“Babies Having Babies”: The Imperative for Ending the Epidemic of Teen Pregnancy in the Black Community

Committed to Leadership Development and Gender Equity in Health, Education, Economic Empowerment, and...

Facilitating Partnerships to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

The National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., wishes to express gratitude to The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy for its financial and program support in this effort.
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Special Acknowledgement

The National Coalition of 100 Black Women would also like to acknowledge the professional services of award winning journalist Hazel Trice-Edney, President and CEO, Trice Edney Communications, LLC, in the writing of this White Paper.
A White Paper by the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.
Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy Initiative

Executive Summary

Eleven billion U. S. dollars. That’s enough money to send 300,000 students to a private college for four years. It’s enough money to put more than a million students through community colleges. And it’s enough money to fund a summer jobs program for nearly a million youths.

But, this $11 billion was not spent on those causes. Rather, this eleven billion is the number of tax dollars that was spent on teenagers having children in the year 2008, the most recent record established by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

This $11 billion includes $2.3 billion for public health care costs, $2.8 billion for child welfare costs, $2.3 billion for costs for state prison systems that often house adult sons of teen mothers and $3.2 billion in lost tax revenue due to lower taxes paid by the children of teen mothers over their own adult lifetimes.

Fast forward to 2011: Currently, The National Campaign estimates the number of teen pregnancies overall have steadily declined by about a third during the first part of the 21st century. The increase in condom use to prevent HIV/AIDS is given significant credit for the dramatic decrease in teen pregnancies. Some see awareness of HIV/AIDS as a dual strategy for fighting the teen pregnancy epidemic because of the clear intersection between both: Neither can happen unless one engages in unprotected sex, and both are 100 percent preventable.

But, specifically in the Black community, which maintains the highest rate of teen pregnancies among all ethnic groups, half of all teen girls still become pregnant by the age of 20. This is despite the availability of condoms and other birth control methods, according to The National Campaign. And a quarter of all African American girls become mothers while in their teens.

Eleven billion U.S. dollars is a lot of money. But the fiscal concerns surrounding this epidemic are dwarfed by the social capital that gives rise to this White Paper on teen pregnancy in the Black community. It is, in fact, the human impact on individuals, on families and on the progress of Black communities and America overall that cries out for this call to action.

NCBW utilized funding provided by The National Campaign to convene a focus group constituted by leadership of twelve (12) national Black women’s organizations with a membership reach exceeding two million Black women across 50 states. The purpose was to explore, through deep and honest conversation and research, this culturally sensitive issue that has long been associated with various social ills. Everything from the degradation of slavery to the systemic low value placed on the lives of Black women to self-inflicted denigration that leads to low self-esteem have been blamed for this scourge.
Black women and girls are very aware of the atrocities of history, the rapes of our foremothers, the lynching of our forefathers as well as the crippling aftermath. And, so, our conversations about teen pregnancy in Black America take on a different tone; a very different context. We, the collective generations of Black women and men who could not intervene no doubt would have lost our minds if we had been required to pass judgment on every unwed or teen mother. Instead, we were taught to ignore the circumstances and love the child because the child was one of our own.

So, as members of the NCBW and its collaborative partners, we enter this conversation with a historical and cultural understanding that because the genesis of the problem is not the same the solutions cannot be the same. We have concluded that to address this herculean issue, multiple untraditional strategies are needed from every major institution associated with the Black community. Among the cornerstones of strategies, we must counteract old and new attacks on the self-esteem of Black girls and we must condemn the cultural acceptance of teen pregnancy. Simultaneously, we must reject the pop culture that glamorizes teen pregnancy amongst White girls while stereotyping Black girls.

We must also pinpoint and diffuse the ‘What’s Up Bitch?’ factor. This psychological seduction has become inculcated in our youth communities through television, stimulating music, the internet, and fashion - among other forms of entertainment - and has resulted in their acceptance of denigrating labels and behavior.

The existence of this seduction is underscored by a survey recently released by ESSENCE Magazine and The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. In that survey of 1,500 Black youth, 72 percent said they believe that the media sends the message that Black females' most important quality is their sex appeal; 64 percent agree that the media sends the message that it is okay for Black males to cheat in relationships; 73 percent say the media portrays Black youth as sexually aggressive, compared to 39 percent who believe the media portrays Whites as sexually aggressive, and just 18 percent say they see themselves in the TV shows and movies they watch.

