

**Paths to Success:  
A Forum on Young African-American Men  
July 18, 2006**

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**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Good morning, everybody. I'm Drew Altman and, on behalf of the Kaiser Family Foundation and *The Washington Post*, let me welcome you to the Barbara Jordan Conference Center. I know for sure that Barbara would be thrilled to see us holding this forum here today and I'm sure, if she were here, she would have a lot to say.

Barbara once had a constituent who said, "I heard her on the radio and I thought it was God." Would that I could be so substantive and so authoritative. But I want to tell you my favorite short "Barbara" story because I've been trying for years to get it on the public record and perhaps with all the media here today I have a chance.

In 1991, I took Barbara to South Africa to work there and, for some reason - I don't know why - at the very end of the trip we decided to meet with the head of the far-right White armed resistance in a little hotel room. And in about 15 minutes into this meeting, this guy stood up, and he looked us in the eye and he said, "I want you people to know I don't like what you're doing in my country and I'm prepared to give my life to stop the blacks from taking over this country."

And Barbara instantly, with that famous smirk on her face, looked up, and she said, "Well, sir, we may just need to take you up on that kind offer."

I wish Barbara could be with us today; she would truly love this event.

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This forum is inspired by an extraordinary series in *The Post*, called "Being a Black Man," and by a special survey we conducted with colleagues at *The Post*, and at Harvard University for that series. It's actually the 16<sup>th</sup> survey conducted with *The Post* in a unique partnership it's hard to believe that began almost a decade ago, that brings our survey research group together with *The Post's* polling group and a broad range of journalists at *The Post* to conduct unusual, in-depth surveys, including surveys of Katrina evacuees, surveys of the South African people, actually, about how they feel about their new democracy, just to name a few I'm most proud of.

I want to recognize - they're both sitting right down here - *The Post's* executive editor Lynn Downey and managing editor Phil Bennett. They're here today. I want to compliment them, among other things, just on their willingness to try something different by entering into what really is a one-of-a-kind partnership between a major news organization and a nonprofit research organization, us, the Kaiser Foundation, which is really what has enabled our two organizations to do something we would not be able to do on our own. And I would add to that that as someone who is not in, but who is very close to the world of journalism, I also very much want to compliment *The Post* on taking on this broader project, which goes beyond the survey itself on Black men, for elevating this issue at a time when, as we all know, the country is not so

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much focused on this issue. It's focused on other things.

For the multimedia nature of the project, which is not only great in its own right but which, among other things, makes it a project which is interesting to younger people and, most especially, for making a year-long commitment - this is not a one-off thing - for making a year-long commitment to this series. Those kinds of things at major news organizations do not grow on trees. It is very special.

And, so, with those public accolades, which they did not ask me to give, let me invite the managing editor, Phil Bennett, up to make a few comments and then, as we're based in California - the Foundation is - as our governor in California used to say in another life, "I'll be back."

**PHILIP BENNETT:** Thank you, Drew. Good morning, everyone. A few months back, my colleague Kevin Merida, who is here and who supervised this project, came to me with an idea to illustrate the first story in this series. "Call up Colin Powell," he said, "Gilda Durenis [ph], the rapper Inkwell and other local luminaries, an executive, a pastor, a NASA engineer. Call them up out of the blue and ask them to show up for a group portrait at a D.C. elementary school for a project that was going to be called, 'Being a Black Man.'"

I think my response was something like, "Uh huh."  
Well, here is the picture that resulted from that gathering. The people in the picture got what this was about and readers have gotten it, too.

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Today, I think that gathering in May was in a sense a prelude to the gathering we have here today. It goes to the heart of this project - to bring together diverse views and experiences, to look in a new way at a common set of difficult issues.

What does it mean to be a Black man? This was the question that inspired the early discussions at *The Post* that resulted in this project. Journalists love great questions, and I think there was an urgency and an exciting sense of possibility attached to answering this one. Part of the urgency came from an awareness that the news media, especially a great newspaper with outstanding journalists in a capital city with a large African American population, faced the challenge to do justice to the variety and depth of experience of people of color, to take on the hardest issues facing our communities in a series and systematic way.

Almost 40 years have passed since the Kerner Commission concluded on matters of race the communications media ironically have failed to communicate. A lot has changed since then, but it's still a challenge that resonates.

What does it mean to be a Black man? Our reporting, including the result of the survey conducted with the Kaiser Foundation and Harvard University, shows that many Black men live with contradictions of opportunity and limitations, of hopefulness and despair, in a place where things generally seem good, but can and do get bad in a heartbeat.

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We've tried to move from the data to the actual experience of Black men living in the Washington area, through a series of narratives about individual lives. For Mark Yarborough, a 45-year-old contracting specialist for the Army, being a Black man means, in part, trying to prepare his 9-year-old son, Marcus, for the day when he will walk in the world as a Black man.

"I call this his day of reckoning," Mark said. "I don't know when it's coming, but it's coming. I want him to be ready."

For Eric Motley, a 33-year-old Bush administration official, being a Black man meant, in part, charting his own course from his high-achieving Black community in Montgomery, Alabama, a stronghold for Democrats, to the largely White world of Republican politics. "I'm tired of that word 'sellout,'" he told Will Haygood.

For Jachin Leatherman and Wayne Nesbit, the valedictorian and salutatorian at Ballou High School, who are here with us today, being Black men meant making a path to make a difference, in their own lives and in others'.

Pherlius Fishern IV [ph], a hairdresser who spent weeks in jail because no officials in the criminal justice system would perform the simple check to verify that, as he was trying to tell them, they had arrested the wrong man, being a Black man meant, in part, that losing your identity could mean losing

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your life.

These are the stories that we've told so far and the outpouring and response from readers and thousands of messages has been like few things I've seen in my career. We have more stories to come, and we're discovering new insights. This is a work in progress. We, as journalists, are looking to this morning's session to advance that work. Thanks.

[Applause]

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Phil, thank you very much. I think *The Post* deserves a lot of credit for this project. My job is to say a few things about the survey in just a couple of minutes, so let me start with, why did we do this? Well, we did this survey, all of us together - *Post*, Kaiser, Harvard - we did it for three reasons. First of all, there was, of course, a research purpose to bring new data to the national discussion about this issue. I think we've done that. You have a summary of all the findings - I'm not going to go through them before this forum - in your chart pack. I think it punctures a lot of myths, a lot of stereotypes, and I think that's a contribution.

Secondly, there was definitely a journalistic purpose behind this survey, to use the survey results as a springboard, if you will, for the remarkable stories you see in the series in *The Post* to provide facts and context for the storytelling in *The Post* and then, for me, there was the most important purpose of all, to give voice, through the survey, to Black men

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themselves and especially to young Black men in the national discussion and debate about them, just as we will do today through the makeup of this panel.

So, what did they say in this survey? This is not a research conference and I just today want to very quickly highlight a few things. And the first one is this: public stereotypes notwithstanding, young Black men do not equal troubled young Black men. Those are not the same things, and I will spare you the data completely. But what they show is that, while young Black men do face challenges, and they definitely have to worry about things that their White counterparts don't worry about, because of the history of our country and deep underlying issues like racism in our country, most young Black men are doing pretty well, they're feeling pretty good about their lives, they're optimistic about their futures. I'm not sure that that's the general picture that most Americans have in their heads about young Black men in America. So, that's the first point.

The second point, the smaller - but I would add, emphatically, by no means small; it's not small at all - group of troubled young Black men. They have all the problems that you know about, from drugs to crime to children out of wedlock, to violence in their lives, but their stories are not simple, they don't all move in one direction, just "bad," as many people think, they're not without hope, so let me just show you one chart about that, if this will come up - which it won't.

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There we - let's try again. Um-hum. Great. Let's go back. I do want to show you [inaudible] violence. I'm good now? You promise? Okay. Thank you.

These are young Black men with problems, the kinds of problems a big chunk of young Black men, but not the majority, with the kinds of problems you're familiar with - been in prison, problem with alcohol, drugs and other problems. But, look, 86 percent say being successful and a career is very important to them; 83 percent are mostly optimistic about their future. A big percentage prays at least once a day. Only 10 percent feel hopeless a lot of the time. Since this forum is entitled, "Paths to Success," I thought I'd emphasize the results in this survey that show there's something to build on, even for troubled young men.

And, finally, just in these brief, selective highlights from this survey, what does this survey say about where solutions may lie?

When I was Human Services Commissioner - this was some time ago - in the state of New Jersey, I was in Cumberland County, New Jersey, which I'm sure most of you have never heard of. It's in the far southwestern corner of New Jersey. It's actually below the Mason-Dixon line, and it's actually the most troubled part of New Jersey, by the statistics about problems, worse than Camden and even worse than Newark, and I was implementing my biggest initiative, which was a school-based services initiative - 90 school-based services sites across the

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state - and I was meeting with young people, and I was being the technocrat. So, I was asking them, "What's the most important service to put in these school-based services sites? Do you need medical care? Do you need mental health services? Do you need counseling? Do you want a pool table? Do you want midnight basketball? What is it?" And I'll never forget this young man looked up at me, and he said, rightly, "Commissioner, you just don't get it at all. It's not this or that service; what we need is somebody we can talk to whom we trust." And what it really said to me is there's no single magic answer, there's no single intervention that will unlock the hearts and minds of every troubled young man or woman, and there isn't one in this survey, either.

But there were two things that jumped out as important when we asked the question, "What variables, or what factors, in this survey are the strongest predictors of avoiding problems and doing better in life?" And that's the last thing I want to show you here, avoiding problems. What were the strongest predictors? And the winners in this survey were "staying in school," and the longer the better so, graduating from high school was more powerful than some high school or college more powerful than high school, and having hope for the future. Hopelessness was a big enemy and, obviously, no single way to defeat hopelessness.

With those highlights we're ready to turn the program over to Professor Ogletree. I know he needs little

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introduction to this audience. I'm just going to say that he's, as you know, a distinguished professor of law at Harvard University, he is a distinguished scholar and author. He also, by the way, has strong roots in this community, having served in the D.C. public defender's office where, by the way, his daughter works today as chair of the board of U.D.C., he's a vital member of our board of trustees, whom our chair of our board, Sheila Burke, who's sitting right here, and I rely on tremendously, and he has a special status I didn't think could be achieved: he's at least as fervent a Boston Red Sox fan as I am.

We begin with a short video produced by *The Post* as part of their multimedia series and then, with no further intervention from me, Professor Ogletree, and a man who needs absolutely no introduction to this group, our expert guest of honor, Dr. Cosby. Thank you very much.

**PROFESSOR CHARLES J. OGLETREE, JR, JD:** Black men of D.C. What does it mean to be a Black man?

**MALE SPEAKER:** What does it mean to be a Black man? What it means to be a Black man...

**MALE SPEAKER:** What does it mean to be a Black man?

**PROFESSOR CHARLES J. OGLETREE, JR, JD:** Is there racism in the world? Sure. But it doesn't have to begin your stumbling block.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Difficult to be a Black man in America now.

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**PROFESSOR CHARLES J. OGLETREE, JR, JD:** To be a Black man is to know that your history has been totally transformed. At one time you could be sold for less than \$50. Now, you can do anything that anyone else can do.

**MALE SPEAKER:** With good training, perseverance, and, certainly, in my view as a reverend, depending on Jesus Christ, you can accomplish whatever you'd like.

**MALE SPEAKER:** The struggle. You know, you're out here on the streets like I am, you know, you need somebody to try to help you, so you can be able to survive.

**MALE SPEAKER:** It is an unfortunate aspect of my job and many of the people I take care of are Black.

**MALE SPEAKER:** We're playing basketball and the police come over and [inaudible] some arrests. It's hard being a Black man in D.C.; a whole lot of discrimination is going on.

**MALE SPEAKER:** A man is a male who is honest, reliable, as well as self-reliable. And he assumes responsibility, not only for his own actions, but for the actions of those persons he is responsible for.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Blacks in America should never forget, we've got nothing out of this country that we didn't fight for.

