



Brother to Brother

Inspiration

Lean On Me

We can't be strong all the time. There are days when we are sad, tired, lonely, angry, afraid, confused, worried or depressed. There will be days when we can't even explain how we feel. We just know we want a hug, a laugh, another's presence. Perhaps all we need on these dreary and desperate days is somebody to lean on.

It's natural and healthy to reach out to a friend when we need to lift our spirits. The best friends accept, encourage, nurture, and love us when we feel worthless and hopeless. They remind us that we are beautiful, funny, and smart when we can't see that ourselves.

We do ourselves a wonderful favor when we allow others to help us. Human interaction is good for us physically, as well as mentally and emotionally. We also give a great gift to others when we let them be there for us; human connection helps the giver as well as the receiver. We don't have to wait until we're feeling low or weak to call a friend. Like eating fruits and vegetables and getting plenty of exercise, friendships just might be preventative medicine!

I lean on my friends and feel the power of friendship.

-Carleen Brice

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SOUTHERN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN'S CBA PROJECT

SAM CBA Project promotes community wellness

The Southern African-American Men's Capacity-Building Assistance (SAM CBA) Project at Jackson State University is dedicated to preventing and reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS among African-American gay men. Additionally, SAM CBA is geared toward promoting community wellness as a means of reducing the infection rate of HIV/AIDS among African-American gay men.

A recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Ga. stated that approximately 1 in 50 African-American men are believed to be infected with HIV compared to 1 in 250 white men. In a recent quarterly meeting of the SAM CBA Advisory Board, "community" was defined



as "a group of African-American men who have similar sexual behaviors that may classify them into specific groups, i.e., self-identified, transsexual, gay, bisexual, or same gender loving. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition*, defines "wellness" as, "the condition of good physical and mental health."

Therefore, the definition of Community Wellness for African-American men who have sex with other men (MSM), is a process of assuring that the physical and mental health of a group of African-American men who have similar sexual behaviors that may classify them into specific groups is appropriate.

This edition will address issues surrounding these concepts.

Community identification role in HIV/AIDS interventions

The uncertainty of community in the African-American (MSM) population plays a vital role in the breakdown of the HIV/AIDS interventions process. "Finding the Community in Community-level HIV/AIDS Interventions: Formative Research with Young African American Men who have Sex with Men," is an article which appears in the *Journal of Health Education & Behavior*, Volume 27, Issue 4 (August 2000) that begins to address the issue of uncertainty in the African-American MSM community. The research data is from 76 qualitative interviews with 18- to 29-year-old African-American MSM in Chicago and Atlanta.

They were examined to identify perceptions of "community" and components of community-level HIV/AIDS interventions.

The study showed that many men reported feeling marginal to African-American and gay white communities because of perceived homophobia and racism. Those who reported feeling part of gay African-American communities characterized communities in terms of settings, social structures, and functions, including social support, socialization and mobility. Despite these positive functions, divisions among groups of MSM, lack of settings for nonsexual interaction with other

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Government creates new AIDS response programs

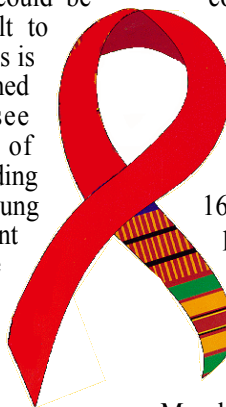
In a recent article in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher addressed the Federal government's response to how AIDS is impacting the African-American MSM community.

The article noted that young gay men, particularly African-Americans, could be the most vulnerable and difficult to reach in the AIDS epidemic. "This is a group that we're very concerned about, who continue to see themselves on the fringes of society," said Dr. Satcher. According to Dr. Satcher, 7 percent of young gay men have HIV, but 20 percent of African-American gay men are HIV positive. He also noted during his news conference at the U.S. Conference on AIDS in Atlanta, that 80 percent were not aware of their infection until they were tested. In response, the federal government has created two programs, the Crisis Response Team and the Leadership Campaign, which are aimed to help minority communities fight AIDS. Sixteen cities now have crisis response teams.