We must identify and destroy the culprits that erode the moral fabric of our communities, resulting in the belief among our young women and our young men that anything goes. And we must teach our girls the difference between sex and love, especially those who desperately search for love of a man in the absence of their fathers, and those who know or knew their father’s love and seek it in their partner.

Ultimately, this White Paper calls on the Black family, the Black Church, Black social organizations, educational institutions, lawmakers and public servants to take on this mission and to place it among their top priorities. There must be a sense of urgency, starting within our own communities, lest this epidemic continues to beset us.
Introduction

By M. DeLois (Dee) Strum, President
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.

This is a historic moment for us at the National Coalition of 100 Black Women. As we take the helm of leadership in this most important conversation, I think of the question, “Why us and Why now?” The answer is very simple: If it’s not us; then who? If it’s not now, then when will it be?

The National Coalition of 100 Black Women is committed to assuring the success of the next generation of Black female leadership. A large part of that commitment is grounded in this national strategy to link, leverage and lead the larger Black women’s conversation and advocacy agenda on behalf of both Black women and Black girls in the areas of health, education and economic empowerment.

Clearly, when we talk about the topic of teen pregnancy, we all understand the adverse impact that teen pregnancies can have in minimizing the abilities of our Black girls and their children to really achieve their full potential in every one of these areas. The statistics outlined in this report are startling and cry out for action.

This is a crucial conversation. But, it is not necessarily a polite conversation. This White Paper is intentionally candid. And it is strategically researched and written from a Black perspective. Its purpose is not only to present a body of research wrought from conversations and observations in our own communities but also to present a “Call to Action” that will evoke response and results.

We wish to turn the tide of popularity that we’re observing at the start of the 21st century that glamorizes teen motherhood. Rather than glorify this epidemic, we wish to send a message that is far too often omitted. That message, in the words of our grandmothers: “It ain’t easy, sweetheart. It ain’t easy.”

In the absence of this message, the larger pop culture, including entertainers and movie stars, is drowning out the voice of this intrinsic wisdom. The data shows that we must begin to strive against the tide by promoting messages that will counteract the overriding voices.
Our children are hearing that it’s all right to become pregnant at 14 and 15 years old. They are seeing high-powered celebrities being glamourized with single parent pregnancies and they are hearing messages in songs and videos that characterize them as “bitches” and “hoes.” Unless we counteract with truth, wisdom and life-changing enlightenment, these images are assaults on their self-esteem and character and thereby a detriment to their futures and the future successes of their children, and by extension, the Black community in America.

Given the longevity of this epidemic in our community, it is clear to us that we cannot allow others to plead this cause on our behalf. Indeed, for maximum impact, this national strategy must be carried out for us and by us.

Finally, this report is not intended to dissuade the wonderful advent of motherhood. Rather, it is intended to encourage the timing and planning of motherhood, which are conducive to the maximum health and well-being of the mother and child involved.

Neither is this report intended to cast aspersions on or indict the Black community in any way. In fact, the women whom we call “Champions” who worked diligently to compile this information have either been teen mothers themselves or known teen mothers as members of their families, neighborhoods and communities. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “There cannot be great disappointment where there is not great love.”

Furthermore, we are well aware of the long history of pain and degradation that led to some of the social and psychological oppression involved in this epidemic and others in our communities. From the denigration and marginalization of enslaved Black men to the rape and subjugation of enslaved Black women, we recognize that our history is steeped in torture that has led to many social ills.

Therefore, in this White Paper, we take into account our history, our present and many of the root causes of our circumstances. We have aggressively sought answers from every significant spectrum of our community and we will continue this conversation well into the future by an actionable blueprint fueled by the national NCBW network of chapters and our like-minded and committed sister organizations. We hereby present in this body of work what we deem to be a call to action for a measurable reduction of teen pregnancy in the Black community.
The Conditions

“Babies Having Babies”: It is an oft-heard phrase in conversations among African Americans. Said with a scoff and the shake of our heads, it denotes these dire circumstances:

- **Educational Deficiencies.** Half of all African American teen girls get pregnant by the age of 20, a third of which never graduate from high school or get a GED.