**MALE SPEAKER:** [inaudible] still smoking .45 and begins to cry [inaudible] looks in some eye, brown lifeless eyes, dialing 911 but it's too late, I'm already drifting towards Heaven and that's when I view my funeral [inaudible] my mom screams through the top of her lungs, "Don't you see? You're

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killing each other! Over what?"

**MALE SPEAKER:** You know, I think I've done a tremendous amount and I think I've been an incredible role model as an African American leader.

**MALE SPEAKER:** We have our advantages, you know? The women love us - all races. They love us, because we're beautiful.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Well, I actually think I'm a better role model than some quarterback having sex on a lake in front of some kids, quite frankly.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Well, you have to be extra strong.

**MALE SPEAKER:** I think the obligation that I have, particularly as a Black man, but also as a Black physician, is to help the system recognize that these young Black men that we're referring to who are victims of violence are people, and they live life just like everyone else does.

**MALE SPEAKER:** I can show people that I can make it in the world and that we are all part of the people and that we shouldn't hold grudges against nobody.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Self-empowerment.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Actually, I define myself as being a person who - well, there's no question about it; I am colored, or Black, or Negro, something that I'll be the rest of my life.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Unless you've been baptized by fire, I mean, you're not going to get the fire. You can't lead where you won't go. You can't teach what you don't know.

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**MALE SPEAKER:** But, at the same time, to be a Black man is a wonderful thing. It's a wonderful thing; it's not always a struggle. Sometimes it's a good thing, too. You know what I'm saying? The women, the people you meet, the history that we have and the future that we got. You know what I'm saying?

**MALE SPEAKER:** All you see is Black men provoking crime in my area, especially. So, I feel like I'm a role model for the young kids, show that there's positive leaders out here, you know.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Anyone who has the potential of being treated as a second-class or sub-citizen, we should be their ally, based on our history.

**MALE SPEAKER:** I do believe that there are some who are, in defining themselves, like to think of themselves as not being Black.

**MALE SPEAKER:** When it's asked to me, "What does it mean to be a Black man? What does it mean to be a Black gay man?" It means for me to embrace fully who I am.

**MALE SPEAKER:** And that's something that you can't afford wherever you go, whatever you do, how high you go, you are that.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Most of the time, when I find people angry with me, what they're really saying is, "How dare you to live so boldly?"

**MALE SPEAKER:** And you know, growing up, well, now, when being Black wasn't positive; that wasn't much of a

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compliment, maybe I cringe a little bit still when I'm referred to as a "Black," but I'm learning to live with it.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Dr. Cosby, thank you for joining us today. I wanted to first say thank you to you and Camille Cosby for what you have done.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D.:** Now you've saved the day.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Absolutely. Well, because what we do know is that for decades the two of you have publicly and privately given millions and millions of dollars to address these issues. You haven't run for political office yet. You haven't announced that you're trying to be a national spokesperson but, two years ago, at the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brown, you stood up to say there is a problem in our community, and we need to address it. And here we are at this forum today talking about Black men, and it's hard even to find a Black man, but your sense about what do we have to do, what's your sense about what we have to do as a large community, to address the problems of Black men, plural?

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D.:** This is going to be very quick. It's the way I like it. *The Washington Post* ran a clip and then they edited it, and then they showed us - somebody did - of what they wanted us to see these men saying, defining what is a Black man? Unless I missed it, I heard not one Black man say anything about being a father. I heard not one Black man say, "My responsibility..." - not, not - they just didn't say - I

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heard one fellow say, "I am this and I feel that I am an example of ...," but the family and the structure of it, not one edited version of these people with a camera on a drive-by. I'm looking to media - and I don't like media. I don't like people who see and can't tell the truth. I don't like people who talk about Jesus and misunderstand the contract between the human being and God. If we are Christian we believe in it - I'm not saying one's better than the other - but our contract was - and is - to look after the garden. This is God's garden. It doesn't say - just because it says, "The Lord will find a way," it doesn't mean for you to sit there and wait for Jesus to come and cut your grass.

The Lord gave me strength to continue to stay afloat until help came for survival, etcetera, etcetera. I'm talking about that film. I'm talking about the newspaper. I'm talking about things called "statistics," where a man tells me, "Actually, it's not as bad as it is." I don't want to hear that shit. I want to hear that one death caused by somebody with an AK-somethingdy-something, "How did he get it? He's got no place to practice. He aims at you and shoots and hits homes." You understand me?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Indeed.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** I'm not interested in his statistics telling me things are not as bad as they seem; they're horrible. They're horrible. You're going to hear from this panel - and these people are not drive-by people trying to

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define something. These are people who are helping. And they have their own numbers. They have their own jobs and they have their own wants. All I know is, Doctor, when I was in Newark, and a woman stood up to speak to somebody from the school council of [inaudible] - and these are people of my color - this still is a problem. People like this. We used to be able to vote this way, and know that that was protection against this color. No, no. They're in cahoots and they dislike us as much. And these school people who keep coming back and saying, "Well, we just had a meeting. We just went out on a summit. We went someplace and we're going to put this out." It should have been out. Things should have been out.

I don't know when it was that Jesse Jackson said to me, "Babies having babies." When he said it, it should have been out and action should have started - immediately. Us. It's on us.

Congresswoman Holmes Norton said, "People give money, but that has to do with the money giving. We still have to behave with it." How true.

There was a meeting - and I'm finishing up now - a gentleman who [inaudible] Arthur Ashe [inaudible] was at Harvard. We flew in. He wanted to start a school, a private school, for African American kids, brilliant people, and he was talking about this school. So, one of the people he had invited was a gentleman who had run the Harlem School of something-something. I remember doing two benefits for them

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because they had run out of money and they needed money. We do the benefit, put some money in, and then they came back again. "We've run out of money again." This is Black people. "We've run out of money again." We did another benefit and then the thing closed. So, I said to the gentleman, "Well, here's a gentleman who's had experience running this kind of thing. What happened?" And this Black man said the following - and he felt very comfortable because he's sitting around the table with Black people. He said, "They gave us a million dollars and didn't tell us what to do with it." And I said to him, "Why did you take the money? Did you think you were really stealing and taking something from them? You can't do this. This is not a time to play."

I hear, and I have met people crying about what's happening. And no solution yet. They were just crying because people like the ones on this panel were actually moving to do something about it, were saying things. You see what I'm saying? I'm not interested in some jagumbooms who want to write in their newspaper that I said they're a bunch of knuckleheads and I said that they're cursing, and I said - and then the next thing you know there's a whole fire going out, when the newspaper never did print that I said our children are trying to tell us something and we're not listening.

See, that newspaper - *The Washington Post* - didn't print that, because it would have been too much information.

It would have taken away the crap that they were trying to

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start. Well, good. Because you can stay as angry as you want with me. I am saying what I feel, what elders are saying. People who can't speak, who are too old and too scared, too diabetic, too high blood-pressured, young babies born - I don't care what the statistics say; a Black child in the hospital - there's two words: disadvantaged and the other one? What? No. Disadvantaged and? Poor. Yes. Black. That's what they see. People see that. And if you dress differently, I don't care what these statistics say. You put on a suit and a tie and you're 18 years old and you get on a bus and if you're over six feet tall, some White person is gonna say, "You play basketball?"

I don't care about these damn statistics, man. I'm tired of this "drive-by" crap. We need to talk to the human beings here - and I know about five or six of them. When you hear them talk, they have a passion, and they're for real, Doctor. And they will tell you that a junkie and her 8-year-old son are not statistics. It's a real happening. They will tell you that anyplace in this audience some of these people have cousins, nephews, shooting up. You understand? It's not a statistic to them. That's Arthur. And we can't let Arthur in our house, because Arthur will steal our money. Doesn't have anything to do with who's Black. Yeah, there are White people doing the same thing. But this is kinda shammy.

Harvard does a study - beautiful. But I'm talking about who's on there? What? Get something done. We need

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bodies on these young men, bodies on them. Bodies are on every successful - and they even put bodies on themselves, when you hear the young men from S.O.S. speak.

**MALE SPEAKER:** They're colored.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** Yes. And they may be the most eloquent people here, because they've killed some people.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you for being so subtle, Dr. Cosby. Let me go to Congressman and now Mayor Ronald Dellums, if I can, to sort of set the tone for the conversation that we're going to be having today. Congressman Dellums, you've been part of the commission, you've also spent most of your life in public service in northern California. Tell us what you see, both from your work and your vision, in terms of the challenges facing Black men in our Black community.

**OAKLAND MAYOR-ELECT RONALD V. DELLUMS:** There are so many things I'd like to say, but, first, let me put this in a larger context. We're convening in a nation that each and every day is rapidly becoming multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. That's the reality of America. So, it behooves us to address the issues that confront people of color because it's in this country's enlightened self-interest to do so, and not to do it is to do it at our peril. So, it's not a question of noble obligation; we have a responsibility to address these issues. In an intelligent society we'll start to address these issues because we have to. Because we're going to awaken one morning and the majority of America is going to be people of

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color. So let's start dealing with it right now. And we convene dealing with the issues of young Black men.

The Joint Center for Political Studies sponsored an activity funded by the Kellogg Foundation to look at life options of young men of color. And, for the purposes today, we're talking about African American males, but our study looks at all young men of color.

And our starting point was to look at these issues through the lens of health, starting with the principal that every person should have the right to a healthy life. And by asking that question, if everyone has the right to a healthy life, what are the factors that impede and inhibit young Black men from having all the options that give them a healthy life? That means you've got to look at the psychosocial issues, the economic issues, the educational issues, the environmental issues. We tend to live in communities that are polluted, asthma, other health issues that are confronted, and we have legal issues as well.

So, the Dellums Commission - and I was humbled that they used my name to chair up the Commission - the Commission is looking at all of these issues, so our starting point is that every institution in our society is failing young men of color. Every institution - families, churches, schools, child welfare, juvenile justice, you name it - every institution is failing our young men of color. And, as you indicated, most recently I was in a campaign in Oakland and at the cities is

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where people live and die. And what I saw very powerfully is we're grinding young men of color, particularly African American males, we're grinding them up like glass. And we're doing little or nothing to address these issues. We're not hearing them, we're not listening to them, and we're ignoring the reality of their plight. We're looking at our schools; we're using zero tolerance to kick young men of color out into the streets.

Data shows that if you kick them out into the streets by expulsion or suspension the likelihood of a negative contact with the police is extremely high. Once contacted by the police, the likelihood of incarceration is extremely high. Once incarcerated, the likelihood of recidivism, back and forth, is extremely high. So, when we kick a young Black male out of a school, we're sending them into oblivion, and that's the reality.

So, we're saying you've got to deal with all of these questions. Yes, there is a personal responsibility and that people need to step up to that, but there are some young people who, for a variety of reasons, do not bring the strength to that moment to deal on a personal level. Families need to deal with it, but they are impaired families. They are dysfunctional families. But that doesn't mean that we, as a community, do not have the responsibility to address the reality of these young people.

Churches, you know, many of them are helping young

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people if they can get a federal grant, but I'm saying that we're still failing these young people in our communities because we're not speaking out, we're not reaching out to them. Our schools are failing, our child welfare system is failing, our justice system is failing them. We bust one of these brothers, send them home with a couple hundred dollars; they come back to the community with \$200 to spend and then the next thing they're knocking me in the head because they have no skill, they have no training. We're not dealing with them.

So, to summarize, the Dellums Commission in November is going to put out a report that deals with all of the policy implications across all of these lines, and not just a study that gathers dust, but to mobilize this country with a sense of conviction and focus and passion to address the myriad of problems that confront young African American men, young men of color, and the extent to which we do it, we will profoundly address the problems of America, because the extent to which we deal with problems of young Black men in America, we're going to deal with the problems that are failing in America and the issues that ultimately need to be addressed. That's the framework in which I think we ought to be talking about these questions.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you very much, Mayor Dellums. Let me ask you one quick follow-up question - I'm going to come to Bishop and Loose in just a minute - and that is, you talked about family and what we can't lose and that

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this is the impact of what happens to Black men or Black women or Black families. What about the impact on the family and, particularly Black women, that we have to be concerned about and not lose that and talk about the plight of Black men?

