

Black advancement changes studied

By IRIS RAESHAUN
Special to the Chronicle

The 21st Century Commission on African-American Males met recently in Washington, D.C. to discuss changes needed for their advancement. The print media has added to the publication of the status of black males.

USA Weekend, and the Chicago Defender Newspaper, reported that:

- 23% of black men ages 20-29 are in prison, on parole or on probation.

- The leading cause of death for black males 15-24 is homicide — 101.8 per 100,000. It is the fourth leading cause of death for comparable white males 11.5 per 100,000.

- The unemployment rate among black male teens in March was 38.4%, compared to 18.6% for white male teens.

- White applicants do face unfavorable treatment in 7% of job searches but black applicants experience discriminating practices almost three times as often.

Furthermore, the black male

has a high probability rate of becoming a high school drop-out, drug trafficker, or a premature parent.

There is no argument posed at this data although the odds stacked against the black male are just as high as these alarming statistics. It is not hard to see that job discrimination helps the black male to remain in this predicament.

Unemployment, poverty, and despair, lead some people into selling drugs. In any event, there isn't an excuse for this and there will never be a valid reason for anyone to contribute to the number of deaths, crimes, and robberies that occur due to drug sales or its use.

Solutions suggested for their salvation include:

- Special schools that teach them about their culture; also, that will teach them respect and boost their self-esteem.

- Male teachers who will encourage, praise, admonish, and hug them, thus acting as a role model, most times replacing an absent father for some.

- Black children should change their dialect by a technique

known to linguistics as "code-switching."

- The December 1989 issue of Money Magazine states "Blacks earn up to 26% less than whites with similar education backgrounds."
- Continue their education.

There are other considerations to keep in mind. Establishing a school with male teachers to be father-figures and role models places parental responsibility on them along with their academic responsibilities.

This added criteria to the profession may not be embraced by them, since they are still arguing the fact that they aren't being paid enough money.

Because some came from one-parent, middle-class, or low-income households, they do not have money to continue their education.

The availability of one of their resources, federally and privately funded scholarships, have experienced cutbacks, and yet tuition steadily increases.

The athletic talent that some of the males possess that could

earn them scholarships, is restrained by the changes and regulations of the ACT and SAT test scores. Could this also be a barrier to their welfare?

In addition to their encouragement to get an education, African-American's are advised to change their speech to become accepted and successful.

First in the 1980s there was the issue of black hairstyles in the business arena. Today, it is their dialect. What's on the agenda to be changed at the turn of the century?

According to this data, black males already have to work twice as hard as their white male counterparts for meaningful employment, and yet they are being pushed to do more and more and more. Granted, they should. However, the struggle for equality should not be limited to them alone.

Once black males have fulfilled their rightful duties by becoming respectable, self-esteemed, self-motivated, educated individuals, what steps will society and corporate America take to rid us of the good old boy antics?

Bias: 'Youth must be . . .'

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Bias' message is both powerful and timely. She said she continues her crusade to reach young people in the wake of her children's deaths "...because I believe that when I give a presentation they have impact and people's lives are being touched."

She lost two her sons within a span of four years. Len Bias, an outstanding basketball player for the University of Maryland, died June 22, 1986, two days after signing with the Boston Celtics of the NBA. His heart stopped after he took cocaine. Jay Bias died as a result of gunshot wounds Dec. 4, 1990.

"It's a bitter pill to swallow to bury a child and to bury two is especially harsh," said Ms. Bias as she walked to the Walker Middle School auditorium to make her address.

"I should be in a mental institution as a result of this and as crazy as loon, but thanks to God's power I'm not. All honor and glory goes to God because I have no power," she said.

