

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

# Blacks rekindling 'village' spirit

In communities across America, blacks are living the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child."

Undaunted by urban horrors or rural squalor, more and more blacks are getting out of their comfort zones and giving back, especially to black youth.

In several cities, Million Man March organizing committees - who marshalled grassroots support for the monumental event - are participating in after-school tutoring and mentoring programs.

Black fraternities, sororities, civic and professional organizations have created youth interests groups dedicated to preparing students for the real world. The curriculum - which consists of a mandatory minimum grade point average and community service - provides the students a positive social outlet.

Joining the fray, our nation's foremost civil rights and advocacy organizations are holding youth leadership conferences, academic awards contests, business forums and a multitude of other activities that give black youth a competitive edge and reinforce a "do the right thing" mentality.

Locally examples of youth empowerment abound. The Rafael Rivera Community Center has an expansive enrichment camp for toddlers, pre-teens and teens.

Since 1994, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Community Resource Center has run a summer entrepreneur program aimed at giving black youth the skills to be employers, not employees. Mentors and students laud the program.

The program on tap at the West Las Vegas Arts Center is to create culturally well-rounded black children. Professionally trained staff - including musicians, dancers and artists - cultivates young talent, nurtures and challenges creativity.

Upward Bound participants get acquainted with the ups and downs of college life during their summer program. And the list goes on.

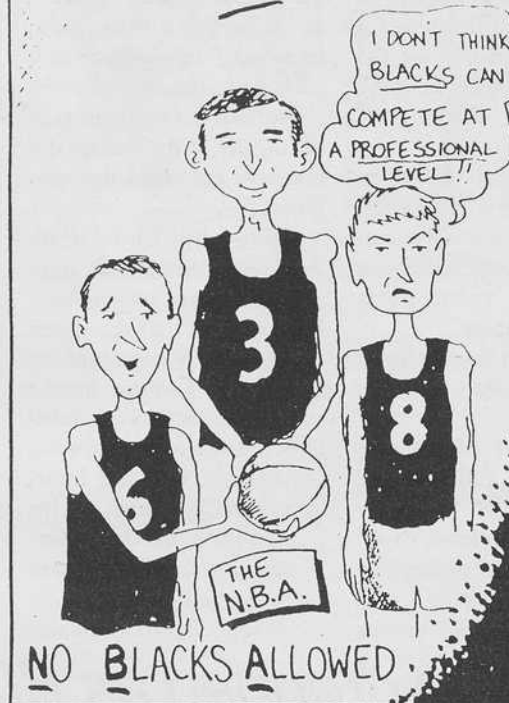
In addition, many civic and political leaders, clergy and business professionals donate their time, money and insight to area youth.

Mainstream media continues to paint a stark picture of the future for African-Americans. Burdened by record incarceration, violent crime, rising suicide, AIDS, hereditary disease - and the list goes on - it's a wonder that blacks are surviving.

But we are surviving, and thriving - albeit amidst societal chaos.

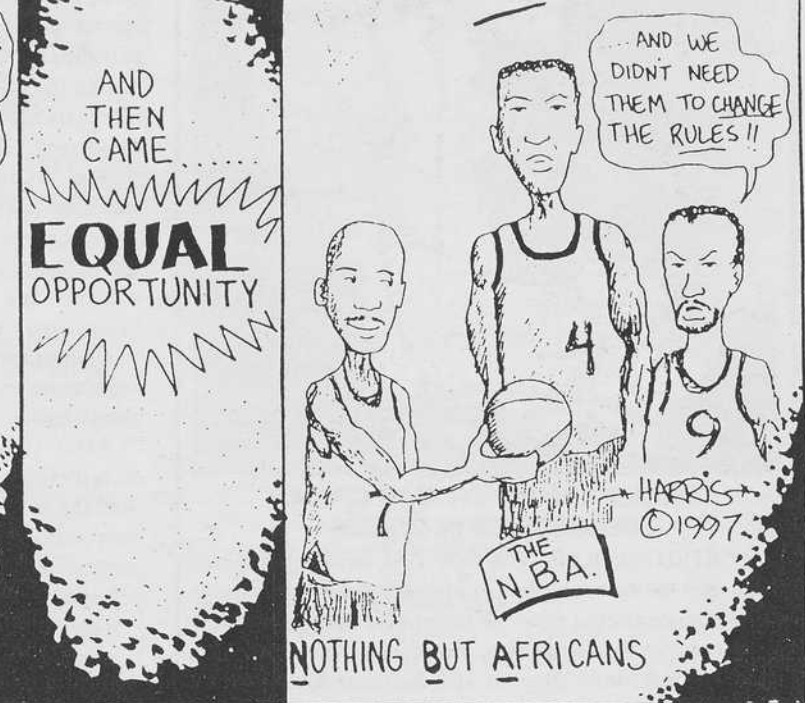
NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION

~1947~



NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION

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# Unmasking the violence

Special to Sentinel-Voice

It must have been 16 or 17 years ago, but I remember it like it was last month. I was sitting in a woman's prison in New York State, listening to women testify to the Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence. The women, all sentenced to long prison terms of 15 years to life, told their stories and how domestic violence had been a part of their lives.

Some had only known lives filled with violence from their childhood; others had experienced it only as adults. One woman recalled her experience as a child riding in the ambulance with her battered mother, only to be ignored in the waiting room by all and not knowing if her mother would live or die. Another told of thinking that domestic violence was a part of marriage - that was what she had grown up with and what she had come to expect as an adult. All of these women had been convicted of murdering their spouses when they could no longer take the abuse themselves or when they watched their children being abused.

I remember driving that same evening to my mother's in Washington, D.C. through a hurricane which threatened the east coast and saying the words, with a new understanding, there but for the grace of God, go I. None of us chooses the family we are born into and some of us are born into families where domestic violence is a part of life.

Domestic violence is a term which is too often unspoken in the African-American

## Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



community. That may be true in other communities of color as well, but I know it is true in my own. To talk about it, some believe, only widens the gap between black men and black women. To talk about it, some believe, is airing our dirty laundry in public and somehow weakens our community's unity. To talk about it, some believe, means telling of the horrors done by fathers, brothers, uncles and husbands and destroys families.

But the reality is that not talking about domestic violence in our community does all those negative things as well. Not talking about domestic violence ensures that the gap between men and women widens even more as women are forced to believe that they are less valuable than our men. Not talking about domestic violence undermines our community's unity even more because a superficial and flawed unity is no unity at all. Not talking about domestic violence guarantees the destruction of a family, not just for one generation, but for generations to come.

Unfortunately, the black church too often has also participated in the silence around domestic violence. Too often the black church has even condoned such behavior,

counseling women to stay in abusive relationships. However, a new national project, The Black Church and Domestic Violence Task Force, located in Seattle, is ending the silence and beginning the dialogue and action. The African-American Initiative of Men Stopping Violence, based in Atlanta, works with African-American men who have been batterers.

Locally, black churches, mosques and community organizations are taking action. For instance, the Open Arms Ministry, a holistic approach to dealing with domestic violence, was begun two years ago by the Zion Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Rochester, NY. In Chicago, a Domestic

Violence Advocacy/Care Ministry trains church leaders on domestic violence and Trinity United Church of Christ has a special ministry for battered women and children. Several years ago in Washington, D.C., Rev. Imagene Stewart began the House of Imagene to shelter and minister to battered and homeless women and children.

We must end the silence about the sin and the crime of domestic violence in the African-American community. We must reach out to help those women and those men who are caught up in this horrible and terrifying cycle of violence. We cannot afford for future generations to be torn apart because we have tolerated it.

(For more information, write the Black Church and Domestic Violence Task Force, Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 936 N. 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103 or call them at (206) 634-1903 or e-mail them at cpsdv@cpsdv.seanet.com.)

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