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## February 2007 Edition

*It's February-the month to recall the contributions of African Americans to the history of America and to show some love to those you love. Here are perspectives from directors in our core program areas.*

## Anti-Violence Project

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### When Your Relationship Hurts

Domestic Violence is physical, emotional, sexual and/or economic abuse, as well as threats, intimidation, and/or isolation in a relationship. Domestic violence occurs when one person coerces, dominates, or isolates the other person. It is about power and control, not love. It happens to individuals of every race, ethnicity, class, age, ability, educational level, and religion.

The presence of the following situations does not definitively indicate that your partner is abusive, but if many of these situations exist in your relationship you may want to talk with someone and get support from the Center on Halsted's Anti-Violence Project at 773. 871. CARE (2273). On the other hand, if you recognize your behavior in any of the following scenarios, you may be abusive to your partner and may want to talk with someone to learn other ways of dealing with your anger or emotions.

You may be in an abusive relationship if your partner:

- Was abusive in a former relationship and/or blames the ex for the problem.
- Is charming, enters your life during a crisis and seems to take charge and make everything "better."
- Refuses to talk or sulks when there is a problem.
- Slams doors, shouts or calls you names during a disagreement.
- Loses temper frequently and more easily (or more explosively) than seems appropriate.
- Makes frequent promises to change or improve the behavior, but never seems to do so.
- Has very low self-esteem contrary to others' perception of your partner's success.
- Accepts no responsibility for any mistakes at home, work, with family, etc.

- Uses intimate information or your insecurities to hurt or humiliate you.
- Threatens to "out" you to family, work, or friends.
- Says you're not really lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
- Says you're not a "real" man or woman.
- Blames you for the times your partner yells at you, manipulates you or hurts you.
- Is jealous of any other significant person in your life.
- Expects you to spend all of your free time together and to know of your whereabouts when you do not.
- Accuses you of lying about where you have been and with whom.
- Accuses you of having affairs with others.
- Is demanding and uses nonconsensual force during sex.
- Ignores "safe words."
- "Punishes" you by refusing to have sex when you want to.
- Destroys your property or hurts pets.
- Buys you flowers or gifts to show sorrow for having hurt you.
- Manipulates you by threatening self harm.
- Uses drugs and/or alcohol excessively.
- Appears to have a dual personality; one moment your partner is charming and warm and the next appears angry, violent or cruel.
- Demonstrates oppressive beliefs and values-racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, ableism- and criticizes you or others for differences.
- Threatens to physically harm you.
- Hits, kicks, beats, pushes, shoves, or slaps you.

Finally, if you are fearful when your partner gets angry, or spend most of your time trying to make sure your partner remains happy, it is possible you are being controlled by your partner's behavior.

If you or someone you know experiences any of the above behaviors, call the Anti-Violence Project 24-Hour Crisis Line at 773. 871. CARE (2273).

**Laura Valazquez**  
*AVP Manager*  
*Center on Halsted*

## **Mental Health Observations**

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In the last issue of CenterPieces, I devoted my entry to exploring the meaning of Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the context of mental health. I continue this exploration as we celebrate and take stock of the African American experience during this, Black History Month.

Mental illness knows no bounds and does not discriminate as to age, gender, socioeconomic status or race. However, African Americans are far less likely to receive mental health services than the general population. According to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Surgeon General, almost 60% of older African Americans do not engage in needed mental health treatment. There are a number of possible explanations:

- Distrust of health workers and medical settings resulting from a history of incompetent and/or unethical treatment
- Reliance on nonprofessional institutions (family, church, social groups) during an emotional crisis rather than a mental health professional
- Cultural differences between providers and consumers

- Stigma associated with psychotherapy and an overall lack of information about mental illness
- Socioeconomic factors that restrict access to both medical and mental health services

Another report from the Surgeon General's Office states that the role of culture in the provision of mental health services cannot be overemphasized: "The cultures that the patients come from shape their mental health and affect the types of mental health services they use. Likewise, the cultures of the clinician and the service system affect diagnosis, treatment, and the organization and financing of services. Cultural and social influences are not the only influences on mental health and service delivery, but they have been historically underestimated-and they do count. Cultural differences must be accounted for to ensure that minorities, like all Americans, receive mental health care tailored to their needs."

