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Chicago School Professor Dr. James Shaw Forges Path to Address Youth Violence

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(Los Angeles) Dr. James (Jim) Shaw, assistant professor of forensic psychology at The Chicago School in Los Angeles, is determined to decrease the number of incarcerated youths. Already making significant strides toward his goal—he is creating a new violence education and prevention curriculum for middle and high school students. Dr. Shaw has also authored two books on the subject.

Shaw's B.R.A.V.E. (Be Resilient Avoid Violence Everywhere) program was piloted at a California middle school, after a sixth grade student arrived one morning carrying a loaded .38 handgun. Fifty-five teachers and over 400 students volunteered for B.R.A.V.E. training. The program is rapidly gaining recognition throughout the criminal justice system; the Philadelphia Regional Office of the FBI/ATF calls B.R.A.V.E. "an example of best community practices," and the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department is reviewing B.R.A.V.E. Kaiser-Permanente—a hospital and health corporation with many clinics in urban, high-risk communities—is considering B.R.A.V.E. for possible use as an employee training program and a patient awareness/public service initiative, in much the same way diet, nutrition, heart and high blood pressure education are presented.

Through the B.R.A.V.E. program, Dr. Shaw hopes to help children recognize and resist the pressure to engage in any form or degree of violence as a means to solve problems or right perceived wrongs. The curriculum teaches youth to express themselves in nonviolent ways so that they may develop an appetite for positive problem-solving, and lead safe and violence-free lives.

"There is a pervasive fatalistic psychology in our nation's urban, inner city areas that 'what will be must be', and youth often feel they are both creatures and victims of destiny," says Dr. Shaw. "B.R.A.V.E. is meant to engender a healthy psychology of personal behavioral management and pro-social communication growth, with a heightened cognition of the salient and safe results of consciously and deliberately making positive personal and social choices."

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B.R.A.V.E. training includes reading assignments and discussion groups that build decision-making skills and teach students resistance/resiliency techniques to help them counteract peer pressure, violence, and bullying. Topics focus on the physical, emotional, and legal consequences of violence; self-worth; interpersonal and inter-group communication skills; conflict avoidance and reduction; and peace-building skills.

B.R.A.V.E. is an outgrowth of Dr. Shaw's first book, *Jack & Jill, Why They Kill: Saving Our Children, Saving Ourselves* (Onjinjinka Publishing, 2000), recognized by CNN as the "smart answer for today's troubled times." *Jack & Jill, Why They Kill* draws on four years of interviews conducted by Dr. Shaw with incarcerated children in state youth prisons.

"Adults and media need to recognize that juvenile delinquents have the power to change, and do change," he says. "Equally, if not more important, juvenile delinquents themselves need to recognize that change is possible. Literary accounts such as mine document that."

Following the widespread success of *Jack & Jill, Why They Kill*, Dr. Shaw wrote and published the psychological thriller *Girl Sinner, Lady Saint: A Diva Redeemed* (PublishAmerica, 2009). The novel, released in February, draws from his expert knowledge of children convicted of murder. The storyline follows the struggles of a fictional young ex-convict turned celebrated hip-hop singer, and her attempts to make amends for her past.

Girl Sinner, Lady Saint was recently featured at BookExpo America in New York, May 25-27, and has received much acclaim on Amazon.com and other book vendor sites.

Dr. Shaw's work has put him on the media map as a renowned expert on youth violence. He regularly discusses issues surrounding juvenile violence in the nation's schools on CNN TalkBack, The O'Reilly Factor, NBC Today, ABC Good Morning America, MSNBC Live, FOX News, and Associated Press Radio. Dr. Shaw was a keynote speaker at the "Day of Commemoration and Change Ceremony" for Columbine High School in 2000 and has spoken at other relevant venues, including law enforcement conferences.

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