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## Dr. Boyce Spotlight: Raising Him Alone, Saving Our Black Boys

Filed under: Dr. Boyce Money, News



Saving the black male is one of the most important tasks for the African American community. It is not just the job of our "black leaders" to address this issue, but it is really a task for all of us. In fact, I believe that every person in our community who takes initiative to solve the problem, even on the smallest level, has been appointed to the ranks of black leadership.

One such individual is David C. Miller. Mr. Miller wrote a book called "Raising Him Alone," which addresses the droves of families in which a black boy is being raised without the father present. While this is a sad reality, it is consistent nonetheless. Therefore, we must confront this issue as we work to create a brighter future for African American men.

I did a Dr. Boyce AOL Black Voices profile on David, which you can read below:

### What is your name and what do you do?

I am David C. Miller, Co-Founder and Chief Visionary Officer of the Urban Leadership Institute, a nationally recognized social entrepreneurial firm based in Baltimore. ULI focuses on developing innovative approaches to impact the social, academic and familial challenges that impact communities of color.

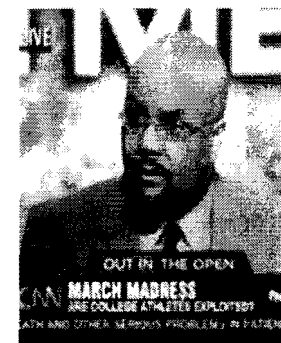
Additionally, Urban Leadership Institute concentrates on developing innovative social marketing, strategic planning and training initiatives focused on reclaiming families, impacting the trajectory of boys of color and improving services for children and families in communities through providing training and technical assistance to educators, social workers, law enforcement officials, clergy and other key stakeholders.

Models include "Raising Him Alone," an advocacy and referral network for single mothers who are raising boys, and Changing Fatherhood ([www.changingfatherhood.com](http://www.changingfatherhood.com)), a companion effort to change the images of Black fathers as well as support fathers in reconnecting with their children.

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Dr. Boyce Watkins

## 2) Tell us about your book and why you wrote it.

*Raising Him Alone: Things Black Women Can Do to Raise Boys to be Men* was written by myself and Matt Stevens, who handles business for us in Newark, N.J., and other greater New Jersey communities. The book speaks to the alarming number of single mothers, grandmothers and other female care givers who struggle to reduce the likelihood that their sons will be killed on the streets or eventually serve prison time. It estimated that 72% of Black babies are born out of wedlock. And a staggering percentage of them will go to bed tonight without receiving any love or comfort from their fathers.

The book provides a blueprint for women who are raising boys to create a "success paradigm" in the lives of their sons. Creating a means for success is critical because we know from statistics and personal observations that "fatherlessness" in America accounts for a large percentage of "chaos" and "confusion" that occurs in Black and Brown communities daily.

According to The National Fatherhood Initiative's report 100 Billion Dollar Man, the federal government spends \$99.8 billion dollars annually on Fatherlessness in America. This includes money spent on child support enforcement, Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

*Raising Him Alone: Things Black Women Can Do to Raise Boys to be Men* provides a series of recommendations and best practices that are focused on improving the life chances of African-American boys. After all, we have all witnessed African-American male children going from middle school to prison. The book and ULI's "Raising Him Alone Campaign" are among a number of innovative practices designed to reduce the school-to-prison pipeline that is removing too many African American men and boys from the community.

The book clearly outlines the power and spiritual essence of being a parent while giving an array of strategies from teaching mothers, grandmothers and other caregivers that highlight the importance of monitoring your son's technology to teaching about the power of money (financial literacy strategies). Other key sections of the book provide step-by-step instructions for African-American males on how to respond to "police stops." 10 Rules of Survival if Stopped by the Police is a series of actions steps that parents teach sons to help them survive a police stop.

The book, along with a comprehensive Web site and a growing virtual resource via Face Book (Single mothers raising boys) allow us the ability to disseminate large amounts of information. Parents can also sign up to get a bi-weekly eblast that goes out to more than 13,000 mothers and grandmothers who are raising boys.

## 3) What would you consider to be the two greatest hurdles of the black male in America?

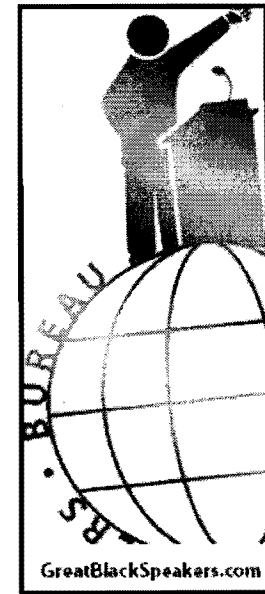
First, we must redefine the images of Black men and boys. I consider that a major hurdle that must be addressed. The lens through which most people in society view us is a very negative one that portrays us as uneducated criminals and gangsters. These images are perpetuated by major media outlets, Hollywood and popular culture.

