

# Forum

## Failing the AIDS challenge

AIDS has been described as another plaque and as the most serious public health disaster of the country.

The experts closest to the situation and most knowledgeable about the disease call for massive national programs to educate people to modify behavior patterns shown to be associated with AIDS. They also support more extensive research into testing for the disease and for a cure.

All of this costs money, lots of it. And the logical source of dollars and leadership against so serious a public health problem is the federal government.

But instead of providing the resources and the leadership, the Administration has resorted to waffling. It wants to test immigrants and federal prisoners for the disease. And it is even talking about

### TO BE EQUAL

By JOHN E. JACOB

violating constitutional rights by refusing to release federal prisoners who test positive for the AIDS virus.

It's hard to see how such measures will help stem the AIDS epidemic. In fact, implementing policies that create the illusion of doing something about the disease just waste resources and could make things a lot harder in the long run.

The reluctance to commit the necessary resources to mass education is probably based on the high costs of such campaigns.

But the cost of an escalating AIDS epidemic could be shattering, not just to the budget but to the total economy.

The numbers are frightening. Currently, some 1.5 million

Americans are said to be infected by the virus that causes AIDS, and up to half of them may develop AIDS or the earlier-stage ARC (AIDS-related complex) within half-a-dozen years.

Federal scientists estimate that by 1991 we could be looking at a total of over 200,000 deaths from AIDS and a total case load of over 300,000 AIDS victims.

Health care costs related to AIDS come to over \$1 billion today. By 1991 they're expected to be as high as \$16.5 billion.

The potential cost to the economy in health care, research, screening, education and lost wages from disability and death is estimated at over \$66 billion.

Because of different transmission patterns and poor economic conditions, minorities are at greater risk.



As a result, African-Americans and Hispanics are disproportionately found among the victims of AIDS.

and the federal estimates of the future course of the disease suggest that some 67,000 African-Americans will have contracted AIDS by 1991.

It may be too late to cut that number by very much at this point,

because so many future AIDS victims already have been exposed to the disease and carry the virus.

But it is not too late for the African-American community to implement education and support programs that inform people about AIDS, help them to avoid the behavior that can lead to contracting the disease, and overcome the stigma associated with it.

Traditional attitudes regarding homosexuality and drug abuse need to be modified in the face of a killer disease that leaves so much suffering in its wake. Disapproval of conduct associated with contracting AIDS shouldn't allow callousness toward its victims.

John E. Jacob is president of the National Urban League.

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## Myths and facts associated with AIDS

As of today, the only weapon we have to fight the deadly disease AIDS is information. When we repeat myths about AIDS, we blunt this weapon. Here are some of the common myths many of us are hearing about AIDS, and the correct information we should be repeating to others.

**Myth No.1:** AIDS is a disease that afflicts gay white men.

**Fact:** AIDS cases have appeared among African-Americans and whites, homosexuals and heterosexuals, and men, women, children and newborn infants.

**Myth No.2:** You can catch AIDS through casual contact with someone who had the disease, just the way you catch chicken pox or

### CHILDWATCH

By MARIAN W. EDELMAN

a cold.

**Fact:** There are two main ways you can catch AIDS. The first is homosexual or heterosexual intercourse with an infected partner, especially without the protection of a condom. The second is by sharing needles during the use of intravenous drugs. Used needles for any purpose should be avoided. There are other, more rare ways that the disease has been transmitted: for example, through the blood supply, though steps are now being taken to correct this situation.

Casual social contact such as shaking hands, hugging, or sneezing

will not transmit the AIDS virus. You cannot get AIDS from toilets, doorknobs, or telephones. Nor has AIDS been contracted from swimming in pools or eating in restaurants.

**Myth No.3:** You can get AIDS by donating blood.

**Fact:** This is absolutely false, but groundless fears have stopped many Americans from giving blood. Needles are discarded after one use, leaving no chance of passing AIDS from donor to donor.

**Myth No.4:** People with AIDS get sick immediately and die.

**Fact:** Some people who have been infected with the AIDS virus have no obvious symptoms. However, these infected individuals

can spread the virus on to others. On the other hand, the presence of symptoms that sometimes are warning signals of the disease (such as a persistent cough) do not necessarily mean the presence of AIDS. Only a qualified health professional can diagnose AIDS.

**Myth No.5:** There is nothing we can do to fight this disease.

**Fact:** AIDS is spread primarily by certain high-risk behaviors described above. Each of us can make an individual choice not to engage in these behaviors.

Marian Wright Edelman is a National Newspaper Publishers Association columnist who is president of the Children's Defense Fund.

## Clifton Graves seems to have the great qualities we need

### To The Editor:

I was quite taken with your article on Clifton Graves in your July 16, 1987 edition. He seems to have great qualities that are badly needed to help channel the African-American people's abilities once he is in position to do so. I hope this turns out to be the "special purpose" he is searching for. So many are still climbing up the rough side of the mountain, where no one ever thought they were worth much or giving them a chance and seem like they were fortunate enough to go on to a higher education would show them the way out of the endless circle of poverty.

We are singing the song "We Shall Overcome" and we should, even if the light flickers, we should never let it go out. We have a lot of people that are being overcome by circumstances beyond their control. No control is the point; yet, African-American people have all the ingredients and the ability to put together an economic pie of their own where they

### CHRONICLE MAILBAG Our Readers Speak Out

have the say over the who, where, what, why and when that is mind boggling. They could generate an economy and hire people from the public sector that would help life the general economy of this nation.

Not until we drop the old philosophy of "every man for himself and God for us all" can we put this together. If we recapture the fellowship our ancestors taught us, along with our abilities we could do wonders in a short time.

