Operation S.A.V.E.: An African-centered church and media model for alcohol prevention

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OPERATION S.A.V.E.:
AN AFRICAN-CENTERED CHURCH AND
MEDIA MODEL FOR ALCOHOL PREVENTION

By

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Bachelor of Science, Jacksonville State University, 1986
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submitted to the faculties of the schools of the
Atlanta Theological Association
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Ministry at
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This final document addresses the need to empower participants to bring about social justice in a municipal district plagued by the chemical enslavement of alcohol abuse. In addition to combatting cultural racism, a subordinate concern was the development of an African-centered media and coalition building model for alcohol prevention and intervention to counter mass media imagery associating alcohol with success, wealth, and having fun. This includes the deadly influence of renegade gangster rap artists who have popularized risk-taking behavior which has contributed to the erosion of the cultural fabric of the community and its morals and values.

Social justice, personal and communal development were at the heart of my concerns. The ensuing learning experiences were framed by ethnographic, historical, sociological, biblical, psychological, theological and from a pastoral care perspective.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to:

the loving memory of my father--John Aaron Smith--
who was killed by an intoxicated driver

my mother--Lessie May Williams

my loving wife--Gelaine Kelley

my children--Jabril and Jamillah

the memory of my mentor--Q. D. Adams

the members of Goodsell United Methodist Church

R. B. K.
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Mr. Jerome Gray of the Alabama Democratic Conference for providing forums, so that my ideas could be challenged and refined.

My peers in radio--Floyd L. Donald of WMGJ in Gadsden; Dr. Shelly Steward of WAGG in Birmingham; Archie Wade of WGAD in Gadsden; Omar Neil in Montgomery; and my father in radio, the late Dr. Roy Wood.

Q. D. Adams, my mentor in the political arena; the members of Goodsell United Methodist Church; the members of the Etowah County Voters League; and to the citizens of East Gadsden, who elected me to the Gadsden City Council.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This model of ministry is based on building coalitions and providing training for parents and extended family members so that they can be role models in educating and activating children in alcohol prevention activities. Most importantly, it is a model that recognizes the value of African-American culture in both countering destructive influences and the empowerment of a more resilient community.

By lifting up the social justice tradition to counter external and internal challenges and the need to revitalize extended family networks, this model offers tremendous potential. Throughout the history of Africans in the diaspora, family and religion have played a crucial role in social change and transformation.

It is important to note the distinction between African American and African-centered. African American refers to a person of African descent. However, African-centered refers to an attribute of thought and practice. Nobles and Goddard relate:

The African-centered paradigm is a quality of thought and practice rooted in the cultural image and interest of African people. As the core and fundamental quality of our beingness and becoming, the African-centered paradigm reaffirms the right of African people to (1) exist as a people, (2) contribute to the forward flowing process of human civilization and culture, and (3) to share with as well as shape the world in response to our energy and spirit. The African-centered paradigm is the intellectual and philosophical foundation upon which we create the political, scientific, and moral criteria for authenticating the reality of African processes. The
African-centered paradigm refers to the life experiences, history, and traditions of African people as the center of one's analyses.¹

This state of thought is crucial in the presence of contemporary crippling labels such as "welfare queens" and the "permanent underclass."

It is essential for therapists to move from a monologue to a dialogue with the victims of alcohol abuse and other social diseases. I have referred to alcohol prevention with the same meaning of alcohol abuse prevention. Faud defines alcohol abuse as "the inappropriate or thoughtless use by non-alcoholic persons of alcoholic beverages which can cause a multitude of problems resulting, at the least, in unhappiness, and at the most, havoc in the life of the drinker and in the lives of others."²

This alcohol prevention/alcohol abuse prevention model has been developed to lessen alcohol abuse through influencing community attitudes, customs, and legislation. A further consideration is the advocacy of care of those already suffering from alcohol abuse. To this end, this research investigates the plausibility and accuracy of four hypotheses, each related to mobilizing parents and extended family networks in the prevention process.


²Margaret A. Faud, Alcohol and the Church: Developing an Effective Ministry (Pasadena: Hope Publishing Company, 1992), 121.
Key Terms

The acronym, S. A. V. E., means to strengthen, activate, value, and empower. The researcher's goal has been to strengthen the target population by building bonds between family, media, church, law, activist, therapist, school, and children to develop a resilient environment. Secondly, activate means to mobilize existing prevention coalitions. Thirdly, value means to expose participants to prevention resources and to introduce basic counseling skills. Finally, empower means to equip participants with the skills to wage an anti-alcohol abuse campaign.

This researcher has used the term church to mean a voluntary fellowship of Christian believers as opposed to the traditional connotations that refer to a building. The basis of this definition is found in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17. The connotations derived from this word used by Jesus refers to something larger than a local group.

The role of the church is described by Paul Benjamin. "The New Testament understanding of the primary role of the leaders in the church, which is called 'the body of Christ' is to equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4: 7-13). The work of Christian leadership is clearly defined as preparing the people of God to minister." The important issue is to equip the saints for ministry.

Carlyle Felding Stewart relates a similar definition. Stewart states, "the prophetic church, utilizing the positive norms of black culture, espouse the God of individual and community justice, whose ultimate concern is the liberation and well-being of the

downtrodden and oppressed."\(^4\) Stewart's definition adds the crucial element of cultural specificity.

The word media refers to a radio ministry initiated at the request of a radio station owner, resulting from the writer's involvement in municipal prevention activities. Future initiatives should include television, teleconferences, the Internet, and other forms of media. The researcher utilized the media (radio talk show) to elevate awareness, mobilize the community, address merchants, other radio stations, television, and local, state and national politicians.

**Hypotheses**

The first hypothesis is the belief that the media can be used to build bonds between family, agencies, law, school, and children. The second hypothesis is the belief that the media can be used to mobilize coalitions for resistance and resilience with collaborative training. A third hypothesis is that a series of radio talk shows and workshops can be employed to raise awareness and introduce parents and extended family to prevention skills and resources. A fourth hypothesis is the belief that by employing the media, parents can be empowered to join in prevention activities and mobilize to wage anti-alcohol campaigns.

In addition to exploring the above hypotheses, this model of ministry examines their applications within an alcohol-infested municipal district. The theoretical

foundations for this project began to emerge in March 1991, while pastoring a local congregation in this district.

After experiencing a series of alcohol and drug-related deaths, the researcher became determined to develop this model for the following observations:

1. The need to be proactive and save lives or the quality of life;
2. The need to empower this alcohol-infested community;
3. The need to address alcohol abuse as a social justice issue.
4. The need to raise awareness in order to counter church and community denial. The writer had also been a culprit in this denial.

It became increasingly evident that a practical model needed to be developed, focusing on those who tended to abuse alcohol and other drugs in this oral culture. Tex Sample describes oral culture by saying,

In oral cultures there are no books, no manuals, and no reference works. If one is not able to recall something, one simply will not know it. In the traditional orality of our own society, entire territories of a person's life are dependent on memory not text, and these persons find themselves in a very different place from those who went to the university of the seminary.5

In this setting, the so-called "educated preacher" was viewed with suspicion. In my initial research, I was repeatedly referred to a proverb reciting storyteller named Q. D. Adams.

Storytelling and Transformation

Storytelling was used as the vehicle for renewing the rich social justice church tradition in this alcohol-infested community. The life cycle of the church had to be transformed from a survival mentality into a vision for effective ministry. The myths had to be renewed.

Peter Morgan states that "myths are the stories that capture the meaning of life. They are the lens through which a community understands itself and its calling."6 I cannot overemphasize the importance of the human documents in this indigenous setting.

Secondly, Morgan states, "stories recollect and celebrate the coming together into community for common pursuit of a shared purpose. The resources of the past are used in the present to move toward a common vision of the future."7 For this reason, I presupposed that the foundational beliefs needed to be renewed.

Morgan argues that these stories must be renewed and are divided into five periods in the institutional life cycle. He describes these periods as follows:

The foundational period centers around the visions of the founders. The vision critiques the present, appropriates the past, and offers a compelling image of the future. The vision has power enough to gather followers who work toward the fruition of the vision.

The expansion period begins the institutionalizing process. Issues faced are formation of belief systems, polity, cultic practices, lines of authority and procedure for perpetuation.

The stabilization period may last a century or more, but may be as brief as fifty years. The purpose of the institution is self-evident and the institution is competent

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6Peter Morgan, Story Weaving: Using Stories to Transform Your Congregation (St. Louis, MO: CBP Press, 1987), 33.

7Ibid.
in accomplishing its purpose. The need to improve is not pursued as basic change, but rather as doing better what is already being done to fulfill the vision of the founders.

The breakdown period is marked by decline and dismantling of structures and belief systems. There is resulting stress, doubt, and disillusionment, regarding the institution’s relevance and ability to adapt to its new situation. Often internal conflict occurs among members, clarity and attention to a common purpose are lost. Old techniques are often attempted with fresh vigor, but these problem-solving techniques become increasingly ineffective.