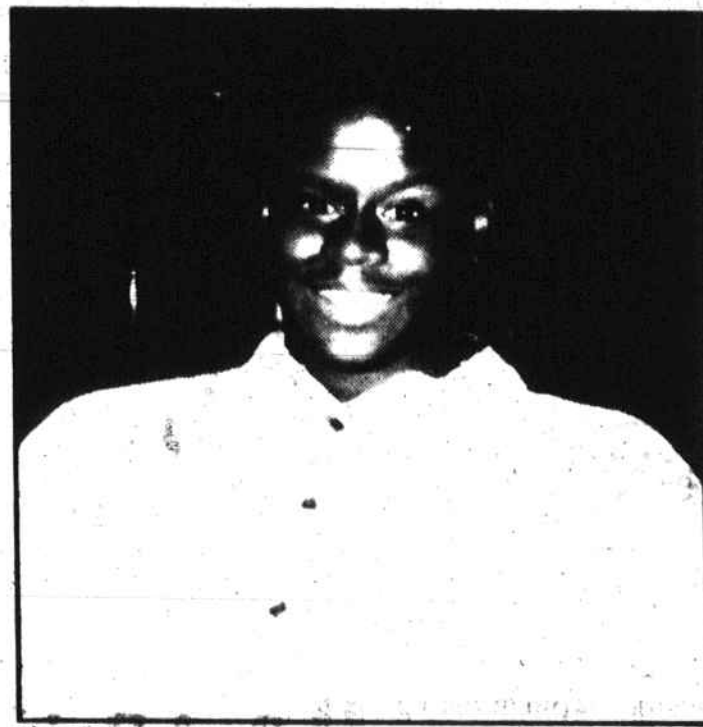
About 70 of the 100 students in the program, along with some of their parents and program advisors, listened intently to what she had to say. She spoke directly to the students and started her presentation by telling them she loved them, saw no black or white faces just beautiful young people, that she intended not to offend anyone by her comments, and that she did not care what people thought about her.

She told them no matter what programs were available through foundation's like the Crosby, or the Sara Lee Corporation far too many young people were still making bad decisions.

She called upon them to be their own 'moral agents'. She said they could not blame anyone else for the decisions they make. "Its about you and what you do to bring about change," Bias charged. "You have a responsibility to take a stand for what's right."

Bias cited several reasons why young people make bad decisions including believing that buying designer clothes or hanging out with the

"right group", or doing "what everybody else is doing" puts them in the "in crowd" and makes them popular.



Chronicle staff photo
Terrence Dickson

"There are too many young people wearing \$200 hats with \$20 dollar brains," Bias said. "Its about what's on the inside."

She said all too often young people make the mistake of believing that someone else's life is more exciting or better and to imitate that person. "The grass may be greener on the other side but they will find that it's still tough to cut," she said.

She said they needed to be careful about who they called friend and how they let those so-called friends be more influential in their lives than the family they have lived with all their lives. She told them they had no power over alcohol and drugs and that when they used either that it was like saying, "I can hold fire in my lap and not get burned."

A major point she drove home to her attentive young audience was the reality of their mortality. "There is nothing wrong with dying," she said, "as long as you have someplace else to go."

She said people often ask her what she means by that. She said she tells them it is used to stimulate fear, "because young people fear nothing."

What she had to say was still very much in focus for many of the young people who heard her message.

"I believe everything she said... I mean she lost two of her sons. If my friends want me to take drugs and if I can't be accepted in a group because I won't do this or that, then I just won't be in that group," said 15 year-old Terrance Dixon.

He said being labeled for not going along with what everybody else is doing might bother him a little but not that much.

"The most important thing I remember about what she said was that sometimes when you stand for yourself, people laugh, and that's going to happen in life. But eventually they will follow me after they have heard what I have to say. That's what I believe," said 15 year-old Damian Anderson.

"Ms. Bias has already been through a lot of the things and more. She's right about the kind of pressures we face today with drugs and sex and all. Nobody has the right to be telling me what I should and shouldn't be doing," said Patricia O'Neal, also a rising sophomore in the program. She said Ms. Bias presentation gave her more confidence about just being herself and not what others may want you to be.

Melanie Crim said Ms. Bias knew a lot about what was going on in a teenagers life today because of what she said. She said there was a lot of pressure coming from everywhere about drugs and alcohol and sex. "But it's like Ms. Bias said, you have to say no. Besides I believe you should wait until you get married and have a monogamous relationship with someone that you trust."

The four year goal of the drug abuse prevention program is to establish a norm among students of what is acceptable behavior and habits in their peer group.

Leadership program

Continued from page A1

Salem, White Plains, New York, and San Francisco. She will bring a great deal of experience and talent to the organization," Irvin said.

Scippio's selection was made by a selection committee that included Irvin, and other Leadership board and class members; John Anderson, Blanche Carter, William Hill, and James Grace, who chaired the committee.

Scippio is a May 1991 graduate of the Winston-Salem Leadership Class program.

Scippio is the first African-American to be executive director of the organization.

