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Abstract

Title:  *Saving Our Boys, Recovering Our Men*¹

To destroy a people in war, first, kill or capture the battle-age males in the group (Jones, 2001; Srebrenica Research Group, 2005). Those who die no longer are unable to defend their communities. Those who are captured can be psychologically disarmed through acts of mind-control to give up their will to fight or escape, while remaining available as non-competitive laborers for their captors. The remaining rebels among the survivors can be frustrated in their attempts to both survive and maintain integrity (Chestang, 1976). No ethnic group of people can survive or thrive without a reasonably balanced supply of healthy, well functioning males as well as females. As the males go, so goes the family, but community institutions as well.

Therefore, professionals and policy makers who are invested in a strengths-based perspective on empowering African American individuals, families, and communities should set as a paramount goal increasing the capacity of males to serve as husbands and fathers (Blackman, 2006,2005,2002; Blackman, Clayton, Glenn, Malone-Colon & Roberts, 2005. Parker, 2002). Women need them as loving companions and satisfying sexual partners for women, as well as role models for both male and female children. Families and communities need their physical strength and protection. In particular, they are needed as “Alpha males” to facilitate positive youth development among adolescent boys.

Recovering estranged fathers to serve their nuclear and extended families and preparing “battle-aged” boys for manhood, including functional and satisfying roles as husbands and fathers, bread winners, role models, and mentors should be central objectives to accomplishing

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¹ This presentation was presented originally as Blackman’s (2007) contribution to the Invited Juried Selection. Workshop Presentation. Blackman, L. C., Armstead, R., and Boykin, R. Saving our boys, recovering our men. Detroit, MI: National Association of Black Social Workers.
this goal. Nothing less than a World War II type Marshal Plan (Hogan, 1987; Marshall, 1947) to save our boys and recover our boys can meet the need for functional, lasting, and deeply satisfying family and other interpersonal relationships and viable community building.

Consequently, the goal of this plenary discussion is to increase the capacity of professionals, policy makers and researchers to intervene to save boys and recover men from systems of captivity (e.g., ethnic oppression, childhood neglect, abuse, and abandonment, exposure to traumatic events, addictions, homelessness, incarceration) while healing emotional chasms between them and the women and children in their families. Together, we must clearly identify successful programs and intervention strategies that are creating newer pathways of escape to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for African American boys and men. It must focus on effective, preventive youth development strategies, as well as effective tertiary intervention strategies for whose minds have been subjected to miseducation, neglect, stress, trauma, or terror.

REFERENCES