The critical period occurs when there is absolute doubt about the value and viability of the institution. Three outcomes are possible from this crisis point: extinction, minimal survival, or revitalization.8

Therefore, the ensuing research was an effort to revitalize the church setting in its critical period by incorporating and renewing its existing stories.

8Ibid., 32.
CHAPTER II

THE STUDY CONTEXT

The study began at the Goodsell United Methodist Church, where the late Q. D. Adams eloquently described the ministry setting. Adams stated that "Gadsden is the queen city. It is built on steel balanced by rubber. It is located by the hillsides of the Lookout Mountains and at the banks of the Coosa River. The men are known by their hospitality and the women by their pleasing personalities. This is where the sun shines in the day time. However, the moon shines all the time." "Moonshine" refers to the availability of alcohol for commerce and consumption.

This describes Gadsden, Alabama. It is a city with a population of approximately 43,000 inhabitants, according to the 1980 and 1990 census of population and housing. Thirty thousand of this total are white. Twelve thousand are Black. Only 450 of this approximate total are other ethnic groups.

A huge statue of the notorious Ku Klux Klan General Nathan Bedford Forrest, riding a horse with Emma Sanson, a Daughter of the Confederate heroine, graces the city square for whites. The same statue disgraces the city square for Blacks. Likewise, the longest street and the cemetery at the end of the street bear Forrest's name.

An approximately fifteen-million dollar jail, equipped with a basketball court, populated heavily by white law enforcement officers and administrators, is filled with
Black captives. It stands out in this confederate city like the mythological King Kong on top of the Empire State Building.

On Gadsden's main boulevard, next to Black Creek, stand Emma Sanson High School and General Forrest Middle School. The mascots for both schools are rebel soldiers.

In 1904, Mr. Sam Coats, Mr. and Mrs. Randall Pearson, Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Hockman, Mr. Newt Adams, and Mr. and Mrs. Sam McMurry, under the leadership of Rev. J. W. Martin, organized the Goodsell Memorial Episcopal Church. It was an A-frame wood building with six windows, equipped with a wood stove for heat and coal oil for lighting, constructed on the borders of an alcohol-infested community known as "Happy Holler." The name was derived from the white whiskey commerce, consumption and ensuing activities.

During slavery, African Americans were allowed alcohol on Saturday nights. According to Gayraud Wilmore, "the shouts of a Saturday night over spirits in a bottle of rum and the shouts of Sunday morning over the Holy Spirit sounded suspiciously alike."

Slave masters were pleased over this alcohol-generated sound for two basic reasons. First, it allowed the slave a psychological escape from the harsh realities of plantation life. Furthermore, it made it difficult for the frequent plantation rebellions and escapes to freedom.

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A Black Lutheran missionary named Rosa Young cited clergy hypocrisy, immorality, greed, ignorance and drunkenness as her rationale for building a Lutheran school in Alabama during this period. She stated, "The majority of those so-called preachers were regular whisky heads. It was a common thing to see a big leader at one of those annual meetings just out of the pulpit, staggering down some dark alley, drunk with wine, beer, 'shinny,' or whisky, heaving like a dog, while the other preachers looked upon it as a joke." Furthermore, according to community narratives, "bootleggers" were "big pillars" of the Goodsell Church.

"Happy Holler" Community

During the late 1800s after the Emancipation Proclamation, sharecroppers from Alabama's Black Belt plantations migrated to the "Happy Holler" community in search of a better life. Few obtained employment in the newly-formed industries. Others managed to obtain degrading work equated with their degenerate plight on the plantation.

According to the history of Etowah County, Gadsden had become a Ku Klux Klan Center. "700 members were initiated into the Ku Klux Klan one evening on South Sixth Street. Almost 9,000 people attended the ceremonies which included a parade down Broad Street to the Emma Sanson statue in 1924. The marches were led by a 24-piece band of the 167th Infantry." It was during this violent era that the Goodsell Church

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2Rosa Young, *Light in the Dark Belt: The Story of Rosa Young as Told by Herself* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1930), 54.

was organized for the primary purpose of addressing "evil activities." Public intoxication, prostitution, gambling and other vices served as illegitimate avenues of commerce in this colony located on the border line between the Black and white communities. However, it is evident that numerous and brief parades of pastoral administrations prioritized other issues.

**An Activist Mission Orientation**

From 1930 until my administration that began in 1990 and ended in 1998, Goodsell had briefly hosted 28 pastors. Few pastoral administrations exceeded two years. The shortest tenures were two months, two weeks, and one hour, respectively.

Among the multitude of Goodsell's ministers, four stood head and shoulders above the rest in the congregational narratives. They are the most frequently related narratives in the oral tradition of the church's witness and service. All four were known for their exceptional pastoral care and social consciousness. They were L. L. Green, who pastored from 1942 until 1944; R. L. Thomas, who served from 1948 until 1956, H. O. Walker, who served from 1956 to 1962; and M. L. Curry, who served from 1969 until 1974.

The common thread in their ministries was encouraging members to engage in the voting rights movement, civil rights, and other social justice issues. Therefore, an activist mission orientation ensued. As a consequence, the Goodsell Church has addressed issues relative to social change and transformation. Civil rights groups met at Goodsell when they were not allowed to meet at other churches in the city.
Gadsden's major industries, the Police Department, the Board of Education, the County Commission, and the City of Gadsden have all been sued by activists who attended Goodsell. Two of the four Gadsden citizens who stood up with the famed civil rights activist C. T. Vivian to integrate Gadsden's city auditorium were Goodsell members. One of these members, Q. D. Adams, had been inspired by the sermons of the legendary Rev. Dr. Vernon Johns, who pastored Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama prior to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. being chosen as pastor.

Devoted lay members have traditionally provided leadership for the congregation. Many of the parishioners look forward to these sometimes vocal laity for direction. The late Q. D. Adams, the most prominent member, reminded the writer after accepting the pastorate, "We don't have all the religion that we ought to have. However, you don't have any religion to give us and it will take all the religion you have just to pastor here." Perhaps, he was warning me of the dangers of failing to work within the traditions of the laity-centered church.

Several significant historical events have impacted Goodsell's present situation. One of the first significant developments occurred from the failure of parishioners to take serious heed to L. L. Green's demand for a new church building. As a result, one morning around the year 1942, members arrived for worship and discovered that L. L. Green had demolished their cherished dilapidated wood-frame building. After much turmoil, this resulted in the erection of a new block building.

In 1948, Reverend R. L. Thomas became pastor of Goodsell. During this administration, an intoxicated man was killed after stumbling in front of an automobile.
The poverty-stricken family was turned away by several pastors in reference to funeralizing their deceased loved one. R. L. Thomas consented to preach the funeral at Goodsell.

Reverend Thomas related to the funeral gathering how several pastors had refused to preach this man's funeral. Some had demanded financial reward. Others had vowed not to preach "a sinner's" funeral. Some had argued that the man was not a member of their church. Others had a policy not to have a funeral on Sunday. As a result, of his identity with the poor multitudes in this alcohol-infested community, R. L. Thomas won many members. The "Happy Holler" residents were attracted to his wit and compassion.

The Rev. H. O. Walker was also celebrated in the church's oral tradition. Walker pastored Goodsell from 1956 until 1962. Q. D. Adams related that H. O. Walker used to carry a pistol to church. Walker defended his position by responding that "the Lord may need a little help every now and then."

During Walker's administration, the community hosted a notorious house of ill repute called "The Pink Pussycat." It was one of the few integrated facilities in the city of Gadsden.

Walker, Adams, and others formed the East Gadsden Brotherhood, a vigilante group, at the Goodsell Church. This group consisted of U. S. Army veterans who used force to "clean up" the community from drunkenness and prostitution. This group fought against the Ku Klux Klan. They shot one Klansman and threatened to kill him if his peers did not come to get him.
The East Gadsden Brotherhood carried high-powered weapons and distinguished themselves by escorting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Gadsden from Birmingham. This group later became the Gadsden chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) under the influence of Dr. C. T. Vivian. Q. D. Adams stated that the group felt that they needed some spiritual guidance after being influenced by Dr. King.

This setting produced my radio ministry and enabled me to get elected as the city council representative of this district. Drugs and crime remain one of the frequently cited concerns of the district.
CHAPTER III

THE MINISTRY ISSUE

I propose to address the following question: **How can we implement a radio ministry for alcohol prevention for adults in this district?**

Prevention must be a holistic experience. Lawford L. Goddard defines primary prevention with the following:

The ultimate goal of primary prevention is to increase people’s capacity for dealing with crises and for taking steps to improve their own lives. Consequently, primary prevention by definition must concern itself with social development of the individual and provide the individual with the skills necessary to function at the optimal level in the society. That is, the goal of primary prevention is to facilitate the achievement of personal social (interpersonal) and functional competence. Two general strategies can be utilized in primary prevention; the first focusing on the individual attempts to strengthen individual capacities and/or decrease individual vulnerabilities. The second strategy focuses on the societal level and attempts environmental modifications through planned social change. It has become apparent that both strategies have to be used in a comprehensive model if there is to be success in prevention activities.¹

I have cited this lengthy quotation because it addresses the critical issues of social structural oppression and the need to empower the victims of social oppression. These are issues that are not usually addressed in many prevention strategies.

