be well worth the effort, especially if that woman is your mother, aunt, sister or friend. By talking about abuse, educating yourself and others, speaking out for people who may not be able to speak for themselves, you are helping to break the cycle that not only hurts women but tears families apart.

"It is the institutionalized racism that Black women endure that often keeps them silent."

Joyce Whiten, Assistant Chief of Staff and Press Secretary for Assemblyman Jerome Horton, discussed how to initiate change through policy. Specifically, she addressed how to make your voice heard by elected officials and how to use legislative bodies as tools to help stop violence. Mrs. Whiten pledged to continue to support the work of CABWHP from her office and

spoke of the Assemblyman's strong support of the effort to help stop violence against women.

By the night's end many people interjected with their own experiences, feelings and interpretations on the subject. One of several men in attendance asked "What can men do to help stop violence against women?" The overwhelming response from the speakers and the audience was that men should become advocates for non-violent communication between men and women.

An informal poll of the audience showed that almost all in a room of over fifty had been impacted directly or indirectly by violence against women -- a testament to the prevalence and far-reaching impact of abuse.

For more information or to get involved with the CABWHP Town Hall Series contact Erica Robbins at 310 412-1828 ext 11 or erica@cabwhp.org.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?....
*As of July 2000, there were only approximately 90 Black psychiatrists in California (of 4,870 total psychiatrists).
American Medical Association (AMA) data indicates that there has been a substantial drop in the number of Black California medical residents



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Survivors Speak Out!
By Family Violence Prevention Fund

Have you ever been hurt or threatened by a former husband, boyfriend or other intimate partner? Did you grow up seeing your mother hit by your father or stepfather? Your experience can help you help others.

You know from your own experience how hard it is to be in a violent relationship. Women being hurt by their husbands or boyfriends need a friend like you to speak up and show that they care. Use your personal story to reach out to a friend ... a co-worker... a family member... a stranger. Reach out at places where your community gathers.

At your place of worship, you can:

- offer to talk to women who need support
- make sure your minister, rabbi or other spiritual leader understands domestic violence - tell him or her your story, and provide facts and information about local services
- ask your minister, rabbi or other spiritual leader to talk about domestic violence in a sermon - or share your story with the congregation
- put up educational posters throughout the building
- help establish a fund for victims

With acquaintances, friends, and family, you can:

Order the Person to Person Domestic Violence Action Kit

This kit is designed for survivors and witnesses of domestic violence who want to help others who are facing abuse.

Developed with the notion that survivors are the best spokespeople for the issue, this kit shows women who have faced abuse and children who grew up watching it how their experiences can make a difference. It contains:

- tips on how to talk with a friend, co-worker or family member who may be experiencing abuse
- ways to raise community awareness about the problem; and
- victim safety cards

Article published as part of the Family Violence Prevention Fund's Prevention Toolbox.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?....

- The California Department of Mental Health (along with other departments and a pending task force) is required by law (SB 1448) to track patients who have died at state hospitals and developmental centers.
- A recent study found that women who weighed 155 pounds or more had a 60 percent higher risk of oral contraceptive failure (5.6 percent) than women who weighed less than 125 pounds (3.6 percent). Women who weigh more than 155 pounds should discuss using an additional birth control method with their doctor.
- Under new USDA regulations effective October 21, 2002, a product that touts itself as organic must contain at least 95 percent organically produced ingredients. A product that claims to be "made with" organic ingredients can have no less than 70 percent organic ingredients.

Be A Silent Sufferer No More
By Gloria Morrow, Ph.D.

When does one know when to seek help? According to information contained in "A Consumer's Guide to Mental Health Services" prepared by the Institute of Mental Health Association, there are important signs that psychotherapy may be needed:

- Prolonged depression (feelings of sadness for a long period of time)
- Thoughts of harming oneself or others
- Abrupt changes in mood
- Undue prolonged anxiety (Excessive nervousness and worry)
- Internal or interpersonal conflicts (Conflicts that interfere with daily functioning)
- Feelings of low self-esteem and low self-worth
- Relationship issues

In choosing a therapist, it is important to seek referrals in order to choose a qualified professional. It is also important to check the credentials of the professional(s) you are seeking help from, and to ask questions about the method of treatment, length of treatment, and the professional's thoughts about your particular problem.

Remember, all of us at some point or another have suffered or are currently suffering from either acute or chronic emotional/psychological distress. However, the only way to continue to experience continual emotional pain and suffering that may negatively impact your life and those around you, is to remain a silent sufferer. You can decide to be a silent sufferer NO MORE.

If you are a silent sufferer, please feel free to contact Dr. Gloria Morrow for consultation, appointment or referral to another mental health professional at (909) 392-6955.

*Part 2 of a two-part series.
 Entire article originally
 published in May 23, 2002
 edition of
Inland Valley News.*

 Have you or a loved one been affected by Domestic Violence?

Answer the questions below and find out?

1. Does your intimate partner/loved one make fun of you, put you down or embarrass you in front of other people?
2. Do you feel scared or worried about doing or saying the wrong thing when you are with him or her?
3. Does your intimate partner/loved one try to control you by being bossy, not taking you seriously, making all the decisions about who you see, what you wear, etc.?
4. Do you find yourself changing your behavior out of fear or to avoid a fight?

If you answered yes to any of these questions you could be in an abusive relationship

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"Committed to improving the health of Black women and girls in California"

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