

Get married! Matrimony the key to ending cycle of Black poverty

by Don Samuels

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You rarely see a wedding on a Saturday morning on the North Side. This was not always the case. In the mid 1960s, only 25 percent of all U.S. Black children were born to single moms. Today, in Minneapolis, that number is 86.6 percent. On the other hand, only 10 percent of White children are born to single parents. This disparity is directly related to the entrenchment of poverty in our community.

The children of single parents are at a decided disadvantage, more so if that family is Black. Fifty percent of Black children born to single parents will remain poor, compared to only 39 percent of whites. On the other hand, children of married parents are more likely to graduate and less likely to go to jail, do drugs, or otherwise fail at life.

Children are happiest when raised by two committed parents. As the sole parent of a now 32-year-old son and a co parent of two daughters ages nine and seven, I have experienced both alternatives firsthand. Today my son is a fully functional adult, but there is no doubt that my job as parent and his as son were made more challenging because I was single.

Both parents should maintain contact and care for their child even when they are separated. This is the right thing to do for a healthy and happy community. Young people should begin to think about meeting someone, falling in love, getting married, and having children — in that order.

Young women should insist that young men make the ultimate commitment to a relationship, marriage, before they produce the ultimate outcome of a relationship, a child.

In addition, young men must be courageous. They must battle their fears of permanency for the sake of the children produced by the millions of tiny, indiscriminate sperm cells they produce and share.

Marriage means you can't just leave easily. As men we commit to a car, a career, a football team, and even a blood family; yet we all give us headaches and are often out of our control. We must learn to do the same for our women and children.

Too often, absentee fathers drift out of relationships with their children and become simply sperm donors. Children blame them for the abandonment of their parents. They think there is something fundamentally wrong with them that makes them unlovable and disposable. Many spend their adulthood battling the emotional repercussions.

Ultimately, children of single parents have less confidence as partners, as spouses and as co-parents. They lack examples of domestic partnership, negotiation, compromise and cooperation. They have to learn everything secondhand and experience frustration and confusion in relationships.

Life as a single mother is most often lonely. There is no abiding presence with whom to share the ongoing defeats and triumphs of parenting. There is often nobody to give the parent a psychic break from decision-making and stress.

A marriage proposal is the most affirming and progressive gift a positive man can give to the woman he loves. When a man is committed permanently in a home, everyone feels secure.

Black women want to get married and have children. Well over 40 percent of Black women have never been married; that's twice

many as White women. There are a million eligible Black women who are not married.

The loss of this normal expectation adds yet another misery factor to the lives of the women who have already shouldered the greatest sexual inequities in our country's history.

Black men should begin to work hard in school and in the workplace. Those with setbacks must strive to rehabilitate ourselves, preparing to be worthy husbands and fathers.

Chris Rock says Black men have been exercising their options to date and marry across races for years. He suggests it's time women do the same. Openness to interracial marriage might be one key solution to the drought of eligible Black men. It is time the routine deficiency of single parenting.

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