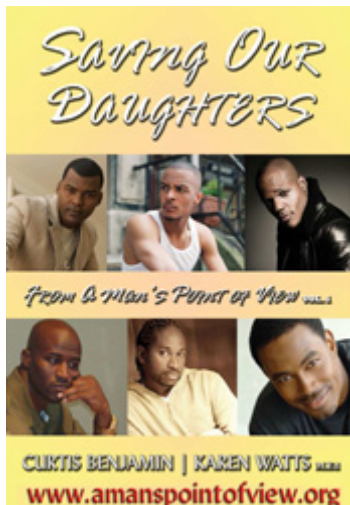


POSTED: OCTOBER 13, 2008

T.I. Stands Up For Our Daughters

Wendy L. Wilson



[View photos of rapper T.I. »](#)

A new book has Black men stepping up to the plate to keep young girls safe. Rapper T.I. is one of six male entertainers who have contributed to "Saving Our Daughters: From a Man's Point of View," a collection of personal stories that address several issues impacting young girls and single mothers today. One of those issues is domestic violence. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, one in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.

T.I. explains to ESSENCE.com about why he got involved in this project, his commitment to empowering young women, and how domestic violence has touched his own life.

ESSENCE.COM: Congratulations on your new album, "Paper Trail," entering the charts at No. 1. So, what was your contribution to the book "Saving Our Daughters: From a Man's Point of View?"

T.I.: I just shared my thoughts on what I felt the young ladies of the next generation could benefit from male guidance and what I thought the men of my generation could do to contribute to that. I talked about how I interact with my daughters, including just being there for them, staying involved in their lives, being honest and open, and being there for them to talk to about anything. In the book I tried to make girls aware of the dangers of being out there and not thinking, and also aware of their worth. They should know how valuable they are to the world.

ESSENCE.COM: How did you get involved with this project?

T.I.: My man Curt B. contacted me. [Curtis Benjamin is the coauthor of the book and executive director of the It's Cool To Be Smart mentoring program] I've known him about five years and we've worked together on the Single Parent Initiative and It's Cool To Be Smart program.

ESSENCE.COM: How has domestic violence impacted your own life?

T.I.: I witnessed domestic abuse once as a child, when I was about 8-years old. I stepped in to

protect my mom from one of her boyfriends, so I know how that can affect a child and that's definitely nothing that anyone would ever want their child to encounter. There's a kind of paranoia that comes with that, where from that point on every time an adult raises their voices, you feel threatened, like there is a possibility that something bad could happen.

ESSENCE.COM: So you're the father of two young girls, one of which is almost a teenager.

T.I.: Man, don't remind me. As of right now, she's not really into guys. She likes music and what not. Every time I ask her about it she doesn't say anything, but I keep checking.

ESSENCE.COM: Have you had that talk with her yet?

T.I.: Of course. I told her how rotten boys are and how they only make nice for the purposes of making nice. I think that me being the kind of dad that I am and setting the standards that I've set and treating them the way I treat them, any dude they take a liking to is going to have to be special.

ESSENCE.COM: What are you hoping people will get out of reading your contribution?

T.I.: I hope they will understand the importance of being involved in young ladies lives in order for them to blossom into prosperous, productive, positive mothers, students, wives, and citizens in society. Anytime I involve myself in things that I hope will help the community, I always have very optimistic beliefs. I hope this book will be of maximum effect and benefit for whoever needs it most.

ESSENCE.COM: Domestic violence is actually rising amongst teens today. Seeing how that's a big part of your audience, what message would you like to give teens about this issue?

T.I.: I want to let them know that things that mean the most to them today will mean nothing in days, weeks, months, years to come. Nothing is worth getting that involved into a person for you to have to get violent. Also, this is just a child in a relationship and they need to be realistic of their expectations. I need for girls to know that this is not the last guy you're going to be with, and I need for guys to know this will not be the last girl you will be with, so whatever they did to upset you, don't take it out on them. You use it as information and motivation to go out and find somebody better. That's the key. [When] you go out there and put your hands on people, you never know what's going to happen to you.

"Saving Our Daughters" will be available in November on amanspointofview.org

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