- **Black youth are feeling significant pressure to have sex.** Either they feel pressured to engage in sex or to go further sexually than they wanted to, according to the survey released by ESSENCE and The National Campaign, first mentioned in the Introduction. The survey included 1,500 Black youth ages 13-21 of which 47 percent of those 13-21 actually had sex. That includes 21 percent of those 13-15 who said they have been pressured to go further sexually than they wanted to.

- **Poverty Result.** These teen mothers are far less likely to receive adequate income than those who do graduate. Therefore, more than 80 percent of teen or unplanned mothers and children live in poverty or on welfare.

- **Many Children in the “System.”** Many children of teen mothers enter foster care programs or end up in prison.

- **Grandmothers Assuming Responsibility.** Grandmothers and great grandmothers on fixed incomes themselves are compelled to raise both their daughters and their daughters’ child or children, and in an increasing number of cases, their son’s children when either or both the son and the mother of the son’s child(ren) are unable or unwilling to do so.

- **Repetitious Cycle.** Their children often repeat the cycle. Compared to children born to older mothers, i.e., 20–21 years old, children born to teen moms are more likely to drop out of high school, experience abuse or neglect or become teen parents themselves.

- **Fathers Also Falter.** Teen fathers do not fare much better than the mothers of their children. Teen fathers also earn substantively less than older fathers aged 20–21.

- **Tax Funds Deferred.** As a result, public coffers that could go toward productive activities like college tuitions and jobs programs are instead being spent to care for single mothers and their children. A total of $11 billion was spent on teenagers having children in the year 2008, the most recent record established by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. The funds included $2.3 billion for public health-care costs, $2.8 billion for child welfare costs, $2.3 billion for costs for state prison systems that often
house adult sons of teen mothers and $3.2 billion in lost tax revenue due to lower taxes paid by the children of teen mothers over their own adult lifetimes.

**National Cost of Teen Childbearing**

Teen childbearing in the United States costs taxpayers (federal, state, and local) at least $10.9 billion in 2008, according to an updated analysis by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Most of the costs of teen childbearing are associated with negative consequences for the children of teen mothers, including increased costs for health care, foster care, incarceration, and lost tax revenue.

Visit [www.thenationalcampaign.org](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org) for multiple forms of Resources including...

**Under Pressure**

The National Campaign and ESSENCE Magazine have teamed up to conduct a nationally representative survey of African-American youth to better understand their ideas about sex, love, and relationships.

Read the full survey at the website shown above.
The Causes

Many of us heard our older relatives talk over the years about being married off at the ages of 12 and 13. They would discuss the difficulty of their marriages, which reflects a history of experiences that they do not want repeated. Yet, today, teens are “volunteering” for the duty of parenting far too early and so ill-equipped. Some do marry; but for a multiplicity of reasons many more do not, and teen marriages are not necessarily the answer to this problem.

In our in depth and frank discussions, we found a myriad of influences on the lives of our youth that often lay the foundation for their decision-making. Among them are failed institutions and the following factors:

- **We Have Become Too Lax.** As the rate of teen pregnancy in the Black community remains high, traditional institutions, such as schools, churches and social organizations appear complacent and unguarded. Instead of playing their traditional roles as guides and standard-bearers, they seem to have become complicit with a media-led culture that implies “anything goes.”

- **Media Images Have Become the Parents.** The media and entertainment arenas constantly feed images that glorify illicit sexual images and even teen pregnancy. This media-led culture has become so pervasive that, in some circles, teen pregnancy is expected and accepted as the norm.

- **Even the Black Church Has Joined the Fray.** Having baby showers in churches to celebrate pregnant teens instead of educating them through mentorship occurs too often. The old way of making these teenagers feel shame and then hide, however, has not worked either.

- **There Are Economic Benefits to Teen Pregnancy and Motherhood.** Some teen mothers—and even their mothers—view teen pregnancy as an economic gain. Teens are able to use their status as single or pregnant mothers to obtain economic subsidies, health benefits and public housing for their families. Teen girls in foster child care facing “out-placement” at the age of 18 without family and often without a sense of a future, often view pregnancy as the next safety net; a form of income, but even moreover, something to call their own.

- **Responsible Adults Appear Hush-Hush.** Viewing teen pregnancy as a social problem appears to have become a taboo. Parents are reluctant to discuss sex with their teens, or they simply do not know how. In contrast, teens want to talk with their parents but, for some reason they cannot. They then engage in the sexual behavior and don’t see the consequences until it’s too late.
• **Sex Is Viewed As a Rite of Passage.** Tragically, some Black youth—feeling socially and economically powerless, vulnerable and trapped—view sex as a rite of passage, a means by which they achieve adulthood and connect with their peers—like their driver’s license or their first car.

