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on issues affecting African Americans
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Bring on the Elephants: It's Time for Action
By Jamala Rogers
BlackCommentator.com **Editorial Board**

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As I put the finishing touches on this commentary, four black men have been murdered in my city in a 24-hour period. It is tragic trend that other urban cities are also facing.

Recently, St. Louis witnessed thousands of men taking to the streets, organized under the Call to Oneness. The Call was to mobilize 20,000 black men to respond to the need for proactive intervention in our communities. There are media accounts that estimate the numbers were as high as 50,000 with plenty of cheering sisters lining the March route. Organizers hope to begin a systematic approach of dealing with the escalating violence, particularly between young, black males.

The Call for Oneness follows several efforts in various cities such as Philly's Call to Action: It's a New Day campaign; St. Pete, FL's Calling the Men Home Project; San Diego's Black Men United; and Baltimore's Call to Action, to name a few. I don't know

what the progress is for these campaigns and it maybe too early to tell (Anyone from those cities can give me a brief update).

What I do know is that addressing the needs of angry and neglected teens requires commitment, consistency and compassion. It's got to be less of telling these young men what to do and a whole lot of showing them. Most importantly, it cannot be a passing fad.

The appeals for more meaningful black male involvement in family and community affairs, such as last week's Call to Oneness, have the potential to have a similar effect on young males as the male elephants have on wayward, adolescent calves.

The elephant herd reminds me of the current African American family structure. Elephants are fascinating animals. They are very intelligent with a highly socialized environment. They are also a matriarchal society. The clan is made up of females and their offspring along with the grown daughters and their calves. If there is danger, the herd gathers in a protective circle around Big Mama, putting all the calves in the middle. The mothers teach the young calves all they need to know about eating, bathing and surviving. The bulls or male elephants hang together, but separate from the cows.

There comes a time in every male elephant's life when he gets to the point that Grandma called "gettin' too big for your britches". In elephant terms, this is called musth. They get rowdy and uncontrollable; that's when they get pushed from the cow herd over to the bull herd to learn what it means to be a male elephant. The adult males help them get their act together in a firm but loving way.

I saw an example of this on TV when some young, male elephants got buck wild in South Africa's Pilanesburg National Park. The young males had been orphaned and were hanging out together with no parental guidance. They were beyond unruly, they were downright violent. They ran in a pack, fighting one another and terrorizing the other park animals. They were acting like little EGs (elephant gangstas) and were even responsible for the senseless killings of rhinos on the reserve.

The park brought older bull elephants into the area and the social dynamic totally changed. Sometimes, the bigger adult males had to double-team rambunctious adolescents to show them who the adults were. There were a lot of pushing, raring up and other physical acts by the Big Daddies before the young EGs realized they'd better settle down. After a while, they did settle down and began acting like polite, obedient young males. The rhino killings ceased and peace was restored to the park.

There are a lot of young black males who have been running loose, raising themselves with no real model of manhood. The impressive turnout of black men who responded to the Call for Oneness gave me a bounce of hope. It's past time to hit the streets and show these misguided males some tough love.

The women folk are tired of visiting the prisons, tired of going to the emergency rooms, tired of burying our young - just tired. We could use of herd of brothers in the neighborhood. Peace in the hood is starting to look more real.

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, *Jamala Rogers*, is the leader of

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