

***Raising Resilient Children:  
How Communities of Color  
Respond to the Challenge***

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21st Annual Minority Health Conference

The School of Public Health

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

February 19, 1999

The William and Ida Friday

Continuing Education Center

***William T. Small, Jr., MSPH***

***Keynote Address:***

**Where Seeds of Tragedy Grow Love**

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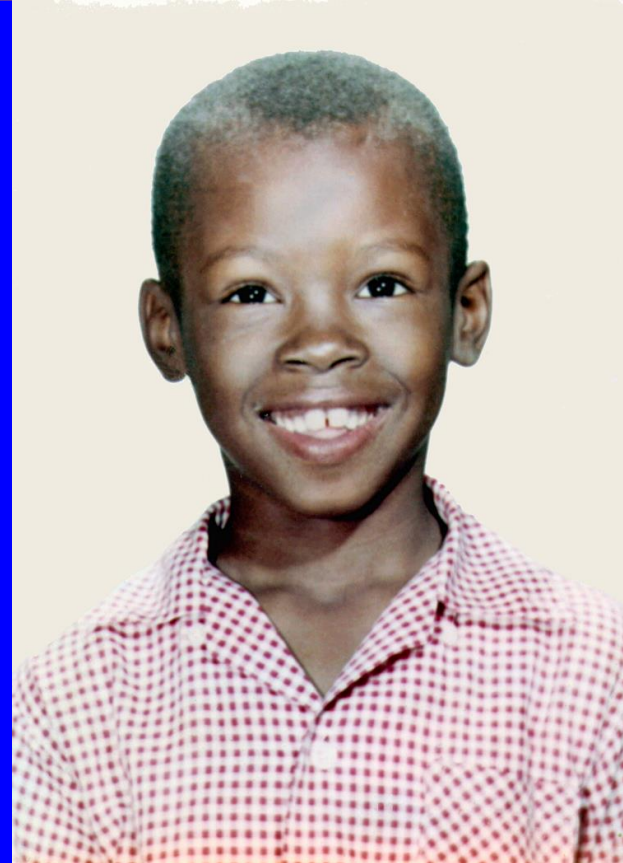
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# Stephen B. Thomas

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- **Born:**  
February 9, 1953  
Columbus, Ohio
- **Mother:**  
Lucille W. Thomas
- **Father:**  
Benjamin Thomas



# ***Sierra Leone Is No Place To Be Young***

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- Conscripted into a vicious civil war, grade-school boys are taking up arms and gunning down friends and neighbors, while their sisters are held in sexual slavery.



**New York Times Magazine, 2-14-99**

# Gandhi

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“As human beings, our greatness is not so much in being able to remake the world --- that is the myth of the ‘Atomic Age’ --- as in being able to remake ourselves.”

# ***The Stress Paradigm***

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“An event, situation or combination of situations in which demands are perceived by the child or adolescent as exceeding his or her capacity to comfortably respond.”

**Smith, C. (1997).**

**Social Science Review**

# ***The Stress Paradigm: Sources of Stress***

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- Ordinary
- Acute
- Chronic
- Unusual

# ***The Stress Paradigm: The Social Context of Stress***

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- Stressful events are rarely independent.
- People living in urban areas and members of stigmatized racial/ethnic groups are all more likely to experience multiple, interconnected sources of stress.



# ***The Risk Factor Paradigm***

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- Those circumstances that increase the likelihood that a child will develop an emotional or behavioral disorder compared to children from the general population.

Garmezy, N., (1983).

# ***The Risk Factor Paradigm: Sources of Risk***

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- Abusive Parenting
- Damaging Environments
- Oppressive Social Conditions
  - poverty
  - joblessness
  - social isolation
  - dangerous neighborhoods

# ***The Stress and Risk Factor Paradigms in Summary:***

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- Both stressors and risk factors have the potential to threaten the well-being of children and adolescents.

# ***The Stress and Risk Factor Paradigms in Summary:***

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- However, depending on how stressors are perceived and handled, they may or may not lead to negative outcomes, while risk factors, by definition, increase the odds of poor outcomes.

# ***The Preponderance of Scientific Evidence Leads to the Conclusion that...***

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- For children living under the burdens of multiple risk factors and the stress of adverse life events, the difference between success and failure, both inside and outside of school, often boils down to the presence or absence of factors associated with a specific character trait..... **Resilience.**

## ***The Resilience Factor:***

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- Most children exposed to risk and stress do **NOT** go on to develop negative outcomes.
- Most children are ‘resilient,’ that is, they are able to overcome developmental hazards and adversity without apparent negative outcomes.

# ***Three Types of Resilience***

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- Overcoming the Odds
- Sustained Competence Under Stress
- Recovery Under Trauma

**Fraser, M. (1997)**

**Risk and Resilience in Childhood**

# ***Common Protective Factors:***

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- **Opportunities**
- **Social Support**
- **Presence of a Caring, Supportive Adult**
- **Positive Parent-Child Relationship**
- **Effective Parenting**
- **Easy Temperament**
- **Self-Efficacy**
- **Self-Esteem**

Fraser, M., (1997). Risk and Resilience in Childhood



# ***The Resilience Factor and Adverse Life Events***

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- Researchers of resilience have consistently used only life events that are adverse to and uncontrollable by the child to measure adversity.

Luther, 1991

# ***Adverse Life Events and Resilience in Children***

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“Resilient youth received more guidance and supervision by their parents and lived in higher functioning families. Other adults in the family complimented the parents in providing guidance and support to youth enhancing their adjustment.”

Tiet, et al (1998). J. American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

# ***Kids Alive and Loved***

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- Kids Alive and Loved (KAL) was founded in March 1994, by Bernadette Leite, whose 17-year-old son Khalil was shot and killed in downtown Atlanta. The acronym KAL is taken from Khalil's initials.



# **Atlanta Youth Surviving Childhood**

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A news documentary produced by ABC affiliate WSB-TV. This eight minute program aired in two segments on the 6:00 news.

It is one example of what we can do to enhance the resilience of youth exposed the adverse life events.

**ARCHBISHOP DESMOND M. TUTU**  
**Robert W. Woodruff Visiting Professor of Theology**  
**Emory University**

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“It is not what  
is done to us  
that matters,  
but how we  
take what is  
done to us.”



# Gaps in the Knowledge Base

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We need more research on the emotional development of school-aged children, particularly children of color.

# **We need to Understand Cultural Factors in Relationship to Stress, Resilience and Outcomes**

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- Ethnic/Racial Group Identity
- Family Structure/Functioning
- Neighborhood Environment
- Religiosity
- Social Identity

# Anne Frank

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“I can shake off everything if I write; my sorrow disappears, my courage is reborn.”



# Bernadette Leite

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“You have to love these kids to keep them alive. That’s how I came up with the name, Kids Alive and Loved.”

# A Prayer for Children

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“Please offer your hands to them so that no child is left behind because we did not act.”

Marian Wright Edelman (1992).

The Measure of Our Success

# Anne Frank

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“Who has inflicted this upon us? Who has made [**children of color**] different from all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly till now? It is God that made us as we are, but it will be God too, who will raise us up again.”