**OAKLAND MAYOR-ELECT RONALD V. DELLUMS:** If I might just make a quick personal reference, because I thought last night about telling this story and then, when you asked me the question, I decided to move somewhere else.

At age 13, I couldn't wait for my mother to come home one evening, to tell her - I was going to a middle school. I was about 13 years of age. There were only 11 Blacks in the school, two males. So, I'm clearly outnumbered. But I couldn't wait for my mother to come home to tell her that I had had a racial confrontation and that I fought and I prevailed. And, so, when she came home, she said, "Well, why did you fight?" And I said, "Because the guy called me a dirty Black African and I beat him up and I won, Mom." And I thought she was going to bake me a pie and fry me some chicken. But her response was, "You're a young man. You have to make the decision whether you fight or not fight and you need to use judgment about that. But if you are going to fight, you should have fought only because he called you dirty, if that was important enough to cause you to fight, not because he called you Black, because you are a member of the Black race, not because he called you African, because you are an African of African descent." She said, "But Ron Dellums is a thousand

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adjectives. Two of them are that you are Black and of African descent. One of them is that you are another young Black man. Wherever you go in this world, be proud of the fact that you are a Black person, but embrace the totality of your humanness."

So, she allowed me to understand that I wasn't just two adjectives. So, I don't get up in the morning and walk out my door - Black man. I walk out of the door, Ron Dellums, a complex human being. So, she didn't reinforce my anger or my violence, she reinforced by humanity and helped me feel the pride of being an African American man. All right?

Now, in that context, she was talking to both my sister and myself because, when she went to her room and cried as a result of this, she came out. I said, "Ma, why are you crying?" She said, "Because I brought you and your sister, 12 and 13 years of age, respectively ..." - and this is a woman without letters; dropped out of high school to have me and went back and finished after I was born - said, that, "I failed you because I have not given you enough to help you feel the pride of your Blackness and your humanity. But, starting today, I'm going to be your Black history professor, your African history professor." So, she gave that to me, gave me that strength.

So, it wasn't a division of Black males, because she was talking to my sister as well. So, she talked to us as human beings who were more than just one or two different adjectives. And I thought that that was a powerful story. I

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hope that it's relevant to this moment, because this is a woman, as I said, who dropped out of school to have me, but who was bright enough and smart enough and intelligent enough to help me embrace my humanity and help me figure out how to make decisions out there that have implications, because beating up that guy in school could have landed me in jail.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** But your mother saved you.

**OAKLAND MAYOR-ELECT RONALD V. DELLUMS:** But my mother saved me.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you very much. Let me go to Bishop and Loose. First of all, let me thank both of you for coming. We appreciate the fact that what you've done - and most people don't know the story - but what you have done in Newark and what you did as two young men, thinking about we have to have peace as a first step to address the problems, and what you're doing now with S.O.S. So, can you tell us a little bit about S.O.S. and what you want this larger community to appreciate and understand about what you're going through and how important it is to address some of the problems in our urban community? Loose first?

**JAMES C. (LOOSE) WHITE, III:** Well, just to start off by saying, it didn't just start with just me and Bishop, it was a number of people who care about their community, who care about themselves, and the whole thing right now is like, when we sit down, me and Bishop, we call it "two different sides of the fence." So, when we sit down we come from two different

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points of view but, at the same time, we come from a Black male point of view. You have to be a man first, you have to take care of yours and your own.

So, we are strong. You know? And we - it's hard to get it out; I apologize.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Take your time.

**JAMES C. (LOOSE) WHITE, III:** When we sit down and talk, on an honest level, we see that there is a problem in our neighborhoods. We want to remove the problem from our neighborhoods. It's lack of finances, lack of education, it's a lack of love and that's just the bottom line right there. There's no love. It's not comfortable. And we need that. We need big brothers. We need the '70s back. That was an era of love. We don't have that no more. You know? And, I'm young. I wasn't here for the '70s. I'm still trying to remember things in the early '90s, so, it's a generation gap. I don't know what I haven't been through. And if I don't have nobody to tell me, which I prefer the older Black male, how am I going to know how to teach the younger ones underneath myself? And, that's just my point of view and the way I feel, that saving ourselves should be implemented so deeply into our roots and in our urban area in Essex County. And that's why I do this.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Appreciate it. And, Bishop, do you want to take us back a little bit how saving ourselves got started and where you are now, in terms of going from just a few meetings, to creating an organization, to do some things in

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the community every single day?

**MARCELLUS (BISHOP) ALLEN:** Well, first of all, this is the furthest we've got. But as far as May 21, 2004, we had a cease-fire agreement, not a peace treaty, a cease-fire agreement, where the Bloods and Cripps came together in a certain building to try to just agree on some things dealing with the neighborhoods. I mean, at that time it was really getting out of hand with the shootings here, there, just anywhere. And we figured, with the help of certain individuals in that city, mediators like [inaudible], Panthers and things like that, you know, people that we could trust, we figured we could go a little further.

So, we had this meeting. We agreed on some things, several sets from the Cripps' side and the Bloods' side, we agreed on it, and, from that day on, we basically tried to enforce it. Now, first, we need you all to know that we couldn't enforce this without a lot of street credibility. Because I'm going to let you know right now none of you can stop nothing that we want to do. None of y'all. And it took people like - and I'm going to say this. That day, I didn't want to do it. I didn't agree with it. It's just that I had a cousin, he believed in this, and I was always a family dude. It's just that, over the years, we lost.

So, when he asked me to do it, I disagreed for a minute, but he came at me, kind of made me feel bad, because our main person talking about family this, family that, he

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threw it in my face, you know what I mean? So, when he did that, I had to think twice. So, I thought twice and I did it. I represented them that day. And when I seen the love that was in that room, or at least the people that acted like they wanted to do this, I figured, "Why not?" And I just totally went from there.

And, like you said, we had several people that was down with this movement, people who got shot in the process, people who got locked up because, when it went down, police did not want it. I'm talking about that night people got arrested. You know, man? And this is what it is, when we're in a neighborhood, this is why a lot of people or a lot of brothers and sisters dealing with the gangs don't want to come out, because they figure this is what's going to happen, like, they got warrants, whatever, whatever, we can't even do something positive without getting record checks. You know what I mean? So, when this stuff go down, you got people that are just saying, "Man, to hell with it. We're going to do what we know to do and we're going to bang."

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** What does Saving Ourselves represent in the Newark neighborhoods in the sense that other people aren't doing what they should be doing? Churches, schools, community organizations? How has this become the community that you both are a part of and other parts of the community have failed you in some ways?

**MARCELLUS (BISHOP) ALLEN:** First, I believe the whole

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community failed us. That's number one.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** All right.

**MARCELLUS (BISHOP) ALLEN:** Now, as far as what S.O.S. is trying to do - and I'm going to let you know, we're two years strong right now. I mean, we really don't have anything. We do this ourselves, but S.O.S., in itself, we want our younger brothers and sisters, particularly the gang members, since this is the big hype for the city, probably the world right now, we need them to know and understand that they've got an option in life. You've got to know you've got an option in life. If you don't know that, then we're lost. We're going to stay lost. So, if I've got to put my face, and Brother Loose has got to put his face on the front line and let them know that, hopefully, if they haven't chosen to knock us off, lock us up, whatever they want to do, hopefully, one of them young brothers and sisters will learn, and want to take our place. We need this movement to continue.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Okay. I want to go to Dr. Leary and Dr. Poussaint because what we've heard both these young men say, which is often not in the conversation, the word "love" came up for the first time, and "family," in the sense that they see the issues beyond just them and their community; it's about love and about family. Dr. Leary, you've done a lot of research on the slave deficit and issues of this significance and you've also just finished a great report on some of the issues that you've found affecting men, particularly African

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men, in our community. Can you tell us about what you're hearing and what that tells you about your research?

**JOY ANGELA DEGRUY-LEARY, PhD:** Absolutely. And I'd like to commend the gentlemen for how well they articulated what's going on and I think it was alluded to by Mr. Cosby as well, there's a sense of a historical context. We didn't just show up here, and the fact that we are resilient and capable of functioning should be no surprise, given whose shoulders we're standing upon.

Now, when we look at the history - and people often look at slavery and say, "Well, okay, what happened after slavery?" That's what becomes important. What happened after slavery was almost re-enslavement, with everything from sharecropping, peonage, convict leasing, where you've got over-representation in the criminal justice system, Jim Crowe, so the freedom, or that movement and that growth, was always coinciding with the oppressive behaviors that are out there. And still we rose.

And I think family, as you talk about, they say we don't know, because we aren't telling them. They have to figure out who they are, so, if you are in a situation where you have been historically marginalized, you're going to figure out a way of getting respect. And what I looked at was respect, and it's interesting because a survey said that to 81 percent of the gentlemen in the poll, respect was important.

What they didn't look at is what happens when you're

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disrespected. And what is that about? And why is it so many young men feel that importance? This is where you begin to look at the hyper masculinity, when you begin to look at the need for a sense of value. And what he said, more importantly, in studies by other African Americans, is that these young men need to feel love. They need to understand what intimacy is. And sometimes the hand on the shoulder makes all the difference. But if all the images that you see, and all of the things that are being projected is that you are non-touchable. You see. You're untouchable because you're oversexed, because you're violent. And so that young boy - not a man - that young boy, growing up, needs someone to help him. And if that family can't do it, there are other people in that community that can and should.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Perfect. Dr. Poussaint - and first let me thank you as well - you were a consultant on the Cosby Show for its many years as a top program, and one of the goals of that is that it was an American family that happened to be African American, but race was not [inaudible]. Here was a family with all the challenges, the issues, the problems, but it always overcame adversity. As you hear these young men today and Dr. Leary, what's your sense, from your profession and from your personal view as a father, about what we face and the challenges for Black men in America today?

**ALVIN POUSSAINT, MD:** Well, it's very, in some ways, puzzling. And, to start, I want to cite a study that was

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recently released by the Yale Child Study Center on preschool expulsions, that is, being expelled from preschools. Twice as many Black children were expelled from preschool and nine out of ten of those Black children were Black males.

Now, what's going on there? Is racial profiling starting at 3 and 4? Or, is there something going on before preschool that relates to the family and the community that it's already making some of those young Black males unable to adapt, unable to fit in, in a preschool level and, when they expel, you can see why we have problems down the road, if it's showing up even before you get to kindergarten.

And, so, we have to ask ourselves some tough questions. And I think they're very complicated questions. Why is it primarily happening to Black males? Are they being expelled because they're aggressive? They're violent? They use a lot of kind of language which the girls don't use, or the teachers can't deal with their aggression? So, it starts very early.

Now, we all have to face the fact - and this is getting into the medical part - women are the stronger sex. I think we're finding that out across the board, across ethnic lines that that is the case.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** I have four examples of that.

**ALVIN POUSSAINT, MD:** And they are surviving - you don't have to - all the statistics. I mean, just around.

Educationally, both with White women and Black women, they're

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just steamrolling ahead and they're going to be the majority in our professions and everything, I think, in short, short order, although we're hanging on.

So, we want to wonder about that because, if you move down the line, many more Black males are said to be mentally, in some way, handicapped, or the old term, "retarded," than Black women, and far more than White males or White females. Well, what is that? What? Is something going on prenatally? See? Is something going on that we don't know about?

Also, the young Black males are much more likely to show up in kindergarten and elementary school with emotional problems so that all of the special education classes are loaded down with Black males; they're more likely to have dyslexia. Something is going on. And ADD? Right? Males have more ADD, Black males have four times, five times more - that's Attention Deficit Disorder, for people who don't know - which also is an issue.

And, then, what's the role of parenting in the early years of life that may be affecting these Black male children differently? If they're being raised mostly by women or in two-parent families, why are they developing so much aggression and anger at a very early age?

