Workshop 2C
Left Behind: Children and Families in Bondage

Moderator/Panelists: Dr. Gilbert Park

Presenters: Dr. Creasie Finney Hairston
Omar Jahwar

Dr. Gilbert Parks explained the importance of commitment in families and relationships. He said that most families will function well if there is a sense of “healthy interdependency.” He also discussed the important role siblings play in our emotional, social and psychological development. The older we get, the more important our sibling relationships become.

Omar Jahwar emphasized how important understanding youth culture is. To impact youth culture, we must use “urban specialists” -- people who live in the environments with our youth and understand the daily struggles young people have. We must be willing to engage in youth culture if we are to understand it. We must attempt to see why young people choose certain individuals as role models and do not choose others.

Dr. Creasie Hairston said that we, as professionals, must reconnect with families and communities. Incarceration has an impact on even the strongest family, she said, and it’s not just a family problem but a community problem. Two million people are incarcerated in state or local jails. Many fathers are also the primary caregivers of children whose mothers are incarcerated. This problem is growing nationally. She concluded her presentation by sharing two things that make a difference for children: 1) We must practice inclusion and acceptance; and 2) We must continue to voice our opinions and encourage others to do so in order to make policy changes.