

Child welfare system failing blacks

by Andrea Shaw
Staff Writer

The black community must become the overseer of its own children, an Eastern Michigan University lecturer told participants in a workshop on child welfare.

Sylvia Sims-Gray discussed child welfare services at the 1986 Black Experience Workshop sponsored by the School of Social Work on March 21.

Sims-Gray said although there had been some progress in child welfare, it was not enough.

"The child welfare system is failing black children," she quoted from the book, *Children of the Storm*, which tells the history of black child welfare.

She said black children were being removed from their homes needlessly nationwide. She cited the system's failure to appreciate cultural differences and its failure to make a commitment to preserve families as reasons for removal.

"We are continuing to assess black families functioning based on dominant group values and stereotypes," Sims-Gray said. "Strengths of the black family and societal variables impacting that black family are often ignored."

In some circumstances, children cannot stay in the home, she said.

"We are clearly advocating for some permanency for children, and as last resort, children be removed," she said. "What we're finding is that we're still very child-oriented and not

enough family-oriented. We are child rescuers not family preservers."

She said policies and manuals do not stress enough the importance of preserving families.

Cultural sensitivity is not emphasized in schools of social work and training programs, she said.

She stressed, "If you are going to work effectively with black children and black families, you've got to know Afro-American culture."

Sims-Gray received her B.A. from Tennessee State University and her master's degree from Michigan State University. She is also a consultant at Homes for Black Children in Detroit, known for its adoption program.

She said social workers need to demand training in cultural awareness, develop strong worker client relationships and utilize community services to preserve families. She added that the black community has to be educated about what is happening to its children.

Sims-Gray emphasized, "We have to establish a dialogue between the black community and the department of social services."

Community-based resources, like the black church, she said, respond to the needs of its community.

"People of color will utilize services in their community best of all," she said.

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If he doesn't compensate in this way, he often indulges in violence. This way, he gains control he doesn't have otherwise, he said.

"The value placed on life in the black community is too low," he said. "Allowing this kind of violence says that it's all right to wipe out your brother."

Beverly said a cure to violent and destructive behavior is learning the true meaning of unconditional love. "What most people mean when they say 'I love you' is that 'You have something that I want,'" he said. "The reason black people feel this way is that society teaches them to take rather than to give, he said.

Raising a child in this society is a difficult task and parents must contribute to a child's social growth as much as possible, he said. Every person possesses traits of his opposite sex and children, to their disadvantage, are forced to suppress those opposite traits.

A man who recognizes his

feminine qualities is less likely to become an abuser of women, he said. "Hurting the wife would be destroying and devaluing a part of himself."

The way children are treated in their formative years has a lot to do with the way they treat others as adults. Beverly said there should be no artificial bonding process between a child and his mother. "From the day

a woman knows she is pregnant until she gives birth, she should talk to that baby—send him messages of love.

"It's not a wonder that a lot of babies come out hyper and nervous, those are the messages they are being sent," he said.

Blacks should build bonds with their children in the way African mothers and fathers build theirs. "Don't invest in those buggies and strollers," he said. "Carry that baby on your back. Hold that child." Children will grow into better adults if parents practice those methods of bonding, he said.

All-star celebrity line-up appearing on campus

by Shirley Hunter
Managing editor

They are already here! Yes, an all-star group including James Brown, Phi Collins and Michael Jackson have come prepared to take this campus by storm! They have bravely traveled here flanked by such other standouts as James Carter, Jackie Kennedy, Amy Grant and Elizabeth Taylor, for one specific purpose. No, they did not come to hype up the next nation-wide charity event. And, not they did not come here to film another star-studded Coke or Pepsi commercial.

Actually, these "celebrities" are students here at Carolina who have come to this great institution to receive an education. Unfortunately, or fortunately, whichever the case may be, they also share the distinction of carrying the name of someone who has already made a "name" for himself, or herself.

Collins, a senior from Burlington, sees his problem as an ongoing source of running gags. He said someone always makes references to the famous Collins' albums. He said people always ask him if jackets are required, referring to the latest award-winning album. Overlooking the usual jokes, Collins said sharing the name was an experience.

"People certainly don't forget your name," he said.

Taylor said her name really has not caused her many problems because she prefers to be called Betsy. She said most of her ordeals occurred in elementary and high school.

"When the roll was called and they called my full name, people would always ask me where Richard (Burton) was."

Kevin James Kirk, a graduate student from Chapel Hill, has had similar experiences, but like Taylor also, his experiences have been

limited because he prefers to be called Kevin. He did say, however, that his name has made some interesting situations. "When I was in high school, I was on certain teams. I was the captain on some and they always named the teams 'The Enterprise.'" Kirk said his father's name is James Kirk, and, oddly enough, when the series "Star Trek" first began, he became hooked on the show.

Benjamin Franklin Jr., a junior from Charlotte, said his name is the continual butt of jokes. "People ask me if I've flown any kites lately," he said.

And so goes the name game. While most of us with ordinary, but sometimes interesting sounding, spelled or pronounced names go searching for identities, others have discovered they have the burden of trying to escape someone else's. So, good luck to James Bonds, Jackie Kennedy, Jodi Foster, Kenny Smith (not him), Lynda Gray, James Holshouser, Herbert Hoover, Michael Jordan, Ann Miller, Mary Richards, Katherine Ross, James Stewart, the four James Taylors, the three Robert Kennedys, David Thompson, Robert Wagner, and let's not forget — Amy Harris Teeters (no relation), and a host of others out there with this problem. Do not fret too long, because the problem diminishes, as popularity and notoriety decreases, according to Tom Smothers, a sophomore from High Point. "Really most of the kidding occurred in the early seventies when the Smothers Brothers were known. Now, not many people remember the comedy team."

And, if the kidding does not go away, there is always one last ditch effort. Follow the example of Jackson, a dental student here.

"I just keep hoping they will mix up my checking account with his," he said.

New BSM Officers

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second voting was Walker 77 and Roach 70. Roach said, "The situation was unfortunate. I wish the election was more organized." She intends to continue to work closely with the BSM.

Walker was happy about the election results. He said, "I have certain projects to execute this year. I am very excited to have the opportunity to implement these projects. Although Walker is excited about his position, he expressed concern about

his opponent. "I am a little upset because Janet is a friend of mine and it is really bad that one of us had to lose the election," he said.

The candidates for secretary and treasurer ran unopposed. Danielle Bowens, a junior industrial relations

major from New Bern, NC won for secretary. Monica Card, a freshman from Rocky Mount was elected treasurer.