Now, what we leave out of the picture, which I come face to face with all the time in psychiatry, is very high levels of child abuse and neglect in the Black community - very high levels, a lot of it related to socioeconomic level.

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That's a serious, serious problem. There's an overuse of beating kids - corporal punishment - so that you have a disparity in White and Black communities. You've got 80 percent of Black parents believing you should beat them - beat the devil out of them. And research shows the more you beat them, the angrier they get. It is not good discipline.

And there's also research and data that indicates that the Black males are beaten more than the Black girls are because, in attempt to control them and put them in line.

The other issue in single-parent families - and I say this kind of anecdotally - is that a lot of the Black mothers struggle to know what to do in raising their Black male children, that it's not totally natural to them, frequently. They know more what to do with the girls. Right? And the girls may be in ways less aggressive and more compliant. But when I go on a circuit and I'm talking about parenting to Black mothers and so on, invariably a Black mother will get up and say, "What should I be doing to raise my son properly?"

Now, the question, in itself, is telling. They never ask me what they should be doing to raise their daughters. All right? So, there's some gap that they need - and here's where the whole issue - what Bill refers to, in terms of family - is that there has to be an emphasis on what are good parenting skills, parenting education, to stand the best chance that we're going to raise strong children? Because one of the things running through all of this, starting very early now,

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since we know about the preschool situation, is high levels of anger in the Black male. So we have to ask ourselves, where does the anger come from? Does it come from bi-racism? Right? We could say that means some kind of blanket way.

But, in reality, and it comes from your most immediate associations in your environment. It's how you feel you're being treated in your own community. And it doesn't have to be physical abuse; it's also psychological abuse - what you say to your kids and so on. They become very angry at a very early age and you can see it in the supermarket and you can see it on the street. I mean, there are so many things. All of you would agree if I said you saw Black women and men calling their 2-year-old kid "stupid" and "you idiot," right? "You're no good, just like your father." I mean, all kinds of things.

So, I think we have to ask that question because anger is also at the bottom of a lot of the rage and the violence and the killing. It's much easier to pull a trigger if you are enraged, right? And if you devalue your own life, in addition, because you don't feel you were loved and cared for, that's where the hopelessness sets in that lets off both [inaudible], both homicide and increase in rate of suicide.

One thing we haven't touched upon here, I'm just going to mention it. We have to talk about the major influence of media on Black people and, particularly on Black males, in our society and how they imitate certain kinds of styles and where violence may become part of the manhood image that they feel

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they have to perpetuate and that's glamorized so much in the media. So, I think that all of these things leave us to ask ourselves some questions about the family and what can we be doing from day one that education starts at birth, maybe it starts at conception. And what can we do as a Black community to fortify the well-being of children?

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you. I'm going to go to Faye Wattleton and Congresswoman Holmes Norton in just a moment, but, Dr. Leary, do you want to have a quick response to Dr. Poussaint's comments?

**JOY ANGELA DEGRUY-LEARY, PhD:** The first thing that I thought about, because so much resonated with me, is that when we start looking at parenting in particular, we have to understand that many of the - you know, we all know that there was a teen pregnancy problem and we, at that point, started throwing condoms at everybody. And what we're looking at now is, what are the results of mama being 13? So, when we start looking at parenting, we've got to look at who is parenting and who parented her. The grandmother, the extended family that used to be there, you could take her to Big Mama, or some other adult. But now she's 35 and wanting to get her party on. So, we cannot ignore what has occurred over time. And even looking at harsh punishment of boys, this is not a new thing. That used to be survival. I mean, look at Emmett Till. The fear of the Emmett Till situation is happening. No, you keep yourself right here. So, we have adaptive behavior that is folded in,

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which has to do with surviving in a hostile environment, so we begin to look at family and how we intervene. We have to look at a break, a severance, as we have known it, in terms of even the people sitting around this table, or those in the audience. We can say, "How many people in this audience have drama going on right now?" And when you have drama going on, you have stress. And when you have stress on a mother, that represents cortisol passed through to the infant. So it begins even before birth, because we are living in environments that are so hostile, that are so trauma-filled.

And so we have to begin to look at the etiology of it. Where does it come from? And how is it being passed along? Because that was my question. How is it folks are still talking about "good hair?" You know? Why is that happening in 2006? You see, we have to begin to look at why that's happening, intervene where it needs to be.

A young woman said to me in my class that I teach at Portland State University, I brought the community in, so social workers could actually look at the folks they were dealing with or planning on dealing with. And when I brought these young people in, this young girl said to me, "My mother had me when she was 13, and when it came time for me to do algebra, she couldn't help me." And so we have to understand it in the context. Now, let's throw a little crack on that. And then we see what's exacerbated the problem.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you very much. Now, I want

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you and Dr. Poussaint before we end to come back to the prescriptions, because you've described some very complex problems that we're facing.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** I just have one sentence. I have a sentence to add to - everything seems to point to the female carrying the child - not everything - but carrying the child. Was the mother on crack? And I think somebody medical needs to say that there's a good chance that the sperm donor, while snorting, blowing, doing whatever he is doing, could have released some bad missiles himself, which could have hit the egg, but could have delivered some ADD, ADHD, and a whole bunch of stuff, so, it's also in that sperm and what the man was doing. He could have been dead drunk on that night, or whatever. We can't just leave it up to whether she was shooting or snorting or smoking.

And the other thing is this: these two young men know and they are, along with the others who are coming, know the word "love" and that's why they went to the corner. They didn't say it. I've heard them speak before. They didn't have the love; they went to the corner looking for it. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** (Laughs). Thank you, Dr. Cosby. M.D. We do have some medical experts who will tell us whether or not that sperm - yeah, we'll get to that before [inaudible]. Faye Wattleton, let me ask you - there are a lot that I'm sure you're [inaudible] interest. I just have one particular

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interest, in terms of making sure we have all these issues on the table, and that is, at least the prevailing myth, that the problems that young Black girls face is young Black men. And some of the studies that you've read and are familiar with tell us there's another problem that has occurred in our community that we need to talk about publicly, about older Black men's impact on girls. Do you want to tell us about that?

**FAYE WATTLETON:** Well, I think you're probably referring to some of the data that show that teenage pregnancy is often the result of impregnation by adult men. And, so, this is an adult-child issue more frequently than we think it is.

But, going back to some of the comments that have been made and thinking about the complexity of this issue - and we talk a lot about our history as African Americans and sometimes we forget that immediately after slavery, we were among the most civic-minded, the most highly educated, the most aspirational, the most determined to be good citizens group of people that have ever perhaps visited upon this country. And it was after Jim Crowe that took that apart that we saw the breakdown in the social structure of our communities but, mind you, we still held on to our communities because we were ghettoized. And I take sort of the, perhaps controversial position that integration came too soon for us, that our civil rights were recognized, but we were dispersed as a people, another Diaspora, the results of which we are living today.

The results of that are teenage pregnancy, because elder women

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are not around to teach and guide young women. We don't live in an integrated Black community in which all of economic and education levels live together and, so, those very powerful images upon which I grew and the dedication and commitment to each of us - and I do resonate with what Bill Cosby has said, that the statistics are just that - statistics. But we really are talking about human lives, and that's what we ought to be concerned about.

And we are dispersed, we are a people in a Diaspora. We don't live in a Black community anymore. There is a theoretical Black community. The social structure and the social systems are being taken apart. Our churches are being exploited for political gain. Our churches are now being invaded by conservative, political operatives that do not have the interest of African Americans at all. But you see them as an important political segment to be exploited.

So I think that these are all of the problems that lead to teenage pregnancy, that lead to too early child bearing and, if you don't have the proper start, how - we talk about black men, but they were once Black babies that were born, presumably, as human beings with, theoretically, the same opportunities, but it's what happens after that that makes a difference. And I submit to you that we really have to find a way to redefine the Black community, because we really are not a community with the kind of cohesion that made it possible for those of us who are sitting around this table to feel very

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passionate about what happens to the least among us, and to get up and do something about it. We like to abandon the Great Society. Well, the Great Society wasn't around long enough to really have any impact. We say that affirmative action is not necessary any longer. Well, that's because there are some of us who have managed to escape and have left so many behind.

So, I don't think that we can talk about teenage pregnancy in any sort of isolated way, although it is a serious problem. And it is a problem within the African American ethnic group. But we have to redefine community again. I mean, if I misbehaved in my neighborhood, my family was Ms. McElroy, the painter's wife, that I didn't dare misbehave, because we all lived together. And I don't know how to recapture that - and perhaps I have a romanticism of it, but somehow I think that it really does get to what these young men are talking about, that love was expressed in discipline, love was expressed in aspirations and love was expressed in a way that made me believe that I could be anything that I wanted to be, because I saw that among my family and the Black community.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** A quick follow-up question before I go to Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton. First, make sure you are passing your questions to [inaudible] if you have questions now. And that is those who were born in the '50s, right after [inaudible] integration, their argument, in response to you, if I could respond to it briefly, is this:

"Well, I had to leave that urban area. Violence, crime, the

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schools are terrible, not good healthcare," you know, all the problems that, you know - and they've left for the suburbs. It could be Washington, it could be Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit - you name an urban city, the Black, middle-class flight has been tremendous.

How do you persuade those who have made it out that they should come back and invest in that community, given what has happened in the last 50 years since integration?

**FAYE WATTLETON:** Well, as I said, this may be a pipe dream, but we have to make the investment. If not the economic investment, we have to invest with our time because I don't foresee any great exodus back to areas that are unlivable even for the people who are trapped there.

But there are many of us who have achieved significant success, affluence and wealth, and we are not investing and we are not voting as in our interest, we are carried away by the so-called "moral issues" when they are directly opposite to our political and our economic interests, and there has to be a reformulation of what family means and what community means. And I think we have to give up this notion that somehow we live together, because we don't. It just simply is not the case and to redefine how we can be a community again, with the reality of our dispersal.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you. Congressman Norton, let me ask you, there is a lot of talk today and a lot of it about personal responsibility, and the question is, you heard

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on the video a little bit of sense that there's not enough that's coming from other sources. As the representative of the District of Columbia, do you think there is some government role, in addition to the idea of public responsibility, individual responsibility? And how do we think about what we should expect from our tax dollars, from our citizenship, etcetera, beyond what we have to do in terms of personal responsibility, do you see both of them being important?

**REPRESENTATIVE ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON:** [inaudible] I'm due back in the Congress to go on the floor protest yet again cuts in programs that are being mutilated. And the last thing we can do is wait on this issue. Nor ultimately are we talking about an issue that all that I could possibly do in the Congress, even after the Democrats, whom I hope get back in power in November, take over. If I were talking about all I could do, I would be off subject. I would be off subject.

Ron said, "Every institution has failed." Yeah. That's just how wide and how deep it is. But, you know, while I have enjoyed this dispassionate discussion, I really want to second the rage of Bill Cosby. Thirty years ago, in doing some research for a speech [inaudible] Jordan asked me to give at the Urban League, I was astounded to find that a third of Black children were born to single women. I said, "Oh, my God. This is amazing. This is counter to our community." We'd always had divorce in our community; these were mostly never-married women. Today, it's 70 percent. This is not about Black men.

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I had a commission on Black men and boys here in the District of Columbia. But that is for a reason. I am looking for a way to save the African American family. And I believe that they have become the key link. Our community is full of marriageable, young Black women and unmarried young Black men. When Bill says, "If 'Father' does not come out of your mouth, you are betraying our lineage," that was the first thing a Black man thought he had to do. What do you think a trek from 'Bama, from South Carolina and from Mississippi was all about? It was about coming to where you could find a job to raise your family and then what you did was, one by one, to bring them up. And still you had your families together. The government has only, after the New Deal, taken any responsibility for the family and then only when it falls apart. And it has taken no responsibility for African American men.

