

NEWS & NOTES...For Inquiring Minds

Dear Editor:

I am concerned that there are a number of guys in the area which I live who are dealing drugs. A few of these guys have been locked up before for selling drugs, but they were released within a couple of months. I would like it if some type of legislation were passed to keep this "riff raff" off the streets. My seven year-old son is not allowed to play outside because of the drug trafficking. Something needs to be done...and fast!

~Concerned Citizen

Dear Concerned Citizen:

Let's hope the 'three strikes you're out' law is enforced in North Carolina. It's only the early innings, but the rage to lock up the chronically rotten and throw away the key is having scant effect in most states. With the big exception of California - where more than 700 people are now in prison under the "three strikes" sentences - these laws are seldom invoked a year or more after taking effect.

Washington state cases totaled just 33 nearly two years after passage of a law expected to bring in 40 to 75 a year. By mid-September, in Colorado, North Carolina and Tennessee not a single person had been incarcerated under their "three strikes" laws.

Basically, the "three strikes" law gives an individual two chances to mess up. I'm quite sure that these guys you're talking about have been in and out of trouble for quite some time. If more people like yourself write to your local and state representatives, then these guys will surely be taken off the streets...FOR GOOD. Keep the faith, but understand that you can make a difference by quietly doing something about these drug dealers. Believe me, the sound of the pen is a lot louder than the sound of a voice.

To the editor:

There was an article which appeared in the CIAA edition of the Phoenix. The author was LeRoy Richardson. I would like to commend the AC Phoenix for bringing in writers such as this who educate readers on our history. This was an excellent article. I am using portions of this article to teach my students about the history of African American people. Most children of African American decent are confused about who they are. Many of them do not know whether to call themselves "Black", "Brown", or "African American". I had one student to say that no matter what anyone tells his grandmother, she still refers to herself as a "Colored American". Who determines what name we will receive? It's no wonder so many children are confused. In fact, adults are just as confused as our children. Keep the innovative articles coming and I'll keep reading.

~A. Clarke

6th Grade Teacher

Dear A. Clarke:

You keep on reading and we'll definitely continue to print resourceful articles. Call our office and we'll put you on a mailing list (910)727-1171.

Dear Editor:

I couldn't have said it better myself: "If you don't know who you are as a people, you don't know who you are as a person." (Quote taken from His-Story...by LeRoy Richardson, Jr.) Our children need to be taught from birth that Black people come from kings and queens, and yes they are special. Black people have a wealth of history that has not yet been learned by most people. When I say people, I mean all people. The same way we are forced to learn European History we should be forced to learn Black History. My daughter attends First Assembly Christian School and during Black History month she would come home with new information each day. I never realized how exciting learning with my daughter could be. I will make sure that my daughter learns something new each day regarding Black History and Native American History, because not only is our history important, but so is the history of the people we deal with on a daily basis.

Carol Burns
Winston-Salem

Dear Editor:

Never have I felt so compelled to write to you as now. I have been torn on the issue of having guns in the home. I am a single parent, and I have always kept a registered gun in my home. Not simply to have a gun, but for protection "Just in case". Last week, my son and his best friend were playing in my den area. I always keep the gun (unloaded) on the top shelf of my den storage closet. Somehow my son got his hands on this gun, and when I came home from work, he and his friend were practicing their aim. Fortunately the gun was not loaded, but what if it had been loaded? All kinds of thoughts rushed through my head, and the most disturbing thing: what if I had come home and one of the kids were shot, or even worse, dead? I have been taught to use a gun safely, but now I'm not sure if I want to keep it in my home or not.

~E. Roberts

Dear E. Roberts:

Our homes contain a multitude of potential threats to children. Kitchen knives in unsecured drawers, power tools in the garage, drain cleaners and other household products easily attract children. With supervision, knowledge and safeguards, our homes can be happy and protected places for our children. Being a single mother, living alone with your son, if you feel the need to have a gun in your home, it is imperative that you educate your child regarding the dangers of handling this weapon. If safe and proper storage methods are adhered to, there should be no reason for alarm. The mere fact that your son was playing with this dangerous weapon should signal an alarm for you, but it should not frighten you to the point where you get rid of the gun. If that's the case, you'll be getting rid of almost everything you own. Anything in your home that presents danger should be brought to your son's attention. Talk to him

about the dangers of messing with things that do not belong to him. Make him understand that items such as knives, power tools and household products are meant for adults' usage, they are NOT Toys. If you get an understanding with your son, then your mind will be at ease.

