

## Help for Single Mothers Raising Sons

By C. Zawadi Morris

### Original article published in the Forte Greene Blog

(<http://fort-greene.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/05/06/help-for-single-mothers-raising-sons/>)

They were single women — mostly African-American — mothers, grandmothers, aunts and sisters. All of them had sons (or were caring for one). They gathered in Fort Greene Monday at 6 p.m., at MS 113 Ronald Edmonds School on Adelphi Street, for “Raising Him Alone,” a workshop for single mothers raising male children.

This was the second annual “Raising Him Alone” workshop, started by hip hop activist and author Kevin Powell. About 125 women and their families attended.

This year’s event was hosted by Akila Worksongs, Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE), Hot 97 radio, 98.7 Kiss FM radio, the Black and Latino Filmmakers Coalition and the Open Society Institute.

“I have two beautiful male sons, but we’re not connecting the dots,” says Natalie Stanislaus, one of the attendees. “They’re looking up to rappers as their father; I’m in a battle every day for him to pull up his pants. I need some help on how we can be on the same page.”

The ongoing absence of a father is destroying black families, according to David Miller, a curriculum writer and one of the workshop’s facilitators. It’s a deadly cycle, leading to economic disparity, violence, drug use, incarceration, misogyny and more broken homes, he said.

Mr. Miller went on to note that in 1961, 80 percent of black children were born into two-parent households. In 2009, 80 percent of black children are born into one-parent households. And the consequences are far-reaching, he said. The absence of a positive male role model affects boys more than girls, witnessed most immediately in high school graduation rates, he said.

“In most major metropolitan cities, 50 percent of black men are dropping out of school,” Mr. Miller told the auditorium of women and children. “We can turn this thing around, y’all. But we’ve got to draw a line in the sand and say ‘enough is enough.’”

And judging from the turnout, single women have had enough. Mr. Miller told a story of a great-grandmother he had met recently, Eta Jones, who was caring for six young boys. Their mother had been arrested on a drug-related charge, and left them in their grandmother’s care. But when the grandmother passed, they were then left with their great-grandmother, who Mr. Miller says, “should be baking cookies, not raising children.”

# RAISING HIM ALONE



Providing Resources and Support For Single Mothers Raising Boys

---

According to one of the event organizers, Diallo Shabazz, the goal of “Raising Him Alone,” is to offer single mothers help, advice and additional resources to make their job as a single parent easier, through:

- After school, summer and mentoring programs
- Healthcare resources, youth employment resources and adult learning programs
- Access to a support system of men, women and other community members who want to see change.

So does anyone know of efforts in the neighborhood to reach out to those absentee fathers? We would like to hear about them.

---

[www.RaisingHimAlone.com](http://www.RaisingHimAlone.com)

**Baltimore Office:**  
Raising Him Alone / Urban Leadership Institute  
2437 Maryland Ave., Baltimore, MD 21218  
Phone: 1-877-339-4300

**New Jersey Office:**  
Raising Him Alone  
403 Alpine Trail, Neptune, NJ 07753