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BLACK MALES AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Prevention Through Afrocentric Socialization

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Most Americans are aware of the high rates of social problems among Black Americans. For example, Blacks are disproportionately represented among Americans experiencing academic failure, teenage pregnancy, female-headed families, chronic unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, drug addiction, and criminal victimization (Poussaint, 1983; *U.S. News and World Report*, 1986). Consequently, there is a great deal of debate among politicians, journalists, academics, and ordinary citizens concerning the etiology of these problems. Those who attempt to explain the prevalence of these conditions among Blacks tend to argue one of three positions: genetic inferiority, culture of poverty, or racial oppression.

Advocates of the genetic inferiority perspective argue that the high rates of social problems among Blacks is a product or expression of Black peoples' innate inferiority to Caucasians and other racial groups. Moreover, advocates of this perspective argue that Blacks possess genetic traits and characteristics that predispose them to engage in problematic behavior at higher rates than White (Garrett, 1961; Jensen, 1973).

A major problem with genetic inferiority theories is that advocates of this perspective tend to differentially apply it in explaining the causes of social problems among various racial and ethnic groups. For example, White Americans have higher rates of academic failure, teenage pregnancy, female-headed families, drug addiction, and criminal involvement than do Europeans (Archer and Gartner, 1983; *Time Magazine*, 1985). However, the rate dif-

ferences between White Americans and Europeans are almost always explained in terms of differences in environmental and cultural conditions.

The genetic inferiority perspective is also criticized for failing to provide evidence of a specific genetic trait that causes crime or any other major social problem (Montagu, 1941). For example, the genetic inferiority of Blacks is often based on the results of culturally biased intelligence tests (Clark, 1975; Hilliard, 1981). Advocates of the genetic inferiority perspective also tend to disregard the role of systematic racial discrimination in generating social problems among Blacks.

The culture of poverty perspective is another body of assumptions designed and often used to explain the etiology of social problems among Blacks. Advocates of this perspective argue that poverty, social disorganization (i.e., the breakdown of basic community institutions, including the family, church, and school), and inadequate socialization of children are the primary causes of the high rates of social problems among Blacks (Banfield, 1970; Moynihan, 1965). Moreover, advocates of this perspective have suggested that lower-class Blacks adhere to a distinctive set of cultural values and traditions that lead to or directly condone involvement in problematic behavior (Miller, 1958; Banfield, 1970).

A major criticism of the culture of poverty perspective as an explanation of the high rates of social problems among Blacks is that this perspective fails to explain why only a small percentage of Blacks who experience poverty and exposure to community social disorganization engage in behavioral patterns that suggest the internalization of values and norms in conflict with mainstream values and norms (Hill, 1972).

The third and probably the most popular explanation of social problems among Blacks is the racial oppression theory. Advocates of this perspective argue that the majority of Blacks, like the majority of other Americans, support mainstream values and goals (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). However, historical patterns of political disenfranchisement and systematic deprivation of equal access to educational and employment opportunities have induced a dis-

proportionate number of Blacks to engage in illegitimate means (e.g., robbery, drug dealing, and prostitution) to attain mainstream values and goals (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

In a more recent formulation of the racial oppression theory Wilson (1987) argues that historical patterns of racial discrimination and the technological transformation of the economy have produced disproportionately high rates of joblessness, female-headed families, poverty, drug abuse, and crime among Blacks.

A major criticism of racial oppression theories is that they tend to overpredict the number of Blacks who are likely to become involved in problematic behavior. For example, all Blacks are directly or indirectly affected by American racism; however, only a minority actively participate in activities that cause social problems.

A STRUCTURAL-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Given the inadequacies of the genetic inferiority, culture of poverty, and racial oppression perspectives of Blacks and social problems, I would like to offer an alternative theoretical perspective based on the interrelationship between structural pressures and cultural adaptations.

The most fundamental assumption of the structural-cultural perspective is that the high rate of social problems among Blacks is the result of structural pressures and dysfunctional cultural adaptations to those pressures. The term structural pressures is used to refer to patterns of American political, economic, social, and cultural organization designed to perpetuate White superiority and Black inferiority. Thus, I argue that White racism and various patterns of racial discrimination are the predominant environmental pressures adversely impacting on the survival and progress of Black people.

