Silent No More:
The Unheard Echoes of Rape in the
African-American Community

Indira Henard, MA
Counseling and Advocacy Program Manager
DC Rape Crisis Center
Washington, DC
202-232-0789 ext 1201
indira@dcrcc.org

Goals

Part I: Historical Oppression

- Historical Trauma
- Institutions of Power
Goals

Part II: The Barriers to Disclosure
- Internalized Racism
- Cultural Mama ISM's
- Multiple Victimization
- Engaging the System
- Religion

Goals

- Part III: How to Respond to the Barriers
  - Educate
  - "Cultural Lens"
  - "What is your experience?"
  - Creating an Invitation
Goals

Part IV: Resources

Part I:
Historical Oppression
Historical Trauma: Roots of Violence

- Collective wounding as a result of massive historical events
  - Slavery
  - Lynching
  - Negative effects of civil rights movements and police brutality
- The trauma and pain is transmitted over generations

Historical Trauma: Slavery

- Forcible capture
- Families torn apart
- Laws against worship
- Imposed illiteracy
- Beatings
- Captivity
- Starvation
- Malnutrition
- Auctions and sales
- Breeding
- Torture
Historical Trauma

- Lynching
- Slave Breeding
- Forced Sterilization
- Rape
- Police Brutality

Historical Trauma: Rape

- Slaves considered property; had no rights
- Offspring of rape property of slave owner
- Jezebel Image
Institutions of Power

- Police
- Church
- Mental Health Agency

Part II:
The Barriers to Disclosure
Internalized Racism

- Internalized racial images
- Self and community imposed silence to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes

Cultural Mama ISM's

- Do not air your dirty laundry
- It happened to me...Just get over it
- Pray about it...Talk to Jesus
- The Mask “The Strong Black Woman”
Multiple Victimization: Web of Trauma

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Sexual Harassment
- Community Violence
- Physical Abuse
- Psychological Abuse

Engaging the System

- Disclosing to a system that has historically oppressed you
- The double edge sword of being black, female, and "other"
- Breaking down stereotypes
- The fear of re-victimization
Religion

- The historical role of religion in the African American community
- Taboo in the black church
- "Falling out of love"
- Depression
- Drugs
- Alcohol
- Other addictions

Part III:
How to respond to Barriers
Educate

- Doing research on the "unique" experience of African Americans and sexual violence... familiarizing yourself with the issues

Cultural Lens

- By doing research and familiarizing yourself with the "unique experiences of African Americans and sexual violence you are able to look at, their experience through a "cultural lens" of understanding. Not saying that you will be the expert, but you will be armed with additional information, and a different perspective.
Creating an Invitation

- Create a safe, non judgemental experience
- Invite others to take off the "mask" and re-connect with their source, whatever that may be
- Going back to the basics
- Aim to re-connect the mind, body and spirit

Part IV: Resources

- "Black Pain" by Terri Williams
- "Strong on the outside: Dying on the inside" by Lisa M. Brown
- "Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey Through Depression" by Meri Nana Ama Danquah
- "Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought" by Beverly Guy-Sheftall