Dear Editor:

I am writing to inform all our readers that a local car dealership in the Winston-Salem area has been ripping off their customers. I purchased a used BMW from this dealership and the mileage had been tampered with. When I brought this to the attention of the dealer, he said that there was nothing he could do, and he refused to sell me another car on my original deposit. It seems that there should be something that I can do about this situation. Do you have any suggestions. By the way, I know that there are other people who have had similar problems at this same dealership.

~Anonymous

Dear Anonymous:

You'll need to give me a little more information. Our staff could do an official investigation if you will contact us by phone at (910)727-1171. We will have trained automotive dealers and repair men to look into the history of the dealership in question. You do have certain rights as a consumer, but before we can educate you on your rights, we need to obtain more details.

For your information: Tampering with the odometer on a vehicle is a Federal Offense, and if the dealership was aware of the mileage change, they will be held liable. We look forward to hearing from you.

To the Editor:

My girl friend is getting married in June. She was having problems with her directress and was looking for a nice way to retract her offer to this person. I gave her a suggestion, she went with it, and now she and the directress (her aunt) are no longer on speaking terms. I tried to help them patch things up and now neither of them are speaking to me. So much for trying to be a friend. Why don't you guys start a special section on managing stress when planning a wedding.

~Jilted Friend

Dear Jilted Friend:

You're not the first to go through "wedding bliss" with a friend and you definitely won't be the last. If your friend is a real friend, she will come around. I don't know the circumstances behind the misunderstanding, but you must understand that brides-to-be are generally under quite a bit of stress prior to their weddings. This stress can sometimes cause them to do or say things that they don't mean. Beginning mid-May, the AC Phoenix will be publishing a special section entitled: "The Perfect Wedding". This section will include everything from stress management to where you can order wedding invitations. Unfortunately it's not going to be out in time to help you and your friend with whatever problem it is you're having.

Send Letters to the Editor c/o:
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Minority Crimes Drug Related

(AP)Minorities comprised 5% of the youth population in North Carolina but were involved in nearly 16% of all juvenile arrests in the 1993-94 fiscal year, a state report said.

The report issued by the Juvenile Justice Committee studied 9,895 juvenile delinquency cases, including children accused of crimes and those accused of "status offenses" which are not crimes for adults, such as running away, violation of curfew or possession of alcohol.

80% of the cases, some of which did not involve arrests, involved whites and 18% involved minorities. The race of the child was not known in 2% of the cases. The same child may be involved in more than one case, the report said.

Minorities, 50.4%, were prosecuted at a higher rate than whites, 48.7%. They were also detained in secure facilities at more than twice the rate of whites, 11.8% compared to 4.6%. Many detained youths were charged with narcotics offenses.

Out of all the youths convicted of criminal offenses, minorities were committed to Division of Corrections facilities at twice the rate of whites, 26.4% compared to 13.7%.

Most youths in corrections facilities were accused of serious criminal offenses and nearly half had previous probation violations.

One-third of minority youths in the facilities were charged with drug offenses.

"Over representation of minority youth in security institutions may be directly diminished by preventing the involvement of minority youth in the sale of drugs," the report said.

The best way to combat the youth crime problem is to arrest adults who lure youths in housing complexes to sell crack cocaine. More research is needed to determine if the disposition of cases is affected by the backgrounds of juveniles or their specific offenses.

The committee prepares periodic reports on minority youth crime to maintain funding from the U.S. Department of Justice.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Almost one in every three young black men is serving a criminal sentence - either prison, probation or parole, according to a study by an advocacy group. That's a dramatic increase from five years ago, when the proportion was one in four.

The report says that blacks accounted for 24% of all drug arrests in 1980, but the figure climbed to 39% in 1993.

Blacks make up 12% of the U.S. population. They are 74% of prisoners serving time on drug charges according to the report.

Be sure to read *Where Do We Go From Here* in this month's edition of the AC Phoenix.