Another major assumption of the structural-cultural perspective is that Blacks have failed to adequately respond to White racism. The term dysfunctional cultural adaptation refers to specific styles of group adjustment that Blacks have adopted in response to

structurally induced social pressures. The most problematic of these dysfunctional cultural adaptations include:

1. The failure of Blacks to develop an Afrocentric cultural ideology;
2. The tendency of Blacks, especially lower-class Blacks, to tolerate the "tough guy" and the "player of women" images as acceptable alternatives to traditional definitions of manhood.

FAILURE TO DEVELOP AN AFROCENTRIC IDEOLOGY

Throughout the world, all societies have established sets of ideas by which life is made understandable by their members (Vander Zanden, 1986: 136). Ideas such as these are generally referred to as an ideology. A society's ideology "tells people about the nature of their society and about its place in the world" (Vander Zanden, 1966: 136). In this sense, a society's ideology gives structure to how group members define themselves and their experiences and also provides impetus for group action. Thus the most important function of a society's ideology is that it forms the spiritual and intellectual foundation of group solidarity (Vander Zanden, 1966: 136).

A major aspect of the Euroamerican cultural ideology is that people of European descent are inherently more intelligent, beautiful, industrious, and just than are non-White people (Jordan, 1969; Froman, 1972). All Americans (Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, and others) are exposed to pro-White socialization messages disseminated by the school system, mass media, and religious institutions (Baldwin, 1980; Cogdell and Wilson, 1980).

In America, pro-White socialization is primarily anti-Black. Ideas of White superiority are embedded in every aspect of American society. For example, educational, religious, and mass media institutions all play a major role in the projection and dissemination of ideas and images that convey the innate superiority of Whites and the innate inferiority of Blacks (Boggle, 1974; Cogdell and Wilson, 1980; Staples and Jones, 1985).

The American educational system has played a major role in perpetuating negative images of Blacks by portraying them as descendants of savages and people who have failed to make a

significant contribution to America or world civilization (Woodson, 1933; Baldwin, 1979; Perkins, 1986).

The superiority of Whites over Blacks has also been perpetuated by American religious philosophy and symbolism through the projection of White images of Christ and God (Welsing, 1980; Cogdell and Wilson, 1980; Akbar, 1983). This has had a devastating impact on the psychological development of Blacks. For example, "to embrace a White God is to reject the Black self" (Cogdell and Wilson, 1980: 115). Moreover, being socialized to perceive God as White creates the idea in the Black mind that people who look like the White image of God are superior and people who are non-White are inferior (Akbar, 1984: 54). The most significant problem emerging from the projection of God as White is summarized best in the comments of Welsing (1980: 28): "Therefore it can be said that all Blacks and other non-White Christians worship the White man as God — not as God but as the God. So the White man is perfect, good, supreme, and the only source of blessing." Hence, as a result of their religious socialization in America, "in the Black religious mind, a White man is their creator, protector, and salvationist" (Cogdell and Wilson, 1980: 117).

America's cultural ideology has been deliberately designed to glorify whiteness and to denigrate blackness. Consequently, this process has led to the cultural annihilation of Black Americans (Mahubuti, 1978: 41, 118; Karenga, 1986). Unlike other American racial and ethnic groups, Blacks have failed to develop a distinct cultural tradition that contributes to the psychological, spiritual, cultural, and economic development of most Blacks. The Americanization of Africans in America has resulted in Blacks being locked into the role of America's permanent outsiders.

The failure of Blacks to develop an Afrocentric cultural ideology is a major source of psychological, social, political, and economic dysfunction among Black Americans (Williams, 1974; Mahubuti, 1978). Afrocentricity as defined by Asante is the centering of one's analysis and perceptions from the groundedness of the African person (Asante, 1987). For example, American cultural ideology promotes a specific set of values and images that define what is and what is not beautiful. Constant exposure to beauty standards that

are antithetical to their racial characteristics causes generation after generation of Blacks to experience low self-esteem and self-hatred (Clark and Clark, 1947, 1980; Cogdell and Wilson, 1980: 1-16). Consequently, Black self-hatred has been a major factor that has historically contributed to the lack of unity among Blacks as well as a pervasive low evaluation of Blacks by Blacks. Hence, the failure of Blacks to develop an Afrocentric cultural ideology has prevented Blacks from developing the sort of collective philosophy, definitions, cultural traditions, and institutions that other American racial and ethnic groups have established in order to facilitate their survival and progress in American society.

