General Information

Source: NBC Nightly News  
Creator: Brian Williams/Al Roker  
Resource Type: Video News Report  
Copyright: NBCUniversal Media, LLC.  
Event Date: 02/06/2009  
Air/Publish Date: 02/06/2009  
Copyright Date: 2009  
Clip Length 00:02:42

Description

A growing number of American children are growing up without fathers, and the crisis is especially dire in African American communities, where the number of single-parent homes has more than doubled in a generation. One Newark high school is trying to fill the void for its fatherless male students.

Keywords

Fathers, Fatherhood, Families, Blacks, African Americans, Absentee Fathers, Single Parents, Adolescents, Teenagers, Gangs, Boys, Inner Cities, Newark, New Jersey, Link Community School, Veterans, Making a Difference

Citation

MLA

APA

CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

Transcript
Making a Difference: Desperately Seeking Dad
BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
We're back with our Friday night MAKING A DIFFERENCE report. We all know about the much-chronicled crisis of absentee fathers, especially in black households in America. It's a problem the president has spoken about often. For black families alone, the number of single-parent homes has doubled in a generation. Some attempts at a solution have worked. It's something our friend Al Roker looked at recently for a documentary on the subject, and Al files tonight's MAKING A DIFFERENCE report.
Ms. MARNIE McCOY: Link Community School, will you succeed?
Group of People: (In unison) Yes!
AL ROKER reporting:
Marnie McCoy, principal at Link Community School in Newark, New Jersey, says 80 percent of her students are growing up without their fathers and that's a worry.
Ms. McCOY: Developmentally, this is the transition period in a young person's life.
ROKER: A time, she says, when boys like seventh grader Heru Kirkland especially need their father's steady presence.
Mr. HERU KIRKLAND: Sometimes I used to feel like, `Where did he go? When is he coming back? Why did he leave in the first place?'
ROKER: In 1996, Heru was one of the babies whose births we witnessed while reporting on the high incidence of African-American men who fall out of their children's lives, particularly in the inner city.
Heru's father, Keith Kirkland, a veteran of the first Gulf War, was there to pledge his love to his family.
Unidentified Woman: (From file footage) Always will, baby.
Mr. KEITH KIRKLAND: (From file footage) You know, every thing I do now is for them. You know, both of them, you know? It's not for me anymore.
ROKER: But a few weeks later, Keith lost his job, then went missing. Diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome, this seemingly well-intentioned man has over the years disappeared for weeks at a time.

Mr. K. KIRKLAND: The condition I was in, they wouldn't be missing too much anyway.

Mr. H. KIRKLAND: I do wish that he would be here because it would be more fun.

ROKER: Heru's mother and other adults in his life do their best to fill the void.

Ms. McCOY: A young man who's trying to define what it means to be a man and really enter into his manhood, his father would have said to him, `Son, this is what it means to be a man. Be a person of character. Respect yourself and respect others.' So that somebody who's in a gang won't tell them, `If you want to be a man, this is what you do. You kill other people. You join a gang. You get somebody pregnant.' When a father does that first, anything else that happens after that is irrelevant.

ROKER: Perhaps that's one fundamental way to attack a problem that affects millions, one child at a time.