Both strategies must be utilized in order to address the devastating impact of alcohol and other drugs in the erosion of the social fabric of our church community. Several persons have died since 1992 from alcohol-related causes. Three children on two separate occasions were killed by men driving under the influence of alcohol. One adult was killed by another intoxicated driver. The writer witnessed a horrible death of an adult dying from alcoholism.

In addition, numerous persons have been maimed, crippled, and killed in drug-related incidents. One of these persons was one of the church's youth who was shot in the back four times prior to my writing this project proposal. One policeman was killed during the writing of this proposal and three others were severely wounded in a drug raid.

Activism and Alcohol Abuse

The most popular drugs in the youth community are alcohol and marijuana (weed, blunt). These two drugs are called gateway drugs because they often lead to addiction and use of harder drugs, such as cocaine, crack cocaine, LSD, and heroin.  

Alcohol is also associated with the erosion of values and the escalation of violence. Criminal activity and youth violence have resulted in the closing of several neighborhood stores. As a result, prospective merchants have located in alternative sites.

Overt alcohol consumption is a common occurrence on city streets. It is evident that alcohol is not considered a harmful drug.

Jerry Johnson addressed the impact of this deadly drug by stating that "The National Highway Traffic Safety Association, estimates 250,000 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes in the last ten years." The writer's father was killed by a person driving under the influence of alcohol.

**Biblical Norms**

A narrative, biblical account pertaining to the evils of alcohol abuse dates back to the prophet Noah. According to Genesis narrative in chapter 9, verse 22, Noah exposed his nakedness to his son, Ham, as a result of his intoxicated state.

The Proverbs writer in chapter 20, verse 1, admonishes that "wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." The deceptive influence of alcohol abuse weakens individuals and communities to evil social forces and structures that deny shared power, social justice, meaningful political participation, cultural integrity and economic empowerment. The casualties participate unwittingly in a diabolical form of ethnic cleansing and weaken their resistance to forces that destroy their God-given purpose of dominion as related in the book of Genesis, chapter 1, verse 26. Addiction to alcohol and other drugs becomes a form of idolatry.

The community is destroyed and individualism becomes the norm. James Harris reminds us, "As long as we think of salvation as an individual, personal experience, instead of a community experience, we fail to understand the Exodus event as a paradigm, not only to liberation, but also of salvation, contrary to what blacks were

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taught during slavery, salvation apart from liberation is inconsistent with the gospel message. To be saved is to be a new creation, and a new creation implies complete transformation. The community’s vision of Kingdom building in the here and now is aborted when sobriety is not esteemed as a virtue.

Social Justice

Human nature is divinely inclined towards justice. Augustine wrote, "the religion of Pelagius was firmly based on two axioms: that God is just, and that man is responsible—which means free." Therefore, challenging the merchants and victims of alcohol and other drugs liberates both the oppressed and the oppressor towards their just nature.

A culture of racism has obstructed the identity of the African American in the elusive struggle for justice. Traditionally, African Americans have been unjustly expected to be docile in the midst of social oppression. Jefferson Edwards, Jr. states, "It has always been dangerous to live under an oppressive system. You can at any time become a threat to the power structure, so you have to be careful, keep your place, keep your mouth shut, not rile anyone, remain unnoticed, or something bad could happen. Those in power must define your identity in such a way that benefits them and keeps

4James E. Harris, Pastoral Theology: A Black Church Perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 93.

their power secure and you submissive, compliant."⁶ Alcohol has served this purpose and alienated segments of the American population from the true teachings of Jesus.

Edwards also states, "Jesus Christ can identify with blacks of today because he, too, lived under an oppressive system. He lived in the Roman Empire which controlled his culture, his race, his history, and his religion. But Jesus was not intimidated by the cultural or religious power structures of that day. He didn't stay in his place. He didn't keep his mouth shut. And he certainly didn't remain unnoticed. He riled many."⁷

During slavery, the slave master used alcohol as a means of control and domination. As early as the 1800s, Black leaders, such as Frederick Douglass, warned Black slaves and freed Blacks of their heavy weekend and holiday drinking that interfered with their struggle for civil rights and educational development.⁸ Contemporary examples of social and health devastation resulting from alcoholism is found today on Native American reservations and heavily populated Black inner cities.

Foundations for Ministry

The foundations for my present model of ministry began in the early 1970s while working with various types of prevention programs. One of my first jobs after completing high school was conducting seminars in the U. S. Army. In this capacity,


⁷Ibid.

I worked with numerous addicts. Many had returned from the Vietnam War and had expensive heroin addictions.

Secondly, in my troubled past, I was almost killed as the result of my personal experimentation with alcohol and other drugs. I had tried to escape the painful reality that my grandfather was dying from tobacco addiction. I had been addicted to the deadly life style of the drug culture. For many, death was the ultimate escapade.

My personal experience empowers me with a unique understanding of the urban mythology of African-American youth. Having the ability to identify the mythology that shapes a person's life is crucial in the therapeutic process. Edward P. Wimberly argues that, "stories have shaped responses to a variety of situations in life."9 Being empathetic, shaping the same worldview and understanding the racial and socioeconomic dynamics are vital components for youth empowerment.

Furthermore, I have also had the opportunity of working directly with a broad spectrum of youth. This spectrum has ranged from teaching and counseling at Morris Brown College, teaching at Clark Atlanta University, conducting anti-drug training for the national Southern Christian Leadership Conference to my current work with troubled youth at the State of Alabama. In all capacities, I have addressed the issue of alcohol and drug abuse while utilizing several diverse approaches.

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From Denial to Activism

During matriculation at Clark Atlanta University, a series of hardships forced the writer to re-examine priorities. Economic problems and multiple alcohol and drug-related deaths coinciding during examinations interrupted the writer's studies and forced the writer to focus on the issue of prevention.

One death in this series resulted from chronic alcoholism. I witnessed a church member die from the horrors of alcohol addiction. During this time I became more committed to prevention for empowerment. The writer noticed that repeated therapeutic programs lacked the vital ingredient of cultural specificity and had failed to empower our afflicted church member to overcome her deadly environment.

First, the issue of alcohol prevention is in harmony with my personality and ministry as an activist. Ben Campbell Johnson states, "the activist meets God not primarily in the church or in religious practices, but in social service and political action. God is already at work in the world and the activist meets the Holy One by joining in that divine providence in the world. The historical arena provides the setting for a meeting with the living God; the Eternal Mystery is not buried in a dead past, but is present now, transforming history."\(^{10}\) The issues of praxis and transformation are crucial issues.

Secondly, activism is critical in this time and place because the conformity of former religious establishments has been broken down. The solution to alcohol abuse will come by new or renewed convictions.

Thirdly, there must be a holistic appeal to the mind and heart in the healing of the community. Alcohol abuse is much more than a criminal or clinical issue. Alcohol abuse is an issue of politics, economics, family, education, and spirituality. It should be treated as a disease that affects every avenue of the life of an individual or community.

Addressing this issue will make a contribution to the Goodsell Church community and the United Methodist Church, because the church has been slow to embrace effective solutions to African-American drug abuse and authentic racial diversity. Both are barriers to a sound biblical model of community.

United Methodist Bishop Felton May argues, "We now know that we can not have communities of Shalom without addressing the root causes of chemical dependency and alcoholism. We must work to overcome a spiritual malaise, fostered by undisciplined and compromising attitudes, even among Christians, racism, economic injustice experienced primarily by women and children, and a national loss of affirming the sacredness, dignity and value of a single human life." May cites racism as one of the root causes of alcohol and other drug abuse.

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The Church, like society, tends to tolerate acculturated Blacks. However, bicultural and Afrocentric personality profiles are usually viewed as threatening and relegated to invisibility. Peter Bell defines the differences in stating, "the acculturated Black person has made a conscious decision to live, work and play outside the Black community." Acculturated Blacks tend to be Black on the outside but sometimes reflect white racist notions about their own people.

In contrast, Afrocentrics have one of the lowest rates of chemical dependency in the country, according to Bell. He further states that, "culturally immersed Afrocentrics tend to politicize most social issues, including chemical dependency. They view racism as the primary factor for most inappropriate and dysfunctional behaviors in which black people are involved. It is therefore difficult for them to view addiction as a primary illness. They see it instead as a secondary symptom of racism and oppression."

Both church and society are in denial about racism and social oppression. Treatment strategies that do not incorporate these themes are minimal, ineffective and possibly damaging.

According to Janice Hale-Benson, "One of the unfortunate results of the American slavery experience was the de-Africanization experience that converted the

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12Peter Bell, *Chemical Dependency and the African American: Counseling Strategies and Community Issues* (Minneapolis: Hazelden Educational Ministries, 1990), 56.

