

Press-Telegram

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Surviving domestic violence

By Brian M. Cuaron Staff Writer

As a poet and former editor at Essence magazine, Asha Bandlele was always on the lookout with the written word.

She continues that watchman attitude today. A former victim of domestic violence, the mother of a 9-year-old daughter makes sure that never happens to her again.

"You have to always remain vigilant," Bandlele said.

That was the message she conveyed to audience members at Tuesday's A Journey to Healing: Finding the Path conference. The session was the final meeting of the two-day conference, which was put on by the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community.

Tuesday's meeting allowed workers in the field of domestic violence to share research, thoughts and opinions with their peers through speeches, panels and workshops.

"The different workshops ... are focused on skill-building," said Oliver J. Williams, institute executive director. "(We're) trying to give people who are practitioners a tool kit."

Among seven workshops covering violence in the home was one that dealt with the trauma suffered by battered women and the elements of their recovery.

Sounding a conference theme, it pointed out that there wasn't a "one size fits all" solution to helping victims heal from their traumas.



Stephen Carr Staff Photographer

Carolyn M. West, a University of Washington psychology professor, joins other experts in discussions of domestic violence and recovery.

"There's not a universal response we see among all children," said Robert Hampton, a sociology professor at Tennessee State University and a participant in a panel on trauma and recovery for children who witness violence.

"(Domestic violence) is even more complicated than we sometimes present it as being," he said.

Joyce Thomas, a panel member and president of the Center for Child Protection and Family Support in Washington, D.C., cautioned that organizations like hers can only help

those who come forward. She said only a portion of the total number of child victims do so.

Personal recovery, Bandlele said, is a lifelong project because those who survive domestic violence are changed people who must protect themselves from going through it again. As a result, they should be honest with their kids about what happened.

"Never stop the (healing) process," she said, "and tell your children the truth."

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— Robert Hampton, sociology professor, Tennessee State University



Stephen Carr Staff Photographer

Chicago trauma specialist Terri Pease speaks Tuesday at a conference sponsored by the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community at the Westin Hotel in Long Beach.