And let me say this: the government, who was chiefly responsible for the problems of Black families, I don't even want in my family life. But I do want - I do want - people like me to go to Congress - and here's my real problem. What we do is we come after the fact. It's like, if there is a leak in the ceiling, the first thing I want to do is say, you know, this could get worse. So, I'll say, "Will somebody go up there with a mop, while we can take care of it?"

What we are doing relying exclusively on people like me in government is waiting until the ceiling falls and saying,

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"Oh, my God. We've got something to do here." The ceiling falls beginning with the failure of Black men and women to do when there was no government, when White people in the north and the south were thoroughly indoctrinated with racism, when there was nobody but two entities. One was the African American church - and they are AWOL, often. So I ask them to resume their calling. And the second, of course, was the African American family.

Now, government is a support system for families that desperately need it. But you don't begin with that; you begin with trying to put together what it takes to deal with Dr. Poussaint's statistic about rage. A child is not born in this world with rage. But, if you're 2 years old and everybody is messing up and throwing things at one another, by the time you go to preschool, you know what to do. The effect on boys more than girls; by the way, there's White boys and girls, too. There is something here that we do not understand.

Black women have a disproportionate influence on Black men that they do not want. And young boys recognizing that the appropriate role model is only partly the woman go into the streets beginning at 7 and 8 and find themselves some role models, some proxy fathers, there being so few proxy families. The rage, it seems to me, comes from the fact that we have sat here with the most urgent problem facing the African American community in our face, which is the decline and fall of the African American family life - of whatever description. Not

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everybody had Coleman and Vila Holmes homes and stayed together all their life, but there was somebody there to help you. There were some proxies there. Well, some of our children don't have proxies. We have to be proxies. We have to organize proxies. We cannot leave it to the schools. The teachers? My God. Try being an elementary school teacher and dealing with all the problems of the family and the street coming in to your classroom every day. And then shake your finger at the teacher. Why not shake your finger at us? Yes, there has to be self-help and self-responsibility, but we're not organizing that. Yeah, I'm angry with it.

[Applause]

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you so much. Let me ask you one other question. Dr. Poussaint's doing his analysis now and diagnosis and Dr. Cosby just asked her if she wanted to join the Cripps or the Bloods.

Let me ask you if you would give us a short, just a minute, Congresswoman, on a history that too few people in this audience know, because I'm going to Jachin and Wayne next, about the history of a time when we did have that village raising a child. And that's - the institute I run is called the Charles Harmon Houston Institute, at Harvard Law School, and Houston was a D.C. native, went to the old M Street High School, which is now Dunbar. Could you share - what people don't realize there was a time public education was the key - no violence, no crime, at least not at this level, so it's not

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as if we've always had this, but, in our lifetime, there was another opportunity. And can you talk about your class, the women and men from your generation?

**REPRESENTATIVE ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON:** Well, you know, in fact what we're seeing today is completely new. Of course, there's always been disproportionate crime among poor people. You ask the Italians and the Jews and the Irish and they will tell you that their kids hung in the street and did all kinds of bad things and then, of course, opportunity became available and then the next generation didn't do the same thing. D.C. was a stone-cold racist Southern town. And it divided its schools into - it was segregated, it was one of the six *Brown v. Board of Education*; it was integrated since I got out of high school, and, until it came on line very late, there was one preparatory - [inaudible] came on line late - there was one college preparatory high school for Negroes. Cardozo was for business, Armstrong was vocational and then - understand this is majority Black town only beginning in the late '50s - and then there was the college preparatory school.

Now, what do you have to do to go to the college preparatory school? Just go. There was no test to get in. And who were these children? These were the children - and this is perhaps the one difference between D.C. and deep South segregation - these were the children of people who scrubbed floors, but were in government buildings, or who were messengers. This was a town which was segregated in each and

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every way and every institution in the town reinforced that. It did believe, however, that education was freedom. So, you went to Dunbar and we had the flagship University; didn't cost that much to go to, Howard University, [inaudible] Teachers' College, the Teachers' College and, so, from the humblest beginnings, if you came up from Carolina, you got in the groove. Yes, Faye, integration came and things changed. Hey, that kind of progress - each generation has to recreate itself.

I don't yearn for the good old days. I want to create for today in an atmosphere with a whole lot more opportunity than we had. There was a time when almost every African American who became prominent came out of Dunbar High School, because people kind of gravitated toward this high school because it was segregated. You think I'm proud of that? It was segregated, so we had a great high school. Well, they would have been great people without it. They would have gone on to colleges all around the country without it. They probably would have done more without it. And, yes, there were these little cocoons. But, for all of us who might have had the good luck to be nurtured in one of those cocoons, from whatever our background, there were - most African American had nothing and had no cocoon. So, with the greater opportunity - yes, much of it provided by government - we have got to meet what government has provided with a step-by-step, block-by-block effort to talk some turkey to our kids to say, "Hey, men, do you know the definition of manhood? Marriage. Children.

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Owning your children. Having a child called "Junior" because he knows who his father is." You think our people aren't ready for that? The fact is, when I speak in D.C., they want to carry me out of the room. They are so into that. The failure of government? Yeah, but it's also a failure of Black leadership.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you very much. Let me ask Jachin Weatherman and Wayne Nesbit, you are the people who I can describe as the exceptions to the rule, two young brothers who grew up here, went to school here, went to middle school together and are the valedictorian and salutatorian of your class at Ballou High School, which means the first and second, in the high school. And I think it's important to acknowledge they've always had soldiers lifting them up behind them, like their two fathers. If their fathers would stand up, who are here today, too?

[Applause]

All right, brothers. The floor is yours. How did you do it? [inaudible] again, over and over again. Is there anything different about you, the two of you, that made this happen, or is there something that you can share with us to help other young people stay the course and make it as far as you've made it?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Well, [inaudible] can start, I mean, like many people already know, it always starts in your house.

It starts with your parents and the people raising you. And I

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remember, you know, when I was young, you know, my father, he always stayed on me, because he raised me and my brother by himself. And he just stayed on me, he just enforced the education. Even though the neighborhood we grew up and the whole Southeast area was just - you know, in the midst of all of that he said, you've got to stay focused, and you know, a lot of things are going to come your way that's not good and you've just got to have a one-set mind, make a go, and don't let nothing turn you away from it.

So, I know, like, every day my father just stayed on me, you know, I was blessed. God gave me a talent to play football and other sports, so I thank God for that. Because if it wasn't for that, I could have been doing a lot of other things - I wouldn't have time to do other things, but I know that it is very important that my father stayed on me. Even though I was good in football or whatever sport that I played, he made sure that without education it doesn't matter how good you are, it doesn't matter who you are. So he just made sure how important that was, and I guess it just stuck with me because he just always made sure that was the key in my life, so I know it just starts in the house and it starts with the people who are raising the child. Because a lot of people don't have that love and caring from their father or from whoever is raising them.

So, I mean, it definitely can be done again. It's not an easy thing, coming from where I came from or where me and

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Jack came from, being, you know, the smart one, getting all the attention, being good in sports and having 4.0; it was hard growing up in our area. You always had struggles. There were times when it was bad in the house but you knew you still had to go to school and stay focused.

So, I would just like to say it just starts in the home, when you are first born, with that parent just being there and just raising up a child as he is supposed to be.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Who were the other people in the community who might have influenced your success, beyond your father and family? Were there other people who helped you both positively and negatively to stay away from or be a part of?

**MALE SPEAKER 2:** Yes, at young ages, our coaches taught us so much, just about life, period. Like, our coaches, they would tell us about how it was when they were younger and they were so much older than us, it was, like, we were listening to them at a very young age. Our parents, I guess they knew that they should get us in sports and get us active at young ages because it would better us as people and get us more talking to other people and interacting with kids our ages, so I guess our parents understood that.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** How do you influence the next generation - and I guess it's hard as Valedictorian and Salutatorian; you don't get much higher than that - are both of you doing something now, looking back, those 8-year-olds, 9-year-olds, to try to tell them, "Hey, it matters now - right

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now. Study habits, discipline, you know, getting at home, being responsible?" Are you able to give anything back now to the young brothers and sisters below you, who are trying to fight the same battles you're fighting?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Well, right now, I know we could. I mean, if we had the opportunity to speak to them, I know it would be a lot of stuff we both could tell, because it has to start at a young age, because a young mind can get lost as early as 2, 3 years old. So, it has to start at a young age, so, I mean, if we had the opportunity to talk to them, I think we could make a difference telling them our story and where we came from, especially the youth that are from our area. I think it would be good for them to hear a success.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** All right. And dads and Dr. Cosby, I think we can bring these young men in from Holy Cross to go to Hart Middle School? [inaudible] middle school?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Yeah.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** To talk to that stage group? Were those the young men and women you could talk to?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Yeah.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** We could bring you back from your break from college?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Yeah, sure.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** We've made a deal already today. Great, great.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** Look, look. The story

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that the two of you happen to be telling, it's sort of like the cover of the book. I want to go inside of the book. I want to go inside and I want you to tell me how you went from division to algebra, without stopping, without quitting, I mean. How did that happen?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Well, you have to first set goals for yourself. And -

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** Stop. Stop. Who told you that?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Well, our parents told us that ...

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** And who else?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Teachers, everyone.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** Now, stop again. See, that's from one side of the fence. Now, we need your cooperation. All parents, teachers, anybody who wants to help, we need - and any person older than 17 - learns you can lead a horse to water. Now, you are two drinking horses. Tell us how you managed to put in your mind, without fear of, I hope, strangulation, mutilation, never living anymore, how did you manage to believe in these people, in spite of all of the things going on, being called names, all of the things? In you - go to the inside of that book, because people need to know.

**MALE SPEAKER:** I guess it was just taught to us at a very young age and I guess we just processed it. I don't know exactly how you can process that information at 2 and 3 years old, but it was just taught and told to us over and over and

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over, so I guess we just heard it so much that it was like, "Yeah, that's the key to success. You have to set your goals and you have to make sure that you don't get sidetracked by anything and you just go straightforward."

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** And what happened ...

**MALE SPEAKER 2:** And I just wanted to add to that, the reason why you do such things is, when you're coming from a place like we did, you hope for a better future, so you do things to - hopefully your future can be better. And I know when I was growing up [inaudible] - I'm still growing up; I'm a young man - but I know that I didn't want to be in the position that me and my family has been in all of my life and I knew to better that situation I had to better my education and whatever else I did, I knew I had to do it to the best of my ability to better my future, so I guess that's another reason that we did what we did.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Let me ask you one related question as well, because one of the amazing parts of the competition is that you guys challenged each other over and over again. And what was that about? Was it because you were athletes, because you were students, because you were friends? How did you create a bond so that it wasn't good enough just to get over? It was important to be an A student; that is, you were striving for the best every single time. How did you push each other?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Well, I know, because we're both very

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competitive in anything, if it's playing video games, I want to win and he wants to win. So, that came in schools, sports, we wanted to be the best and that just stuck with us in everything that we did. We just wanted to always be number 1, so I guess it's just that competitiveness in us to strive and just be the best in everything that we do.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** One final question. And there are, with all of our examples, there are people as smart as we are, but who didn't make it. What about those brothers who didn't make it? Are their folks who were with you all the way through, but started to drop off from the middle school to high school?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Of course. I would just say they probably got sidetracked, like they'd be out in the streets, probably, hanging with some of the other guys that were teaching them things that they shouldn't have been listening to, or whatever, so that's why I say it's important to set your goals and make sure that you do not get sidetracked, you go straight and you get what you want to get.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Well, we have both the radio and the TV audience, but for the radio audience, I've seen video clips of you and stories of both of you. You have your dreadlocks, you have your braids, you have the baggy pants, how were you able to be who you are, and still be the student? Was there a challenge? Were you comfortable, in a sense, because you didn't have to wear a bow tie or a suit and walk around

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with a briefcase? What is it by being both part of the community and by being smart? How did you show that smartness to others?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Mostly, everybody already knew, because we'd been doing it for so long, people just know. They just know. A lot of people know us already for different reasons, whether it was football or just friends or whatever, and a lot of them, they already knew we were smart. We've been doing it for so long.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** A very final point that I'm going to Ras Baraka, is there anything that either of you want to say to your dads, who are here? [inaudible], but there they are.