DYSFUNCTIONAL DEFINITIONS OF MANHOOD

The tendency of lower-class Blacks to tolerate the "tough guy" and the "player of women" images as acceptable alternatives to traditional definitions of manhood is another major dysfunctional cultural adaptation to White racism.

In all societies men and women have distinctive sex roles that encompass a specific set of expectations and responsibilities (Perucci and Knudsen, 1983). Within American society the traditional masculine role prescribes that men be tough, emotionally unexpressive, self-reliant, economically successful, and oriented toward protecting and providing for a family (Brenton, 1966; Fasteau, 1975). Successful enactment of the traditional male role is generally dependent on a male's access to educational and employment opportunities. However, due to their membership in a racial group that has been systematically denied equal access to political and economic power, as well as educational and employment opportunities, a substantial number of Black males lack the skills and resources that are necessary to successfully enact the traditional male role (Welsing, 1974; Stewart and Scott, 1978; Staples, 1982).

Although all Blacks are subject to systematic attacks designed to have an adverse affect on their ability to survive and progress, Black males are its primary target because it is they that most Whites fear and who also represent the greatest threat to the

continued political and economic subjugation of Blacks (Welsing, 1974; Kunjufu, 1983). The high rates of academic failure, unemployment, and imprisonment among Black males are dramatic examples of what Welsing (1974, 1978) has described as the "inferiorization process," that is, a systematic stress attack (involving the entire complex of political, legal, educational, economic, religious, military, and mass media institutions controlled by Whites) designed to produce dysfunctional patterns of behavior among Blacks in all areas of life. Through the inferiorization process, Blacks are conditioned to play the role of functional inferiors. That is, Blacks are socialized to be incapable of solving or helping to produce solutions to problems posed by the environment. However, for Whites, the inferiorization process is designed to facilitate their development as functional superiors. Thus, under the system of White supremacy, Whites are conditioned to solve or help to provide solutions to problems posed by the environment.

There is a great deal of evidence that indicates the adverse impact of the inferiorization process on Black males (Stewart and Scott, 1978; McGhee, 1984). For example, 44% of Black males are estimated to be functional illiterates (Kozol, 1985). Much of the responsibility for these high rates may be attributed to the public school system which promotes these students without their having obtained reading and writing skills (Staples, 1982: 3). Moreover, in some of the nation's largest cities, high school drop-out rates among Black males are 60 to 70% (Poussaint, 1983: 50). Consequently, as a result of their lack of marketable skills and discriminatory hiring practices, almost half (46 percent) of the 8.8 million working-age Black men are unemployed (*U.S. News and World Report*, 1986).

Black males are also disproportionately represented among persons incarcerated. For example, in 1985, Black males represented 47% of the U.S. prison population. Between 1978 and 1982, Black males were eight times more likely to be in prison than White males (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1985b). As a result of their exposure to institutional racism and the inferiorization process, a substantial number of Black males have opted to re-define manhood in terms of toughness, sexual conquest, and thrill-seeking (Perkins, 1975; Staples, 1982). Adherence to these norms has given rise to two

culturally distinct masculinity role orientations among Black males: the "tough guy" and the "player of women."

TOUGHNESS AND PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOR

Black males' adherence to the "tough guy" image is a major factor contributing to the high rates of interpersonal violence among Blacks. Hence, the leading cause of death for Black males 15 to 34 years of age is homicide (Centers for Disease Control, 1985). The tough guy image is also a major factor contributing to the high rates of wife-beating among Blacks. For example, Strauss and his colleagues (1980), found that wife-beating was 400% more common among Black families than White families.

Another problem that has emerged from Black males' adherence to the tough guy image is the fear of Blacks by Blacks (Mahubuti, 1978: 233; Oliver, 1984). In many Black communities throughout the nation, Black people are becoming increasingly polarized as a result of the fear caused by Black males who terrorize the Black community. Their disproportionate involvement in lifestyles centered around idleness, alcohol and drug abuse, drug trafficking, and other acts of criminality is a major source of this fear.

SEXUAL CONQUEST AND PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOR

Black males' adherence to the "player of women" image is another major factor precipitating social problems among Blacks. In his classic ethnographic study of Black males residing in a Washington, DC ghetto, Liebow (1967: 142-143) observed that many lower-class Black males see themselves "as users of women" and are overtly concerned with presenting themselves as exploiters of women and expect other men to do the same. Hence, attempts to enact the "player of women" role is a major factor contributing to the fact that 25% of all Black babies are born to teenage mothers, 55% of Black babies are born out of wedlock and nearly 50% of Black families are headed by unmarried females (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983; *Ebony*, 1986). Moreover, Black males' adherence to the "player of women" image is responsible for the high rates of

divorce among Blacks. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983), in 1982 Blacks had a divorce rate (220 per 100,000) that was two times that of Whites (107 per 100,000).

