

EDITORIAL

Take a Stand on Violence

This week, the Center for Violence Prevention will announce a new paradigm for curbing domestic violence in the Jackson area, bringing the Duluth Model to the metropolitan area. Batterer's intervention programs, or BIPs, are a big part of what's coming.

The annual Jackson Free Press Chick Ball has raised funds for the center since 2004. Each year, Jacksonians have been more generous in their contributions. Last year, Chick Ball proceeds bought a minivan, providing reliable transportation to women and children in need. In 2008, like the previous three years, the focus was on helping abuse victims.

But domestic violence has two components—the abused and the abuser. Only providing assistance to victims is solving only half the equation, and as math scholars will tell you, that's not solving the problem at all.

Any effective program must protect victims from continued abuse. But within that broad goal, the Duluth Model involves the entire community in solving the domestic-abuse problem, including the justice system (police, lawyers and judges) and the social system (shelters, hotlines, clinics, etc.) in formulating the solution. Abusers must change their behavior, and that's where batterer's intervention programs come in.

BIPs, unlike therapy or anger management, confront abusers with their fundamental beliefs. "I'm a man, that's why," is a common refrain from men who dominate and control their partners. It's called male privilege, and it is just one of the many unexamined beliefs batterers hold that allows them to beat the crap out of their women when they "misbehave," or withhold money to ensure every penny is spent the "right" way, or curse their children by telling them they're stupid. By making abusers aware of the cost of those beliefs, BIPs encourage taking responsibility and changing their behavior.

We applaud the Center for Violence Prevention for having the vision to bring the Duluth Model to the Jackson metro, but making it work will take funding and dedication. Buying tickets for the JFP Chick Ball will help. The dedication must come from the community, and that will take some changes, too. Police must be willing to take a hard line with abusers; district attorneys must be ready to prosecute instead of cutting deals; and judges must be willing to put abusers into a BIP or put offenders unable to change behind bars.

With our combined dedication behind it, the Duluth Model can make an impact on domestic violence in Jackson. For all of us, we must take a

KEN STIGGERS

Complexion Vexation

Mr. Announcement: "In the ghetto criminal justice system, the people are represented by three members of the McBride family: police officer and part-time security guard at the Funky Ghetto Mall, Dudley 'Do-Right' McBride, Nurse Tootie McBride of Ghetto Science Community Clinic, and attorney Cootie McBride of the law firm McBride, Myself and I. This is their story."



(doink, doink!)
 Nurse Tootie (screaming): "Coooootie, Duuuudley! Dispatcher says either a race riot or protest is about to happen at the Cootie Creek County Community College Swim Club!"
 Cootie and Dudley (in unison): "Aww, heck no! It can't be!"
 Nurse Tootie: "It's time for an intervention, brothers! We got to stop the drama and increase the peace!"
 (Cootie, Tootie and Dudley jump in the SUV and drive to the swim club. Upon arrival, they witness a humiliated group of ghetto children and adults from Camp Ghetto Science Team standing outside the pool area. Cootie goes to talk with the directors of the swim club and Camp Ghetto Science Team.)
 Cootie: "What's causing the water to boil at this swimming pool?"
 CGST director: "That mean, old swim-club director and members saw us splashing in the pool, decided to change the rules and kicked us out of the club!"
 Swim club director: "Not so! We were afraid that the Camp Ghetto children would change the complexion of our swim club. It was just too many of you people."
 Nurse Tootie: "Lawd, forgive him for that negrophobic statement—another incident of Foot in Mouth disease."
 Cootie and Dudley: "Doink, doink!"



"JUDGE NOT, LEST YE BE JUDGED" MATTHEW 7:1

YOUR TURN
 by Jamie Holcomb

A Man's World

I'm disappointed in women, particularly myself. Check out the opinion section of any local or national newspaper. Where are the women? According to the Op-Ed Project at Stanford University, between 80 and 90 percent of a newspaper's opinion essays are written by men. At the Washington Post in 2008, nine out of 10 submissions came from men, and 88 percent of the pieces published were by men. More startling is the fact that there are more women, as a percentage, in the United States Senate than published in the op-ed pages, according to Rutgers University researcher Bob Sommer. A few months ago, I complained about the lack of women op-ed writers to The Clarion-Ledger, only to be told women just do not submit them.

This isn't the newspapers' fault; it's our fault. My experience with op-ed writing is similar to that of other women I know. I'm addicted to newspapers—especially on Thursdays and Saturdays when Gail Collins writes for The New York Times—and I have strong opinions on just about everything. Yet, I feel paralyzed when it comes to writing opinion essays. Given the number of smart women in Jackson and around the state, why aren't we writing?

An informal poll of my female friends finds a few recurring reasons: "I'm not an expert in anything." "People might not like me if they know what I really think." "I don't think I'm a good writer." "Someone else might know more about this topic than me." "What if I'm wrong?" These are understandable but inexcusable thoughts because writing opinion essays isn't rocket science.

Opinion essays give people the opportunity to have an impact on the policy process. Elected officials, their staffs and the public routinely read and comment on opinion essays. Catherine Ornstein of the Op-Ed Project met with President Bill Clinton's Latin America policy team the week after writing an opinion essay on Haiti in The New York Times. After submitting an opinion essay to The Clarion-Ledger in March about the role of women in rebuilding the economy, I received e-mails from a man in Mississippi running for public office, asking for my support in an upcoming election. By not writing opinion essays, women are missing a crucial entry point into politics and only enabling the trend of low political participation and representation by women. We must shift from worrying about self-perception to worrying about our social responsibility.

In the spirit of collective action, let's come together to express our opinions and facilitate discussion about important issues. Although I am a woman, I don't want to be confined to "women's issues." I usually develop more refined arguments when I discuss ideas with other people.

Form a group with your peers to function in a similar way: a safe place to refine your opinions and use each other as resources for editing and story ideas.

Let's change the face of the opinion pages in Mississippi and nationally.

Jamie Holcomb can be reached at jamie@womensfundms.org



E-mail letters to letters@jacksonfreepress.com, fax to 601-510-9019, or mail to P.O. Box 5067, Jackson, Miss., 39296. Include daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.