Workshop 1C
Faith-Based Intervention: Empowering African American Fathers with Responsible Leadership

Moderator/Panelists: Charles M. Sutton, Ph.D., Family Assistance Program Spec, ACF, OFA

Presenters: Terrence Lewis, Program Manager First A.M.E., Child and Family Center, Seattle, WA
Thanh Nguyen, Fatherhood Specialist, First A.M.E., Child and Family Center, Seattle, WA
Charles E. Lewis, Jr., Ph.D., Howard University

The objective was to demonstrate how intervention by faith-based organizations can empower ex-offenders to develop as responsible fathers and to sustain healthy relationships.

Mr. Terrence Lewis stated that approximately 700,000 incarcerated African American men are released back into society each year. These men achieve less that those who have never been behind bars. In most cases, men who grew up in a dysfunctional environment will continue that cycle. This stems from the man’s familiarity with that dysfunctional environment.

Mr. Lewis has found through interviews that most Black men place a higher economic value on material items than on the woman in their lives. Women are labeled according to their importance. "Wifey" material means the man would marry that woman. The label, “skeezer,” identifies a woman the man values little. Mr. Lewis hopes to develop workshops for men to help them change these ideas and become good citizens, husbands, and fathers.

Dr. Charles Lewis stated that reconciliation of the family is done one step at a time. He advocated reaching out to prisoners while they are still in prison. That can be done through posting information on websites, expanding community knowledge, and offering grant writing workshops. A single mother from the audience shared her feelings of abandonment by the church. Someone else echoed her thoughts and added that the church spent too much time on attracting members and caring for the building rather than reaching out to ex-offenders.