Wilson (1987) has argued that these conditions are primarily products of structural pressures, that is, historical patterns of racial discrimination and social dislocation due to technological transformations in the economy. I acknowledge the power of structural pressures to impose constraints on the lives of uneducated, low-income Blacks. However, I also believe that these problems are products of a cultural context in which the Black community has allowed too many of its males to make the passage from boyhood to manhood by internalizing and acting out definitions of themselves "as users of women."

The remaining sections of this article are devoted to describing an alternative model for reducing the occurrence of social problems among Blacks. Although the model is applicable to Black males and females, I have limited discussion of its application to Black males, primarily because I believe that the most critical factor contributing to the high rates of social problems among Blacks is the dysfunctional cultural adaptation of Blacks males to White racism.

THE AFROCENTRIC WORLD VIEW

In recent years, an increasing number of Black scholars have begun to promote Afrocentricity as an intervention paradigm to facilitate the transformation of Blacks from a state of dependence to a state of independence and self-reliance (Asante, 1980, 1987; Karenga, 1980, 1987, 1988). The Afrocentric cultural ideology is a world view based on the values of classical African civilizations. Advocates of Afrocentricity argue that the high rates of social problems among Blacks are a direct result of the imposition of a Eurocentric world view on African Americans (Asante, 1980; Akbar, 1983; R. Karenga, 1986). According to Karenga (1988: 407), Eurocentric socialization has had an adverse impact on Blacks, including: (1) the internalization of a Euroamerican mode of assess-

ing the self, other Blacks, American society, and the world; (2) the loss of historical memory of their African cultural heritage; and (3) self-hatred and depreciation of their people and culture. Thus, the failure of Blacks to develop an Afrocentric cultural ideology and world view has made Blacks vulnerable to structural pressures that promote definitions of Blacks as being innately inferior to Whites, ignorant, lazy, dependent, promiscuous, and violent.

An Afrocentric cultural ideology would encourage Black Americans to transcend cultural crisis and confusion by reclaiming traditional African values that emphasize "mankind's oneness with nature," "spirituality," and "collectivism." The cultural emphasis of Afrocentricity is in contrast to the Eurocentric world view which encourages "controlling nature," "materialism," and "individualism" (Mbiti, 1969). The Afrocentric world view is not anti-White. Rather, its primary objective is to facilitate "a critical reconstruction that dares to restore missing and hidden parts of our [Black peoples'] self-formation and pose the African experience as a significant paradigm for human liberation and a higher level of human life" (Karenga, 1988: 404).

In addition to the collective oriented values that formed the foundation of classical African civilizations, the resurrection of the African world view in America must also incorporate definitions and meanings that reflect the historical and contemporary experiences of African Americans in an alien context. Hence, there are two specific American definitional realities that must be incorporated in an African world view resurrected out of the American experience of displaced Africans.

First:

The Afrocentric cultural ideology must acknowledge the omnipresence of White racism throughout American society and the adverse impact it has had on the psychological, cultural, political, and economic development of Black people.

Incorporating these facts in a collective Afrocentric cultural ideology will facilitate among Blacks a world view that offers a realistic interpretation of African Americans in terms of their unique cultural heritage and role in American society.

Second:

The Afrocentric cultural ideology must recognize that terms such as colored, Negro, and Black do not define the essence or depth of Black American history, cultural heritage, or identity. Hence, it is critical that Black Americans re-define themselves as African Americans.

Every racial and ethnic subgroup in America, except for Blacks, describes themselves in terms of the lands of their origin. By re-defining themselves as African Americans, Blacks can begin to repair the psychic damage that has been inflicted upon them as a result of their exposure to Eurocentric values. Moreover, by re-defining themselves as African Americans, Blacks will initiate the development of a cultural context in which Black youth will be guided toward identification with the Blacks of the classical African civilizations of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Nubia. It is critically important that Black children know that there is a great deal of archaeological, anthropological, and historical evidence that indicates that their native-born African ancestors were the first human beings to populate the earth, domesticate animals, engage in agriculture, develop a system of writing, establish universities, and practice monotheistic religion (James, 1954; Davidson, 1959; Jackson, 1970; Ben-Jochannan, 1970; Diop, 1974; Williams, 1974; Van Sertima, 1983, 1984).