13Ibid., 18.
African into a Negro."¹⁴ The African American is in a constant struggle to be accepted as a human being.

Richard Wallace states, "Africans were defined by Europeans in the same way that the man in Genesis gave names to all the animals. The point is that defining another makes the defined subservient to the definer."¹⁵ We can provide the church with a culturally specific model so that the proud African American does not have to lose his/her identity in order to be accepted.

Julian Rappaport relates an interpersonal trauma of racism and oppression in a condition termed as learned helplessness. He states, "if poverty, racism and other social systems variables act as a harness or as an inescapable barrier, it is reasonable to expect that they will create learned helplessness and alienation."¹⁶ Rappaport described an experiment with dogs subjected to electrical shock. The dogs developed a mental condition after they perceived their condition was inescapable. The dogs resigned and adjusted to the deadly electrical shock from the normal resistance of reacting wildly to abnormal silence, and finally an unnatural resignation to the pain. There appears to be a similar devolution of Africans in America. Historically, captured Africans rebelled on


slave ships, led rebellions on plantation, protested during the Civil Rights Movement, and throughout their sojourn in America, have been willing to die for freedom. However, it appears to be an increase in the contemporary state of apparent resignation to racial and social injustice. This learned helplessness is evident in the self-destructive lifestyles advocated by the "gansta" rap artist and their patrons who celebrate self-annihilation. This resignation is even more tragic in contemporary gospel music void of lyrics relative to social justice.

Cornel West argues, "the major enemy of black survival in America has been and is neither oppression nor exploitation, but rather the nihilistic threat—that is, loss of hope and absence of meaning. For as long as hope remains and meaning is preserved, the possibility of overcoming oppression stays alive. The self-fulfilling prophesy of the nihilistic threat is that without hope there can be no future, that without meaning there can be no struggle."¹⁷

A magazine article alleged that a man is possibly responsible for putting one hundred at risk with HIV while trading drugs for sex. This article states, "This case demonstrates the unacceptable level of drugs and alcohol use in our teens."¹⁸ The relationship between alcohol and other drug use and HIV infection is also a life and death concern.


We can also provide a model that will help deliver African-American substance abuse related devastation in the forms of HIV and AIDS infection, criminal activity, high rates of student dropouts, increased birth defects and infant mortality, child abuse and parental neglect, disintegration of families, high unemployment and large numbers of incarcerated African-American males. There is a critical need to address these issues for African-American youth who are increasingly becoming casualties of these challenges.
CHAPTER IV

PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE
MINISTRY ISSUE/QUESTION

The issue of alcohol prevention has been addressed by many organizations, including law enforcement agencies, family specialists, churches, and activists. Alcohol abuse is a persistent problem for practically every major sector of society.

According to Frederick Harper, "Little has been said about the role of alcohol in Black history and in the Black community about its role as far back as slavery in terms of 'keeping Blacks in their place' or 'keeping Blacks from getting out of place.' "1 Perhaps it is more than cultural paranoia to suggest that there is a deliberate void in this area of research cited by Harper.

Since alcohol problems produce jobs and sustain oppression, it is questionable to this writer whether all agencies intend to offer effective solutions. For example, during the past few years, Gadsden's Police Department has hired over forty officers. Practically, all of these officers are white. However, the crime rate has escalated. This includes one officer being killed and three others wounded in a drug raid.

The newly built county jail is currently being expanded to accommodate more prisoners. Alabama prison officials are also complaining about overcrowding and the

need for more prisons and prisoners. However, practically all of Alabama state systems are administered by mostly all-white administrators. In contrast, most of the victims are Black. This substantiates the need for social justice in the development of an effective model.

Establishing Norms

An ideal model would be culturally and biblically based. Few models are biblically based. Margaret A. Faud states that "What the Bible says about alcohol is a question that brings contradictory answers which are sketchy and blurred at best." Establishing biblical norms for alcohol prevention is like traveling through a maze. Faud's book provides excellent strategies for implementing an effective alcohol ministry. This is precisely because she conceptualizes alcohol abuse with contemporary challenges. One contemporary consideration is driving under the influence. This was obviously not a life and death issue during New Testament or Old Testament times because the major mode of transportation was donkeys. Head-on collisions did not cause fatalities.

Wine was used for celebrations and as a symbol of blessings. An example is in the gospel of John. Jesus turning water into wine at Canaan of Galilee during a wedding feast is recorded by John as Jesus' first miracle. According to the narrative, it manifested Jesus' glory and magnified the disciples' faith. A survey of Proverbs ranges from the consumption of wine for merriment to admonitions of the deceptive influence of wine.

2Margaret A. Faud, Alcohol and the Church: Developing an Effective Ministry (Pasadena: Hope Publishing Company, 1992), 41.
The Reverend Cecil Williams offers exceptional theological advice in drug abuse and recovery. Williams’ model is based on empowerment. He states that, "empowerment comes in knowing that you have power but you are not the ultimate power."³ Few models in the writer’s research addressed the critical issue of empowerment.

Secondly, Williams’ model at Glide Memorial United Methodist Church in San Francisco is based on principles of liberation theology. Williams states:

In my search for answers, I read widely, searching and seeking. As I read liberation theology, I found my theological home. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, most from Central and South America, wrote about a new way of thinking, God, and being the church. They wrote of the importance of taking 'a preferential option for the poor, meaning that when God chooses sides in the struggle between the powerful and the powerless, the accepted and the rejected, God can always be found with the poor."⁴ Williams’ perspectives are relevant because his theology begins with the victims. This is the opposite of the systems that tend to oppress the poor. Furthermore, Williams states:

No longer is theology the task of those cloistered in ivory towered academia. Theology, or talking about and searching for God, is the job of those living in every ghetto and barrio in the world. As the poor and disenfranchised come together to tell their stories, reflect on God and then take action in the struggle against injustice and oppression, truth would be found. Liberation is people-centered. It values both action and reflection, experience and theory.⁵


⁴Ibid., 19.

⁵Ibid., 24.
Finally, Williams indicts national security, drug dealers, police officers, and the millions of Americans, indifferent, afraid, or don't want to get involved for the cocaine epidemic.  

**Previous Attempts**

The most influential group to engage in prevention and recovery among African Americans has been the Nation of Islam, under the leadership of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and currently under the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan. Malcolm X was a product of the Nation of Islam's reform program.

Another significant Black activist group to attempt to combat the saturation of alcohol and drug abuse in the Black community was the Black Panther Party. They also viewed themselves as guardians of the Black community.  

Both groups received tremendous opposition in their efforts to clean up the drug-infested war zones in the Black community. This lends credence to the allegations of a government conspiracy in Black youth drug and gang warfare. "For the better part of a decade, a Bay Area drug ring sold tons of cocaine to the Crips and Bloods street gangs of Los Angeles, and funneled millions in drug profits to a Latin American guerrilla army run by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, a Mercury News Investigation has found."  

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6 Ibid., 55.


Similarly, several key Black Panther leaders were killed in police raids shortly after they tried to form community coalitions with Chicago street gang members. Eugene Perkins states that, "Some people felt that the police realized the potential of such a coalition and made every effort to prevent its formulation. Perkins speculates the police executions of Fred Hampton, chairman of the Chicago Black Panther Party, and Mark Clark, chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Party, were linked with this crackdown.\footnote{Perkins, Explosion of Chicago's Black Street Gangs, 24.} Before his death, Chairman Hampton had been making some progress in mobilizing gang leaders around political issues.

**Other Considerations**

Ethically, the Church must respond to the contemporary perpetuation of chemical slavery in order to preserve African-American civil and political rights. This response against chemical slavery must be as furious as the response of John Wesley in attacking physical enslavement. William McClain states: "Wesley furiously attacked slavery. His strategy was consistent with the rest of his ministry, an individual direct appeal to the conscience of the guilty. In opposing slavery, Wesley directly appealed to the captains on slaving ships; the dealers in slaves and the slave owners themselves."\footnote{William B. McClain, Black People in the United Methodist Church: Whither Thou Goest? (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1984), 11.} Likewise, chemical slavery is deadly and damaging like physical slavery.

Psychological insights were gained from Paul Hill, Jr. Hill states that "the Afrocentric perspective grounded in the struggle of African-American people forces one
always to ask the alternative question. It forces one to think in a dialectical framework. For example, if African-American men are disproportionally represented in the prison, one does not assume that they commit more crimes than others. Using Afrocentric perspective, the question has to be 'Why?' This must be the foundational perspective against marketing, and the resulting consumption of alcohol among African-American youth.

Another mandate for prevention comes from Paul Hill. He states that "alcoholism is now perceived as one of the most significant health, social, and mental health problems within the Black population. The consequences of alcohol abuse . . . have been extreme for Black Americans, especially Black males. These problems include homicide, accidents, criminal assaults, and other run-ins with the law." Hill also advocates an African-centered methodology for community empowerment. In addition, significant work comes from much of an African-centered psychological perspective. The psychology of the African without Afrocentricity has become a matter of great concern. As a result, an abundance of resources has been produced by Asa Hilliard, Naim Akbar, Joseph Baldwin, Amos Wilson, Francis Cress Welsing, Wade Nobles, and Bobby Wright.

