

Report: Men of color are in a health-care crisis

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

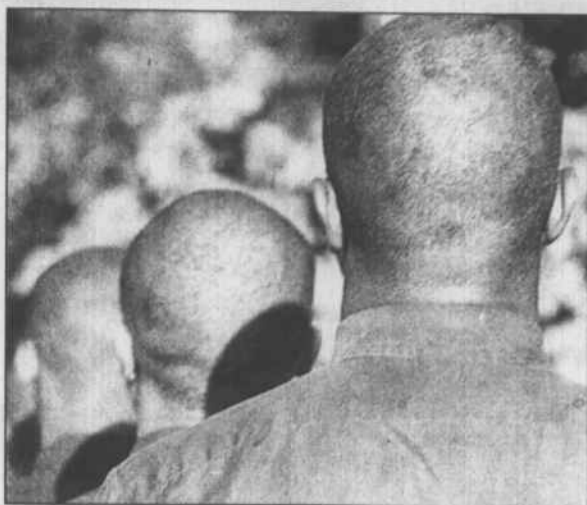
WASHINGTON — Because men from racial and ethnic minority populations face such high risk of heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and other conditions and often lack access to basic care, they are now experiencing a health-care crisis, according to a report released last week by Community Voices: HealthCare for the Underserved. The organization concluded that there is a growing urgency to recognize and to stem this crisis as the diversity of our nation continues to expand, and unless action is taken soon, the crisis, and attendant financial implications related to treating large numbers of men living in poverty, will grow.

The report, "A Poor Man's Plight: Uncovering the Disparity in Men's Health," examines the health status of black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and mixed race men and identifies strategies that can reduce this alarming health gap.

Authored by Dr. John Rich of the Boston Public Health Commission and Dr. Marguerite Ro of Columbia University, the report finds that men of color are overall less likely to have health insurance and less likely to access health care services than their white counterparts. Moreover, the report finds, men of color disproportionately lack access to much-needed mental health, substance abuse, and oral health services. "A Poor Man's Plight: Uncovering the Disparity in Men's Health" also offers insight into health issues that adversely impact minority communities:

- On average, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Native Hawaiians are nearly twice as likely to have diabetes as non-Hispanic whites of similar age.

- HIV/AIDS is the second leading cause of death for African-American men between the ages of 25 and 44



File Photo
Citing issues such as AIDS/HIV and homicide, a Baltimore-based group last week said that men of color, especially black men, are facing a health crisis.

and the third leading cause of death for Latino men in the same age group.

- Men of color suffer higher rates of preventable illness, such as sexually transmitted diseases. This is particularly the case for African-American and Latino men who have rates of gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis and herpes infection that are higher than for other men of color and much higher than white men.

- In 1998, men of color accounted for 70 percent of deaths by homicide in the United States. Homicide is the leading cause of death for African-American men between the ages of 15 and 34 and the second leading cause of death for Latino men in the same age group.

"Policy-makers and health care providers fail to focus on how to combat the excessive and unacceptable levels of morbidity and mortality that plague the lives of poor men and men of color," said Dr. Henrie Treadwell, program director, W.K. Kellogg Foundation. "This report acknowledges the historical, social, and political factors that have

blocked access to care for men of color and provides us a roadmap to move forward in addressing the needs of this vulnerable population."

"A Poor Man's Plight: Uncovering the Disparity in Men's Health" outlines 12 policy strategies to overcome obstacles that men of color face in accessing appropriate health care. These recommendations include:

- Expand health insurance coverage for men of color.
- Establish enhanced points of entry into health care for men of color.
- Increase the availability of community-based screening and services for men of color and increase outreach to men of color.
- Build a culturally competent work force.
- Expand research and data collection on the health of men of color.
- Develop community coalitions of health, public health and social service providers who serve men of color.
- Develop national, state, and local policy agendas for the health of men of color.

Race

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segments are the least able to do what needs to be done for themselves."

While education has been her field for years, Beatty said she has diverse issues that she is concerned about, including the economy.

Beatty is not exactly a newcomer to politics. More than 10 years ago she ran unsuccessfully for an at-large seat on the Board of County Commissioners. She is confident that this time around she can be successful if she gets her message out effectively.

"People should take this election very seriously," she said, "because the Legislature now is in a pivotal position and the decisions it will be making will affect us for a while to come."

The fighter

As the head of a nonprofit social service agency, George Bryan has had to go toe to toe with legislators in Raleigh more times than he cares to remember.

"It seems as if every time we are beginning to make progress on something, we have to deal with something in Raleigh," said Bryan, the executive director of Exchange/SCAN, an agency that works to fight child abuse and on other family-related issues.

Bryan says he wants to make a difference in Raleigh by keeping in focus the people who are affected by decisions made in the General Assembly.

Bryan, through his job, has worked to develop several legislative bills. He counts that experience as a big plus for him.

"I know the system from the bottom side up," he said.

In addition to family issues, Bryan says he will work to eliminate equality issues, such as over-representation of minorities in the child welfare system.

Bryan is the president of the West End Neighborhood Association, a title that he says has nurtured in him an ability to bring diverse groups together to ponder solutions

to complicated problems.

The regular person

When Mischi Binkley found out that Oldham was not running, she called up Marlowe Foster, a young Democrat who lost a hard-fought election to Alderman Vernon Robinson last year for the South Ward, to urge him to run for Oldham's seat. When he declined and Binkley saw that there was only one person signed up to run in the 72nd District, she decided to run.

"I decided to run to at least give voters a choice. I believe that is important," said Binkley, a longtime faithful member of the Democratic Party who has led the Forsyth County Democratic Women organization and served as campaign



Binkley

coordinator for Allen Joiner's successful bid for mayor.

By the time Binkley got to the Board of Elections to file, she learned that the race for Oldham's seat had become packed quickly, but she still filed because she said those who filed before her probably would not fight for the issues she is passionate about. Binkley said she is concerned about many issues, from the environment to education and jobs. She has been a single mother and says she understands and is concerned about the special issues that group has to deal with as well.

Binkley calls herself a "regular person" who will fight for issues that concern regular people like herself.

"I don't represent special interest," she said. "I want to be a voice for people."

The political veteran

Earline Parmon had already filed for a fourth term on the Board of County Commissioners when she finally made the decision to run for

Oldham's seat.

"When I learned that Pete Oldham would not run, I felt that it would leave us without an experienced leader," Parmon said. "I felt with my experience in government, I would have something to offer."

Although Parmon has the experience and name recognition, she said she is not relying on them alone to propel her to Raleigh.



Parmon

definitely sees her vast experience as a public servant as a plus.

"I feel good about my record and the service I provided to this community over the years," she said.

Parmon was the executive director of LIFT Academy, a charter school that last year lost a battle with the state to keep its doors open. Parmon said she is not running for the House to try to get LIFT "reopened." She says her platform is broad and includes fighting for educational parity and the local economy.

"My campaign is not narrow...There are so many issues that are critical for us locally."

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