In order to incorporate the African world view in the lives of African Americans, African American adults must begin to engage in Afrocentric socialization.

AFROCENTRIC SOCIALIZATION

The transmission of ideas, values, culture, and the development of the self are the primary functions of socialization. Hence, "socialization is the interactive process by which individuals acquire some of the values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge of the society in which they belong" (Coser et al., 1983: 106). Institutions such as the family, the educational system, mass media, and the church play a major role in the dissemination of a group's or

society's values and cultural ideology. Thus, in order to facilitate the internalization of an Afrocentric cultural ideology or world view among young Black males, Blacks must restructure their primary institutions to insure that Black males will internalize Afrocentric values. The establishment of Afrocentric institutions is absolutely essential to the creation of an Afrocentric world view among Black males (Mahubuti, 1978: 127; Perkins, 1986). According to Mahubuti (1978: 20), "A people without life-giving and life-saving independent institutions are a weak and dependent people. They are a people without a proper and rational understanding of the world and the factors that keep a people strong, together, and in command of their own destiny."

Thus, Afrocentric socialization refers to an interactive process by which Black parents and adults structure their behavior and primary institutions to promote among Black youth the internalization of values that emphasize love of self, awareness of their traditional African cultural heritage, and personal commitment to the economic political development of African Americans and other people of African descent. In the remaining section of this article, a list of institution-specific recommendations that African Americans should adopt in order to facilitate Afrocentric socialization of young Black males is provided.

THE FAMILY

1. *Black parents must instill an Afrocentric value system in their children.*

Families are the foundation of all cultural groups and societies due to the major role that they play in socializing children to internalize the values of their cultural group or society (Coser et al., 1983). In the last two decades, an increasing number of Black scholars have urged African Americans to adopt an Afrocentric value system in order to facilitate the transformation of Blacks from a state of dependence and cultural confusion to a state of independence, self-reliance, and cultural sanity (Karenga, 1977, 1986; Mahubuti, 1978; Kunjufu, 1983; Perkins, 1986).

Socialization of Black youth that is guided by the Afrocentric perspective would encourage young Blacks to know themselves through the study of African and African American history, to be proud of being Black, and to internalize definitions of adulthood that associate maturity with one's contribution to the mental and political liberation of Black people (Perkins, 1986). Moreover, Afrocentric socialization should be designed to encourage Blacks to define self- and group-destructive behavior (e.g., drug abuse, drug dealing, exploitation of other Blacks, and violence) as being anti-Black and in opposition to the interests of the African American community (Asante, 1980).

According to Karenga (1980, 1986), the premier advocate of Afrocentric cultural transformation, the high rates of social problems among Blacks could be substantially reduced if Black parents and other adults would teach their children to adopt the Afrocentric value system that he refers to as *Nguzo Saba*. Moreover, Karenga (1977) argues that the seven values that comprise the *Nguzo Saba* represent "the necessary core and moral minimum of any value system constructed to rescue or reconstruct Black lives in their own image and interest."

I agree with Karenga (1973, 1977, 1986). Any effort designed to facilitate the Afrocentric socialization of Black youth, especially Black boys, must include a collective oriented value system such as the *Nguzo Saba*. Listed below is a brief description of the seven core values that comprise the *Nguzo Saba*, followed by an explanation of how the internalization of these values by Black boys will benefit African Americans.

Umoja (Unity)

To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

Socialization that emphasizes Umoja (Unity) communicates to young Black males that commitment to family, community, nation, and Black unity is a primary objective of African Americans. The internalization of Umoja would contribute to the emergence of cultural values and psychic restraints that would substantially re-

duce Black males' participation in behavior that is self- and group-destructive.

Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)

To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named for, and spoken for by others.

The history of America clearly indicates that White Americans have used their familial, educational, political, mass media, and other cultural institutions to promote negative images of African Americans and other non-White people (Mahubuti, 1978; Baldwin, 1980; Cogdell and Wilson, 1980). The Afrocentric value Kujichagulia (Self-Determination) prescribes that Black parents socialize their children to define themselves as African Americans as opposed to niggers, coloreds, or Negroes. Socializing Black youth to define themselves as African Americans cannot and should not be regarded as complete simply by training them to replace one label for another. Socializing Black youth to define themselves as African Americans must also include making them aware of the cultural and political circumstances that have contributed to the emergence and evolution of terms such as niggers, coloreds, Negroes, and African Americans.