**MALE SPEAKER:** Yeah. I love to say something to my dad. I'm proud of him and I love him with all my heart and I'm just glad he stuck with me and my brother for so long, because I know we were hard to raise.

**MALE SPEAKER 2:** And, to my dad, I just want to tell him, I love you. That's it. I just want to thank him for everything. If it wasn't for my dad, I wouldn't be the person I am today. So I just want to thank him.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Great. Thank you.

[Applause].

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Ras Baraka, you've been very patient sitting here, agitating, wanting to get in. You've worked with the young men in Newark, you've been involved in politics, there are issues of what would work with our youth.

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What's your sense of the challenge we face, and what's the message you want to leave with this audience here, with the wider audience who are here, what we're talking about today?

**RAS BARAKA:** Well, so much has been said already. You know, I was sitting here. I was thinking James Boylin [ph] a bunch of times, from watching the video and then listening to people. He said, "As long as you think you're White, I'll be forced to think I'm Black." And it made me think of this whole notion that we're talking about the Black community, the White community. See, we never say "the White community," because the White community is supported by the super structure that already exists - by the media, by the church, by everything that already and normally is there's the White community.

And the Black community exists in spite of this community. And, hopefully, that we get the resources and the strength that we need to move on and do the things that are necessary. And our culture has been there to help us survive and it hasn't been a culture of what people are saying now; it hasn't been a culture of people who don't like education or devalue education - that's not our culture. We sought education even when it was illegal for us to read and write. I mean, we're not the culture of people who love to have kids out of wedlock or - that's not our culture, you know? We got married when we couldn't get married. We jumped the broom when it was illegal for us to be married. We sought out our relatives after slavery. I mean, that's not our culture.

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These things have come because it's difficult to find out who and what you are in a country that constantly and constantly tries to make that invisible or disappear that.

Imagine being a father trying to raise a child and trying to find a cartoon for a child to watch, a decent toy for a child to play with, to shop during Christmastime to buy something that looks like your child or something that looks like your family, or something that resembles your neighborhood or the things that you think are important to you, or that you value. It becomes difficult. So, most of us try to push that aside and move on and do what we can. And because of integration, that was talked about, or because of the "flight," I would say - I don't want to say "integration" - because of the flight of the Black middle class and so forth and people like that, and the so-called academia in our communities, it's been difficult to define what our culture is, and where we've been and where we should go and what's happening now and why we're in the situation we're in. So, people are figuring it out on their own.

And then you have these things like this video. When I watched it I was kind of disturbed a little bit. I want to say only because, to reiterate what Dr. Cosby said, that to say that things are okay speaks against the fact that, over 30 and 40 percent of us are not graduating from high school. It speaks against the fact that we're being murdered at high numbers in these communities. It speaks against the fact that,

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in some cities, there is almost 50 percent unemployment. You know? So, when you talk about the Kerner Commission, you have the millennium breach, which exists now and which talks about how situations have almost worsened in some aspects of our community. And, so, it speaks against that.

And then you ask the guy a question, "Do you want to be successful?" Well, I think all human beings want to be successful. I think everybody who's alive, like a caterpillar wants to be a butterfly. It has no choice. It's just science. When you're born you want to grow and develop. It's just a natural feeling to want to have success. Because you're a gang banger doesn't mean you don't want to be successful, it means that you think your success is tied up with your need to be a gang banger.

What we need to do is take that out of there and say, "You can be successful without being a banger or, if you decide to do this, then maybe you need to organize your community and do this in another kind of way, other than just shooting people."

Yes, there are frustrations and there are problems. And I think these kids, as a teacher and an educator, are frustrated or angry because they are isolated, alienated in their community, and they are powerless. And they see their fathers as powerless and alienated. They can't do anything. Can't do anything about the garbage on the street, they can't do anything about the teacher in my classroom, can't do

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anything about the fact that I don't have any books - that's happening, I can't even bring food home to my mama. My mama's here, breaking her neck with all of us. Every time you come in you punch her in the mouth. You know?

There's something - they become powerless, alienation. Every time I walk the street, the police have to stop me, because I'm going to the store or coming back from the store. I can't stand here, because this corner is a drug corner. Can't go here; I have to make decisions about how I can walk, where I can walk, what I need to wear, what I can't wear, how I can be mistaken for this. So, of course you're going to be angry and alienated. When you grow up as a child and you see this kind of pattern that's happening, as a 2-year-old, you imitate those patterns of anger and alienation and you go to school and you act out the same way your mama acts out, cussing out the father, and the front. Or you act out in different kinds of ways.

And I don't want us to leave here thinking that the Black community is the only community with all of these problems. These problems are worsening, to us, because we don't have the super structure, that I talked about earlier, to help us deal with these kinds of problems of White teenage pregnancy or the fact that there are White people taking drugs and are on crack and drunk, as well, but we don't have the kind of support that other communities may have, to help us get through these situations and incidents. We don't have that

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kind of support. So, I separate into self-determination and democracy. The self-determination is we have to have the ability to do for self, to fix our own community, to stand up and do what we think is necessary to do in our neighborhoods, and we did that during slavery, and we did that during Jim Crowe, and we need to continue to do that. And I think we have stopped doing that, and we have to begin to take care of our families and take care of our communities on our own.

And the second thing is democracy, because we are a part of America, because we are American citizens, because we pay taxes - that some of us don't want to pay sometimes - that we pay taxes; we can't bury money in the backyard like we used to. We do these kinds of things that we deserve the same kinds of things that other Americans deserve. We deserve all the institutional benefits that come with being American. We deserve those things, and we ought to have them. And so we should fight to get them.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** I want this audience to know who just spoke. There is a story, and it's a true story, I believe, about this young man that recently he was walking through Newark with a friend. And a man jumped out from somewhere, and put a gun to his friend's chest and, I guess, the fellow was talking about, "Give me your money, or your life," and I don't know what he planned to do with the other person's life, and Ras stepped in front of the gun and asked

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the man, in a few choice words - I think it had to do with whether he had lost his mind or something like that - and the man with the gun pulled it back and told his friend that he was lucky that he was walking with Ras.

So, this is the kind of human being who is speaking here. This man has an aura about him. When we are looking at our own community, we also have people who are being shot and killed and then people don't want to tell who did it.

In Philadelphia there is a woman - I must bring this story to you - who said she's not telling - she saw who did the shooting - but she's not telling. And her reasoning is the following: her son was killed three weeks ago and nobody came forward. So, she's not telling on the other people, because nobody told who shot her son. Thank you.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Mr. [inaudible] let me just - one quick comment, because you're at the epicenter; you're not the teenager anymore, you're not the grey lord yet; you're right at the center. In your sense, in your lifetime, that these problems that we've all described can be solved? Or are you pessimistic about whether we can really solve the problems in our communities in your lifetime?

**MALE SPEAKER:** Well, I don't have the luxury of being pessimistic, so I have to be optimistic. If you're going to be a leader, or in charge of something, you have to be optimistic about the future. I think that we've been through so much that, to be pessimistic does a disservice to our history. I

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think that any problem that we have can be overcome, but it takes the will and the support of us as a group, and not as individuals, to take on these problems.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Okay. I'm going to go to Rev. Issac and Dr. Rousseau in just a minute. I want to go to Steve Holmes. You've heard a lot - Steve, I wanted to ask you one question to respond, and then you can talk about other issues that you want to reflect on. There's been a lot of criticism in the media today and you've been patiently listening to it, but, to what extent do you, as an African American male working for *The Post*, and having worked for *The New York Times* and editor now, to what extent, even with this series on being a Black man, do you see it as a crisis, as others have described it, or is that too dramatic? The anger, the frustration, the rage - there is a crisis. Is that an appropriate description of what you have researched, investigated, and what you want to report on, or is it something different?

**STEVEN HOLMES:** Well, I think whenever you have about 30 percent of any particular group in trouble, that's crisis. I don't think there is any question about that. But I also think that we should never forget that the opposite of that is 70 percent who are doing pretty well. And certain people have said that they don't want to hear about that, they just want to focus on the crisis, to make sure something is done about the crisis.

I have no argument about that, except to say that I

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think it gives a distorted picture of Black men. Now, if we want to have a distorted picture, that's fine, but understand that that's what it is. It doesn't make us complacent to say that 70 percent of Black men are doing just fine; it just makes us realistic and accurate. And I think accuracy is what, at least we in journalism, should strive for.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** And are you worried, as well, about an audience, a broader - your audience, readership - not responding well if it's only bad news? I mean, is there some value in the good stories, in the success stories? Is that part of the theory there, that we want this wider community, not just the Black man, but the whole Washington and national community know that there are some incredible, successful, brilliant, talented, gifted black Men who are doing important things in America today?

**STEVEN HOLMES:** Well, obviously I think it's important that the wider community have an accurate picture of the Black man. To me, as a journalist, I think accuracy is the thing that I strive for the most. And whether that accuracy leads people to become enraged, complacent, or whatever, is actually not my responsibility. My responsibility is to present the truth, whatever that truth is. And, as I said before, 30 percent of any group that's in trouble is a crisis. And we shouldn't forget that.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Let me just - one other point, Steve. I read in *The Post* this morning one of your colleagues

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wrote an opinion editorial concerned about Washington, D.C. No one should die; we are not wishing death on anyone, but his point was a White person died in Georgetown and it became a crisis for Washington, D.C., where 99 Black men have died this year and it was a footnote. How does the press - I mean, that felt like it should be a front-page story, but it was a powerful statement about his own paper about, "Are we getting this right by focusing on what generates news," as opposed to say, "Isn't it ironic?" as he said, which is correct. Crime, violent crime, has gone down, here and everywhere else, from the '80s until the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But, yet, we see an incident, and it makes it seem as if people have to lock their gates, and the image of crime is Black and male. How do we deal with that?

**STEVEN HOLMES:** Well, again, I hate to sound repetitious, but I think that the thing that we in journalism should strive for is accuracy. If it's accurate to say - and tragic, by the way - to say that 99 percent of the murders in D.C. are of young Black men, killed by young Black men, we should say it. That is going to lead people to believe certain things, but it's our responsibility to be accurate, to be truthful, not to try and hide things.

It's also our responsibility, I believe, to make sure we don't emphasize things that sort of distort pictures. And I agreed with my colleague that having front-page news on the unfortunate and tragic incident of the White man having his

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throat slashed in Georgetown and virtually ignoring so many of the other killings in other parts of D.C. involving young Black men is wrong and that we should strive not to do that.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** All right. We've got five people here who are ...

**STEVEN HOLMES:** Can I make one quick point?

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Yes.

**STEVEN HOLMES:** And I'll be really brief and really quick. Because it goes to Jachin's and Wayne's story. I think it was inspirational - this story was inspirational but it was inspirational for two things. It's inspirational for what they did for themselves, but I got even more inspired reading about what they did to their colleagues and their friends on the football team. And that they convinced them to study hard and to get into AP classes. And it brought to mind something that was in the poll that I just wanted to highlight really quickly. We talk an awful lot about family and the problems with the Black family.

There's also an issue about friendship. In the poll we asked people what they considered important and one of the things we asked was, having lots of close friends, how important was that? Only 26 percent of Black men said having lots of close friends is an important thing to them. That compared to 55 percent of White men.

There's a huge disparity in the value that young Black men, especially, place on friendship. And friendship is

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really, really important and often overlooked. You find jobs through friendship, you find schools through friendship, you find good relationships, you get good advice. Now, some people will say you also get really bad advice from friends. And that's true, that there's a chance that you'll get bad advice from your friends. There's also a chance that, if you have friends like Jachin and Wayne, you'll get good advice. But the only guarantee is that if you have no friends, you get no advice. And no advice is probably the biggest reason why people make bad choices. And, so, as we focus on family and institutions, we also have to figure out ways that Black men can be friends with each other.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Great. Well, let me just ask you one final point, and I'll go to the five to conclude, and that is, could you say a word about how people - because we've got a radio audience and a TV audience - how they can find the series on being a Black man and can you preview for us, if you can - this started in June and this is going to go for an entire year - do you have a rough idea of what else will happen, so we can think about reconvening this audience a year from now, to figure out whether we've done more to solve the problem, or just report it?

