

Domestic Violence and the Faith Community

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The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC) is an organization that, as its name implies, focuses on the needs of African Americans as they relate to ending domestic violence among this population. In its efforts to partner with the faith community around addressing the issue of domestic violence, IDVAAC has convened workshops and roundtable discussions to address the intersection of the two. One prevalent issue raised at these gatherings was the incorrect application of religious tenets to justify domestic violence.

In the Christian faith, for example, the misapplication and/or misinterpretation of Bible scriptures can contribute to the oppression of women. An often-cited passage of scripture from the Bible as it relates to the role of women is Ephesians 5:22-24, which indicates that wives should submit to their husbands in everything because the man is the head of the household. Some theologians interpret this passage in a way that might compel women to remain in abusive marriages as an act of obedience outlined in the Bible. However, later in Ephesians, the chapter discusses a husband's responsibility and how he should treat his wife with love-not with violence-in a spirit of interdependence.

Religious leaders of other faiths also debate the role of men and women in families, communities and in places of worship. Regardless of which religious doctrine guides the personal lives of individuals, one thing is clear: The faith and domestic violence sectors must work together to end the violence in homes and communities that is destroying the very fabric of America.