



# A Culturally Specific Perspective: The HBCU Story

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) occupy a critical space in Black families and communities, offer an extraordinarily rich environment for pioneering culturally specific violence prevention, and foster solidarity and innovative responses among advocates working to end sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking, both within and outside Black communities.

There are 107 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the nation, according to the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). While the 107 HBCUs represent just 3% of the nation's institutions of higher learning, according to Thurgood Marshall College fund, they graduate nearly 20% of Black Americans who earn undergraduate degrees. HBCUs remain the institutions that demonstrate the most effective ability to graduate Black American students who are poised to be competitive in the business, research, academic, governmental, and military arenas.



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## HBCU Highlights

- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are institutions established prior to 1964 in an environment of legal segregation with a mission to provide Black Americans a quality education. These institutions often were the only educational institutions where Black Americans could receive a college education (New America 2015).
- The first HBCUs were predominantly private and began in the north with the establishment of Cheney University (PA), Lincoln University (PA), and Wilberforce University (OH). These institutions were founded by northern, anti-slavery and religious groups (U.S. Department of Education 1991).
- The Morrill Act of 1890 prohibited the distribution of money to states that made distinctions of race in admissions unless at least one land- grant college for Black Americans was established. As a result, 19 public Black colleges were founded (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities 2013).
- The American Missionary Association founded 11 HBCUs: Berea College (KY), Clark Atlanta University (GA), Fisk University (TN), Hampton University (VA), Tougaloo College (MS), Dillard University (LA), Talladega College (AL), Lemoyne-Owen College (TN), Huston-Tillotson University (TX), College of Charleston (SC), and Howard University (DC) (Britannica.com).
- HBCUs have a rich history of social justice from a historical and contemporary perspective.
- HBCUs produce 20 percent of Black college graduates in the United States (Thurgood Marshall College Fund).
- HBCUs have produced some of the most notable leaders of the movement, including Ella Baker (Shaw University), Medgar Evers (Alcorn State), Rosa Parks (Alabama State), Stokely Carmichael (Howard University), and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Morehouse College) (HBCU Lifestyle 2014).
- Most HBCUs were established by churches, religious denominations, and philanthropists. Wilberforce University (OH), for example, was established by the Methodist Episcopal Church. Morehouse College (GA) was founded by a Georgia Baptist church. Spelman College (GA) was founded in the basement of a Baptist church by two teachers from Massachusetts (Britannica.com 2015).
- Currently, HBCUs are located in 20 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Of those, there are four (4) medical schools: Meharry Medical College (TN), Morehouse School of Medicine (GA), Charles R. Drew School of Medicine and Science (CA), and Howard University School of Medicine (DC) (U.S. Department of Education).
- HBCUs make up only 3 percent of the 4,879 institutions of higher education in the US (Gasman, 2013).
- HBCUs have educated 75% of all Black American PhDs (MyIPS.org, 2016)
  - 46% of Business Executives
  - 50% of African American engineers
  - 80% of African American federal judges
  - 65% of African American doctors

## HBCU Mission and Values

- HBCUs define their mission as encompassing not only the welfare of their students, but the interests of society.
- HBCUs deem the following themes critical to fulfill their mission: community service, open enrollment, democracy, citizenship and leadership, social change, concern about health, ethics and values, educational emphasis and Black and cultural studies.
- HBCUs invest in Institutional Effectiveness, a systematic and documented process measuring performance against mission in all aspects of the institution.
- Students can be themselves and know their presence is valued, as their enrollment at HBCUs is less likely to be perceived as solely tied to affirmative action or sports scholarships.
- Some HBCUs include international populations representing over 67 different countries, thereby dismantling the idea that HBCU campuses are not diverse.
- HBCU campus communities represent various socio- economic backgrounds, geographic locations (rural, suburban, and urban communities); a variety of ethnic groups (Africans, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinos), race and ethnicities (Black American, white, Latino, etc.) and other identities (e.g. LGBTQ).
- HBCUs have a dual responsibility to position and prepare their students for future success. They are obligated to meet the same curriculum standards as predominantly white institutions while simultaneously offering Black students an education that is culturally relevant.