Socializing Blacks to define themselves as African Americans will reduce the high rates of low self-esteem and self-hate that Blacks have internalized as a result of their exposure to negative images and anti-Black propaganda disseminated by the educational system and the mass media. Defining themselves as African Americans will lead Blacks toward identifying with those Africans who were responsible for the classic ancient African civilizations and their many contributions to the modern world.

Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)

To build and maintain our community together and make our sisters' and brothers' problems our problems and to solve them together.

American society places a great deal of emphasis on individualism. In its ideal form, America's emphasis on individualism asserts that a citizen should have freedom in his economic pursuits and should succeed by his own initiative. However, in practice, American individualism induces individuals to perceive their interests as being more important than the interests of their social group or society. Consequently, individualism is a major source of apathy, alienation, and conflict in American society.

The Afrocentric value of *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility) is the most fundamental aspect of the traditional African world view. *Ujima* emphasizes elevating the interests of the community above those of the individual. According to Mbiti (1969: 108-109), native-born Africans have historically been socialized to define themselves by their relationship and social obligations to others in their community. Thus, the African world view socializes the child to perceive himself in terms of "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am."

The commitment of Blacks to individualism has not rendered them rewards commensurate with those achieved by Whites. Moreover, as a result of the harsh economic conditions that Blacks experience, individualism is greatly exaggerated, "which causes values associated with unity, cooperation, and mutual respect to be systematically sacrificed" (Cogdell and Wilson, 1980: 221). Thus, Black males' commitment to individualism is a salient feature of the "tough guy" and "player of women" images.

Socializing Blacks to value *Ujima* would substantially reduce their participation in self- and group-destructive behavior. *Ujima* encourages Black parents and adults to define maturity and manhood in terms of actions that contribute to the progress and development of Black people. And by definition, individualistic behavior is defined as a sign of immaturity and boyhood. Thus, incorporating *Ujima* in the socialization of Blacks introduces a positive communal dynamic in which they are taught that achieving manhood is inseparable from actions that contribute to the progress and development of the African American community.

Ujamma (Cooperative Economics)

To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Structurally induced economic underdevelopment is a major factor precipitating the high rates of social problems in the Black community. According to Wilson (1987), the high rates of joblessness among Black men is directly related to the formation of female-headed families, welfare dependency, and criminality among Blacks. In order to overcome economic underdevelopment and the social problems associated with it, African American parents and adults must teach their boys to value Ujamma.

The boy socialized to value Ujamma will become a man who understands that it is important to the survival and progress of the African American community to support Black businesses. African Americans will never achieve social and political parity with other American racial and ethnic groups without establishing a solid economic base.

Emphasizing Ujamma will cause Black businesses to prosper. Subsequently, the growth of Black businesses will increase the ability of African Americans to create jobs for themselves and discontinue the intergenerational tendency to depend on the federal government and non-Blacks to provide for their economic survival and progress. Hence, incorporating Ujamma in the socialization of Black boys is absolutely critical to the transformation of Blacks from a state of dependency to a state of independence and self-reliance.

Nia (Purpose)

To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Systematic racial discrimination and oppression have been the most salient features of the African American experience in America (Franklin, 1947; Knowles and Prewitt, 1969). Nia is a critical

element of Afrocentric socialization because of the emphasis this value places on making Black youth aware of the oppression that Africans and African Americans have experienced. Moreover, the Nia value encourages African American parents to instill in Black youth a commitment to devote their lives to eradicating those structural pressures and cultural conditions that prevent African Americans from achieving economic and political parity with White Americans.

Kuumba (Creativity)

To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Throughout the United States, areas inhabited by lower and working-class Blacks tend to be substantially more deteriorated than residential areas inhabited by comparable groups of White Americans. Although some of the responsibility for the deterioration in Black residential areas can be attributed to older housing stock and the lack of city services, apathy and lack of concern on the part of a large segment of the Black community also contribute to racial disparities in community deterioration.

Socializing Black youth to value Kuumba (Creativity) would contribute immensely to the aesthetic quality of African American communities as a result of the emphasis that this value places on community beautification. Socializing Black boys to value Kuumba would reduce the tendency of many of these boys, especially those prone to hanging out on street corners, from throwing trash anywhere and not showing respect for the property of others.