The Crisis Response Teams are multi-disciplinary teams that will operate in individual communities where racial and ethnic populations are hardest hit by HIV/AIDS. The teams will work as partners

with local officials, public health personnel and minority community-based organizations to help them address their minority HIV/AIDS situation and develop new strategies to increase the effectiveness of their prevention and treatment efforts to reduce HIV/AIDS. In many cases, local communities have found ways to address the HIV/AIDS problem at large, but targeting issues specific to minority populations can be particularly challenging.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has determined that 16 communities with large minority populations affected by HIV/AIDS were eligible for this assistance. These communities include: Detroit, Michigan; Miami, Florida; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Atlanta, Georgia; Baltimore, Maryland; Chicago, Illinois; Los Angeles, California; Newark, New Jersey; New Haven/Bridgeport/Danbury/Waterbury, Connecticut; Washington, D.C.; West Palm Beach/Boca Raton, Florida; Ft. Lauderdale, Florida; Houston, Texas; New York City, New York; Jersey City, New Jersey, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.



Reference:
Atlanta Journal and Constitution
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Fact Sheet

Community response needed to influence behavior

There are several issues critical to facilitating participation by men who have sex with men in activities to alter community contexts that influence behavior. Some of these issues discussed in the *Journal of Health Education & Behavior* (Volume 27, Issue 4) were: lack of settings for nonsexual interaction with other MSM, lack of leadership, and negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

An article that responds to these issues appeared in the September/October issue of *Cliques* magazine, one of the nation's leading same gender loving (SGL) publications for people of color. In the article, senior staff writer Craig Washington describes his experience with a community that is responding to the issue of altering community contexts that influence behavior. Below is an excerpt from that article.

I want to give a sample of black

brotherhood, something uplifting for your soul to keep.

AUGUST 1999

A brother that I was dating told me about a retreat for black gay men out in Tennessee. This was the first of such gatherings arranged by Ororo-Crossroads, a Memphis-based support group for brothers in the life. The flyer offered the promise of fellowship and fun. It featured discussion topics like relationship, intimacy, HIV/AIDS and more. This retreat was just what I needed, a place to exhale, a respite from the rigors of change.

I drove alone to the retreat and by the time I had arrived, I was tired and irritable. Dwayne left me with Charles who offered to show me to my cabin. I mustered a cordial smile but inside, I was "tight" and my conversation was curt. Charles

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Community Mobilization solution to address HIV infection prevention

UJIMA - which means collective work and responsibility implies: "To build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers' problems our problems and to solve them together."

This is what the Southern African-American Men's Capacity-Building Project at Jackson State University's Mississippi Urban Research Center is all about. One of the key components to this project is community mobilization. This process provides a training class backdrop that fosters an opportunity for community members to develop networks and coalitions to address the growing challenges

to prevent HIV infection in the African-American community. The time is now to answer the call through action that will increase empowerment and self-reliance among the African-American community as it relates to both physical and mental health. Every effort should be made to bridge gaps existing for the good of the community. The battle is not about turfdom but that of community mobilization for the cause of HIV prevention in the African-American MSM community.

"I am because we are and since we are therefore, I am!"

- Author unknown

Community identification continued...

MSM, lack of leadership, and negative attitudes toward homosexuality may make it difficult for men to participate in activities to alter community contexts that influence behavior.

Rather, changing norms, increasing social support, and community-building

Community response continued...

responded with a detached calmness, he didn't try to placate or challenge my attitude. His feathers were distinctly unruffled by the anger waves I radiated. He seemed to know and I accepted where I was and within minutes my anger cooled and dissipated ("still waters run deep, yes they do").

After dinner we had a facilitated discussion that included a visualization exercise. As the workshop ended we were asked to find a partner we didn't know and discuss our visualization. As we filed out of the room, I felt my head begin spinning and my heartbeat quickened. I stood there as others went off in pairs and I tried to center myself. Just then, Anthony walked up and said, "How are you?" Usually when someone I didn't know well asked me that question, I would automatically say "fine." With Anthony I was comfortable enough to be real so I talked about the feelings that came up for me after the exercise. When we hugged I cried, then quickly caught myself, afraid to be seen by the others. But with Anthony, I felt safe.