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12Ibid., 25.

13Ibid.
Operational literature includes Henry H. Mitchell's and Nicholas Cooper-Lewter's *Soul Theology*. They define core beliefs as "the bedrock attitudes that govern all deliberate behavior and relationships and also all spontaneous responses to crises." African-American norms that produced an uncompromising quest for social justice has degenerated because of the erosion of core belief systems. Empowering stories of faith and fact can be introduced to supplant self-destructive stories. An example of this is the Minirth-Meir Clinic which has adopted a twelve-stage program, similar to "The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics/Anonymous," based on the first fourteen chapters of the book of Romans. Reauthoring core beliefs will bring about wholeness and liberation.

**Re-editing Christology/Mythology**

Tom Wright provides an excellent narrative account of the life of Jesus as a revolutionary. Wright relates, "Among the crowds there came a man a year or so younger than John: his cousin from up north. His name was the same as that of the leader who had taken over from Moses all those years ago: Jesu, Joshua, or in Greek, Jesous, Jesus. And like Moses, handing on the torch to Joshua, John pointed to Jesus as the one who would take the movement forward from there." The narrative of Jesus

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must be reinterpreted and reauthored for Black liberation. As late as 1963, during the
bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden's police chief was
a Ku Klux Klan official. 17 He was also allegedly involved in the bootleg industry.

Bobby Wright elaborates on the futility of looking solely to law enforcement for
social justice:

Because of their lack of ethical or moral development, there is no conflict between
the Whites' religion and racial oppression. The White race had historically
oppressed, exploited, and killed Black people all in the name of their God, Jesus
Christ, and with the sanction of their churches. For example, it is generally
overlooked that the Ku Klux Klan is primarily a religious organization and Blacks
should never forget the Pope blessing the Italian planes and pilots on their way to
bombing Ethiopian men, women and children who only had spears to defend
themselves. 18

Wright further states, "This behavior is not surprising since Whites use the scriptures to
justify their treatment of Blacks, namely the book of Genesis whereby Noah placed a
curse on his son, Ham, forever dooming all of his descendants to be the servants of the
servants of God. Naturally, Whites interpreted Blacks as being the descendants of Ham,
and themselves as being servants of God." 19 Historically, Whites in the South have
practiced and tolerated a religion diametrically opposed to the well-being of Blacks.

This difference in praxis is related by William Grier and Price Cobbs. They
relate, "Up to the advent of Martin Luther King, Jr., the often violent churchmen have

17 John Archibald and Jeff Hansen, "Ku Klux Klan of the 1960s: An Inside Look,"
The Birmingham News, 21 September 1997, 16A.

18 Bobby E. Wright, The Psychopathic Racial Personality and Other Essays
(Chicago: Third World Press, 1984), 5.

19 Ibid., 6.
been matched by a passive, law-abiding, black co-religionist. At best, white preachers have ignored the psychic and physical murder of their black Christian brothers; at worst, fundamentalist churches have been the seed of virulent race hatred in infecting the community with the notion that all would be right with the world if 'the niggers were kept in their place.' "20 They also relate, "Black religionists, on the other hand, have been meek, forgiving, non-violent, law-abiding, and willing to wait through unspeakable misery on earth for a reward in heaven. In our defense, it must be said that many parts of our fair land have harbored white hatred of such an intensity that the meek, accepting posture has been the only one a prudent black man might adopt had he hopes of staying alive."21 The meek Black religion and sinfully silent white religion have characterized the bombing and burning of Black churches, the castration of Black men, the lynching and killing of Blacks as well as the contemporary drug-related violence in urban America.

An effective model of prevention would include new and liberating Christology. Edwards provides an excellent resource, including a chapter with an exegesis of the liberation motif of Jesus found in Luke 4:14, 18-19.22 The mythology of oppression must be challenged.


21Ibid.

This mythology/Christology must be edited. Wimberly states:

First, we identify the themes that inform our lives; can we see effects of the personal, marital, family, and ministerial myths? Step two is to assess whether these themes or the related myths are producing growth in ourselves and others; or are they contributing to our remaining wounded? Step three discerns the ongoing continuously unfolding nature of our call; what is it doing to bring renewal to the themes and myths at work in our lives? Finally, step four sets goals; can we make plans to alter our myths and bring them in line with our continuing call?23

Although re-editing self-destructive myths is critical, it must be emphasized that empowerment is also contingent on countering the crippling mystical phenomenon of racism.

The new rhetoric of a "color blind society" prevents African Americans from reacting past interpersonal racism in order to address institutional, socio-structural and intrapersonal racial violence. Omowale Amuleru-Marshall elaborates, "socio-structural racism is being defined as the historical and systematic arrangement of productive and social relations in this society, so that they, without extraordinary intervention, develop a certain racial group, and dialectically, underdevelop other racial groups. Another form of racism that is given little attention is intrapersonal racism or self-hatred on the part of the victimized. Intrapersonal racism is the internalization of White supremacist notions,

views, and values within the psyche of the oppressed."\textsuperscript{24} Both perspectives are important considerations.

**Narrative Considerations**

Ideal editorial narratives for therapeutic ends can be derived from the legacies of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Their activism represents the best of two complimentary traditions in the struggle for social justice. James Cone writes: "The meeting of Martin and Malcolm has profound symbolic meaning for the black freedom movement. It was more than a meeting of two prominent leaders in the African-American community. It was a meeting of two great resistance traditions in African-American history--integrationism and nationalism. Together, Martin, a Christian integrationist, and Malcolm, a Muslim nationalist, would have been a powerful force against racial injustice."\textsuperscript{25} Cone further emphasizes the value of unity by stating, "When they were separated, their enemies were successful in pitting them against each other and thereby diluting the effectiveness of the black freedom movement. Both Martin and Malcolm were acutely aware of the dangers of disunity among African Americans, to


forget their differences and to unite in a common struggle for justice and freedom."26 Disunity continues to be a barrier in the address of social challenges.

The recent white men's movement called the "Promise Keepers" may also be another source of division. They have failed to incorporate African-American social justice advocates. It is questionable whether they will address the so-called "Hamite hypothesis" and its resulting practices. They will probably not acknowledge the Black African presence in the Bible. They have not prioritized the national sin of racism. They want to advocate racial reconciliation without racial justice. Furthermore, some of the so-called conservative Christian constituents are opposed to affirmative action and equal rights for African Americans.

**Mission Orientation**

Understanding church mission orientation is crucial. Perhaps one of the most alien and devastating mission orientations in the face of injustice is the sanctuary mission orientation. It can be described in the following manner:

Otherworldly in emphasis, this orientation encourages the view that church exists mainly to provide persons with opportunities to withdraw, in varying degrees, from trials and vissicitudes of daily life in the company of committed fellow believers. A sharp distinction is made between the sacred and secular, between the spiritual and temporal realms. The temporal realm is sinful, but nevertheless God-given and necessary to human existence. Thus, Christians are expected to live in the world, accepting it as it is, and to uphold its laws; but they are to be 'not of this world' in their deepest loyalty which belongs only to God.27

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26 Ibid.

This is descriptive of an increasing number of African-American churches. Others tend to be more evangelical; however, the otherworldly focus remains a socially crippling factor. White churches tend to preserve oppressive social structures and hoard wealth and resources from social conscious African Americans.

Activist African Americans, like Malcolm and Martin, have brought about social progress while all have been beneficiaries. Therefore, my immediate concern is to develop an activist model for prevention. Primary alcohol prevention includes whatever factors may help keep a person from being harmfully involved with alcohol or other drugs. However, based on the age range of my target population and their socioeconomic plight, secondary prevention is also an objective. Secondary prevention refers to interrupting and reversing the course of problem drinking, training in recognition of problems and the key role of denial in abuse. A comprehensive model for communal change would include both primary and secondary prevention.

Instead of Blacks changing society, they tend to adjust to problems of living that they face daily by using alcohol. Therefore, an ideal model would adhere to an activist mission orientation and include the following considerations: "Stress justice and a critical posture towards existing social structures, affirmation of members and congregational involvement in social action, including the expectation that the pastor will be the leader in this regard, openness to confrontation, conflict, and civil disobedience,

\[28\text{Faud, Alcohol and the Church, 189.}\]

\[29\text{Ibid., 190.}\]
stress the establishment of the Kingdom of God in society, concern for the welfare of all people, ecumenical cooperation, membership involvement in public life, and educate members on social issues.\textsuperscript{30}

An activist media model will empower clients proactively, promote drug education, personal and social development, enable clients to develop mastery skills, promote a life span approach to prevention and empower them to combat racism and social oppression as abuse factors.

CHAPTER V
LIMITING THE STUDY

The title of my proposal is Operation S.A.V.E. The acronym S.A.V.E. means to strengthen, activate, value, and empower. This acronym limits my research.

