



## **About-Face Education Into Action workshops program**

### **A proposal for the African-American Health Disparity Project**

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#### **Contact**

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#### **Background**

In the 2008-09 school year, About-Face delivered its Education Into Action media-literacy workshops to 685 students in 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades, 11 percent of whom were African-American. The workshops focus on helping students decipher and “read” media messages such as music videos, magazines, and commercials. Issues of ethnicity, identity, and body were addressed. Beyond simple education and media literacy, About-Face workshops encouraged young women to make changes in their own lives in order to empower themselves and their communities.

About-Face has been working with young women ages 13 to 30 in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond since 1995. The organization exists to equip women and girls with tools they need to understand and resist harmful media messages that affect their self-esteem and body image. About-Face has three programs:

- Education Into Action media-literacy workshops (in schools and other organizations),
- Take Action groups, which empower young women to take action around media messages in a positive, productive, and public way, and
- About-Face.org, About-Face’s web site, which includes a Gallery of Offenders and Gallery of Winners.

In the previous school year, About-Face workshops improved young people’s resistance to media messages by 25 percent. (Before workshops, 50 percent said they did not feel pressure to conform to media messages, and after the workshops, 75 percent said they do not feel this pressure.) By reaching more young people, About-Face continues to make these crucial changes.

#### **Summary of proposed program**

About-Face is requesting \$7,000 from the African-American Health Disparity Project to teach media literacy to at least 70 teenage females in San Francisco, with a focus on African-American teenagers. The objectives are for young women to discuss how media messages contribute to their sexual and other health behaviors, identify media expressions of violence against women, and learn to question what they see in media. The intended outcomes for the young women are: significantly higher self-esteem and ability to use critical-thinking skills beyond the duration of the workshop. Potential follow-up programs are also discussed below.

### **Need for this program**

Many of the media messages teenagers are watching focus on demeaning treatment of women that can play out in young women's everyday lives around issues of sexual health and sexual agency — issues that affect the rest of their lives and cut off or make available opportunities to develop and achieve their life goals. As late as 2004, two-thirds of TV programs contained sexual content, and many would agree that sexual content is even more prevalent now. In a longitudinal study of 1,792 adolescents, one major study found that when teenagers watch sexual content on television, they begin having intercourse earlier (Collins, 2004). Earlier intercourse is associated with unintended pregnancy and risk of contracting of sexually transmitted infections.

But what about the *nature* of messages in that sexual content? According to most media teenagers watch, the expectations are that women are usually available for sex with men, exploitation of women is commonplace and normal, and that safer sex measures are not to be used. Young people cannot help but see that constructed world as reality, given they have little experience with healthy sexual relationships. Acting out the behaviors they see in music videos or advertising messages can have unintended consequences: for young women, lack of sexual agency and early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection (STI), and emotionally speaking, a self-defined sexuality that does not take into account a young woman's prerogative to choose her life's path.

These messages contribute to the erosion of young women's self-esteem. Media portrayals of black women as sex objects whose value is based on their appearance contribute to African-American adolescent girls' feeling worse about themselves and developing self-concepts that focus on appearance and romantic appeal (Gordon, 2004).

Our method of media literacy is a way to mitigate these effects. Our purpose of this program is to help young women see how media messages can affect one's own view of herself and how she is "supposed" to behave as a woman. We will also facilitate discussion about ways to define oneself as a woman outside of the media's definitions.

Because About-Face's work often focuses on body image in media, it's important to address body image here. Studies show that African-American women and girls tend to maintain their self-esteem even at higher body weights, which is different from Caucasian counterparts. It's a desirable situation for women to feel good about themselves, but there are health consequences for many women who maintain a higher body weight. It should also be noted that teenage girls in ethnic minority groups are reaching parity with Caucasians in body image and eating disturbances (Shaw, et al. 2004; French, et al. 1997). Latina, Asian, African-American, and Caucasian women are equally likely to present the symptoms of bulimia, anorexia, or binge eating disorder (Cachelin and Streigel-Moore, 2006). And we can't ignore that binge eating and emotional eating may account for much of the obesity and health issues in African-American populations. So while the drive for thinness is not as pronounced in African-Americans, disordered eating is still prevalent and should be acknowledged in this work.

### **Objectives for program**

This program aims to help young, African-American women

- discuss and learn how media messages contribute to the formation of their sexual and other health behaviors
- identify media expressions of violence against women and discuss normalization of violence
- learn to question what they see in music videos, commercials, movies, in song lyrics, and on the Internet

Concepts About-Face workshops will help young women develop are:

- self-esteem, especially around sexual and other health behaviors, for the purpose of encouraging girls to view themselves as having agency, resisting their own exploitation, and to see themselves as worth caring for
- self-acceptance around body image with regard to racial appearance characteristics and view of oneself within the world
- the importance of healthy behaviors (safer sex, healthy food and exercise choices, etc.) as an expression of feeling good about oneself

### **Program design**

About-Face Education Into Action workshops are:

- Guided, not lecturing: Workshop leader don't tell teenagers what to think, but instead let them develop and express their own thoughts
- Interactive: We provide discussion time and engage young women with the media they watch and listen to every day.
- Action-oriented and positive: We leave participants inspired to make change, not feeling hopeless.
- Sassy and edgy: We use humor, making the workshops fun.

