

Submitted by CeCe Norwood, M.A.

Incest & Child Sexual Abuse ARE Alive And Well In the Black Community.

April is the National Sexual Assault Awareness and Child Abuse Prevention month. With this in mind, I submit the following for consideration.

I am hopeful Black America does not pat itself on the back when we view the media parading white, heterosexual men across the television screen who are accused of sexually abusing children and lie to ourselves that Black children are immune. The reality is that Black children are just as susceptible to being victims of incest and child sexual abuse as children of other races are.

Unfortunately, Black children don't have to be shopping in a retail store to be stalked by sexual deviants. Nor does the Black child have to be befriended by White clergymen to experience sexual abuse. The abusive behavior of equally perverted Black men and women is rampant right here in the Black community.

Sexually abusing our children is one of our best-kept secrets, our own closet skeleton. Sexual abuse of Black women and children can be dated back to slavery times. We just choose to only remember the incidences when White men raped and sexually abused our women and children. Like it or not, such abuses are still pervasive in the Black community. It's all around us.

Think about the young girls in our community who seem to become pregnant younger and younger. Some have multiple children and are not even 21 years of age. We usually blame the girl. That's our first reaction. Why? Because blaming the girl is easy. By blaming her, we don't have to evaluate the situation any further. "She's fast." "Look at that short skirt." These are the things we say. The fact of the matter is statically these girls are not impregnated by boys of like age, but by grown men! Grown men who are more knowledgeable, manipulative, and deceitful. Grown men who are family members or close friends of the family. The young girl doesn't have a chance!

We don't want to accept that the man next door, or our husband, or the preacher, or the teacher, or our cousin, or our best friend, or...are the fathers of these children. We don't want to accept this fact, so we continue to blame the girls when in reality the behavior of these grown men IS incest, child sexual abuse, and possibly rape.

Or what about our boys? It is know that they to are victims of incest and child sexual abuse as well. As a result of their abuse, they exhibit emotional disorders such a post-traumatic stress, depression, and a variety of other anxiety disorders. They suffer from encopresis, or engage in alcohol and drug use and abuse. Additionally, they participate in risk-taking behavior during adolescence, such as running away and doing things that put

them at risk for contracting HIV. Some attempt to prove their masculinity by becoming hyper-masculine which manifests itself by having multiple female sexual partners or engaging in dangerous “macho” behaviors.

Other signs of sexual abuse for both girls and boys that are less obvious are manifestations of depressed moods, dropping grades, withdrawal from age appropriate activities, rebellious, illegal behavior, mouthy, curfews broken, can't hold a job, etc. Or maybe the abused child is now a grown woman who seems to have too many frequent male visitors or a grown man who appears to have a different girlfriend every other day. Often they have sordid reputations in the neighborhood such as crack head, welfare mother, dead-beat dad, never works, too many children, prostitute, and school drop out. We make judgments about women, men and children in our community who exhibits the above behaviors. We only address, however, what we believe to be his or her disrespectful or inappropriate behavior, not WHY he or she is disrespectful, inappropriate or seemingly without aspirations. We seldom probe. Probing involves time; thinking beyond the obvious and too many times we are not interested. Instead we may snub them. Unfortunately, not probing means our children, men, and women continue to be abused. Some on a daily basis.

We must face the sexual abuse of our children; talk about it, and eradicate it from our community. Incest and child sexual abuse are insidious and the ramifications of it to the Black community keeps growing and growing.

Black children are suffering. Black women are suffering. Black men are suffering. As a result, the entire Black community is suffering. Whenever the parts of anything alive are sick, the whole never functions to its fullest potential. When members of our community do not live up to their God given talent, the community, our community, the Black community does not develop and prosper fully. If our community does not continue to produce educated and contributing members of society we will eventually have no Black physicians, teachers, tradesmen, community activist, hair dressers, barbers, business owners, clergy, attorneys, counselors, etc. If we allow a generation of our children to feel they have no one to share their most intimate secrets, they will never recover from the many daily challenges of life and most assuredly not from being sexually abused as a child. We'll end up with a generation of takers instead of givers to the community.

It is imperative that we protect our children, provide continuous guidance, instill values, morals, and provide opportunities for them to share what is going on in their lives.

We must punish and highlight the sexual abusers in the Black community. By doing so we take a public stand against the sexual abuse of our children. By doing so we let abusers know they are not welcomed in our community. By doing so we embrace our women, men, and children who have been unable to share their suffering so their lives can prosper.

Next time, when you see a White, heterosexual man on TV accused of incest or child sexual abuse, remember a Black man or woman could be there just as easily. The only

difference is that we hide the abuse and the abusers in our community. We need to stop doing this!

Black people, YOU need to recognize. Incest and child sexual abuse are alive and well in the Black community. Do something about it!