**STEVEN HOLMES:** Well, like the rest of Washington, we're taking the summer off and we will start up again with the series in September in the fall.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Now, you're not really taking the

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summer off; the paper comes out every day, right?

**STEVEN HOLMES:** The series is taking the summer off.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** And the series will start again in September?

**STEVEN HOLMES:** In the fall, yes.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Okay.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** I don't understand how you can do that, man. I really don't. And I don't mean to harass you, but we're talking about - you said 30 percent was - I don't know the word - I don't remember the word you used - "crisis" - out of - how can you take off the summer, not writing what you ought to be writing, I think, when our children are out on the streets? School is out. People need to, as you say, hear the truth, see the truth, and this is a predominantly Black area, although your paper goes to the White people - Virginia, Maryland, whatever - what are you afraid - what is your paper - huh?

**FEMALE SPEAKER:** We've got some White people in D.C.

**WILLIAM H. COSBY, JR., Ed.D:** Well, you've got - yeah. Well, those people go - and they go back in their house or whatever. I'm not arguing - my point is, what the hell is closing down on issues like this in the summer? The most important time when our children - it's a hundred and something degrees outside. These people are very sad, they're confused, they have nobody. They think they want jobs, but there is nobody addressing them. Where does your paper give the help

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from the series that was run, if you're going to do it, as opposed to - don't you have somebody? Some junior people, from somewhere, who would love to just have somebody mediate some papers or something to put in your paper over the summer, giving ideas? You could have these two guys write articles for your paper and put it out.

[Applause]

I mean, I don't understand. Yeah, go on vacation. Spend the money that you're making while you're - not you, but the people. It's just horrendous, to me. Thirty percent. Let's look at 30 percent. The 70 are doing fine. That's what they are supposed to be doing. But the 30 percent that's not could shoot some of the 70. The 30 percent need to be cut to at least five percent. These young men - you talk about friendship? Talk to some people who graduate from Howard University. Ask them how many friends they have. They have friends from Chicago, they have friends from Detroit, they have friends from Boise, Idaho. All over the joint. So, I'm just begging you, *Washington Post*, Harvard University, all you people who do this stuff and then report the numbers, we're more than numbers. A dead person on the street - ask the coroner, "What number was that, with the brains out on the sidewalk, who was 19 years old, who no longer can think?" You're not looking at a doctor or a lawyer or something, somebody that fixes elevators.

I know I'm cheating when I say these things, but I mean

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to. We've got to do better than this. I'm holding *The Atlanta Constitution*, *The Washington Post*, all these White newspapers, to look at these Black people as other than some people that you don't take seriously, and look at us and take us seriously. And I'm looking at Black writers who write for these papers to have some integrity, to stand up. You had your best shot when your Judas reported Jesse Jackson saying, "Hymie town." Okay, that's enough of that. Now, let's get down to fact. And, sir, it has nothing to do with you. I'm just spewing what I believe needs to be done this summer. No vacation anywhere at *The Washington Post*.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** I think the new publisher of *The Washington Post* has just given a directive to the editorial board and I'm sure we'll have an answer for you and I suspect, between June and September, there will be some more coverage on this issue. Thank you, Dr. Cosby.

Let me ask Dr. Rousseau and the Rev. Issac - and I'm going to come to James Forman, Corey Wiggins and Mr. Murfree - who are out there doing things right now. Some of the good news - Dr. Rousseau, tell us what you're doing and why it's important, addressing issues as a community, family and Black men.

**EVA R. ROUSSEAU, Ed.D:** I am pleased to say that those with whom I'm involved are working with young men. We realize that young men need a sense of community. They need to feel accepted, to belong, and you may not realize it, but our

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competition of people who tell young men, "We'll look after you," - you see, if they don't have anybody else to look after them, there's a subculture that says we will look after you. We'll protect you. We'll make you feel safe." And then they add, "We'll respect you. We will listen to you. We understand you." And our young people affiliate themselves with them and there begins the downward spiral into a detrimental, destructive and toxic life.

So, we call upon men to surround the young people and embrace them because, you see, we took the young people to the Million Man March. At Dunbar, all the male staff members, the parents, the alumni and businesses, they marched with those young men but then, after that, the young men wanted to know, "Where are they?"

And, so, while we can't give them their fathers, we have to do the next best thing. There are initiatives, and we have to encourage the involvement of fathers. So many fathers feel left out when they would get to schools, because all the calls were made to the mothers. And the fathers felt disrespected. We have to keep the fathers involved. There are many clubs. The young people need someone to go with them places. They worried, when they were going to the Million Man March, that people would look at them and decide that they were going to be in trouble, that they were going to attack them, that they were going to rob them. So, these young men said, "We need somebody with us, to surround us." The love you're

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talking about, they'll let that love come from the person who is going to end up sending them to prison. That love has to come from all of those that I see in here and upstairs there was such an impressive group of men standing - nothing but testosterone power up there, nothing but that. And that has to be spread out, and given to the young people.

So, as far as schools, we have to be advocates. Make certain that the young people are not all herded into special education as a tracking system, because they turn around in the class and seem to be - they were bored. That's what it was with some of them. It wasn't ADHD, but boredom. And sometimes, if they question their teacher, they were considered out of line and out of control and labeled with conduct disorder and so you want to make certain that you are an advocate and that that does not happen to children, either.

But I am so pleased, because Dunbar debunked and refuted the mystery that Black males could not learn. Those Black males that you read about during Black History Month, which is one week out of the month out of February, but should be every day of the year - make certain that you learn about the Black men and their contributions. We say "Dunbar" and they say, "Well, that was a long time ago. What about the ones sitting here right now? That's today."

And, so, I won't take the time but I know that the social and emotional issues that we're talking about in the young children, some are there and they need to be addressed,

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but they need men - males - in their lives. There is such a thing as "male empowerment," and please help to empower our young people so we don't lose them to the streets.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you very much. Is there a web site you have, as well, for the organization?

**FEMALE SPEAKER:** Yes. And I can give you that information to make certain that everyone gets it.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Okay. Rev. Issac?

**REVEREND DONALD L. ISSAC:** Yes, I'm Donald Issac, executive director of East of the River Clergy-Police-Community Partnership and our focus is the 30 percent of those who have been entitled in the survey as the "subgroup" who, in fact, are troubled and on the fringe of following through.

One of our major programs, since you asked about that, is called "Forty Days of Increased Peace," where we have identified the summer as one of the highest risk areas in times of the summer, so we call for intensified intervention and outreach during that time. During the "Forty Days of Increased Peace" kickoff, I think, on June 28 or thereabouts, and for the initial period, here in Washington, D.C., we've had 13 homicides in 14 days, indicating that if we not address the 30 percent, as someone has said, the issues that are on the fringes of our society, if we do not address them, they have a way of finding their way into our living rooms. And, so, we think that that's why that is the focus that we all must have.

In the interest of time, I'd like to just close by

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saying that Congresswoman Norton has said that, in the failure of the community, she identified the church. And she said the church is missing in action. And as the one clergyperson, I think, on this panel, I certainly would like to say we're guilty as charged. The church both has lost its historical origin and legacy as being a help to our community. Not only that, I believe that the church has become a failure to keep its contractual relationship with God and with people, and have become more concerned with the things that we have and the things that we do.

And, finally, I would like to just say in that context, I think Dr. Leary hit a very important point when she talked about our methods of intervention, because what I've found is that even though we in the faith community do have a lot of well-intended and committed people who are in the pews, who are people of faith, who want to do work, but what I found after six years of doing the work is that oftentimes our methods of ministry and intervention are ineffective. That is, that if we go out on the corners and we begin to work with the brothers in S.O.S. and D.C. groups and such as Peaceaholics, and other female groups are increasingly becoming a part of the 30 percent that we have to talk about, our work and methods have to be reevaluated and updated to address the current situation that we find ourselves in. Thank you.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** What you didn't tell us is the name of your church and how we reach you.

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**REVEREND DONALD L. ISSAC:** I have to tell the name of my church because my pastor will be upset, so ...

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Well, I want to make sure you do that.

**REVEREND DONALD L. ISSAC:** But I work at Southeast Tabernacle Baptist Church, but we do work under the East of the River Clergy-Police-Community Partnership. We are the church outside the walls, church folk having [inaudible] have learned very well how to have anniversaries and choirs and pastoral celebrations, but part of my ministry is perfecting the work of the church outside the four walls.

**FEMALE SPEAKER:** I'd just like to give you the name of my organization, because I have to return there and work. We have programs, though, from infant centers to residential homes. And, so, there are a lot of counselors working with children, they work with early childhood development, as well as when they get up to their adult years. And, so, it's a good program and, again, I neglected to give you that, but it's a very fine organization. Associates ...

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** You still haven't told us the name.

**FEMALE SPEAKER:** I'm going to give it to you.  
Associates For Renewal in Education.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** And located in Washington, D.C.

**FEMALE SPEAKER:** It's located in Washington, D.C.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** And the telephone number is?

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**FEMALE SPEAKER:** And the telephone number is 202 939-3551, or 483-9424. Please call them and let them assist you with - we have a total family support program.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you. Corey Wiggins, let me ask you. You have gone through the Barbara Durham Scholars Program and you are now, as a young professional, finding ways to think about giving back to the community. Tell us your sense about this conversation and how we need to do things, from your point of view.

**COREY WIGGINS:** Well, I find myself in a [inaudible] complex. Just because I'm 25 and I can't help but think about the concept, "How does it feel to be the problem?" When you sit down and constantly hear statistics and constantly you hear things about how bad and how things affect African American males, sometimes you can't - I mean, you do get disappointed. But you have to look within yourself to find that type of motivation, that initiative that you're going to buck the system. You're not going to go with what people say that you should be, and what people say that you're going to be.

And I look back and I see - and I'm looking at younger kids who are younger than me - and I see where there is a need. Well, there is a need for support, in which the young brother spoke of love. There is that need. But, also, at the age of 25, I still long for that mentorship and that type of love, as well, from the older brothers, just because of the simple fact, if we're all in this fight together, it should be a situation

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where you have people who have reached a certain level of success and then that generation of people should propel the next generation above them. So, in order to do that, I, myself, and the young brothers need to talk to the older generation to find out some of the things that they went through, some of the experiences that they had, to teach us so that we don't have to experience some of those things. In the sense that once we reach a certain level, we will continue to rise and bring up the younger kids, and that way we can all sit back and look back and then help everybody within our community. It's mostly about the whole love of helping our community, helping people and trying to give back to everyone.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you very much. And let me go to James Forman, Jr., now - and just to put a footnote on this, I'm a proud mentor of James' and most of you may not know him, but we all should know his father, James Foreman, Sr., who was very active in Snick [ph] and one of the most progressive African American leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who set a tone - and I can imagine what it meant growing up in that environment with a father who was out there every day struggling to create a sense of opportunity for us.

And James went to Yale Law School, where he was a top student, he clerked for the Supreme Court for Justice Sandra Day O'Connor when he was there and with all of those titles, awards and accolades, he had offers both at Yale Law School and at Georgetown Law School, where he teaches now, but, instead of

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making money and trying to thrive on his success, he has created a charter school - and not only a charter school, but a charter school that's named after Maya Angelou, with the idea that the children every day will remember history as they learn math and science and technology, and that's what it means. One of the question was, "What about those who are gifted?" Here is someone who is gifted and talented and still finds a way every day to give back. And James, I just want to thank you publicly for all you've done as a young scholar and as a young pioneer in our community.

