

Cheers to 'faithful' fathers

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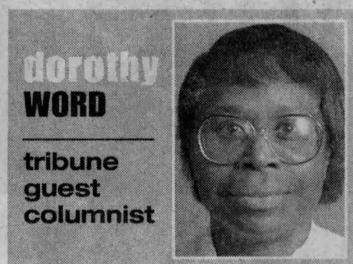
■ There are dads who are trying to make this a better world.

Some of us vividly remember superstar-pop singer Diana Ross and her many "hit songs" including "Reach out and touch somebody's hand, make this a better world if you can." But reaching out and touching and making this a better world antedates Diana Ross and her popular song.

The Black Church from its very beginning was committed to reaching out, to making this a better world. From the very beginning, black church leadership and influential father figures went about touching lives. Dr. Charles Albert Tindley is a renowned example.

Tindley (1856-1933) was a minister for 30 years in Philadelphia, Penn., and a prolific hymn writer. One of the many people he reached out and touched was Thomas A. Dorsey. Dorsey was forever grateful for that father-figure influence on his life.

Tindley persuaded and inspired Dorsey to leave the vaudeville and blues circuits and redirect his musical talents to writing



religious music exclusively. Dorsey began writing gospel songs in the 1920s and produced more than 400 songs. In 1932, Dorsey composed his most popular gospel song which still enjoys universal appeal, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand."

Preacher/teacher Wallace McLaughlin at the Fathers Resource Center in Indianapolis reaches out to touch the lives of young African-American fathers, and tries to make this a better world for them and their families.

"The work that I do, I dedicate it to the memory of my father (a minister) who died when I was 13," said McLaughlin. "He gave me a sense of life and an understanding of fatherhood and what I am called to do."

The Fathers Resource Center's mission is to improve the life-chances of children by helping young fathers achieve self-sufficiency and strengthen their parental involvement.

Some of the activities going on at the Center are: an intense 6-week Fatherhood Development Workshop, parental and co-parenting classes, child development classes, employment counseling, job placement and retention

services, and long-term career planning. Also, fathers are required to sign a child support agreement.

"A

man's identity is locked up in what he does and what he produces, not what he is as a husband and father," said Ken Canfield, founder and president of the National Center for Fathering in Kansas. The challenge for working fathers is to find a balance between being a breadwin-

ner and a family man. There are few role models.

Books like "Working Fathers" and "Business Dad: How Good Businessmen Can Make Great Fathers (and Vice Versa)" offer some guidance for the "balancing act" of work versus wife and kids.

Deadbeat dads and absentee fathers are found in all ethnic groups and races, on all economic levels. The good news is there are fathers from all ethnic groups and races, on all economic levels, who do "have a life" with their families and are trying to make this a better world, especially for their children.

I have observed four faithful fathers who spend time transporting their kids to and from after-school tutoring classes. These dads deserve report cards full of good grades for making good attendance possible, for modeling good manners and respect, and for showing genuine caring and concern for their children's best interests.

Three cheers for these dads: Mr. Ewbank (Albert's dad), Mr. Barrett (Johnathan's dad), Mr. Castillo (Anzaya's dad), and Mr. Clark (Asha's and Shawn's dad).

Dorothy Word of Kokomo is a retired teacher.

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