This comprehensive model includes the community, parents and media. An interaction of these vital entities will create a resilient environment.

Initially, I intend to employ my talk show to encourage parents to develop a commitment to prevention with their children. This includes the incorporation of a coalition of agencies to teach parents and to encourage them to nurture and support children in prevention activities.

I intend to strengthen participants by employing the media to mobilize coalitions to develop an alcohol prevention task force. This includes collecting and utilizing data to plan, evaluate and modify prevention efforts while being attentive to racial and ethnic factors in order to develop a culturally sensitive program. Grace suggests, "this would require that the program design take into account current realities of African Americans; use accurate knowledge about the complex social and economic structure of the community; make use of available community resources; guard and mobilize the positive
forces in the community; and in no way threaten the integrity or survival of individuals, groups, or institutions that promote the community's well-being."¹

**Community Empowerment**

In addition to cultural sensitivity, I intend to develop a caring community with a normative expectation of abstinence by a series of weekly talk shows on alcohol prevention. It cannot be overemphasized that an ideal program would also include promoting healthy, personal mythologies that facilitate growth and development. This will counter the tragic failure syndrome described by Edward P. Wimberly as the "Sisyphus Identity."² This failure syndrome is associated with incarceration, the astronomical spread of AIDS, violence and drug abuse.

A healthy personal mythology is necessary to promote the values of social justice, academic excellence, and the devaluation of alcohol and other drugs. In addition, teaching refusal skills, peer resistance skills, goal setting, listening, writing, storytelling, and using scripture in counseling will be incorporated.

Coalitions, parents, children, and media are key components in the prevention community. The term community is used to mean any identifiable that (1) has recognizable boundaries, (2) can be defined by its sharing of common set of experiences,


worldview, value systems, and social institutions, and (3) has a sense of its own "beingness." An effective program must be a community venture.

Secondly, I will activate participants utilizing an African-centered paradigm. "This is a term categorizing a quality of thought and practice, that is, rooted in the cultural image and interest of African people, and that represents and reflects the life experiences, history, and traditions of African people as the center of analysis." In this regard, participants will be encouraged to engage in direct action campaigns.

Thirdly, I intend to emphasize the therapeutic value of the development of an Afrocentric worldview.

This term (Afrocentric) refers to and is responsible for (1) the intellectual and philosophical foundation upon which African peoples create their own scientific criterion for authenticating African reality, (2) African peoples self-conscious act of creating (African) history, (3) the utilization of the African experience as the core paradigm of the higher level, human functioning and liberty, and (4) the historical and cultural anchor. This reaffirms the right of African people to exist as a people, contribute to the forward flowing process of human civilization and culture, and to share with as well as shape the world in response to our energy and spirit.

African Americans have been forced to maintain resistance in the face of great odds and constant opposition. The continuity of this struggle has taken the forms of slave ship rebellions, underground railways, marches and protest to the current struggle

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4Ibid.

5Ibid.
to maintain hard won gains in civil rights, school desegregation, fair housing, and voting rights.

We cannot lose our cognizance in the plight of our struggle for progress and survival. "If we don't know ourselves, not only are we a puzzle to ourselves, other people are also a puzzle to us as well. We assume the wrong identity and identify ourselves with our enemies. If we don't know who we are then we are whomever somebody else tells us we are."\(^6\) Our shared identity cannot be understood fully without an examination of our shared struggle.

Fourthly, community empowerment is an objective. Goddard defines community empowerment as "the process of developing and/or enabling a people to create experiences that are simultaneously designed to represent their view of the world and to secure and/or establish the greater community's well-being and welfare."\(^7\) This can be accomplished when African Americans are consistently conscious of our struggle to bring about a just and equitable society. This includes the contemporary internal struggle to reclaim crime-ridden neighborhoods by staging anti-drug rallies and providing church and community-based strategies and services. Only an empowered community can overcome this new wave of murder and fratricide. These four developmental phases will constitute the Operation S.A.V.E. model.

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\(^7\) Goddard, *An African-Centered Model of Prevention*, 141.
There are several ways the literature enabled me to formulate my ministry issue. First, while reviewing the literature, a pattern emerged. The four consistently distinct elements for alcohol prevention were defining the problem, having well-defined family or community expectations, having mentors or role models, and building strong bonds between family, school, and community. The literature sporadically emphasized peer counseling, role playing, and peer resistance skills.

I found an absence of substantive research on church-based models for prevention. Even though media advertising was cited as a culprit in abuse, no models incorporated the media in the prevention process. The so-called multicultural resources had little to do with African Americans. An African-centered worldview was seldom mentioned or validated. Racism and economic violence were rarely mentioned in traditional literature as contributing abuse factors. The victims were not mentioned in the solution to their problems. Additional considerations included an absence of a life span approach to prevention, promotion of personal and social development, a proactive perspective, and ignoring culture in the prevention process.

It is obvious that no consideration is given to empowering African-American children in the various forms of struggle to achieve integration, cultural pluralism,
separation, or self-determination in this contemporary chemical warfare. African-American children must be empowered to continue a struggle that began long before they were born and will possibly continue long after they die.

A critical element in the empowerment process is redefinition. Richard Wallace writes, "when Europeans encountered African peoples and the indigenous peoples of the earth and called them Negroes and Indians, they were doing more than describing them, but were defining them." Redefinition is avoided in most quick fix programs.

Several key challenges emerged to inform my approach in addressing this ministry issue. Rappaport states that,

these problems are (1) the conflict between individual and subcommunity, rights with the concerns of the larger society for social order and control; (2) the problem of cultural relativity and its conflict with tradition of a single standard for social behavior; (3) the need for a psychology of person-environment fit which not only recognizes diversity as legitimate but also provides resources and alternatives to foster it. In order to have a chance to solve such problems, community psychologists must search for new paradigms to guide research and conceptualization.

The Operation S.A.V.E. model addresses these vital issues. Our community is being challenged to transform theory into praxis in order to create a new reality.

Authentic biblical morality challenges power. Westerhoff asserts:

Each and every person needs to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to act for liberation just as everyone needs to be aided in developing a capacity for moral thinking. Our understanding of power, our sense of our own power, and our

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ability to use power creatively, constructively, and morally are results of education. Born in the image of God we humans are historic actors. Power is the ability to act. We have been granted by God the possibility of acting either for our own or God’s purposes. Christian education needs to revive in us a sense of God’s purposes and enable us to acquire the skills, sensibility and stimuli necessary to join God in God’s history making.  

We must be active participants empowered by biblical and cultural heritage in eliminating the lethal appetite for alcohol and other drugs.

**Four Program Phases**

Awards in honor of activism were given during a developmental four-phase program. These awards served to preserve and build upon the noble narrative foundation of the local, state, and national civil rights movement and to affirm participants. The awards correlated with historically significant events and contemporary issues related to the Operation S.A.V.E. program.

**Strengthen**

The first program was the Simon Bradford Voters League Founder’s Day. This program honored a pioneer political rights activist. The focus of this program was to strengthen participants by building prevention coalitions.

**Activate**

The second program was the Q. D. Adams Memorial Family Day. Adams was a consultant in this project and died during the writer’s research. Adams requested on his death bed that the writer allow him to help get our political rights family together.

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He had distinguished himself as a political and civil rights activist. Adams was a primary resource person in the writer’s research. The focus of this program was to create resilience by activating parents and extended family networks.

**Value**

The third program phase promoted activism. It included a letter-writing campaign against illicitly zoned alcohol establishments located near schools, churches, and day care centers. Letters were written to politicians and newspaper editors. Television and other radio stations were also targeted to address the prevention issue. Prevention was addressed in relationship to murders, rape, child abuse, domestic violence, fatal car crashes, and other tragedies. Advocacy for drunk driving laws, programs to keep children productive after school, and treatment for the alcohol and drug addicted was emphasized. Children and adults were also be encouraged to wage a campaign against alcohol advertising that tempts children to drink beer, and replace it with advertising that educates young people about the dangers of alcohol abuse. The focus of this phase was to value children as primary resources in the prevention process.

**Empower**

The fourth phase introduced participants to Edward P. Wimberly’s biblical model for narrative counseling. Activist narratives were included. Students, parents, and extended family were exposed to self-destructive plots such as the previously cited “Sisyphus Complex.” They were provided with a model for editing their personal stories. The focus of this phase was to empower the community. The community was
empowered toward a more intentional activist mission orientation and the community

towards a more African-centered worldview.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation took place during and after each phase of the program.

Further action goals are to provide eight one-hour, bi-monthly seminars in the
four-phase program for four months. A recommended reading list was given to all
participants. Lectures were conducted on each second and fourth Monday from 5:00
p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Participants were encouraged to attend all meetings and to participate in anti-drug
campaigns. However, deliberate emphasis was given for parent participation each fourth
Monday to provide intergenerational support.¹

Each fourth Monday, a series of lectures was given by a coalition of speakers,
including the Rosa Haven Domestic Violence Shelter, Christian Counseling Center,
Gadsden Police Department, youth workers, educators, therapists, recovering persons,
activists, and prevention specialists. According to Butler, on a macro level, four systems
within the African-American community--church, community, neighborhood, and social
organizations--have been the major vehicles for providing cultural focus, cultural
patterning, and social development.⁵

⁴Edward P. Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon
Press, 1992), 56.

