

EDUCATION



HILTON

By Dr. Keith
Orlando Hilton



Misery research vs. re-empowerment research

Daily and nightly on TV, radio and through the print media, the African-American community and Pan African world (including continental Africans, Afro Latinos and Afro Caribbean) are flooded with negative reports.

Much of what is reported warrants questioning. We refer to these reports and studies as "misery research."

As a researcher, I personally know of "scholars" and practitioners who have received Ph.D.'s, masters degrees and research grants for announcing and documenting how "sick and sorry" the Black community is.

But we continue to go on record as questioning the complete purpose of these and other, similar focuses of research.

Fortunately there are

professional health care organizations that are countering much of this "misery research" and presenting some of the same information with an affirmative approach.

Two such organizations are the National Medical Association (NMA) and the Association of Black Nursing Faculty in Higher Education (ABNF).

Yes, some very real problems do exist, however, if the African community was as bad off as some would have us believe, we would have become extinct years ago. The following are examples of health care and education "misery research" that are often cited whenever our communities are discussed.

Recent statistics show that 70 percent of the causes of

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CHILDWATCH

The 10 point coalition is taking it to the streets

By Marian Wright Edelman

In 1992, the Morning Star Baptist Church in Boston was the scene of an incident so horrifying that it forced the city's Black clergy to realize the danger of waiting for the streets to come to church rather than taking church to the streets.

Several gang members burst into Morning Star during the funeral of a young teen, who had been gunned down at a party. They fired shots and stabbed a youth seven times while a terrified congregation looked on. The pastor, the Rev. John Borders, intervened, draping himself over the youth to keep him from being stabbed any more. The gang-bangers thought their victim, a rival gang member, was there to disrespect the dead teen. Actually, he was there to pay last respects to the deceased, a young man he had played ball with on weekends.

The entire community was stunned, not only by the

viciousness of the assault, but by the fact that the sanctity of the church had been invaded, signaling the peak in Boston street violence. The act even violated gang members' traditional principle of respecting holy ground.

But what emerged from the chaos of 1992 was a model of cooperation and activism that stands as a vivid example of the potential power of the church in the battle against violence. They adopted as their action plan a Ten Point Proposal for National Church Mobilization to Combat Black-on-Black Violence, drawn up two years earlier by another group of clergy that met periodically to pray and discuss possible solutions for improving the community.

"It wasn't long before the original 300 had dwindled down to about 15 people," says the Rev. Sam Wood, a current executive committee member of the Ten Point Coalition, and one of the original clergymen who wrote the 10-point plan. "There was more and more interest once it became clear that we were serious about saving our children and helping the inner city come back to life."

How did the Ten Point Coalition get serious? The first

step was to take to the streets. The coalition set up regular neighborhood crime patrols of "Christian soldiers," who pray together on the street and then put prayer into action by demanding that gang-bangers and drug dealers get out. In addition, the coalition assists senior citizens, helps homeless folks find homes, and teaches Black and Hispanic teens about their history. It also has established a court advocacy program, wherein judges send many troubled youths to literacy and computer programs instead of locking them up. These programs are now in place in Boston's mostly Black districts of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan.

"This is empowerment," says Wood, whose group meets the second Thursday of every month and works with about 80 churches that are now part of the coalition. "We know we're being successful, because we're being used as a model in other places."

Ten Point coalitions have been established in New York City; Hartford, Conn.; Providence, R.I.; and Memphis, Tenn. Among the many individuals and groups that have endorsed the work of the Ten Point Coalition are

Massachusetts Gov. William Weld (R), Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, Cardinal Bernard Law, and the Urban League, which honored the coalition last year.

"Too many churches only open their doors for Sunday morning service, Wednesday Bible study, and, maybe, Friday night prayer," says Wood. "There used to be a time when churches were open all the time. If something happened, no matter what it was, you could go to your pastor, your church. And that wasn't just in the South, but all over the country."

Ten Point's efforts have helped churches, regardless of religious affiliation, understand the importance of working together for a common good, says Wood. "It was time to break down the doctrinal walls. That was something that had to change. For a long time, many pastors would take a brick out and peek, but it wasn't until now that the walls actually came down. If we didn't stand up as clergy and hold hands, how could we ask young people to do it?" he said.

Marian Wright Edelman is the president of the Children's Defense Fund, and a leader of the Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC).

Youth

(Continued from Page 3)

mediocrity," said Bailey of the special awardees. "These are not mediocre people. They strive to be at the top. These are the creme of the crop."

"The whole idea of role models and mentors for youth should not be overlooked," Ensign said before honoring the graduates. "We know, today, we don't have enough role models. Just watching somebody on television in an athletic uniform does not mean they are the role models we need for our young people. We need mentors in the community, in the private sector, showing that it's okay if you don't make it to the NBA, or you don't make it to the NFL, or you don't make it to Major League Baseball; and it's okay if you go to work every single day and earn a living," he said. "That's an honorable thing to do — provide for your family."

The participants said the program was an awarding experience and most admitted to learning plenty.

"The program means a lot because it helps you understand the workforce," said Kenisha Ashley, a 17-year-old at Vo-Tech High School. "It prepares you and gives you the experience to

get started — plus, it's something good to put on your resume."

Ashley plans to go on to college and become a psychiatrist.

"Mostly I've learned leadership skills," 18-year-old Ledger Cantley III said of what he's gotten most out of the program. "Today is a great day for us. We're gathering and being recognized for doing and achieving good."

A 1996 Rancho High School graduate, Cantley, who's been working at Apex for the past seven years, recently began classes at UNLV where he is majoring in computers.

"Although we are here to today to honor the young people that have successfully completed their training at the summer program here at Apex Janitorial, they would not be here today if it wasn't for the support of the parents, their families and their friends," said Richard Blue, executive director of Nevada Business Services. "And very often, that support and effort goes unnoticed. So, to the parents, grandparents and others, we applaud you."

"What we're doing (through the program)," added Blue, "is nothing more than investing in

the United States of America by participating in the lives of our young people."

Funded through the Department of Labor's "Job Training Partnership Act," Nevada Business Services helps economically disadvantaged persons and workers in the southern Nevada area who have found themselves unemployed due to layoffs and downsizing, obtain the training and retraining they may need to become employed. Courses include basic skills training, job skills training, basic education training, skills enhancement and upgrading, work experience, career counseling, and job search and attainment skills training. All services are offered free of charge to all eligible participants.

NBS put nearly 1,600 people to work this summer, according to Blue.

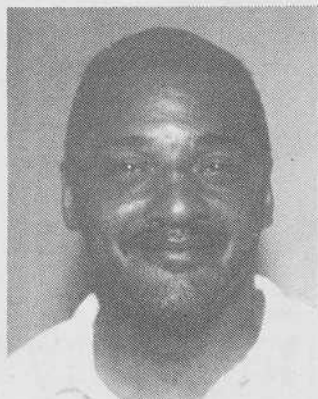
"America is helping the kids, but they're not giving them very many opportunities," added Anderson. "Working in America is one thing, but feeling you're part of America is another."

"They're (program participants) looking at the American Dream, and they got the chance to taste it and feel it."



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