

Dangerous obstacles threaten black men in the '90s

By ERIK ROGERS
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They say they "did overcome" in the 1960s.

But in the 1990s, black men are facing a new challenge. Like dry bushes in a brushfire, many black males are rapidly disappearing from society. And when the smoke clears a lot of them are either in prison or the grave.

Prison has become a second home to many black males. Ken Parker, manager of research at the N.C. Department of Correction in Raleigh, said blacks made up 55.7 percent of the prison population in North Carolina, as of September 1989. Of the blacks in N.C. prisons, 66.7 percent were in for drug misdemeanors.

The "N.C. Uniform Crime Report for 1988" reported black males were responsible for 226 of the 558 murders committed in North Carolina. White males formed the second highest group of offenders at 166. Black males were victims 192 times, while white males were victims 175 times.

The statistics get even worse. The book "N.C. Vital Statistics" reports black males have the highest death rate in the state. Black males between the ages of five and 14 have a death rate 39 percent higher than the national average, while black males between the ages of 45 and 54 have a death rate 31 percent higher than the national average.

Capt. Ben Callahan of the Carrboro Police Department said there was only one homicide reported for the area last year. In that incident, a black male was the offender, and the victim was another black male. Chapel Hill Police reported no homicides.

"One of the biggest reasons why the black male is having so many problems is because of drugs," said Susan Min-

ter, a black employee with the UNC Physical Plant. "It worries me a lot. I know of some black males who do drugs and ... well, I just know them, but I'm not going to call any names." Minter said the reason many black males get involved in drugs is because the drug racket is an easy way to make money.

"It's easy money for a person to make, and they don't have to get dirty doing it. I know of little 5-year-old black boys who are 'cleaning the streets' by making a huge profit off of drugs. Those kids will walk around with \$100 shoes and gold from the top of their head to the bottom of their feet. What makes it so bad is that some of their fathers are sending them in the streets to do it. Let's face it — the cocaine business is killing the black male in more ways than one."

Ella Sue Pettiford, another black female employee with the UNC Physical Plant, agreed there is a serious problem with the black male and drugs.

"I know of one husband who has sold his wife as a prostitute, so he could have enough money for drugs."

Minter said there was "more than what meets the eye" when it comes to the black male and drugs.

"I realize the black man is dealing the drugs, but the drugs are coming in from other countries by way of ships and planes," Minter said. "I don't know of too many black men who are rich enough to afford planes and ships, so obviously there are some other people of different races behind the scenes."

Chapel Hill Town Council member Roosevelt Wilkerson said the black males' problems stem from economics.

"The problem is some black men are worried about having enough money, and then that often leads to drugs."

There are some who feel that black

males should look at themselves first before they point fingers at other people. Michael Hostler, a black male living in Chapel Hill, said the problem lay within the black race itself.

"Black men don't want to help each other out. There are some black guys on my job who tell other black guys that they are never going to make it in life. They are always downing each other's families. In fact, one guy told me that my kid would never amount to anything. He is always discouraging me instead of encouraging me."

And it does not stop there, Hostler said.

"These same guys, who are supposed to be brothers of mine, make degrading comments about their own race. If they see a black guy driving a nice car, then they automatically assume the guy is pushing drugs. They don't even stop to think about the fact that the guy could have actually worked hard on a real job to get the car."

Another negative thing that black males have a tendency to do is discriminate against each other, Hostler said.

"The black guys, especially the ones on campus, don't treat you fairly if you have darker skin than they do. They will look at you like they are better than you, and many times they won't even speak to you. They need to remember that they are just as black as I am, and the bottom line is we are all brothers."

Even though the problems of black men are steadily increasing, some people do not sympathize with their situation according to Minter.

"I think there are some whites who are forming a conspiracy against us. It's not all of the whites, but there definitely are some who are out to get us. I think there are some who are simply setting us up. After all, they set up Mayor Barry in Washington by

getting a female to lead him on. I think the only reason they did that is because he is black, and they did not want him to stay in office." Minter said she felt many whites could not empathize with blacks because whites have a difficult time understanding African cultures.

"Why would a person want to be like me if he does not even like, or for that matter, understand my culture? I think many whites don't like our culture, but they are willing to tolerate it, since they see a profit in it. That is the major reason why you see so many whites promoting rap music."

Pettiford disagreed. "I don't think the whites are trying to get rid of the black males, because the black men work for the whites, so they are helping the whites out. A lot of the black men can only blame themselves for the troubles that they have."

With a life-threatening situation facing the black men, many wonder if the problem can be lessened. Hostler

said providing black males with role models might make things better.

"If we can get some respectable black men to look at in society, then the younger black guys can have somebody to look up to. That is why Jesse Jackson is being so active politically. He is showing society that the black male is capable of making a contribution."

Wilkerson agreed that role models would be important for the black males' recovery.

"Role models are very important, but we need for more of the role models to come from places other than sports. There is a tendency for the young black male to make a professional athlete his role model. Unfortunately, these kids push the academics aside and only concentrate on the athletics. Then, some of those kids who felt sports were so important in their lives are really let down whenever they find out that they do not have what it takes to make it on the professional playing field."

Hostler agreed with Wilkerson, so citying has not helped matters by stereotyping.

