Town Hall Overview
Presented by The African American Policy Forum
CONTENTS

Introduction

Planning Team: Roles and Responsibilities

Partnership Requirements

Partnership Assessment
Introduction

African American Policy Forum
The African American Policy Forum (AAPF) is an innovative think tank that connects academics, activists and policy-makers to promote efforts to dismantle structural inequality. We utilize new ideas and innovative perspectives to transform public discourse and policy. We promote frameworks and strategies that address a vision of racial justice that embraces the intersections of race, gender, class, and the array of barriers that disempower those who are marginalized in society. AAPF is dedicated to advancing and expanding racial justice, gender equality, and the indivisibility of all human rights, both in the U.S. and internationally.

Breaking Silence Town Hall Series
The Breaking Silence Town Halls are a series of hearings rooted in the testimonies of girls and women of color. This document provides a snapshot of the roles and responsibilities of the planning team and culminates in a partnership assessment.
I was in DC foster care for nine and a half years. Growing up, I thought I had a loving big family but it turns out I just feel like I'm related to people I saw on a regular basis. I never knew what a childhood was and even at the age of 19, I still don't know. You might think I'm over exaggerating or being a drama queen but truly the only image that I have of childhood is being moved from foster home to foster home leaving a lot of things along the way. If you were to close your eyes, close your eyes and imagine all the stress of being an adult and you just want to say you want to go back to being a child again because you don't have to worry about it, right. Open your eyes, I don't have that.

I don't want to go back to losing my innocence at four years old. I don't want to see or to see my brother getting beaten half to death because the lady that gave us birth just wanted to get ahead. I don't want to go back to being taken from eight or nine years old. I don't want to go back to having to explain to my little brother that or mom is on drugs and that I don't know if we're ever going back home. I don't want to watch as doctors hold the same little brother down to give all these different medications because you can't explain that he's mentally and emotionally unstable. I don't want to remember that childhood.

*Testimony from the DC Breaking Silence Town Hall*
Planning Team Overview: Roles and Responsibilities

The planning team consists of three sub-committees--Outreach and Recruitment, Media and Communications, and Event Logistics. After the planning team decides on 2-3 panel topics, the sub-committee are tasked with the following action items.

Outreach and Recruitment
- Identify testifiers, commissioners, contextualizers, and artists for the town hall hearing
- Recruit and confirm the attendance of all of the above players
- Support testifiers as they develop their testimonies for the town hall

Media and Communications
- Develop outreach plan
- Identify relevant media outlets and share press release with appropriate newsdesks
- Engage media by scheduling pre- and post-interviews

Event Logistics
- Secure venue and food for dress rehearsal and town hall event
- Draft the program run of show
- Apply for funding, manage funds, and report accounting figures to foundations and other sponsors
I was arrested in school for getting in a fight and put on probation. Whenever I was late to school the police would be surrounding our campus giving out truancy tickets. After a few times getting tickets my probation was violated and I was sent to - - Juvenile Hall. From the time I entered the gate I felt anxious and hopeless. I remember the sound and sight of the big, bulky, metal, wire gate opening and slam shutting behind me. I took showers with the staff watching me from beginning to end and there was no curtain on the windows so I could also see male staff during the showers the whole time I was locked up.

For the first few days I was pretty distant. I wouldn't eat or go to the day room... [or] sit with other girls and I felt unsure and uncomfortable. Instead of trying to counsel me, the probation staff just stopped talking to me. They stopped asking if I wanted some food or to go to the day room. Even though I wasn't on lock down I felt like I was in solitary confinement already. I guess they thought I was depressed so they put me on lock down for real. No cell, no dayroom time, no hope. The rooms are about 5' by 10' with a metal door and a small shatterproof with the exception of the door -- sections of the wall are covered with brown stains that looked like smeared feces or blood. Almost everyone in lock down was in shorts and a t-shirt. The air conditioning would be on full blast so it was always freezing. Once in that cell you couldn't come out again until it's time to take that 45 second shower which was 23 hours later. I felt too tense when any of the guards would come close to my cell. Paranoid that I had done something wrong when in reality I had - - by myself for the last 24 hours of the day. It is by far the worst feeling I have ever experienced.

Testimony from the Los Angeles Breaking Silence Town Hall

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Partnership Requirements

The planning team is ideally, a coalition of organizers, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders who have committed to partnering with AAPF to organize a town hall hearing on girls and women of color. As such, the planning team is committing to:

- Identifying panel topics, testifiers, commissioners, contextualizers, and artists for the town hall hearing
- Securing space and food for the dress rehearsal and town hall event
- Managing the funding and budget for the town hall hearing
- Providing a follow-up budget report to town hall sponsors and funders
In the eighth grade, I was taken out of school because my mother found out that I was pregnant, and she felt that was what was best for me.

I was a young mother, too young to legally provide for my son and myself, and no one to guide me. I later met my knight in shining armor, or so I thought, and found out he was a drug dealer. He used me not being able to provide for myself and my son, to control me. I felt trapped, because I didn’t have support or a role model. I was being abused in my mother’s home, and I couldn’t tell her, because she worked nights and slept all day.

How do I walk away from my own support? My mother received support for myself and my son, and wouldn’t even buy socks to put on his feet. In staying in the abusive relationship, I later found that I was HIV positive, and my children were exposed to an abusive relationship. Today, I advocate for those who have not yet found their voices.

Testimony from the New Orleans Breaking Silence Town Hall
**Partnership Pre-assessment**

If, after reviewing the above materials, you and your community are interested in organizing a town hall hearing, we invite you to connect with us about next steps. In the meantime, we encourage you to ask yourselves and answer the following questions.

- Why do you want to host a town hall on girls and women of color?
- What do you hope to accomplish with the town hall?
- How have you demonstrated your commitment to girls and women of color?
- How have you demonstrated your commitment to the intersectional framing of key issues?
- After looking at the roles of responsibilities of the community collaborative, what is the your capacity to do the town hall?
- What time commitments can you make to the town hall planning process?
- Who is your point person for the town hall planning process?
- What resources, skills, and talents do you think you will need for the town hall?
- How do you think AAPF can support these efforts?
Breaking Silence

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