⁵Jacqueline P. Butler, "Of Kindred Minds: The Ties That Bind," in *Cultural
Competence for Evaluators: A Guide for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention
Practitioners Working with Ethnic/Racial Communities*, ed. Mario A. Orlandi (Rockville,
The Operation S.A.V.E. program began with a pre-test and concluded with a post-test. All meetings were recorded on journal and cassette tapes. There were recorded descriptions of each training session, topics covered, materials distributed, trainers, length of seminars, and problems encountered. This includes the number in attendance at each training session. The program was concluded in an anti-drug campaign, a commencement exercise, and an awards program. A questionnaire was designed and administered to measure adult attitude change based on our radio talk shows.

The program objectives were accomplished by mobilizing potential coalitions, introducing the usage of scripture in counseling, promotion of parent networks, and employing direct action campaigns.

After naming my research project and giving definitions of the key concepts, the outline of my dissertation project resembled the following:

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ADDRESSING ALCOHOL ABUSE AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE

III. THE MINISTRY ISSUE

IV. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTING TO THE NEED FOR ADDRESSING THIS MINISTRY ISSUE

V. THE THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

VI. AN AFRICAN-CENTERED PARADIGM OF ALCOHOL PREVENTION FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN YOUTH
Chapter

A. The Ethnographic Perspective
B. The Historical Perspective
C. The Sociological Perspective
D. The Biblical Perspective
E. The Psychological Perspective
F. The Theological Perspective
G. The Religious Educational Perspective
H. The Pastoral Care Perspective

VII. CHALLENGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS MODEL OF MINISTRY

VIII. PURPOSE, DESCRIPTION AND PROJECT METHODOLOGY

IX. EVALUATION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROJECT
   A. Interpretation of the Data
   B. Implications for Ministry
   C. Implications for Social Change and Transformation
   D. Personal Reflections and Projections
   E. Key Questions Raised by This Study

X. CONCLUSION

APPENDIXES

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Reflections and Conclusions

The first conclusion is the belief that the media can be used to mobilize existing coalitions in a municipal district to educate parents and extended family networks on the dangers of alcohol abuse. The second hypothesis is the belief that a series of workshops conducted by these coalitions can increase the awareness of parents and extended family networks in the dangers of alcohol abuse.

The third hypothesis maintains the belief that as a result of workshops, parents and extended family members will be educated to be role models in alcohol abuse prevention activities. The fourth hypothesis maintains that the participants can be mobilized in direct activist campaigns to counter media messages. By employing this model, the church and community can provide an atmosphere that will increase resilience and decrease vulnerabilities.

After researching numerous models and attending the annual Alabama School of Alcohol and Other Drug Studies conference and other conferences, it became evident that a culturally legitimate model needed to be developed in this alcohol-infested community. Milton Morris makes the distinction between culturally consistent and culturally legitimate by stating the following:

Prevention programs must be consistent with the culture of the target population. Nobles makes a conceptual distinction between culturally consistent and culturally legitimate. Culturally consistent means that the personnel and programmatic activity (e.g., behavior values, attitudes, policies, practices, procedures), are congruent with the cultural substance of the particular target population served. Culturally legitimate means that the program/services must respect and reflect the image and interest of the people they are intended to serve. Culturally, legitimate prevention services must be recognized and respected by the target population as well as acceptance by, and accountable to, their community. Prevention is an act of affirmation, not simply
denial; it is holistic and not segmental. In other words, effective prevention activities should not split the world into parts such as environments, host, and agent, as in the public health model, but treat the whole life of the individual in the context of community.⁶

A culturally legitimate model must empower the community to combat causative factors, provide resilience and reflect the community's worldview.

The Importance of an African-Centered Paradigm for Alcohol Prevention

Historically deficient models are labeled as the deficit model and the bicultural model. Long states,

The deficit model that is based on self-deprecation views Black people as genetically inferior, socially disadvantaged, culturally deprived, pathological, and possessing a slave culture. The bicultural model is based on a process of self-diffusion and is characterized by an emphasis on slave culture, assimilation, subculture, inferiority, ethnological modification, and European or mainstream domination.⁷

These models are not culturally legitimate.

Because of the crippling conditions of social injustice, societal inconsistency and personal impotence, Long argues that the only acceptable model for socializing African American youth is an Afrocentric model. He states,

When examining the socialization process from an Afrocentric perspective, one is guided toward recognizing a supportive environment, strong family units, and supportive secondary institutions (e.g., schools, churches). Close kinship bonds and the extended family are directly traceable to the traditional African culture, which valued the group above the individual. The behavioral outcome of this environment


⁷Ibid., 88.
was youth that had a strong sense of discipline, well-defined roles in family and community, a positive self-concept and self-appreciation. The Afrocentric yielded a collective self-realization and Black liberation.\textsuperscript{8}

Effective alcohol prevention models must employ a new paradigm in the wake of the current urban challenges confronting African American youth.

This model of ministry provides a framework for dialogue in the construction and implementation of a model that began in the basement of the Goodsell United Methodist Church and expanded throughout the municipal district after the writer's transfer to another parish and ensuing election to the Gadsden City Council. Although the theoretical presuppositions have been formulating over an extended period of time, the actual implementation phase commenced on October 26, 1998 and concluded March 1, 1999.

Chapter I, the Introduction, gives an overview of the alcohol prevention/alcohol abuse prevention model, with definitions of key terms that are used throughout the project. Chapter II describes the study context by defining its history, location, demography, socio-economic plight, and the inhabitants. Chapter III describes alcohol abuse prevention as a social justice issue. Chapter IV relates to previous efforts to address the issue. Chapter V describes the four-program phases. Chapter VI is a description of the ministry model, research, and an evaluation of the data collected. Chapter VII is a summary of the research evaluation and project implications. Chapter

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., 89.
VIII is the conclusion. It includes the project's influence on the writer's theology, views on prevention, and implications for future ministry.
CHAPTER VII

EVALUATION AND PROJECT IMPLICATIONS

The evolution of this research was based on the development of an African-centered media model for prevention. The plausibility of four hypotheses were investigated. The investigation included the hypotheses: (1) that media can be used to build bonds between family, agencies, law, school, and children; (2) that media can be used to mobilize prevention coalitions; (3) that radio talk shows and workshops can increase awareness and introduce prevention skills and resources; and (4) that the media can be used to mobilize parents and extended family networks to wage anti-alcohol campaigns.

During the initial project phase, only participants twenty-one and older were surveyed. The survey included members of the Goodsell United Methodist Church, a political activist group—the Alabama Democratic Conference—and members of the municipal district.

The survey revealed that 87% were listeners to WMGJ radio station. One hundred percent were frequent listeners to the researcher’s talk show, and reported that the talk show had increased their awareness about alcohol prevention. A total of 32 responses were received by 23 females and nine males.
The researcher's pre- and post-test questionnaires were derived from a U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Report.¹ This report summarized thirteen model prevention programs and included consistent factors found in the writer's research.

**Research Hypothesis #1**

The assertion that the media can be used to build bonds between family, agencies, law, school and children was consistent with the researcher's findings. In a pre-test survey, 57% did not consider themselves to be adequate role models for prevention, did not spend adequate time with children by joining them in prevention activities, and were unable to talk with children about the dangers of alcohol in response to questions 5, 6, and 8. In a post-test survey, 51% reported that they were capable in this area of concern.

**Research Hypothesis #2**

This assertion was that the media can be used to mobilize prevention coalitions and was reflected in questions 4, 7, and 11. The pre-test data suggested that 62% did not feel that they had affectionate ties with children in their family/extended family in relationship to prevention, were unaware of prevention resources, and were not able to work with children to counter media images that glamorize alcohol use. The post-data analysis suggested that 37% were able to accomplish this task.

Research Hypothesis #3

This assertion was that radio talk shows and workshops can increase awareness and introduce prevention skills and resources. Questions 1, 2, 3, 9, and 10 were used for this hypothesis. Ninety percent of the respondents acknowledged alcohol as a dangerous drug, 88% of the respondents related alcohol to other serious social ills, and 75% reported that daily media exposure increases alcohol usage in the pre-test survey, in response to questions 1, 2, and 3. However, 71% of the participants believed that they were unable to provide counseling and guidance in order to enable children in the prevention process.

The post-data studies reflected that 84% viewed alcohol as a dangerous drug, 100% related alcohol to other devastating social ills, and 75% considered media exposure to be a factor in increased usage of alcohol, in response to questions 1, 2, and 3.

The respondents' post-test revealed that 36% believed themselves to be able to provide guidance and counseling to empower children in the prevention process.