When I returned to my room, I opened my journal and wrote a few lines drawn from a song that kept resounding in my head. I



should be part of initial community-level interventions. Community-building might identify leaders, create new settings, and create opportunities for dialogue between MSM and African-American community groups to address negative perceptions of homosexuality.

didn't give it much thought and soon afterwards, Charles came in and we started talking. We went to sleep with him holding me spoon fashion. I thought for a moment that he might misinterpret our physical intimacy as a prelude to sex, but he didn't do anything to indicate that. I let go of that fear, realizing that I was just projecting my own "stuff." It was also clear that I needed more non-sexual physical affection from men in my life regardless of the nature of the relationship. I began to cry and tried to explain myself but I could no longer speak for the sobbing. As Charles embraced me, I cried so hard I was both tired and relieved. Charles phoned Conrad. The both of them sat me down and encouraged me to ask for what I need, to love myself fully and to accept nothing less than love in all my relationships.

As you will note from this article there are unique ways in addressing community issues on an individual basis. How many MSM have been where Craig was? This is only an example of why the African-American MSM community must begin to mobilize now.

Washington, C. (2000, September/October). "360 Degrees." Cliques, p.56.

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Focus

The Southern African-American Men's Capacity-Building Assistance Project seeks to motivate, mobilize, increase participation and involvement of African-American men who have sex with other men (MSM) in the delivery of HIV prevention services and the community planning process. This project also seeks to foster collaborations and linkages of HIV prevention programs targeting African-American (MSM) with these stakeholders and community leaders.

The Southern African-American Men's Capacity-Building Assistance Project's geographical area of coverage is as follows: AL, AR, FL, KY, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX.

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Skills-Building Course Calendar

Community Planning.....January 25 & 26
Orlando, Florida

Community Planning.....February 8 & 9
Little Rock, Arkansas

Community Mobilization.....February 22 & 23
Louisville, Kentucky

Community Mobilization.....March 8 & 9
Miami, Florida

Community Mobilization.....March 22 & 23
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Community Planning.....April 19 & 20
Louisville, Kentucky

Community Mobilization.....May 16 & 17
New Orleans, Louisiana

Community Planning.....June 7 & 8
Jackson, Mississippi

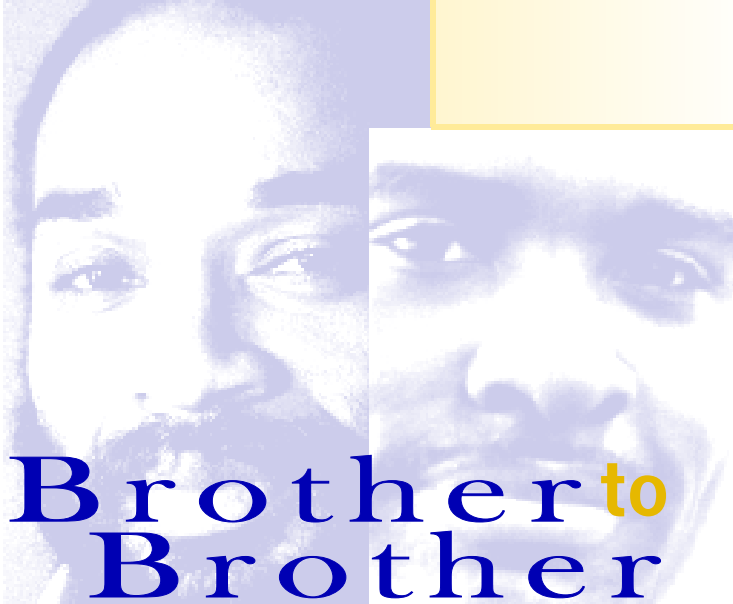
Community Mobilization.....June 28 & 29
Nashville, Tennessee

For information about these courses, please call the Southern African American Men's Capacity-Building Assistance Project, toll-free, at 1-866-JSU-MURC (578-6872).



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