These messages and images are shaping generations of children globally. Black males in America have developed an image problem.

More organizations must be willing to create ways to create narratives that highlight and promote positive images of Black men and boys.

In November 2010 we launched a new Web site, Changing Fatherhood, in an effort to help fathers and men become "masters of our own media." Through the site we are creating and developing our own stories to provide people with a more comprehensive lens through which to view young Black males.

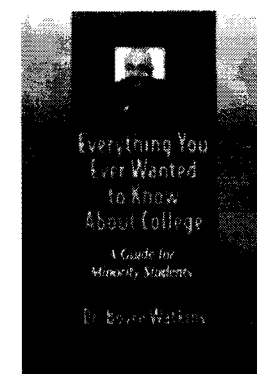
Second, we must address the parenting calamity that is handicapping young Black males. A growing percentage of our children are angry because they are being raised by parents who are ill-equipped to parent. This issue doesn't have anything to do with class or community demographics but instead has to do with parental accountability and a willingness to learn strategy necessary to support healthy child rearing.



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This void has produced a culture of narcissism that equates to epidemic arrests and incarceration rates, apathy and a general disregard for human life. Most days we can pick up a newspaper and read horror stories about young Black men involved in violent acts, many that often result in death.

#### **4) What is it going to take for us to change the outcomes for black boys and black families?**

We must develop a sense of urgency that encourages all people to get involved. Getting involved means everything from donating money to "credible" organizations that are working with young Black males to serving as mentors in communities.

The key institution is building. In other communities people have created life-giving and-life sustaining organizations that support families. When I was growing up we could rely on the church as one of the larger "messengers of hope."

This has dramatically changed over the last couple of years, but we must revert to that if we are to once again thrive as a race of people.

Also, we need "transformational leadership in Black America." Far too often we have leaders who hold offices but are unable to create a legacy of change. Our leaders historically are reactionary and devoid of any kind of strategic plan or vision. The new brand of leadership will need to devise ways by which we are able to raise money to help us "fund our own freedom." Why do we continue relying on organizations outside of our community to fund our survival? It is illogical and keeps us in a position of weakness versus a position of strength.

Bold and innovative leadership is needed to implement policies and practices that will directly impact the lives of African-American males. This kind of leadership will require us to forge ahead and focus greater energy on creating economic "centers of excellence" for the Black community. Much of this will be predicated on our ability to create sustainable family businesses which create generational wealth.

#### **5) What is the role that black women can play in helping to reshape the experience of the black male in America?**

Our women are a critical variable in helping to resurrect Black men and re-tooling the Black community. Much work is needed in encouraging and supporting Black men to become better fathers, husbands and change agents in the community.

Often our women have become our biggest critics and send very destructive messages about the state of Black men.

Black men desperately need to live in a world where we believe that our women support us, value us and want to work with us to reclaim our families and communities.

#### **6) What can black men do to help save our black boys?**

We need Black men to be fathers and role models to Black boys. Young Black males are in desperate need for sober, responsible and productive role models.

While a growing percentage of fathers and men are committed, we still have a large group of Black men who are not connected to their sons and other young Black males in their community as they should be.

In order for us to stem the tide of apathy and dysfunction, adult Black men must become a critical part of the solution. This begins with increasing the levels of accountability with Black male organizations and fraternities.

Additionally, religious-based and civic groups that are focused on issues related to Black men and boys must become more visible and active.

#### **7) Is there anything else you'd like to share with our AOL Black Voices audience?**

When you look at our current situation it is beyond time for us to get our acts together.



Black Women United

Massive incarceration, staggering high school completion rates among young Black males and increasing apathy among parents continue to handicap our children. We know that fathers are critical. Father absence accounts for the following: \* 63 percent of youth suicides are from fatherless homes \* 90 percent of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes \* 85 percent of all children who show behavior disorders come from fatherless homes \* 80 percent of rapists with anger problems come from fatherless homes \* 71 percent of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes \* 75 percent of all adolescent patients in chemical-abuse centers come from fatherless homes \* 85 percent of all youths in prison come from fatherless homes

It is time for us to step up our game and reclaim our families and our communities. If we don't do it, we will have no one but ourselves to blame for our demise.

Black men are the envy of the world. Our families need our leadership. If not us than who!



Dr. Boyce Watkins is the founder of the Your Black World Coalition and a Scholarship in Action Resident of the Institute for Black Public Policy. To have Dr. Boyce commentary delivered to your email, [please click here.](#)

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