

# SunSentinel

Local News / Broward News / Fort Lauderdale News

## Panel focuses on black pride, education and roots of crime

By Anne Geggis Sun Sentinel *contact the reporter*

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Community conversation focuses on black pride, education and roots of crime

May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 9:56 PM / FORT LAUDERDALE

**P**rison, poverty and fatherlessness were up for discussion Saturday, made more urgent as urban unrest and police shootings in other cities in the United States generate headlines.

The Black on Black Crime Solutions Panel drew about 75 people to the African American Research Library and Cultural Center on Saturday. Most of the conversation focused on why grim statistics shape so many black lives. Among the consequences: High unemployment and high-school dropout rates.

Frantz McLawrence, a former public defender now in private law practice, said that the justice system sets black men up to fail, starting with the so-called War on Drugs declared by President Ronald Reagan. "Once they are released [from prison], they are relegated to third-class citizenship," McLawrence said. "The criminal justice system is broken and we need to fix it."

James DePelisi, president and CEO of Broward County Crime Commission, said he wants to see less profits for private industry in incarceration.

Others, though, focused on education as the solution.

"You can't expect the source of your problems to be the source of your solutions," said A.K. Aheto-Tosu said, a research analyst who lives in Davie. He said that the country has subjected blacks to distortion, discord and destruction.

Samishra Askew, 37, who grew up in Fort Lauderdale and now lives in St. Lucie, said she came away thinking that the black community needs more unity. "President Obama had a whole team behind him" to win the presidency, she said.

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