• **For Some, Sex Is a Drug.** Just as bad, some also see sex as a drug, something to help them medicate against the ills of society. It’s the one thing they can do that feels good, and it’s free — until they get pregnant.

• **No One Clear Voice Exists.** Despite the existence of highly respected organizations such as The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, there appears to be no unified voice specifically targeting the Black community on the rate of teen pregnancies.

• **Teens Accept the “Come Here, Bitch” – “What’s Up Bitch?” Identity.** Girls seeking acceptance at tender ages and wanting to feel beautiful are acting out the behavior of the so-called bitches, sluts and hoes portrayed in the stereotypical media and entertainment industries. In addition, the glorification of teen and unplanned motherhood on TV shows and through other pop-culture forms influence girls.

**The NCBW Call to Action**

The old saying that “It takes a village to raise a child” superbly applies here. For those young people with or without children, it will take a national village of individuals, organizations and institutions to turn this epidemic around. From the public-policy arena, to the education and the religious and the health communities, to both the Black family and the Black social organizations, to peers and to the media, it will indeed take a national strategy to affect the behavioral patterns of our youth.

Working simultaneously, harmoniously, and with a needed sense of urgency, we believe the epidemic of teen pregnancy can be greatly impacted and significantly diminished over the next five years. With this objective in mind, we have crafted specific strategies to be used in the following eight arenas.

• **Public-Policy Arena.** Billions of tax dollars are being used to fund the aftermath of this epidemic and little is being used for prevention on the front end. Members of the U. S. Congress and state and local legislatures must consider bills and pass laws to increase funding for “character” education, inner motivation and pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention in public schools. Character education describes programs that help students establish principles to help them excel and face life situations, such as perseverance, responsibility, caring and self-discipline.
**Planned Action(s):** NCBW and its partners will actively support legislation to increase funding for teen pregnancy prevention. Such support can take the form of letters, testimony and/or collecting signatures for added support. We will rely on The National Campaign to assist in the identification of such legislative initiatives and defining the most effective ways in which our organizations can leverage their national profile.

- **Educational Arena.** Teachers and guidance counselors cannot replace parents, but can certainly supplement their advice and guidance. When voids in parenting exist in this area, school programs—even sex and sexual education curricula—can certainly make an impact.

  We recommend that elementary and high schools develop curricula that not only engage students about sexual responsibility but also deal with low self-esteem that often leads to premature sexual activity. Also, teachers and guidance counselors must be on the lookout for students whose grades or behaviors suddenly change. These adults serve as the eyes and ears outside the home, picking up what parents might miss.

  To the extent that they are able to give a word of wisdom or guidance, that could change a teen’s dead end course or save a teen from the mistake of a lifetime. Eighty-nine percent of African American adults and 83 percent of African American teens say that reducing teen pregnancy is an effective way to reduce the high school dropout rate and improve academic achievement.

  Dr. H. Dandridge Collins, Jr., a Pennsylvania-based psychologist, family therapist and ordained minister, says educators, parents, mentors and faith leaders must be conscious of at least three key steps in order to effectively deter teen pregnancy. Those steps are:

  1. **Pre-Teach:** Because some teens see pregnancy as an “unspoken rite of passage” or how they “rise up” into an adult and fit in, they must be taught how to “rise up in discipline” so that they can see themselves as “powerful – not by indulging – but by choosing to wait for the right time, for the right circumstances with the right person.”

  2. **Create an alternative rite of passage:** What they really want is communion, meaning to be a part of, having a connection with people who surround them. What they’re settling for is sex. At that age, identity is the key. Creating an alternative rite of passage means giving them ways of loving themselves, nurturing themselves and comforting themselves. And the key for teenagers is to keep them doing positive things because if they are not busy doing higher things, they’ll think of something lower to do.
3. Have conversations about their future: Help them to think and create a vision of what their ideal families and lifestyles will look like in the future. Most people would not say, “I just want to be a single parent”.

**Planned Action(s):** The NCBW teen pregnancy collaboration will define specific actions and research existing literature that is culturally-sensitive to guide our advocacy in the aforementioned areas and to further define the manner and approach each organization can take to reinforce the “messaging”.