She received her BA in Business Administration at Howard University, and is currently a candidate for an MA in liberal studies at Duke University. As a graduate of Leadership Winston-Salem, Scippio knows first-hand the challenges that this community faces during this decade.

"The challenge for Winston-Salem in the 1990's is to create, provide and maintain opportunity for all residents. Leadership Winston-Salem will play a major role in the realization of that goal and I would like to be a part of that team."

Scippio is taking over from Margaret "Tog" Newman, who had been the organization's executive

director since June 1985. The lives of both women have some interesting parallels associated with the experiences each have had.

Both women have two children. Each is an arts enthusiast. Both women became graduates of Leadership Winston-Salem prior to becoming the program's executive director. Newman is a graduate of the first Leadership class. And both women have a keen interest in the future of Winston-Salem and how the relationships between those that make a difference in the life of this community develops.

The purpose of Leadership Winston-Salem is to work toward the continued improvement of the community through furnishing opportunities for direct or personal contact among community leaders. It promotes awareness among those leaders of the major issues affecting our community, helps them to develop an appreciation and understanding of each other and of the community's differing views, among other things.

Each year 35 to 40 recognized leaders in both the public and private sector are selected by the organization from the applications that come in from the community.

"It was nice to have the class experience and then to direct it,"

said Newman. "The class is the heart and soul of the program and it is important that program be looked at as a whole unit, that is the class and the alumni, instead of as separate entities."

Scippio agrees, "It is vital as director that you have a unique perspective of the process so you can see what works and what doesn't."

"The class participants find the class rewarding and enriching," Scippio said. "From being in the class, they will know what comes next in the process for them, which leads them to some form of action and involvement."

Scippio said the Leadership format had proven itself over the years and she did see the need for any wholesale changes. "There may be a few minor enhancements, but nothing major," she said.

Newman said she plans to continue her work with Leadership in a consultant capacity on special projects, such as a community orientation program for newcomers to the area.

She also said she would be working with the Triad Leadership Network which starts in September. The network is a conjunction of Leadership Winston-Salem, Leadership Greensboro, and Challenge High Point, that was coordinated

through Piedmont Horizons, organized by the Forsyth and Guilford County governments for economic development planning primarily.

Newman said she also plans to research proposals for seminars for Leadership graduates. "I've always got to have a community oriented program," said the self-proclaimed work-a-holic. "There's a great deal of satisfaction out of setting a goal and then looking back and seeing that you've achieved it," Newman said.

For Scippio there is a similar drive and more. "I'm not only a work-a-holic...I'm also very intense. When I elect to play, I'm very intense. I tend to take on projects that are challenging," she said. But she admitted taking over the Leadership program may tone her down a little.

Both women agreed that the greatest challenge to running the program was understanding the myriad of leadership styles that comprise the organization.

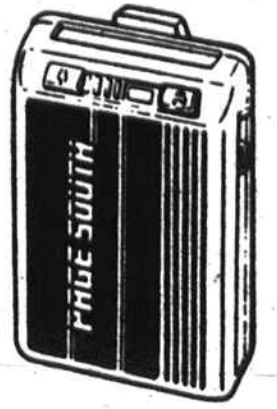
"The greatest challenge is to enable them to achieve what they are after in the own leadership style," said Newman. "So we are continuing the dialogue Leadership teaches that helps us to talk to each other differently. And that is very important," Scippio said.

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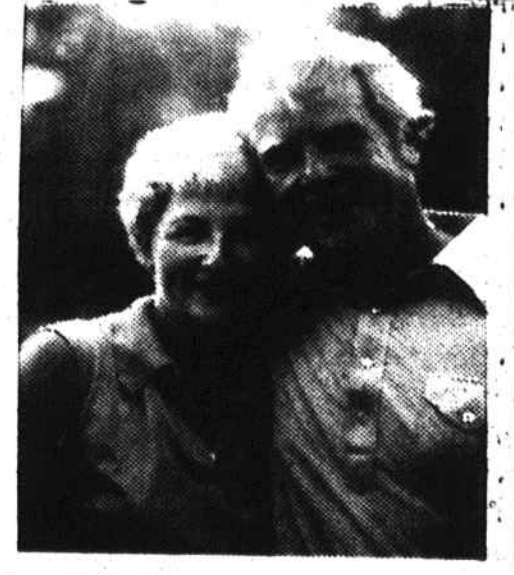
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