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Chris and Rihanna: From Cute Couple to Somber Statistics
By Jamala Rogers
BlackCommentator.com **Editorial Board**

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The shocking news of Chris Brown's physical assault of Rihanna took them from superstardom to domestic violence statistics. I'm pretty sure that Chris didn't know it was "[National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week](#)" when he allegedly used Rihanna as a punching bag.

As shocking as the news was of Rihanna's beat-down, for those of us who have dealt with victims of domestic violence, the subsequent news that the two might reconcile was not. It is predictable behavior just like we surmised that this was not the first time for an attack of this nature by Chris.

Reaction to the news was swift. Doublemint Gum suspended its commercials featuring Brown. Some radio stations pulled his music. When female fans got wind that Rihanna may unite with her abuser, they began to also organize boycotts of Rihanna's music.

This sad and sorry story must be used as a teachable moment to raise awareness about the pervasiveness of domestic violence among young people. The statistics aren't rosy.

Youth is a time of extreme vulnerability for girls and young women to be victimized in relationships. [U.S. Department of Justice](#) statistics reveal that females ages 16-24 are three times more likely than any other age group to experience partner violence. One in three teens reports knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped or physically hurt by their dating partner.

That is troubling, but it gets worse. In one report on teen violence, female high school students were asked whom they would talk to if someone they date is attempting to intimidate, control or physically harm them. In a policy brief, "The Imperative of Developing Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs in Secondary Schools," 86 percent said they would confide in a friend, while only 7 percent said they would talk to police. Parents, counselors, ministers or other caring adults weren't even considered.

Maybe this is because [Family Violence Prevention Fund](#) and [Advocates for Youth](#) found

that 81 percent of parents surveyed either believed teen dating violence is not an issue or they don't know if it's an issue. Most parents have not talked to their male or female children about dating violence.

We live in a violent world in general. Violence against women is becoming the norm in a misogynist society as the victims and perpetrators get younger. Some powerful men, from athletes to politicians, think that being abusive or violent is part of the job description. The messages that young people are getting is that when you have money or power, you can make anyone your victim. At 19 years old, Chris has taken the bait.

In the African-American community, there is a certain level of accepted violence whether it's sexual street harassment or knocking your woman upside the head. It is why documentaries like Aishah Simmons' "No! The Rape Documentary" and Byron Hurt's "Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes" are so important to make and to widely discuss.

Chris Brown is reported to "being sorry." If Chris is truly sorry, he can help his young fans learn a valuable life lesson by speaking out on the dangers of domestic violence. He needs to roll out some anti-violence ads geared towards young people. He should make hefty donations to projects that address teen dating violence. Rihanna needs to do likewise. They are now poster kids for domestic violence; they might as well be spokespersons.


It is rumored that Chris and Rihanna will soon record a love duet. No doubt this bad advice is coming from attorneys and publicists to redeem the image of the two. Instead, some one with some wisdom should encourage them to use their star power to emphasize an important message: Violence has no place in any relationship.


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BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, Jamala Rogers, is the leader of the [Organization for Black Struggle](#) in St. Louis and the [Black Radical Congress](#) National Organizer. Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Rogers.

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