Racial and ethnic minorities are impacted by mental illness to a much greater degree than whites. This is due to the realities of limited resources and comparatively inferior quality of care-not because the forms of mental illness that afflict minority communities are more disabling or prevalent. Without adequate services, racial and ethnic minorities with mental illness experience greater rates of lost workdays and restricted amounts of daily activity. They do not benefit from the extraordinary scientific advances made in the etiology and treatment of mental illness. They cannot profit from or contribute meaningfully to our society. As racial and ethnic minority groups grow in size and number, sadly disparities of income and opportunity keep pace. This atmosphere of inequality means that racial and ethnic minorities will continue to be vulnerable to racism, discrimination, violence and poverty-all of which corrode mental health.

Studies indicate that even relatively successful African Americans experience depression resulting from institutional racism that does not allow them to operate free from racial tensions fostered by white colleagues or peers who do not accept them as equals. Similarly, gifted young African Americans with thwarted or starved aspirations, both academically and professionally, are at risk for depression.

Suicide has for many years occurred predominantly among whites. However, statistics compiled by the National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide (NOPCAS) indicate that suicide rates are growing disproportionately among African Americans-particularly youth. The rate of black suicide for teens ages 15-19 doubled between 1980 and 1995. On average, 5 African Americans take their lives each day in the United States. And this figure doesn't even begin to take into account less intentional acts that can shorten or compromise life. In their groundbreaking book *Lay My Burden Down: Unraveling Suicide and the Mental Health Crisis among African Americans*, Alvin P. Poussaint and Amy Alexander posit that some African Americans engage in self-destructive behaviors (drug and alcohol abuse, unsafe sex) as an almost fatalistic response to disenfranchisement.

The Mental Health Program at Center on Halsted (COH) is committed to doing whatever it can to counter such hopelessness. Our services are affordable and offered in a culturally competent and affirming manner. If you are an African American or any racial or ethnic minority who has found his or her experience mirrored in this piece, I encourage you to contact our Client Services Coordinator for an assessment. All intake appointments are offered at no cost to clients and will link you to services with the power to enhance or even save your life. Through its myriad programs, COH is working at both the macro and micro level to alleviate the distress facing our brothers and sisters of color. In the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be..."

**Jason T. McVicker, LCSW, RDDP**  
*Director of Mental Health Services*  
*Center on Halsted*

## Horizons Youth Program

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It's Black History month and so the Horizons Youth Program at Center on Halsted has carved out time for both celebration and exploration. Our Young Men's Group is breaking open the meaning of coming out as a young African American male. Our HIV prevention group is taking another look at living on the "down low," and whether it is indeed only an African American experience. Our Coming Out group, Up and Out, is exploring the homophobia existent within communities of color and how it shapes our youth. Our young people are also exploring what it means to be black, young and sexually exploited through their rehearsals of "Body & Sold," a dramatic rendering of prostitution among youth.

Through individual and group discussions, artwork and movies, our youth are shining a special light on what Black History month means for young LGBT people. However, our youth will be the first to tell you that one month just isn't enough to understand the complexities of race in America. Throw in sexuality, and we must agree that the exploration and celebration cannot end on February 28.

### Janine Denomme

*Director, Horizons Youth Program  
Center on Halsted*

## Community & Cultural Programming

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Center on Halsted is pleased to announce the formation of CenterPages-Chicago's first comprehensive literary program for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. Initiated in November 2006, this program includes a quarterly recommended reading list and regular programming based on rotating themes. Currently, CenterPages displays can be found at Borders Bookstores in Lincoln Park and Uptown-with an expanded list of stores coming in the near future.

Upcoming topics include Chicago Themes and Authors, Out in Sports, Global Voices, Families, Transgender, and Comedy. For more information, email [culture@centeronhalsted.org](mailto:culture@centeronhalsted.org).

First Quarter 2007

Civil Right / Civil Left: LGBT Civil Rights in America

In recognition of Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday and Black History Month, the CenterPages topic is LGBT Civil Rights in America.

### Recommended Books

Stonewall

*Martin Bauml Duberman*

Publisher: Plume; Reprint edition (May 1, 1994)

ISBN: 0452272068

This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color

*Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldua*

Publisher: Kitchen Table-Women of Color Press; 2nd edition (February 1984)

ISBN: 091317503X

Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights

*Kenji Yoshino*

Publisher: Random House Trade Paperbacks (March 13, 2007)  
ISBN: 0375760210

The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk  
*Randy Shilts*

Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin; Reissue edition (March 15, 1988)  
ISBN: 0312019009

### Recommended Production

## EXECUTION OF JUSTICE

January 10 - February 18  
www.aboutfacetheatre.com  
773-871-3000

About Face Theatre continues its "Dramatically Different" season with a reconceived production of Emily Mann's Execution of Justice, directed by Chicago's own Gary Griffin, presented in association with Jan Kallish and Rachel Weinstein. The show is presented at About Face Theatre in residence in the new Victory Gardens Greenhouse Theatre, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave.



