Presenters stated that we must take at the history of slavery. Black men have always been devalued. Black men could be removed from their homes at anytime. Black men were used as entertainment for slave masters. In the early 1930's/1940's, if a Black man was in the home, the female was not eligible for assistance from the welfare system. The Black man has been profiled, stereotyped and under-educated. Many policies implement inequities against the Black man; it is a systematic issue.

Presenters shared that 24% of African American households, by the time a child reaches two years of age, 80% of fathers have disappeared from their child's life. Ron Collier runs a father involvement program for 100 incarcerated men from ages 21 to 60. The program teaches what the father's role is.

Today's absentee fathers look for ways to operate outside of the child support system. Outside of prison, most men have back child support. Most are not aware that they could set aside child support while incarcerated. Most try to operate out of sight by not establishing credit, not having checking accounts, and using other unstable practices.

Yet all children need fathers emotionally, socially, and behaviorally. We need to understand why these men are not around. We need to break the barriers of single parent households. We need to support marriage, a key to restoring our communities.

Five doctoral students in Clark/Atlanta are developing a parenting curriculum. Neyon Smith also has a 7 week curriculum for African American parents. To get men involved in parenting, we need to go where the men are: Barbershops, basketball courts, etc. These absentee fathers will only work with men who look like them.