- **Organizational/Social Arena.** Hundreds of historic organizations exist in the Black community. From civil rights organizations, to civic, social and professional organizations and to fraternities and sororities, many already have established programs through which they mentor young people and address issues such as self-esteem, character and teen pregnancy.

  For those who do not have such programs, we are asking that they consider the urgency of this issue and create a means by which to deal with it. For those who do, we are asking that they escalate these activities.

  Thousands of youths, on a daily basis, are looking for a way forward in their lives. Some realize they are trapped. But many view their existence among the numerous social ills as the norm and will live out their lives taking part in the cycle of poverty unless someone intervenes. Young men and women need role models, identifiable faces who will not preach at them or judge them but show them the way by leadership and influence.

  This national call to action has as its core dozens of organizations that are already deeply engaged in this issue. We are calling for others to join with us, including fatherhood organizations. We will supply the facts if you supply the action.

  **Planned Action(s):** NCBW will adopt/develop a teen pregnancy prevention module to provide to its 60+ chapters nationwide for inclusion in any locally-administered teen mentoring programs. For chapters that do not host a teen mentoring program NCBW will provide a list of options and opportunities to “push out” this module through local youth-serving organizations as a partnership on preventing teen pregnancy.

- **The Black Family.** This is where it must start. Black families simply must rethink ways of relating to one another. From day one, we all too often sit our children in front of the TVs to keep them quiet while we are busy. They grow up in that same spot, fed with all kinds of negative images and stereotypes of themselves, of which many of us are unaware.
It’s never too late to undo the damage. It’s time to talk.

Even if a teen mother is already in the home, it’s not too late to stop another pregnancy. About one in four teen mothers under age 18 have a second baby within two years after the birth of their first baby, according to The National Campaign. Society often stereotypes teen moms as loose and promiscuous when many of them simply made a mistake in an early sexual experience.

Krystina (name changed to protect identity) is now 17. She was only 14 when she gave birth to her son, Prince. Like many teen parents, she said she did not intend to get pregnant, but when she did, she decided against abortion or adoption because “I knew that Prince would be mine – not something that was my mother’s; not something that was my father’s, and not something that could be easily just taken away from me; someone that would love me and love me back with no problems and that I knew there would always be love unconditionally no matter what.”

Krystina has now learned the ultimate lesson. “My greatest shock is I never thought somebody would be following me around saying ‘Mama’ all day at such a young age,” she said. But with the support of family, she is progressing with her life. She just received her GED and is planning to attend college for nursing and eventually wants to become a doctor.

Lessons that she would pass to other teens before they become pregnant: “It’s not just what’s on the outside like a baby saying Mommy and I love you. It’s the inside too. It’s the hard work. It’s the labor. It’s the caring. It’s the attention. It’s the love. It’s not just the stuff that’s on the outside. “

If she had one moment to talk another teen out of engaging in sex that could get them pregnant, Krystina said she would ask, “Where would you see yourself a couple of years from now with a baby at such a young age just from this one night or this one moment? It could change your life forever.”

Surveys of teens say they want to discuss these sensitive issues with their parents. Surveys of parents say many of them are afraid and simply don’t know how. We compel parents to get the guidance they need on how to start this conversation. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy can help.

Furthermore, in Black families, we must deal with our sons as well as our daughters. For too long, young women have suffered the brunt of this criticism while teen fathers escape
the lessons and the stigmas. Young men must be taught that having loose, irresponsible sex is not cool and that having a baby is an avenue of responsibility, not bragging rights. They must also be taught that they are just as responsible for pregnancy prevention as the girl they are planning to have sex with and that not liking to wear a condom is no excuse.

Tough talk, love, and encouragement are needed to break the stereotypical mindset that teen mothers often suffer, including the images that damage their self-esteem, says Stephanie M. Clark, author of the book, *Life as a Single Mom: It Isn’t Easy, Or Is It?* Clark, herself a single mother, is national director of Project Single Moms Worldwide, Inc. and is a member of the NCBW focus group on teen pregnancy.

Just as family and community support are important, Clark says it is equally important that teen mothers look at themselves as a crucial part of their own immediate family unit—one that will affect the future decision-making of their own children and end possible cycles of teen pregnancy. In a book chapter titled “Real Rap for My Single Teen Moms and Teen Tempted: Now What?” Clark writes:

“Know your worth and that you bring value to your child’s life. You are not a baby-making machine. You do not have multiple babies just for the paycheck. You did not get pregnant just to have a man in your life. Just because your mother had you when she was a teenager does not mean you have to walk in her shoes, in this case. You can break the Cycle!”

**Planned Action(s):** *NCBW and its partners will collaborate to develop short messages to be shared with parents and teen custodians to help jump-start this necessary conversation. Distribution can start with the membership of each organization and the request to expand the reach of the messaging through family, church and membership in other organizations. This “multiplier effect” will help achieve a critical mass of pregnancy-prevention conversations throughout the African American community.*

- **The Health Care Arena.** Though the rate of teen pregnancy among African Americans remains higher than other ethnic groups, the advent of HIV/AIDS awareness is partially credited for causing a significant dip over the years. Teen pregnancy rate among African Americans decreased 45 percent from 1990 to 2005, coinciding with a dramatic increase in condom use in the 1990s, according to The National Campaign. That's because condoms, the chief preventer of the spread of HIV/AIDS, is also the chief preventer of pregnancy—outside of abstinence, of course.
Some see awareness of HIV/AIDS as a dual strategy for fighting the teen pregnancy epidemic because of a clear intersection between both. Neither can happen unless one engages in unprotected sex, and both are 100 percent preventable. Health-care arenas are crucial in this regard and others.

Teen pregnancy is a health issue for both mother and child. The likelihood of a baby being born with health problems or low-birth weight is higher among teens than women of normal birthing age. A teenage mother is at greater risk for pregnancy complications than for women 20 and over, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). This includes premature labor, anemia and high blood pressure. ACOG reports that these risks are even greater for teens who are under the age of 15.

Therefore, we call on government health agencies, clinics, hospitals and other institutions to establish public health campaigns to revive attention to the epidemic of teen pregnancy. This issue is not simply a social statistic especially prone to poor Black girls. Rather, this issue threatens the health of young children around the country and must be viewed as an epidemic in public health.

**Planned Action(s):** Almost every NCBW chapter hosts one or more health related workshops during its program year. Our national health committee will be tasked with developing a turn-key program and agenda specific to teen pregnancy as a health issue.

- **The Black Church:** Among the most respected and revered institutions in Black America, the Black church must reexamine its call to morality teachings. Although this does not mean judgment of “sinners,” it does mean teaching that sex outside of marriage and unplanned pregnancies have consequences.

The Black church must also find a medium between the two extremes of celebrating an unplanned or teen pregnancy and shaming young women. As indicated earlier, the end result of this latter practice for these girls is hiding or irreparable damage to their self-esteem. Rather, the Black church must reengage in its historic and traditional role as the moral guide in our communities: It should discourage teenage pregnancy, provide wisdom and teach the basic tenets of moral character, as well as be examples of it.

**Planned Action(s):** NCBW will rely heavily on its two faith-based partner organizations, National Coalition of Pastors’ Spouses and the Women’s Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, to develop a faith-based teen pregnancy prevention campaign to include multiple ways in which any church could elect to integrate this message.
• Peer Counselors. That old TV program *Scared Straight* was said to have saved many youths from prison. To have gone behind bars and to have seen firsthand the horrors of prison life imparted something to them that they never would have imagined. It caused many to change the error of their ways.

Some teens will need to see and hear the hardships experienced by their peers who—by making wrong decisions—are now trying to raise a child or children. Peer counseling is believed to be one of the effective forms of influence because young people, speaking the same peer-group language, listen to each other.

**Planned Action(s):** *NCBW teen mentoring programs will evaluate the manner in which their teen girls can be used as partners in crafting and delivering an age-sensitive message/program specific to pregnancy prevention, and considering parental approval and/or involvement in such efforts.*

• Parents. Most teens want to hear from their parents. In the *ESSENCE*/National Campaign survey, 31 percent of those ages 13-21 say their parents are most influential about deciding whether or not to have sex compared to 27 percent who cited partners and 5 who cited friends. Parental influence decreases as youth get older, according to the survey: 47 percent of those ages 13-15 say their parents' opinions matter most. That decreased to 28 percent for those 16-18 and 17 percent for those 19-21.