San Francisco, CA. November 1978. Former City Supervisor Dan White calmly loaded his gun, entered City Hall through an open basement window, and proceeded upstairs to assassinate Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, killing each with multiple shots fired at point-blank range. The cast of characters was epic. Dan White-ex-cop, ex-firefighter, working-class hero and all-American boy. Harvey Milk-the first openly gay politician ever elected to high office. George Moscone-the progressive mayor who supported gay rights. The verdict was sensational-Dan White was convicted of manslaughter rather than first-degree murder and sentenced to just seven years in prison based on the infamous "Twinkie Defense."

## State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline

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### African Americans and the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

1987

- The National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS founded.
- National Minority AIDS Council founded.

1989

- Dancer and choreographer Alvin Ailey dies of AIDS.

1991

- Magic Johnson stuns the world with his announcement that he is HIV positive. The news results in record numbers of people taking HIV antibody tests and calling AIDS hotlines across the country.

1992

- Disproportionately high rates of new HIV infections among African American women become headline news.

1993

- Wimbledon champ Arthur Ashe dies of AIDS at age 49.

1994

- The National Institutes for Health issues guidelines requiring applicants for NIH grants to address "the appropriate inclusion of women and minorities in clinical research."

1995

- Rap artist Eric Wright (Easy-E of the Rap Group NWA) dies of AIDS.
- The Balm in Gilead is established to support churches in educating their communities and advocating for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

1996

- HIV is the leading cause of death for African Americans ages 25-44.

1998

- The Minority AIDS Initiative is created in Congress after African American leaders declare a "state of emergency" and the Congressional Black Caucus calls on the Department of Health and Human Services to do the same.

1999

- The World Health Organization reports that more African American *women* than men have HIV and AIDS.
- The Black AIDS Institute, the first Black HIV/AIDS policy center dedicated to reducing HIV/AIDS health disparities by mobilizing Black institutions and individuals in efforts to confront the epidemic in their communities, is founded.

2000-2004

- Among gay and bisexual men, AIDS diagnoses among African American and Latino men *exceed* that of whites for the first time.
- Nationally, AIDS is the leading cause of death among African American women ages 25-34 and the second leading cause of death of African American men ages 35-44.
- HIV/AIDS cases among African Americans are the highest among all racial/ethnic groups with a total of 1,406 cases reported in 2004 in Illinois, which consists of more than half the total

reported cases in the state (2,662). Whites comprised 26 percent of the reported cases, Hispanics 15 percent and Asians 1.4 percent.

- Of the total reported HIV cases among females in Illinois, 70 percent were African American.
- Among the total male population with HIV in Illinois, 47 percent were African American.
- Nearly 72 percent of African American women and 64 percent of African American men with HIV infection reported in 2004 were younger than 40.

The above timeline and statistics show the unique burden and yet the amazing amount of positive effect that African Americans have had in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

February 7 is designated National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Many churches and public HIV/STD service providers in Chicago held health fairs and offered free HIV testing. Most communities throughout the Chicago area have service providers that offer free HIV testing year round. Here at Center on Halsted and the State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline we celebrate Black History Month by considering our common humanity and focusing on the concrete ways in which we can all help each other through difficult times. The prejudices that African Americans face in many ways correlate to the prejudices that HIV-positive people of all races and ethnicities face. Fighting bias in one arena teaches us to empathize and join in the battles of others who are marginalized. This month is also an opportunity for each of us to look inside and honestly assess what prejudices we may harbor that can add to this marginalization.

Every day from 8:00am to 10:00pm Hotline Counselors are available to offer statewide referrals for HIV/STD testing and can answer any questions regarding HIV/STD transmission, symptoms, talking to a partner about HIV, and prevention. Call us: 1.800.AID.AIDS · 1.800.243.2437 · (TTY) 1.800.782.0423

**Jill Dispenza**

*Hotline Call Center Manager  
Center on Halsted*

State of Illinois AIDS/HIV & STD Hotline  
1.800.AID.AIDS · 1.800.243.2437 · (TTY) 1.800.782.0423

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