## HBCU Culture

- HBCU curricula are often infused with rich Black history and continental African history. As a result, students learn what is current and relevant to their identity as Black students.
- HBCUs are affordable and diverse institutions that serve students from a range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Networks provide leadership development, longstanding relationships, and a bridge to professional affiliations such as Black professional associations, student leadership organizations, and Black Greek letter organizations.
- HBCU campus communities are emboldened by a robust focus on dialogue and collaboration
- The low student-teacher ratio provides individualized attention and increases accountability.
- HBCU campuses serve as a safe haven for students to be challenged academically, and to also build communities where they find appreciation and encouragement.
- Students at HBCUs rely heavily on and often establish strong relationships with their faculty members who become life-long mentors to students and alumni.
- Many students attend HBCUs to get the “HBCU Experience”. This experience embraces oral traditions, arts and language, mannerisms, family, and community ties.
- The family oriented atmosphere at HBCUs reaffirms pride in one’s identity and community. It also cultivates strong intergenerational bonds and linkages.

## The Impact of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking in Black Communities

Historically, HBCUs have actively participated in developing a coordinated response to the social injustices that have directly impacted Black Americans and communities of color. The way in which Black communities collectively experience and respond to violence is affected by their complex history and intersects with other contemporary sociopolitical and personal experiences. As HBCUs are largely microcosms of the large Black communities, the impact of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking is a social justice issue that borders the lines of the community and HBCUs.

Sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking exist across all races, ethnicities, and socio economic and educational backgrounds and happen in all relationship configurations.

- Approximately 4 out of every 10 Black women (43.7%) in the United States have been a victim/survivor of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Table 3.1, NISVS, CDC, 2010.)
- Black women (43.7%) and multiracial non-Latina women (53.8%) have a significantly higher lifetime prevalence of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner compared to White, non-Latina women (34.6%). (NISVS, CDC, 2010.)
- Black women have a significantly higher prevalence of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the 12 months prior to the survey compared to White non- Latina women (9.2% and 5.1%, respectively) (Table 3.3, NISVS, CDC, 2010.)
- A substantial number of Black teenage girls reported sexual victimization. Among students, 11.2% of Black girls in a national high school sample reported having been raped (Thompson, McGee, & Mays, 2012).
- 52% of Black Midwestern high school and college female students reported experiencing sexual coercion while in school (French & Neville, 2008).
- 14.2% of Black women who were enrolled in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) reported a completed or attempted rape (Krebs, Lindquist, & Barrick, 2011).
- For every Black woman who reports rape, at least 15 Black women do not report (Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, Hart & Rennison, 2003.).

It has become evident that a “one-size-fits-all approach “to addressing Violence Against Women (VAW) on campus is not sufficient. It is necessary to build capacity, leadership, and culturally and linguistically relevant approaches, as well as develop innovative prevention and intervention strategies within particular communities.

## Strategies to Address Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking

- Many HBCUs are developing and strengthening outreach initiatives on their campuses to address issues of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.
- HBCUs are working to implement best practices such as: trauma informed and victim centered approaches, giving voice to victims/survivors, and culturally specific approaches in prevention education.
- HBCUs are utilizing culturally-specific prevention and intervention approaches.
- HBCUs are creating the infrastructure and staffing needed to appropriately respond to sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking.
- HBCUs are administering campus climate surveys to better gauge and understand attitudes related to dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking on campus.
- HBCUs are enhancing reporting structures to more effectively respond to incidents of violence on campus.
- HBCUs are creating Coordinated Community Response Teams (CCRT) involving both on and off campus service providers. They are also using technical assistance to train their CCRT teams.
- HBCUs are innovative in their engagement of communities, in fostering partnership and in collaboration with administration, students and faculty to ensure a trained campus community.
- HBCUs are conducting effective programming strategies related to mandatory prevention education, judicial boards, and law enforcement.
- HBCUs are utilizing practices and strategies to engage men and to infuse prevention education programs with culturally specific approaches.
- HBCUs are using diverse forms of the arts and social media to engage campus audiences.