Regardless of how aloof they seem, a significant number of teens want to know that their parents care. Yet, parents need help even raising the topic of sex and sexuality to their children. They need to know of places where they can go to seek help in this regard. That commercial about how to talk to your children about drugs could easily be transitioned into a campaign about talking to your children about sex.

**Conclusion**

We recognize that we have challenged some long-held beliefs and triggered some controversy about teen pregnancy. That was our intention. Among the quintessential causes of teen pregnancy is the failure of Black institutions to address it and their proclivity to ignore it.

Surely, the naysayers will scoff and say this life-style is too far gone and we are wasting our time. Those are the comments that we will ignore. Rather, we choose to believe the 77 percent of African-American teens who say that teen pregnancy is a very important problem in the United
States. We also choose to believe the 81 percent of African-American adults who say that teen pregnancy is an important problem. And we are in lock step with the 97 percent of African American adults who say that direct efforts should be in their communities to prevent teen pregnancy.

Again, this is not as much about the money that could be used elsewhere as it is about the lives being impacted. The human capital annually expended in this epidemic of teen and unplanned pregnancies is more than our communities can or should bear. We are all responsible for the solutions. If not us, who? If not now, when?

Acknowledgment
## Attachment 1: NCBW Teen Pregnancy Prevention Partners

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
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<th>Membership Reach</th>
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<td>National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Single Mom</td>
<td>Stephanie Clark-NJ; Andrina Watson-VA; Summer Owens &amp; Yolanda Gates-TN;</td>
<td>nationwide</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix Youth &amp; Family Services- AR</td>
<td>Toyce Newton</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs</td>
<td>Evelyn Rising - NM</td>
<td>nationwide</td>
<td>10,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Women’s Agenda, Inc.</td>
<td>Gwen Hess</td>
<td>nationwide</td>
<td>1.5M²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Christian Leadership Conference-SCLC Women</td>
<td>Diane Jackson Chapman - GA</td>
<td>Southern United States</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Coalition of Pastors’ Spouses</td>
<td>Vivian Berryhill - TN</td>
<td>nationwide</td>
<td>2,500+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Negro Business &amp; Professional Women’s Clubs</td>
<td>Sandra Coleman - MI</td>
<td>nationwide</td>
<td>100,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Organization of Black County Officials</td>
<td>Liz Humphrey - District of Columbia</td>
<td>nationwide</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Missionary Society of the ³African Methodist Episcopal Church</td>
<td></td>
<td>National and international</td>
<td>800,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Representative attend NCBW-sponsored teen pregnancy summit and focus group in Atlanta, GA (April 1-2, 2011)


³ The representative for the Women’s Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was unable to attend the summit but the organization has confirmed its continuing commitment as a Teen Pregnancy alliance partner.
MEMORANDUM OF ALLIANCE

This Agreement (the “Agreement”) is made this 5th day of October, 2011 by and between the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. (NCBW) and its alliance partners committed to an integrated and comprehensive outreach campaign to reduce teen pregnancy in the African American community.

RECITALS

WHEREAS, NCBW has partnered with The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (NC) to expand the national conversation and further the national strategy to mitigate teen pregnancy in America, in general, and teen pregnancy in the African American community, in particular; and

WHEREAS, NCBW has reached out to like-minded African American women’s organizations to facilitate a dialogue around the reasons for both acceptance and even the expectation of a teen pregnancy in the African American family with the goal of developing culturally sensitive (or culturally competent ??) solutions thereto; and

WHEREAS, the parties to this Agreement have reviewed the NCBW White Paper (“the Paper”) capturing much of the conversation from the April 1, 2011 focus group meeting in Atlanta, GA and herewith concur with the tone and tenor of the Paper; and

WHEREAS, the data (empirical) and the conversation (anecdotal) cry out for a range of interventions framed by us and for us;

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants contained herein, and other good and valuable consideration hereby acknowledged, the parties hereto agree as follows:

(I) to contribute input in the draft “blueprint for action”;
(II) to commit to one or more forms of partner action considering the purpose, mission and resources of the partner organization;
(III) to provide written and oral updates for the agreed-upon period of project performance;
(IV) to attend in person or via teleconference one or more agreed-upon partner meetings;
(V) to use any funds that might become available in the performance of the “blueprint activity” as directed in any associated funding agreement.

For: National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.

M. DeLois Strum, National President

October 5, 2011