Research Hypothesis #4

Sixty-six percent of the respondents pre-tested were ill-equipped to wage an anti-drug campaign and unable to work with children to counter media images, in response to questions 11 and 12. However, post-test data suggest that 52% of the respondents believed that they could wage an anti-drug campaign and work with children to counter media images that glamorize the use of alcohol.
Project Implications

The goals were accomplished. The results show that there was significant interest in developing this model. The results also suggest the value in employing the media to educate and mobilize persons in oral traditional cultures.

Several challenges hindered the goals. First, the primary facilitator relocated to another state. Secondly, the researcher was transferred to a church appointment in the city of Birmingham. However, the community elected the researcher to the office of city councilman. This allowed the researcher access to more resources.

Time restraints presented another challenge. More research is needed in this area.

The results of this model can be generalized beyond this target population. The strength lies in mobilizing existing coalitions. Mission or theological orientation of the researcher and participants is a critical factor to be considered in successfully employing this model.
CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

The goal of this Doctor of Ministry project has been to empower participants to bring about social justice in a municipal district plagued by the chemical slavery of alcohol abuse. The researcher employed a model to develop bonds with media, family, law enforcement, school, agencies, and children.

Secondly, the model enhanced awareness of prevention resources of family and extended family. Thirdly, it introduced basic counseling skills and the importance of cultural values. The fourth phase concluded with a letter-writing campaign to the governor, the local legislative delegation, members of the 106th Congress, local merchants, and media.

The crippling self-destructive mythology of the individuals and the community must be challenged and re-edited in order to rise above the deadly plague of alcohol abuse. This research has enabled the writer to contextualize the liberation motif found in Luke 4: 18-19 for this modern challenge of chemical abuse. The basic theoretical presupposition has been that we cannot be serious about liberation without addressing this critical issue facing our youth. Robert Franklin states, "Clearly America has reason for concern about the plight of its young people. The African American community has a particular obligation--indeed, an ethical imperative--to try to arrest the current trend of
juvenile self-destruction. The church has a unique role as young people ask for assistance in getting their lives together. 

Relevant Theology

The researcher has witnessed tremendous discussion among researchers about Afrocentricity and an African-centered paradigm. However, there can be no Afrocentricity with theocentricity. At best, God has been at the center of our struggles and achievements.

The researcher argues that we must do more than just preach funerals and counsel the bereaved. We must develop programs that will empower our young people to meet the deadly challenges confronting them.

Relevant theology must be contextualized. Relevant theology must address both the external and internal factors that are barriers to the uncompromising quest for social justice. Power lies in renewing and re-editing the indigenous individual and communal narratives.

The research evaluation extracted from this small target population has been therapeutic for the researcher and the community. There is still a need for periodic follow-up evaluations, survey, and the employment of more refined research tools. The evaluation has been limited to the process of model development. Future research needs to be conducted to ascertain the outcome of long-term results of the process.

---

1 Robert M. Franklin, Another Day's Journey: Black Churches Confronting the American Crisis (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 85.
The model has taught the researcher the value of understanding one's self. It has also given the researcher a model to address other social issues. It has also given the researcher access to exemplary mentors, Dr. Edward P. Wimberly and Dr. Richard Wallace.

Future initiatives will include television in addition to radio. The implications for this model extend far beyond this limited research.

This research was conducted in the midst of two diametrically opposing mythologies. Gadsden is built on a Confederate, anti-Black mythology; the other has been in the resistance tradition and in response to the first. However, this is a microcosm of church and society in America.

While conducting this research, the researcher received a letter from United States Senator Jeff Sessions in reference to Bill S.254 or the "Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Accountability and Rehabilitation Act of 1999." This bill had been debated by the 106th Congress during the researcher's visit to Capitol Hill. After carefully reading this bill, the researcher is more convinced than ever before that the church is the only institution that is capable of saving our children.

Alcohol abuse in the "Happy Holler" community and its resulting death and dysfunction threatens to erode the hard earned gains won in the continuous struggle for civil and political rights. A religion that ignores the deadly issue of alcohol abuse and its ensuing impact on social justice is nothing but a drug. The liberating mission of Jesus includes preaching the gospel to the poor, healing the broken-hearted, preaching deliverance to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, and setting at liberty them that
are bruised (Luke 4:18). There is nowhere that this mission is more urgent than to those who have been made poor, broken-hearted, enslaved, blinded and crushed, internally and externally, by alcohol abuse.

This research has been an effort to address alcohol abuse and to counter compulsive mythologies of personhood by reviving an existing oral traditional activist church narrative. Radio talk shows were used to heighten awareness, mobilize coalitions, promote extended family involvement and to mobilize participants in a letter-writing campaign to policymakers, media, and merchants in an alcohol abuse prevention campaign.

Finally, this research has been a therapeutic journey beginning with the researcher confronting his helplessness and denial of this lethal challenge and culminating in the development of a model for a more effective and prophetic ministry. If this research serves to heighten enough awareness to save just one life in the "Happy Holler" community or elsewhere, the writer's work will not have been in vain.
## PRE-TEST/POST-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle one number (1-5) as your response to the following questions.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Alcohol is a dangerous drug.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alcohol abuse is related to devastation in the forms of HIV and AIDS infection, criminal activity, high rates of student dropouts, increased birth defects, and infant mortality, child abuse and parental neglect, disintegration of families, high unemployment, and large numbers of incarcerated African-American males.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Daily exposure to alcohol and drug use can influence a child into thinking that alcohol abuse is acceptable.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I have affectionate ties with the children in my family/extended family.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I am an example of a positive role model for alcohol prevention.</td>
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<td>I spend adequate time with children and join them in prevention activities.</td>
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<td>I am aware of alcohol prevention resources available to children in this community.</td>
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<td>I am able to talk with children about the dangers of alcohol.</td>
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<td>I feel confident counseling young people with my counseling skills.</td>
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<td>I am able to provide guidance in developing children's social skills and strengthening their self-concepts.</td>
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<td>I am able to work with children to counter media images that glamorize the use of alcohol.</td>
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<td>I am equipped with the skills to wage an anti-drug campaign.</td>
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Check the appropriate response to the following questions.

13. I frequently listen to WMGJ Radio.
   - ☐ Yes  ☐ No

   - ☐ Yes  ☐ No

15. Do you think that Randy B. Kelley's talk program has increased your awareness about alcohol prevention?
   - ☐ Yes  ☐ No
APPENDIX B

RESPONSES OF PARTICIPANTS

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree; NR = No Response

Number of Respondents = 32

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APPENDIX C

DATES AND LOCATIONS OF SESSIONS

OPERATION S.A.V.E.
October 26, 1998

S1 Session
November 9, 1998

S2 Session
November 30, 1998

A1 Session
December 7, 1998

A2 Session
December 28, 1998

V1 Session
January 4, 1999

V2 Session
January 25, 1999

E1 Session
February 15, 1999

E2 Session
February 22, 1999

CELEBRATION SESSION
March 1, 1999

Introduction
Alabama Democratic Conference Headquarters
(Etowah County Voters League)

S1 Session
East Gadsden Community Center

S2 Session
East Gadsden Community Center

A1 Session
East Gadsden Community Center

A2 Session
East Gadsden Community Center

V1 Session
Alabama Democratic Conference Headquarters

V2 Session
East Gadsden Community Center

E1 Session
Cory Middle School PTA

E2 Session
East Gadsden Community Center

CELEBRATION SESSION
Union Baptist Church
March 1, 1999

The post-test was administered on Monday, March 1, 1999 at the Union Baptist Church during the celebration session. An awards banquet was held March 20, 1999. This banquet celebration incorporated youth participants, and the keynote speaker was The Honorable Johnny Ford, state legislator and former mayor of Tuskegee, Alabama.
SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

OPERATION S.A.V.E.

Introduction - October 26, 1998

Participants first assembled and were pre-tested.

S1 and S2 Sessions

Presenter: Bobby Singleton, Alabama Rural Project Director

Description: How to build strong bonds with family, agencies, law, school, children and media.

Desired Outcome: To strengthen the participants by exposing them to community resources for ecumenical cooperation.

A1 and A2 Sessions

Presenter: Rev. R. C. Suttles

Description: How to mobilize a community for resistance and resilience.

Desired Outcome: To activate potential prevention coalitions.

V1 and V2 Sessions

Presenters: Officer John Tidwell, Gadsden Police D.A.R.E. Program Director, Rose Haven Domestic Violence Center Christian Counseling Center Randy B. Kelley

Description: Parenting for prevention using scripture in counseling and the importance of ethno-cultural factors and African-centered values.
Desired Outcome: Teaching participants basic counseling skills and the importance of cultural appropriateness.

**E1 and E2 Sessions**

**Presenters:** Alice Thomas and Barbara Swain, Alabama Democratic Conference

**Description:** Empowering participants to wage anti-alcohol campaigns

**Desired Outcome:** Letter writing campaign to the governor, 106th Congress, state legislature, city officials, media, and merchants.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