Some questions we will pose to young women are:

- How do you learn how to be a girl?
- How does media teach girls about how to treat their bodies?
- What does "sex" mean according to TV?
- What do you think is appropriate sexual behavior?
- What are the body types of women in music videos? What do those women look like?
- Do the women being objectified in music videos choose to be in that position? How are these images created?

### **Program reach and delivery**

This program will bring seven (7) About-Face Education Into Action workshops to 70 to 100 young women over a period of (8) weeks. We will aim to reach a minimum of ten (10) young women per workshop in the groups they already attend, such as girl groups and their own school classrooms. The maximum number per workshop will be 30. Workshops will begin in December 2009 and continue into early 2010.

Additionally:

- Workshops will be at least 90 minutes each to allow for discussion and evaluation.
- Groups of girls only will be served so as to free girls to air their feelings without the influence of male peers.

Potential organizational partners:

- Thrive House for Youth (in the Western Addition)
- Mo Magic
- Booker T. Washington high school girls' group
- Center for Young Women's Development
- GirlSource
- San Francisco Unified School District High School Wellness Centers

### **Leaders and budget**

About-Face's budget for this project is attached to this proposal. About-Face will bring on a program manager paid on contract 10 hours/week for 8 weeks. One of the About-Face's

current workshop leaders, Geneva Fortson, has indicated interest and time availability. Along with the Executive Director and About-Face's other African-American workshop leaders, the program manager will develop appropriate curriculum for this cohort and see that it is delivered consistently. She will also lead at least two workshops and ensure data is collected from workshop participants.

A part of this program manager position may be delegated to another staff member to coordinate workshop logistics. That person will be paid at the same rate as the program manager and the budget for this purpose will not be exceeded.

Depending on scheduling and availability, About-Face may need to train additional workshop leaders during the project period. About our workshop leaders for this project:

- African-American women
- familiar with the communities they will be serving
- trained by About-Face
- receive a small stipend per workshop and travel/parking reimbursement

### **Extending the effects of the workshops**

About-Face has identified three main tactics to continue engaging young women after their About-Face workshop, with the aim of extending the educational effects:

- sending a weekly e-mail that reinforces the messages they learned (young women choose whether to receive the e-mail)
- takeaway materials, such as "banner pens" (pens with banners in the pen barrels) with fun media-literacy messages on them
- posting full-color flyers at our partner organizations and schools with additional educational messages

### **Outcomes and evaluation**

The goal of this media-literacy project is to bring about significant improvements in the workshop participants' self-esteem and critical-thinking skills — two factors that have been shown to facilitate positive behavior change around physical, mental, and sexual health, as well as good decision-making.

We will evaluate our success by administering short evaluations before and after workshops to determine the short-term effects of the workshop. The measures used on our evaluations will be adapted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3), which measures the extent of media internalization and to what extent subjects question media messages. Both of these measures are well validated and widely used.

### **Follow-on programming: Take Action group**

In its best expression, About-Face's work continues beyond the duration of the Education Into Action workshops. After a workshop, About-Face's Take Action groups empower passionate young women to take action around the issues of media in their own ways. If funded, About-Face will choose young women from the pool of workshop participants and bring together a group of 5 to 10 young women to participate in our 5-week Take Action program.

Thank you for considering this proposal, and please contact About-Face if you have further questions or concerns.

## References

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**About-Face project budget:  
Media Literacy for African American young women**

	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Indirect costs</b>		
<b>Personnel</b>		
Program Manager	1,600	Paid on contract: 80 hrs at \$20/hr.
<b>Total Personnel</b>	<b>\$1,600</b>	
<b>Operations</b>		
<b>Total Operations</b>	2,480	12.5% allocation
<b>Total Indirect costs of program</b>	<b>\$4,080</b>	
<b>Direct program costs</b>		
Data analysis	100	\$20/hour for 5 hours
Equipment and maintenance	790	projector
Licenses/permits	50	background checks for two presenters
Media collection	50	high-quality video from iTunes, etc.
Meeting expenses	60	Meals/refreshments
Photocopying	20	Flyers for workshops
Presenter stipends	350	\$50 x 7 workshops
Software and Services	60	Video capture software
Space Rental	140	\$35/hour for 4 hours
Supplies	100	Presenter training
Take-away/engagement materials	1,100	Banner pens
Travel	100	To/from workshops, to school/org
<b>Total direct program costs</b>	<b>\$2,920</b>	
<b><u>Total Expenses for Take Action program</u></b>	<b>\$7,000</b>	