[Applause]

**JAMES FORMAN, JR, JD.:** Thank you. It seems as if there has been, for the people who are listening in on the radio, you can't see. I've been sitting here and watching everyone speak and everyone on the panel has been nodding for the past hour and a half, listening to the other people speaking. There is so much consensus around the urgency of the problems that we face, as well as some of the specific things that we need to do to fix them.

One of the things that we all have agreed on is that those of us who have had any success, have had it because of somebody, some group of people, some race of people, who have laid down their lives for us and, on an individual level, have loved us, have cared for us. Professor Ogletree is an example for me, of one of those mentors, one of those African American men older than me who - he didn't know me - but we met and he

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decided that he was going to be that sort of mentor for me. And he is to so many people. There's thousands, literally, of African American men that I know that count on this man as their mentor. That is the sort of individual thing that he has chosen to do that I think we all can and are obligated to do.

I was a public defender here in the District, representing kids, started out for two years in juvenile court. And what I saw, day in and day out, is exactly what folks have said, a total failure of virtually every institution, starting with the family, going through to the schools, going through to the social service system. And I talked to my clients about what it was that they wanted. What did they need to change their lives? And this is my point about that this isn't rocket science. The things that they said they needed were exactly the same thing that a lot of the experts here are saying we need. They talked about good schools with high expectations, high standards, and a lot of love. They talked about small classes. They talked about after-school programs. They talked about tutoring and mentoring programs. They talked about having a job that paid them money - legitimate money.

And so we, David Dominici [ph] and I, said, "Well, the kids tell us that this is what they want and the experts say that this is what is needed, so let's try to build a program. Let's stop saying, complaining, and let's build it from the ground up, and develop it. And we talked to Maya Angelou and she was willing to lend her name to this. It became the Maya

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Angelou School. We are a charter school, but we work in partnership with the D.C. public school system. And I want to make that clear. We are allies of the D.C. public school system and, now, ten years out, we have a higher percentage of kids from our school go to college and, of those kids, a higher percent graduate than any of the national averages. And this is a school that still recruits in the juvenile justice system, among the group homes - any kid who applies can come, but we recruit among exactly those places that so many people have given up on.

[Applause]

So, I'm going to end now. We are called the Maya Angelou School. Our web site is [www.seealways.org](http://www.seealways.org). Our phone number is 202-797-8250 and we desperately continue to need volunteer tutors. So, anybody who is interested in tutoring in a high school, we need you and we would welcome you.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you very much. And now I am going to Mr. Murphree, who is with the 100 Black Men, an organization that has done a lot for Black boys and Black men and continue scholarships and mentoring and, Mr. Murphree, tell us about what's going on now with the organization.

**DR. JOSHUA W. MURFREE, JR.:** Thank you very much for the opportunity. When I look around in this room - and I want you all not only to hear what has already been said, but to listen, because when you look out there, you have to ask yourself a question. "If not here, then where? If not you,

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then who? If not now, then when?" Real men, given real time, what they see is what they'll be. When you look around this country, with 106 chapters in 32 states, with 10,000 members serving a 125,000 youth, we are about the business of being about the business of making a difference in the lives of young people.

Now, I got to tell Congressman John Lewis that you all made me go last on this panel. Here's a homeboy from Georgia - not Atlanta, Georgia, but Albany, Georgia. So I had to drive 188 miles to the airport, because I don't fly on small planes. But I wanted to make it to D.C. this morning.

When you look around this country, you've got to understand that there is a systemic problem. It didn't just start ten years ago. But when Roger Sperry [ph] started talking about split brain research, left and right, they understood that African Americans were more spatial, non-verbal and holistic. The entire school curriculum went that way and, ever since then, there has been ADD and ADHD and not understanding what should be done. There has been a disproportionate number of African Americans placed in the school. So the 100 Black Men stood up and got up and started something called the Wembly Project [ph]. We evaluate every student under special education. We found, if you take a hundred students, 50 percent of those students should have never been placed there. We had IQs that were beyond - they were telling families, when they had IQs and standard scores of

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99, at the 99 percentile, they were still placing African American males in those particular schools.

A trajectory problem - if you don't give me ADHD or ADD, then you put me on something called psycho-stimulants, Ritalin, [inaudible], Dexedrine, Ataral, Concert [ph] and everything else. But that's not good enough. You put me on an anti-depressant called Wellbutrin, Buspar, Prozac, all of that, just to slow me down. And if that's not good enough, then you put me in YDC and RYDC, then track me right into the prison system.

But we have got to stand up. The 100 Black Men, at Congressional Black Caucus, came to the White House and said to them that we must change public policy. How in the world do you graduate from a high school or a college [inaudible] you can't find a job, but a compensatory law allows you to finish and just walk out of school at 16? What a sophisticated way of saying you don't want the African American male to make it.

And then, all of a sudden, instead of me staying in the school and you deal with me, you send me to some type of something called an "academy," that I can't mainstream back in there. And, all of a sudden, you say to people in this country, "How can we change the game?"

Now, I've heard a lot of issues and a lot of problems. The reason we get angry, inside the brain is an interior, singular cortex connected to the amygl<sup>a</sup>. If, indeed, you say something to me, emotionally, I have the same feeling as if I

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hit you on the leg. So, it stays with us. So, subliminally, we keep telling African American males they can't make it. Don't tell them that they're in prison. See, if you want to be successful, talk about being successful. If you want to be rich, don't talk about being poor. If you want to do something differently and change the game, talk about shifting the paradigm. If you want to shift the paradigm, you do what these brothers are doing with 100 Black Men right here in Washington, D.C. That's the president right there, serving over 650-something students, every Saturday teaching them about leadership. See, we've got to stop talking about what we need to be doing. It's always a state of Black men. We're in a state of denial, we're in a state of depression, we're in a state of madness, we're in a state of anger - now we need to get in a state of doing. So, once we start delivering - we've got to march people out of prison, we've got to say to folks that we're going to do this. So, when you start looking at an organization like 100 Black Men of America, we've had Jamie Fox, we've had [inaudible] with Susan Taylor, [inaudible] Houston with Steve Harvey saying we're going to launch this. We've had Bill there. And Bill Cosby, we went to the AJC and told them they were full of crap, because what he said was incorrect. He made the right statement but, then they rewrote that. But the media can exploit whatever they want to. Let people talk, let people write statistics. Don't believe in that. Be like the bumblebee. Physiologically, the bumblebee

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is not supposed to be able to fly, because the wings are too small. But you know what? The bumblebee doesn't listen to? Something we need to start is whispers. May God bless you all.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you.

[Applause]

Let me say this. James Foreman mentioned the charter school here in Washington, D.C. I was very pleased with my wife and other parents, like Cathy Reddick and Caroline Hunter-Williams ten years ago, to start the Benjamin Banniker [ph] Charter School. And the purpose was not to criticize the public school system, but to save the children who were being lost. It was too old - our children were too old when we started the charter school, but the idea was to look at Benjamin Banniker, from slavery to freedom, from being nobody to being the surveyor here in Washington, D.C., from doing an almanac, and the school, which celebrates its 11<sup>th</sup> year this year, talks about math, science and technology. That is, the hard subjects, what these young men have succeeded in. And, at the same time, another student like James Earl Martin Phalen [ph], he's a Harvard Law School graduate, a Yale College graduate, he had all of the world ahead of him. And he wanted to do one thing, spend his career working with children. He started the Bale [ph] Foundation. And he gives after-school tutoring in summer school to 10,000 - we call them "scholars" - in Boston and New York and now Washington, D.C. We call every child, from the time they're third grade through eighth grade,

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"scholars." And, so, all they think about is their success and that language matters. And it makes [inaudible] sense.

I met with the Boston Red Sox new ownership when they came a few years ago and they said, "What can we do for the children?" I said, "You can help them with education." They said, "Great. We'll bring them over to Fenway Park, they'll go to a ballgame, give them hot dogs." I said, "No, no, no. That's not what I mean." And what the Red Sox have done is to take 25 African American fifth-graders from urban schools in Boston, each year for the last four years, and give them a \$5,000 scholarship for college.

Now, you think, when you're 10 years old, in the fifth grade and you get a college scholarship, the bragging rights, what that has meant, and it became real and they introduced the young scholars with the Red Sox baseball players and David Ortiz, Poppy Ortiz, was walking out with one of the young men and David said, sort of jokingly, "Oh, so one day you'll be playing with me with the Red Sox." And the kid says, "No, one day I'll own you."

Now, he wasn't talking about actually owning Dave Ortiz, but he was talking about, "I'm going to be on the management side. I'm not going to be a ball player, I'm going to be a ball player owner." And that's the mentality that we know that we can do and we have to do, and I'm glad that Mr. Murphree mentioned it.

One thing I want to mention is this: the organization

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that I'm with is, the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice is [www.charleshamiltonhouston.org](http://www.charleshamiltonhouston.org), and the most important thing he said was in his last remarks, that, "As we're facing the problem today, every year there are hundreds of thousands of Black men coming back into our communities with a criminal record. They can't go to - Madea [ph], she's not here. They can't go back home. They can't get a job. Boston is one of the first cities that are hiring people, despite having a criminal record, and my mission is to have a re-entry program. We have to deal with the fact these are still part of our family. They've left the village but they are coming back. And we have to be responsible for that and handle it in a very concrete way and I urge you to look at the website and see our re-entry program.

And what I'm trying to do - and I'm glad this was so clear for Rev. Issac - here's what I think we have to do beyond all the other great suggestions. One of the things that we need to do is come up with a partnership, and I hope Dr. Cosby can help me do this: find 20 urban cities where we have strong clergy, where we have strong political leadership and where we have strong corporate responsibility, because the only way these folks are going to come back - they can do the laundry, they can cut the grass, wash dishes - there are thousands of jobs that should not prevent people from working, and they become what? They become taxpayers. They become wage earners. They become a productive part of our community. And I hope, as

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we're talking about the pride of Black men, that we're talking about love and family and fatherhood and motherhood and community, because we've done it before. This forum is telling us that we know from *The Washington Post* series that we can do it, and we want to be able to come back and say we each stood beyond our comfort zone and did something to address the plight of the Black man, the Black family, the Black community, which makes it a better community, not just for Blacks, but for every citizen everywhere, in every single way, and I hope that you will agree with me, we're on a mission, a mission to save Black boys. And if we save Black boys, we'll save Black girls and Black families and the Black community, and the larger community. And I hope you'll join that mission and be a part of it. Thank you very much for being here. On behalf of *The Washington Post*, Harvard University, and the Kaiser Family Foundation, I thank all of you, and thank all of our wonderful panelists and Dr. Bill Cosby for joining us today.

[Applause]

**OAKLAND MAYOR-ELECT RONALD V. DELLUMS:** One quick thing. On your list of 20 cities, put Oakland at the top of the list. We're going to be a model city. I came back at age 70, because young people do count. Race, space and place still matter, and young people still count and, in Oakland, we're going to deal with it, so come to Oakland, bring your resources to Oakland ...

**FEMALE SPEAKER:** And Richmond.

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**OAKLAND MAYOR-ELECT RONALD V. DELLUMS:** ...and Richmond, because we're going to be there. One final thing, just before you close. My colleague mentioned that the role of the media is to be accurate. With that I would not debate. But the question is, what is accurate? Just for a moment, take it out of the context of Black male and put it in the context of health care. You can say 45 million people in America lack health care. Accurate. You could say, less than 20 percent of the American people have access to health care. Accurate. You could also say millions of people in America stand outside of our healthcare delivery system, and we're paying dearly for it. We're paying in lives, we're paying at extraordinary levels and it's manifesting itself all over America. That's also accurate. But each one of those accurate statements evokes a public response. And what I'm saying to the media, don't just say "accurate," but be accurate in a way that mobilizes the passions of American people to deal with the problems of young Black males, because they're being ground up like glass in America. That's accurate, as far as I am concerned as well.

**DREW E. ALTMAN, PhD:** Thank you very much. Well stated, and we'll see you in Oakland. Thank everybody.

[END RECORDING]

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