"People assume if you're black, then the only thing you're good for is playing sports. They feel if you don't play sports, then you're no good. I am tired of hearing that. That's why I told J.R. Reid not to talk to me about basketball but to talk to me about something else. I wanted to hear about him as an individual and not just as a ball player."

Hostler said education could play a vital role in aiding the black male. He said he can see the black male headed for better things because the educational system provides good opportunities for people to become successful.

But others see the problem for black men getting worse.

"It's not going to get any better for black males because they will be forced to push drugs in the future," Minter said. "They won't be given the real chance to show what they're capable of doing."

Pacific islands growing drug hotbed

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — Drug traffickers have turned U.S.-controlled Pacific islands into thriving gateways to America for heroin from Asia's Golden Triangle, with federal interdiction virtually non-existent, according to an unpublished government document and interviews with officials.

Heroin, marijuana and other drugs from Asia and southwest Pacific nations are even sent from the islands into the United States "via the U.S. Postal Service," says an internal report to Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan.

In American Samoa, for example,

commercial fishing boats bring in marijuana and heroin from Australia and other Pacific nations for mailing to U.S. residents, the report says.

Shortages of enforcement money and personnel get much of the blame for the situation. There is just one Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent responsible for the four Pacific jurisdictions — American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau and Guam.

"There is a need for additional agents," the report says simply. The Interior report, obtained this week under the Freedom of Information Act, identified island jurisdictions as "major

concerns with regard to drug trafficking." The U.S. Virgin Islands in the Caribbean were cited along with the Pacific area.

American Samoa, Guam and the Virgin Islands are U.S. territories; the Northern Marianas and Palau have compacts of free association with the United States that include Interior Department assistance.

"Nobody knows how much but from our perspective it's a serious problem," said Larry Morgan, director of legislative and public affairs for Interior's territorial and international affairs branch.

DEA officials concurred that the area was ripe for smuggling

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Frye said that if elected she would have Carolina Fever be more involved in non-revenue sports events, as well as for football and basketball, so that non-revenue sports teams could "feel the same kind of support." She said that the CAA was now using incentives to increase attendance at non-revenue games and that people who attend women's basketball games could win a trip. Frye said she believed that if people went to one game, they would enjoy it so much that they would come again.

Candidates for DTH co-editors also explained their platforms and discussed increasing coverage of student achievement and changing the editorial page.

The team of Jessica Lanning and Kelly Thompson said their campaign was one of change. "We want to make the DTH accountable and accessible to all organizations and students," Thompson said.

Their platform includes condensing national and business areas, expanding sports coverage, eliminating board opinions and creating the positions of ombudsman and forum editor.

Thompson said she and Lanning hoped to move arts and features stories to Omnibus. "That way, we'll have more room to do features on students and events."

Lanning said board opinions should be eliminated because they have lost their effectiveness by running every day. "Also, the addition of a forum editor would increase communications so issues could adequately be addressed."

The forum editor would look at letters on a daily basis and ask authoritative sources to write counterpoint responses, Lanning said.

The team of Mary Jo Dunnington and William Taggart said experience had enabled them to know what it was like to run a newspaper and to improve the DTH by evaluating past mistakes.

"We're focusing on experience, but this doesn't mean we don't see any changes," Dunnington said. "We're going to make an active effort to reach out to different groups."

Dunnington and Taggart said they would like to do more on students with achievements outside of sports. "We have features on student-athletes, but rarely on students who do something elsewhere," Dunnington said.

Taggart said there was no need to add another editor to the DTH staff. "The present (editorial page) editor is already doing basically the job a forum editor would do."

Gretchen Diffendal, the sole candidate for RHA president, also discussed her platform at the forum. Diffendal said she believed her background experience and knowledge of what students want makes her the "only and best candidate" for the position.

Diffendal said that if elected she would like to see two accomplishments when she looked back at the end of her term — better student knowledge of RHA and what it can do to help students, and the end of apathy in residence hall government. Diffendal said that by starting with an enthusiastic president, her excitement about events could trigger a change for the better in residence hall government.

She said one of her main concerns was security on campus. Diffendal said she believed that by incorporating SAFE, Escort Service into RHA, the service's problems with publicity and manpower shortage could be solved.

Diffendal also outlined her ideas for improving residence hall recycling and energy conservation; minority participation on the RHA Executive Board; and the Faculty Fellows program.

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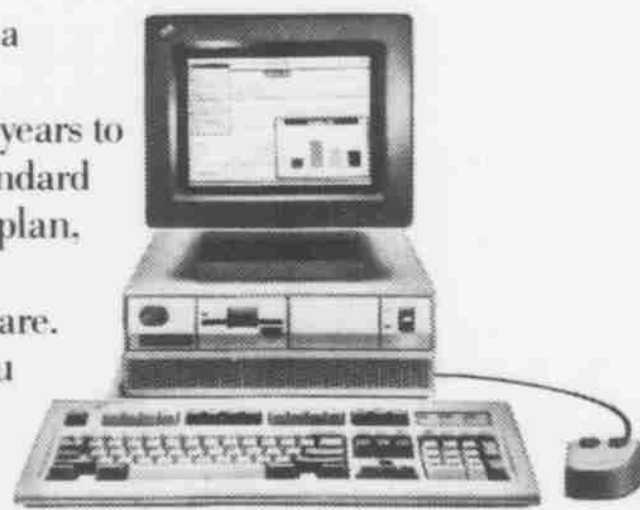
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