## Challenges Identified on HBCU Campuses

- HBCUs are resourceful and have demonstrated an ability to do more with less. However, lack of resources can hinder effectiveness as staff often performs multiple roles and responsibilities.
- Increased capacity would allow staff the opportunity to effectively address issues through the use of climate surveys (which are tools used to gather information on campuses about the occurrence of sexual assault and students' perceptions of the campus climate) as well as through the evaluation of existing programs, and policy revisions.
- Title IX Coordinators are required personnel at educational institutions receiving federal financial assistance and function to ensure in- situations comply with Title IX law, which prohibits sex discrimination in educational settings. These coordinators need additional training to further strengthen their capacity to focus on the issues related to their responsibilities.
- HBCUs need more counseling staff and advocates who are dedicated to addressing violence against women issues.
- Additional funding is needed to address resource limitations and meet the need for consistent staffing that could increase effectiveness and trust by students.
- Local service providers often have minimal capacity to provide culturally relevant support to campus communities.
- HBCU campuses need expanded faculty and staff training related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking relevant to their student populations.
- A history of injustice, police brutality, and over criminalization of Black men and women reinforces a culture of silence and distrust in campus and community police. Challenges Identified Through Listening Sessions with HBCUs.
- Campus Law Enforcement are generally the first point of contact for reports of any form of gender violence, however, victims of color are often less likely to trust law enforcement as their first point of contact.
- High turnover of campus law enforcement staff dissuades students from reporting and trusting new staff.
- Intersectional issues present challenges in addressing gender bias, gender roles, and sexuality; as a result, many victims struggle to break the silence and report.
- Victims and survivors often mistrust service providers, including mental health advocates, substance abuse treatment programs, and other similar resources.

## Available Funding

Created in 1995, The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) implements the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and subsequent legislation, and provides national leadership on issues of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Congress created the Grants to Reduce Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking on Campus Program in recognition of the unique issues and challenges that colleges and universities face in preventing and responding to these crimes.

- The Campus Program supports strategies to prevent, investigate, respond to and prosecute sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking on campus.

- Campus Program Grant Funds encourage a comprehensive coordinated community approach that enhances victim/survivor safety, provides services for victims/survivors, and supports efforts to hold offenders accountable.

- Since the inception of the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Campus Grant Program 322 awards have been made to campuses across the nation, including 44 awards made to 27 different HBCUs. Of the 44 awards, twelve (12) were granted to consortia (a consortium is composed of two or more institutions). The total funding awarded to date to HBCUs is \$14 Million.**

## Technical Assistance

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) has implemented or funded culturally specific initiatives or technical assistance for HBCUs. Black Women's Blueprint (BWB), an advocacy organization working in collaboration with the National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault (SCESA), provides culturally specific technical assistance (TA), training, and support to Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In addition to TA, resources developed by HBCU Grantees of OVW are also available to support other HBCU campuses around the nation, regardless of their status as recipients of funding from OVW. Through the TA initiative, support to campuses will:

- Enhance the capacity of HBCUs to identify and employ culturally specific and effective strategies to address violence against women. These strategies reflect the experience and realities of the Black community.

- Increase the level of information and knowledge on sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking on HBCU campuses.

- Increase opportunities to build community among students, faculty, and staff on HBCU campuses across the nation working to end violence against women. This will allow for long term dialogue, resource development, and sharing of information and strategies far beyond proposed grant projects.

- Develop culturally and linguistically specific educational tools, including a bystander intervention curriculum for HBCUs.

- Provide technical assistance to HBCUs using a variety of methods including conferences, individualized onsite visits, webinars, policy review, and program/education materials

Additional information and updates on OVW Technical Assistance can be accessed here:

<http://www.changingourcampus.org/resources/campus-program-ta>

The First Report of The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault can be accessed and downloaded here:

<https://www.justice.gov/ovw/page/file/905942/download>

In order to assist HBCUs and other campuses across the nation to address sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking, the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) provides grants to campuses through cooperative agreements with culturally relevant organizations like Black Women’s Blueprint (BWB). To learn more, access the OVW Campus Technical Assistance Website here: [ChangingOurCampus.org](http://ChangingOurCampus.org)

**Note:** For the purpose of this document, “African American” and “Black” are used interchangeably and refer to a non-monolithic group which includes: U.S. born Black Americans, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinos, African immigrant communities and international students from those communities.

**Additional Resources:**

The Institute on Domestic Violence in African American Communities (IDVAAC)

<http://www.idvaac.org/forthepress/factsheets.html>

The Women of Color Network (WOCN) <http://www.wocninc.org/>

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey February 2014, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia

[http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cdc\\_nisvs\\_ipv\\_report\\_2013\\_v17\\_single\\_a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/cdc_nisvs_ipv_report_2013_v17_single_a.pdf)

Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization — National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011, Surveillance Summaries September 5, 2014 / 63(SS08); 1-18

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm>