

## Activist: Fund wasn't abused

By Karen Shields  
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A lawyer representing the chief fund-raiser for "Girl X," the 9-year-old whose story made headlines after she was raped and left for dead in a Chicago housing project last January, is denying that his client has misused funds collected for the youngster.

Ralph Bernstein, a lawyer for Beverly Reed said he is confident that his client is not guilty of any wrong-doing after Illinois Attorney General Jim Ryan filed a lawsuit to freeze the "Girl X" account. Ryan said that his office is investigating whether or not Reed violated any criminal statutes in her handling of the fund.

"We are seeking answers on what happened to the money and assurances from the court that the funds will be preserved and directed towards Girl X and her family," Ryan said.

Addressing allegations that Reed misappropriated funds, Bernstein said, "she has no personal interest in those funds."

In addition, Bernstein said there was a two-fold explanation as to why more money hadn't been given to Girl X's family, who he says wanted the entire fund turned over to members.

Firstly, he said, his client had doubts that the family would actually use the money to benefit the child. And secondly, there were concerns that if the family received the money it could destroy Girl X's Social Security and Medicare benefits, because "it would be deemed that she owned the funds," Bernstein said.

According to Ryan's Charitable Trust and Solicitation Bureau, the Girl X fund has taken in more than \$310,000, and from that only \$1,125 has been given to Girl X and her family, while about \$52,000 has been taken out of the fund.

Acknowledging that his client has to account for that money, Bernstein said, "in my opinion the money that was taken was for reasonable expenses."

Bernstein expects to be able to disclose soon how that money was spent, right now he says that Reed is in the process of gathering her records.

In filing the lawsuit, the attorney general's office sought to temporarily and permanently stop Reed from having any association with the fund and to also require her to make a full disclosure of all her expenditures connected with the fund.

Furthermore, an issue of perjury has arisen because Reed, reportedly while under oath, signed a statement stating that she had not been convicted of any crimes. According to reports, the attorney general's office is now investigating Reed's criminal history.

## Black colleges are recruiting

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Shreveport this week as part of a five-city recruiting tour this month. But fighting off the private schools as well as Southern, LSU-Shreveport, Northwestern State and Louisiana Tech for area students won't be easy.

"We're giving out enough information to make everyone in the city think about coming to Southern," said Johnny Vance, a recruiter for Southern, which has campuses in Shreveport, Baton Rouge and New Orleans. "Let's waive their first-semester tuition to get them in here, and after that, we could give them a stipend if they make good grades."

State mandates — which raised admission standards and fees at public colleges — are forcing Grambling and Southern University-Baton Rouge to seek smarter students to offset enrollment drops. The schools lost some 1,300 students this year because so many applicants scored below 17 on college entry tests.

Dillard and Xavier have drawn top black students in the past, but higher tuition and selective admission have stalled enrollment in recent years and sent many students shopping out of state for college.

Then there are students like Grambling junior Keila Mack, who enrolled in 1995 with a 3.98 high school GPA and held that average through two years at Grambling. She said she thought about transferring because her courses are too easy.

"I have friends who attend black colleges and the biggest disadvantage is that we're moving through the courses too slowly," Mack said. "I know we're not at the same pace as some of the mostly white schools who we'll be competing with for jobs."

Colleges with a mostly white enrollment have successfully drawn black students away from black colleges by offering more money and better facilities.

"I may transfer to LSU once I get my two-year degree here, but right now, there's no better experience for a black college student than attending a black college," said SUSBO sophomore Kenneth Smith.

Bigger colleges have been able to lure students away from black colleges.

Black student enrollment at Centenary, LSUS and Bossier Parish Community College has doubled since 1986, due to minority scholarship programs. About 85 of Centenary's 109 black students are on partial or full scholarships.

But cutbacks in such aid throughout the country — mainly in Texas and California — have also reached Louisiana. For instance, BPCC's awards to black students will be cut from 50 tuition-paid scholarships per year to five starting next year because the college switched from local to state control.

"I didn't want to tell our kids about this myself, and I'm not happy about this, but it's a state rule," said BPCC counselor Lurene Barfield, who supervises the minority scholarship program. "Students who've been graduating for the past 16 years

won't be able to in the future because the cutbacks may hurt our black student enrollment."

But black college officials don't expect such cutbacks to bring them more students.

