



COLORADO COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Jon Pushkin
Pushkin Public Relations
303-733-3441; cell: 303-725-5031

PAUL CHILDS SHOOTING RAISES FAMILIAR ISSUES FOR BLACK COMMUNITY

(DENVER, CO – October 17, 2003) The October 16 decision by Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter that the violent shooting death of the African-American teenager Paul Childs by a Denver police officer was “not a crime” is a vivid reminder why the Black community is reluctant to report incidents of domestic violence.

After the shooting, the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) called for a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Paul Childs, the African-American teenager killed during a confrontation with Denver police. CCADV continues to express solidarity with his family and with the families of all disabled persons who die at the hands of police, or in police custody.

As Colorado’s voice for victims of family violence, CCADV is dedicated to eliminating violence in all forms, for all members of our community. Although homicide is the leading cause of death for Black males ages 15-24, the police and the justice system have done a poor job of protecting the Black community. The Childs case underscores why many Black families hesitate to call the police when family or domestic violence occurs. The inconsistency of police intervention coupled with inadequate police training creates a response that is either too harsh or too deficient.

The racial repercussions of reporting family and domestic violence is clear for African-American victims. Black families understand the risks of abandoning relatives to the police. As a result of the death of Paul Childs, CCADV fears that fewer Black families than ever will seek police intervention in cases of family and domestic violence.

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Black families are often reluctant to institutionalize disabled, elderly, and infirm family members, and choose to provide support and caring in the home. Paul Childs suffered from cognitive disabilities. It's easy to see a disability in a person using a wheelchair or a cane. It is far more difficult to see the extent of the problem in someone with cognitive disabilities. We also know that many persons become disabled as a result of domestic violence. CCADV offers training on family and domestic violence to police officers, sheriff's deputies, and court personnel. For years, the Coalition has offered enhanced training on issues of cultural competency and the disabled. We renew our call for this type of training to be mandatory for Denver police officers.

The reality is that police brutality and blatant racism still exist. Access to the criminal justice system for people of color and the disabled is an unresolved issue. The Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence is committed to redressing these issues for all families in Colorado.

Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) - www.ccadv.org - is a 25-year old statewide, grassroots, nonprofit organization providing resources, education, and training, and serving as a voice to more than 80 members and 60 programs serving some 40,000 battered women and children in Colorado each year.