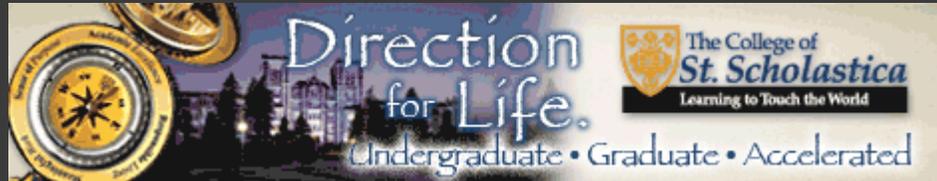




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Help our most oppressed Americans — Black youth

by Don Samuels
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On April 26, a 15-year-old Black girl was killed by her 29-year-old Black “lover,” known as “Lunatic,” in the presence of her 16-year-old rival. It made me think about the oppressive and exploitive lives so many of our young people face within the community.

Our girls are being lured into relationships with older men at an alarming rate. Grown men often have access to vulnerable children desperate for attention with little or no protection from male family members.

Sociologists say this is a sure way to keep the women of a culture poor and repressed. They enter womanhood in child/parent relationships with their dad/lovers, have children before they are economically viable, and are abandoned by their exploiters to a life of dependency and poverty.

My seven-year-old has been clinging to me lately. She says I’m not home enough. She holds my hand, leans on me, and gets sentimental. So, I have been paying her more attention. But it makes me think about all the little girls in our community who are oppressed by the absence or the immaturity of their dads.

These girls start life having to numb the feelings my daughter is expressing. Without attentive, protective men, girls can become victims of exploitation and violence; or they take defense into their own hands, engaging in increasingly aggressive and violent behavior. This is a national trend. Girls are being incarcerated at higher rates, and they are increasingly violent at school and on the street.

Boys fare no better. Older gangsters, or “OG’s,” recruit vulnerable boys to sell drugs and guns and to execute violence for them. I recently learned that a youth who died recently had been a street retailer of AK47s for these “OG’s.” Do these men work for the Klan?

Can you imagine a community where the male elders lure children into life-destroying behavior? Well, it is happening right here. These “OG’s” present themselves as senior members of paramilitary organizations. In truth, they are callous users who prey on children to satisfy their desire for power and material things, and even sex. That is oppression!

Our young men also oppress each other. Recently, a young man was shot up by his former gang peers for trying to leave the gang. Over the years, many youth have died in this way, both locally and nationally.

So, here we have young Black men, already disadvantaged by history and social realities, and then, in addition, they are being oppressed by other young Black men: “If you try to have a better life, we will kill you.” Previously, Black men only heard this kind of nastiness from racists and bigots. Today, they say it to each other and then fulfill their mortal threat.

Recently, a teen friend of mine, while heading home, was jumped and beaten up by three other teens. Last week, another teen was accosted by three youths with three guns to his head, demanding drugs he did not have. They spared his life only because

"looked so young."

The attackers were not enemies from another country, ethnicity or race. These were local African American boys oppressing other local African American boys with threats, violence and murder.

In 2006, North Minneapolis had almost 25 percent of all homicides in the entire state of Minnesota, according to city and state statistics. Every year, the group most devastated by homicides is boys ages 14-19. I have to ask myself: Who will protect these boys and girls?

I had long hoped it would be Black men. I had hoped Black men would descend from the suburbs and from the well-heeled communities to take our children back. But it just isn't happening enough to turn the tide. So today I simply hope someone, any Black or Hispanic, Hmong or White, will step up to the plate and save our helpless children from the bondage of oppression.

I am hoping that city and county leaders, state and federal leaders will soon realize the incredible potential of these equally brilliant African Americans and turn their faces toward them. I am hoping we will stop protecting our delicate constitutions from the reality of the trauma and love them enough to feel their pain.

You can play a part. Call Big Brothers/Big Sisters at 651-789-2447 or Kinship of Greater Minnesota at 612-588-4655 and volunteer to mentor a child. If we don't, the OG's will.

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