"People expected the floodgates to roll in for us after all the attention over the affirmative action stuff. But that hasn't been the case and probably won't be the case," said Winston Brown, dean of admissions at Xavier.

Despite stagnant enrollment over the past 10 years, private colleges have maintained recruiting efforts nationwide because they have more money to spend.

"Money isn't the only factor that keeps us competitive. We go on our reputation and job placement record," said Brown, whose university has sent more black undergraduates to medical schools than any other college in the country.

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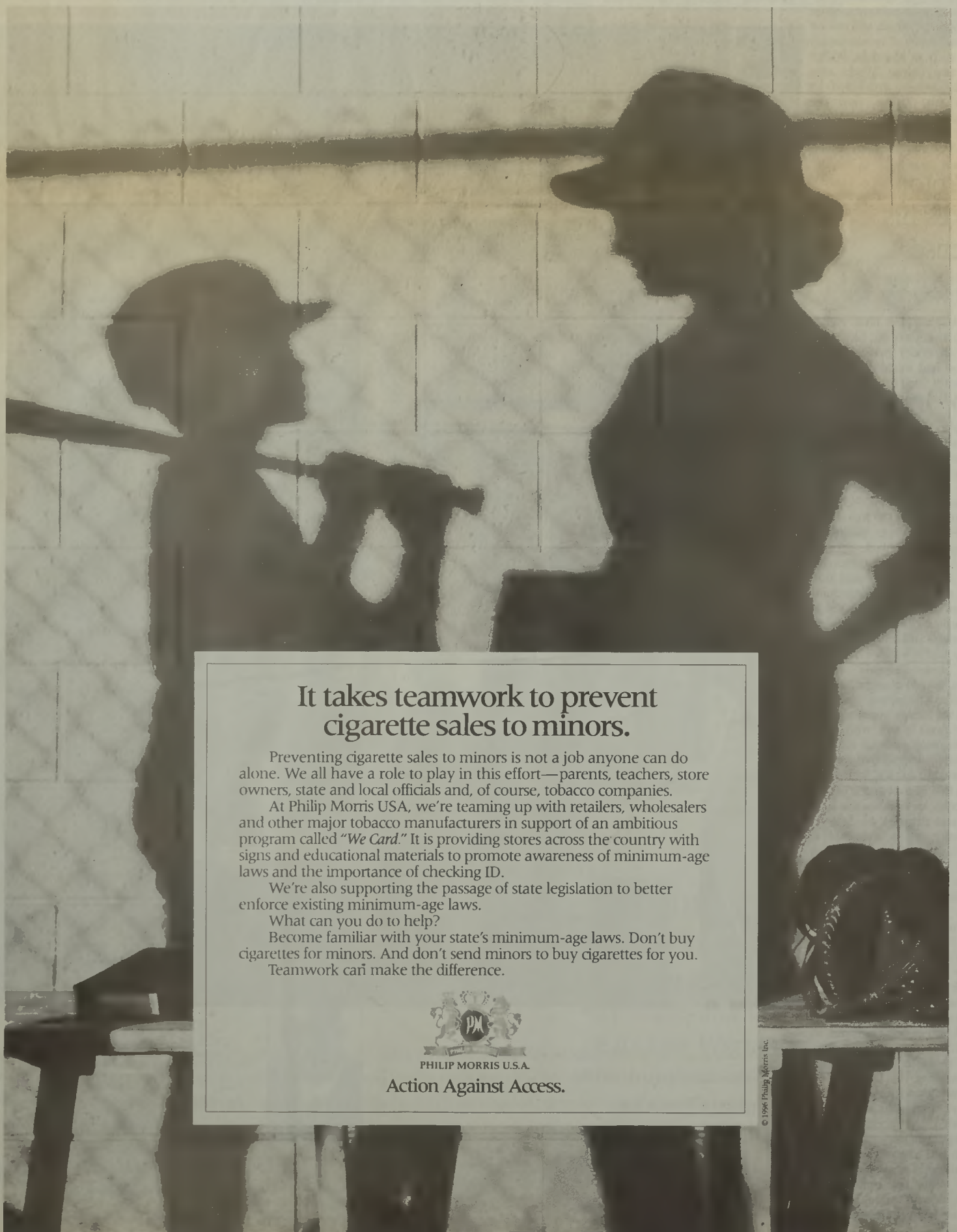
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