The African American Family: Then and Now

The Post Bellum/Reconstruction
Jim Crow Period
Family Transitions from Slavery to Freedom

• Many of those who focus on so-called deficits of the AA family frequently turn to slavery for reasons

• Blacks however, emerged from Slavery with strong sense of nuclear and extended families (See Guttman, 1977, and others)

• The Periods following slavery offered black family life many challenges that receive very little attention in the historical literature
Post War Economic Devastation in the South

- Failure of the Development of Local Economies in the South During the Slave Period
- For some former slaves, the challenge of the economic system during the Post Slave Period was more of a direct challenge to AA family life than it had been during the Slave Period because slaves did not own their own labor
- The Role of Economic Provider as Core to Ideal Masculinity in America
Legal & Illegal Challenges of the PB/Reconstruction

• Opposition to and the Decline of the Freedmen’s Bureau
• Discrimination
• Injustices of an Unjust Legal System
• The Rise of the KKK and other Anti-Black Terrorist Groups
• Terrorist Tactics to Maintain Racial Hegemony: Lynchings, Race Riots, and Other Massacres of Blacks
Adaptive Strategies During the Post Bellum/Reconstruction Period

- Strong views of marriage, residence and kinship patterns that emerged during slavery become institutionalized
- Emphasis on land ownership
- The evolution of the black church as a “communal institution” and the foundation of “the black community.”
- The broadening of black leadership
- Establishment of black towns & communities