

Programme tackles roots of violence

By **ANDISIWE MAKINANA**
Staff Reporter

South Africans, like most people the world over, have a negative view of women.

They are seen as less human, less than equal and incomplete and are regarded as commodities for trade. Only in this country, the disrespect is deeply rooted and acted out in the most severe manner.

These are the words of American Joseph Marshall, who is in Cape Town hosting a two-day conference on violence prevention and intervention.

Marshall is founder and president of the Street Soldiers National Consortium, a youth development and violence prevention organisation based in the US.

His violence prevention model views violence from a "public health perspective" and

"frames violence at the community and individual level as treatable and avoidable".

He argues that a contributing factor to violence, especially youth violence, is the apathetic attitude of parents and society.

Marshall says that while young people are willing to be guided and are waiting for adults to intervene, they (adults) have chosen not to act.

"Violence," Marshall says "is about power, domination and control. And the craving to exert these starts at a very early age these days."

This, he says, is why his programme is aimed at people between 11 and 23 ... "and everyone else, indirectly".

Back home in the US, Marshall is adopting schools, from elementary schools right up to college, to train and encourage teachers to continue the

programme which focuses on young people, including perpetrators of violence, and provides specific methods and techniques for individuals and organisations to prevent violence in themselves and their communities.

Marshall says violent behaviour has nothing to do with poverty, background or race.

"It's the societies that look the other way and kids get away with it. There are no mentors, there is no guidance. Some children get into crime because they think it's the way to survive," Marshall says.

"They listen to rap music and look up to rap stars. Rap is about being a player, being a gangster ... and that sounds cool."

South Africa is in this very same situation, says Marshall. "The thinking is all flawed. Street culture rules," he says.

"Taking children to camps or throwing them into a basketball court is not going to change anything, change their thinking."

Worse still was violence against women.

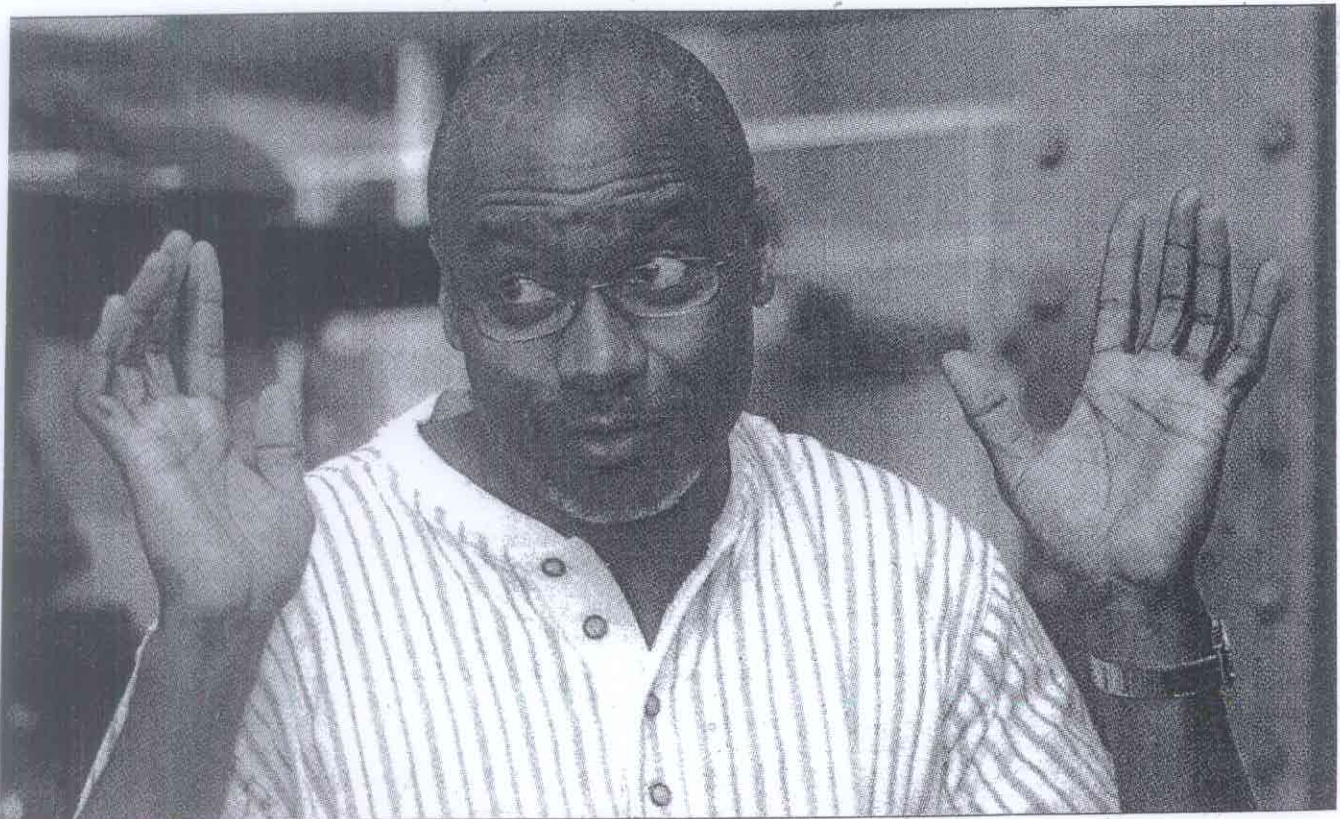
"Women in many countries are viewed as less than human, less than equal, incomplete and commodities for trade.

"You know what I mean... the severity of the violence against women in this country.

"What is worse is that women see themselves that way, as incomplete," he says, noting that this negative view of women is deeply entrenched in cultures and in religions.

Marshall argues there is no quick solution but a need to de-programme people's thinking, get them to change their behaviour and start dealing with their "emotional residue".

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ED THINKING: Dr Joseph Marshall, who is hosting a conference on violence prevention and intervention, says apathy and lack of guidance from parents contributes to violent behaviour in young people
Picture: JEFFREY ABRAHAM