Kuumba also emphasizes exposing children to creative arts such as drawing, painting, poetry, music, and other arts that promote spiritual awareness and harmony with nature and others. Hence, Black boys socialized to value Kuumba are more likely to evolve into men who are sensitive to the needs and concerns of others, and are therefore more likely to become good husbands, fathers, and neighbors.

Imani (Faith)

To believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Afrocentric socialization of Black youth will be impossible if Black parents and adults do not strive to present themselves as living examples of Afrocentric consciousness. Hence, in order to facilitate the Afrocentric socialization of Black youth, Black parents and adults must undergo Afrocentric resocialization. That is, they must internalize new values and assume new roles that are consistent with an Afrocentric world view.

Adopting Welsing's (1974) "codes for Black behavioral conduct" is one way in which parents and adults could demonstrate to Black youth how to live an Afrocentric life. Welsing includes the following standards in her "codes for Black behavioral conduct":

- Stop name-calling one another
- Stop cursing one another
- Stop squabbling with one another
- Stop gossiping about one another
- Stop being discourteous toward one another
- Stop robbing one another
- Stop stealing from one another
- Stop fighting one another
- Stop killing one another
- Stop using and selling drugs to one another
- Stop throwing trash and dirt on the streets and in places where Black people live, work, and learn.

Black youth exposed to adults who are structuring their behavior in accordance with Welsing's "codes of Black behavioral conduct" will be less likely to reject the basic teachings and requirements of Afrocentric socialization as idle talk. Through their interactions with parents and other adults, they will see the dignity and power that emanates from living an Afrocentric lifestyle. Moreover, Black men who adhere to the Welsing "codes" will function as positive examples of Black manhood and potent alternative role models to

those men who define manhood in terms of toughness, sexual conquest, thrill-seeking and exploitation of others.

2. *Black parents and representatives of various community organizations must establish formal rite of passage ceremonies that will provide structure to the process by which Black boys make the passage into manhood.*

A major assumption of the Afrocentric perspective of the high rates of social problems among Blacks is that too many Black males adhere to definitions of manhood that promote self- and group-destructive behavior (Perkins, 1975; Staples, 1982; Oliver, 1984). Consequently, the 1980s has witnessed the emergence of a movement led by Black scholars and a small segment of the African American community in which Black parents are incorporating African-styled rite of passage ceremonies in the socialization of Black boys (Fair, 1977; Kunjufu, 1983, 1986; Hare and Hare, 1985; Perkins, 1986). In their treatise, *Bringing the Black Boy to Manhood: The Passage*, the Hares (1985) argue that African Americans need to develop rite of passage ceremonies because "The socialization of Black boys in today's fractured family life is left too often to the peer groups and the streets. Street education is maladaptive, even antithetical, to school performance and parental teaching."

Although the various rite of passage ceremonies that have proposed differ with respect to the required age range of the initiates and the specific content of manhood training, all have as their primary objective the promotion of Afrocentric values and a sense of collective commitment among Black youth. At the very minimum, a rite of passage ceremony for Black boys should include the following program components:

1. A group of committed adult males who will lead Black boys through the passage from boyhood to manhood (Fair, 1977; Kunjufu, 1983; Hare and Hare, 1985; Perkins, 1986).
2. Manhood Training - to help Black boys understand and appreciate the responsibilities of manhood. A major portion of this training should emphasize the Nguzo Saba, Welsing's "codes of Black behavioral conduct" and the importance of self-discipline in successfully enacting the roles of

son, husband, father, and brother to one's relatives and neighbors. (Hare and Hare, 1985; Perkins, 1986).

3. Sex Education - To help Black boys understand their sexuality and how to formulate responsible attitudes about the opposite sex and sexual relations (Perkins, 1986).
4. Cultural Enrichment - To help Black boys appreciate and value the significance of African and African American history and culture (Fair, 1977; Kunjufu, 1983; Perkins, 1986).
5. Political Awareness and Community Service - To help Black boys understand those factors that have contributed to the pathological social conditions that are prevalent throughout the national African American community. And, how to distinguish between actions that are in the interest of African Americans and those which are not. Also, to help Black boys develop an Afrocentric consciousness that leads to behavior that contributes to the needs of African Americans and other people of African descent (Fair, 1977; Hare and Hare, 1985; Perkins, 1986)
6. Educational Reinforcement - To help Black boys develop a realistic understanding about how educational achievement is an important aspect of their passage from boyhood to manhood (Hare and Hare, 1985).
7. Life Management - To teach Black boys how to integrate manhood, sex education, cultural enrichment, and political awareness training as a foundation for organizing and regulating their lives to achieve maximum effectiveness. Life management training should also include physical fitness, self-defense, survival, and family budgeting, as well as guided exploration of educational and career opportunities (Fair, 1977; Hare and Hare, 1985; Perkins, 1986).