Time is of the essence: in this modern push button world time has put a gun to our head, wanting to know are we going to be a people or not. If we give it the wrong answer, it will pull the trigger and may God have mercy on us all. It is time for us to make a prison break-out of the endless circle of poverty and take a

lot of people with us. I am from the rough side, my friends and I broke out of the cotton fields of Virginia a long time ago. We found like a turtle that is hatched out of one shell to find he is encased in another, it was not enough. Most of them are deceased now, many fell along the wayside. I intend to get a book published that deals with all this. I want to make their mark on the scroll of time, just to let someone know they have been here and gone.

There is a masses work force out there that no one have tapped into, just waiting for someone to show them what to do. Men and women like Clifton Graves are needed to help point the way; kind of like head and body being joined together to make a whole; then let's see what happens. I wish him luck.

Adolphus Lee Brown  
Mocksville, N.C.

### Johnson Remembered

(What follows is an open letter written to Allen Johnson, former executive editor of the *Chronicle*. He is now a features editor with the *Greensboro News and Record*)

This is the letter I owe you, Allen. Several months ago, you approached me with a request to periodically write the *Chronicle* about whatever I thought was important that was going on.

Well, many significant things have happened and most of it has been reported on and commented upon by persons far more qualified to do so than I. (Vernon Robinson's contributions, for example, have been for the most part, extraordinary). "Mr. Ed's" philosophy sums up mine "who says nothing unless he has something to say."

What I have to say now is that you made a great contribution to Winston-Salem in general and its

African-American community in particular and you shall be sorely missed, both professionally and personally.

The *Chronicle* is the best weekly newspaper in North Carolina and one of the best African-American papers in the country due largely to your efforts. You would be the first person to point out the team effort of any worthy enterprise, in your case, including reporters, advertising sales persons, office staff, production people, circulation strategists and the *Chronicle* Advisory Board.

You are only one third, for instance, of that talented triumvirate Chapel Hill connection, along with publisher Ernie Pitt and photographer James "JP" Parker.

But everyone brings their own special gifts to bear and your include a deep desire for journalistic and editorial excellence, a keen

acerbic wit and a positive patron for Winston-Salem in general and its African-American community in particular. Your successor, Dennis Schatzman, has his own unique talents to share and he has the same benefit you had of a fine reporting staff.

A recent *Chronicle* article on Clifton Graves reminded me how rare it is to hear African-American men particularly, openly, unabashedly and unashamedly express personal and professional affection and admiration for one another without jealousy, ego, or guilt. Craig Marberry's *Essence* Column a few months ago addressed this. In my own small way, here and now, consider this done.

The Rev. Carlton A.G. Eversley  
Winston-Salem

### CHRONICLE CAMERA

## Is the criminal justice system fair to African-Americans?

By ESTHER WOODS  
Chronicle Intern

Is the Criminal Justice System more lenient towards whites than to African-Americans in the city? Maybe and maybe not.

A Winston-Salem man recently

declared to the *Chronicle* that he was not satisfied with the district attorney's office's handling of a recent case, where an assistant district attorney accepted a reduced plea for the defendant.

A victim of robbery, he said,

"The DA was supposed to be representing us. But it seemed as though they were representing the criminal."

According to the management division of the Winston-Salem Police Department, in 1986, 14

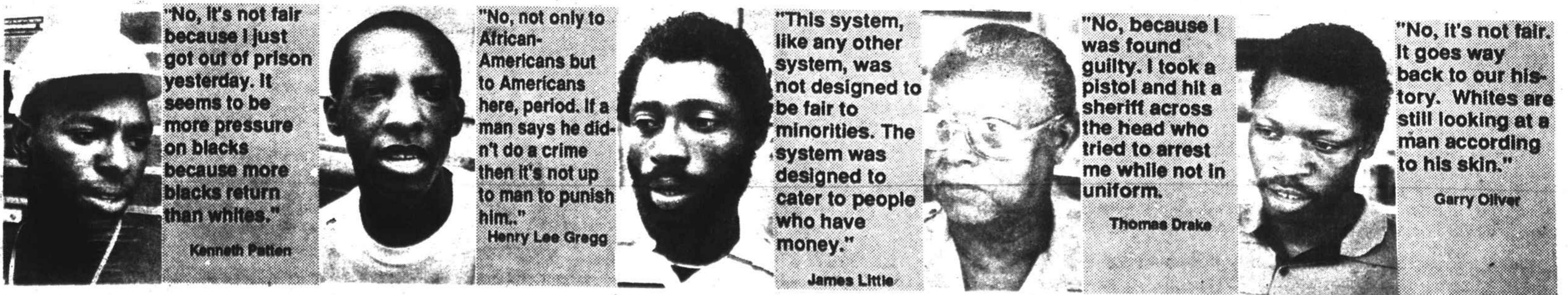
African-American men, one African-American female, and three white men were arrested in the city for murder.

36 African-American men and 14 white men were arrested for rape.

109 African-American men, seven African-American females, 18 white males and two white females were arrested in the city for robbery.

The numbers conclude that more African-Americans are arrest-

ed than whites for similar crimes. The *Chronicle* recently asked local African-Americans, "Is the criminal justice system fair to African-Americans in Winston-Salem?"



"No, it's not fair because I just got out of prison yesterday. It seems to be more pressure on blacks because more blacks return than whites."

Kenneth Patten

"No, not only to African-Americans but to Americans here, period. If a man says he didn't do a crime then it's not up to man to punish him."

Henry Lee Gregg

"This system, like any other system, was not designed to be fair to minorities. The system was designed to cater to people who have money."

James Little

"No, because I was found guilty. I took a pistol and hit a sheriff across the head who tried to arrest me while not in uniform."

Thomas Drake

"No, it's not fair. It goes way back to our history. Whites are still looking at a man according to his skin."

Garry Oliver