The overall purpose of the manhood training that has been proposed has been cogently summarized by the Hares (1985: 1-9): "For the Black boy, we must find ways to punctuate his psyche with commitment for family and race, community and nation, and with motivation for responsibility, along with personal mastery."

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The American educational system has played a major role in the socialization of Black youth. However, the overall impact of American education of African Americans has been more detrimental than beneficial (Woodson, 1933: xiii; Hale, 1982; Kunjufu, 1983, 1986). In his classic work, *The Mis-education of the Negro*, Carter Woodson (1933: xiii) argues that:

The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples. The Negro thus educated is a hopeless liability of the race.

In order to facilitate the Afrocentric socialization of Black youth, the following recommendations should be implemented:

1. Black parents and concerned adults must become more involved in the administration of local educational systems. This can be achieved by regularly attending PTA meetings, establishing curriculum monitoring committees, running candidates for school board offices, and lobbying educational policy makers and administrators to incorporate African American history and culture in the educational curriculum.
2. To insure that African American children will be taught about the accomplishments of classic ancient African civilizations, African American parents must establish "independent Black schools." These schools should supplement or function as alternatives to traditional schools (Mahubuti, 1978; Perkins, 1986).

THE CHURCH

Christianity has been a major tool in the psychic and economic exploitation of African Americans (Blassingame, 1972; Buswell, 1964). In order to facilitate Afrocentric socialization of Black youth, the African American church should adopt the following recommendations:

1. The members of African American churches must establish policies that call for an immediate ban on exposing Black children to religious materials and religious doctrine that portray God, Jesus, and many of the other Biblical heroes as White people.
2. Sunday school and Bible study classes must be structured to not only make Black youth aware of Christ and his message, but where appropriate, as indicated by specific Biblical references and the works of scholars such as G. M. James's (1954) *The Greeks Were Not the Authors of Greek Philosophy, but the People of North Africa, Commonly Called the Egyptians*, and Yosef Ben-Jochannan's (1970) *African Origins of the Major Western*

- Religions*, be made aware that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were founded on the continent of Africa and that ancient Africans played a major role in their creation and evolution.
3. Members of African American churches must encourage their ministers and church leaders to allow their facilities and resources to be used to promote the Afrocentric socialization of Black youth.

THE MEDIA

Over the course of American history, all forms of media have been used to disseminate anti-Black propaganda and negative images of African Americans (Boggle, 1973; Staples and Jones, 1985). In order to promote the Afrocentric socialization of Black youth, the following recommendations should be implemented to counter the adverse impact the media has had on the psychic development of African Americans:

1. Black parents and adults should encourage Black youth to pursue careers in all sectors of the mass media industry in order to insure that African Americans will have positive input into the development of media products.
2. Black organizations must vigilantly monitor the major media institutions and be prepared to protest media products that portray African Americans in a racist manner.
3. In order to insure the dissemination of "the facts about Blacks" and realistic portrayals of Black people and their culture, African Americans must pool their resources and establish their own newspapers, magazines, book publishing companies, film production companies, theaters, and radio and television stations.

CONCLUSION

African Americans have spent too much time blaming White America for the high rate of social problems among Blacks. According to Elijah Muhammad (1965:62), "Before we can be justified in accusing the other man, let us examine ourselves first."

Reducing social problems among African Americans through Afrocentric socialization of Black males is based on two primary assumptions. First, that White racism and historical patterns of

racial discrimination are the most salient environmental pressures adversely affecting the ability of African Americans to survive and progress in America. And second, that African Americans have failed to establish an Afrocentric cultural ideology or world view that could be used to promote unity and to mitigate the adverse affects of racially motivated social pressures.

Afrocentric socialization is not a magic potion; it will not rid Black America of all of its social problems. However, it is certainly a much better option than continuing to allow substantial numbers of lower- and working-class Black boys to make the passage from boyhood to manhood under the tutelage of men who define manhood in terms of toughness, sexual conquest, and thrill-seeking.

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