

OPINION/ FORUM

THE CHRONICLE *35 Years*

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Adoption and Black Families



Victoria Rowell
 Guest Columnist

On one single day, the lives of thousands of children in foster care are forever changed. That day is National Adoption Day. For the last decade, on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, courts across the country have made it their mission to finalize foster care adoption cases so that these children can belong to their forever families.

But the need extends far beyond that one day.

In all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam, National Adoption Day is being celebrated. It is a widespread cause, ranging from courtroom adoptions to community fundraisers and local celebrations. Thanks to the efforts of adoption advocates, policymakers, judges and lawyers, most of whom volunteer their time, a total of more than 25,000 children have been adopted from foster care on National Adoption Day in the last 10 years. But there are still 129,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent, loving families.

I know what it's like. I spent my entire childhood in foster care.

I was born in Maine - the child of unmarried parents. I spent my first weeks of life as a boarder infant before being placed with a white foster family. I couldn't be adopted, because my mother would not terminate her parental rights (out of love for us). But even if she had, under Maine law, I could only be adopted by an African-American family, and there were very, very few families of color in the state. I was profoundly aware of just how important a loving, caring, family was, and fortunately for me I was given a foundation of love by an amazing array of caregivers.

Today, there are 500,000 children in foster care in the United States today, 40 per-

cent of whom are African American, and 100 percent of whom are waiting for their chance - the chance to rejoin their own families or to join a loving foster or adoptive family - the chance to have a chance.

Although the laws of this nation have come a long way since my childhood, the federal government must take even more of a leadership role in reducing the racial disparities still found throughout the child welfare system today. African-American children are not only more likely than white children to be placed in foster care, but are also less likely to receive the services they need, and more likely to remain in care for a longer time. And while sound laws are critical to improving foster care, we cannot create the changes needed without committed state officials to implement the laws, and without committed families to step into the role of caregiver to children who need them.

Under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, states now must address some of the disparities by increasing supports to relatives who raise their kin and by notifying relatives first when a child comes into care. When good laws like Fostering Connections are implemented, outcomes will improve for all kids, no matter what their race.

Thanks to National Adoption Day (which was Nov. 21), we can honor those who expand or build their families through adoption. And we can share in the very special joy of 4,500 children adopted from foster care in hundreds of communities across the U.S.

While National Adoption Day was just one day in a 365-day effort to raise awareness of children in foster care, anyone can get involved at any time of the year. Visit www.nationaladoptionday.org to learn how you can help a child in foster care.

Actress **Victoria Rowell** is best known for her role on the popular daytime drama, "The Young and the Restless."



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Good Riddance, DA Keith

To the Editor:

Being a subscriber and supporter of The Chronicle for over 10 years, I would like to commend The Chronicle and Reporter Layla Farmer for your coverage of the locals and the Ministers Conference lobbying for the removal of Tom Keith, district attorney of Forsyth County.

Throughout his tenure, Keith was known and expected to make disparaging remarks concerning minorities because the statistics of his office prosecution targets and Keith's trial record of racist and bungling comments.

Forsyth County has the highest number of habitual felon convictions of any county in the state. Of these convictions, 82 percent are black and minorities.

Forsyth County also has the highest number of people on death row (and convictions). At least 74 percent are black. This is all with Forsyth County/Winston-Salem being fourth or fifth in population in the state... recent Census states fourth.

But in conclusion, the stats reveal a pattern and vindictive prosecution on the the DA Office's behalf.

I am speaking from being a "victim" of Keith's selective and vindictive tactics.

There is hope at the end of the tunnel. By faith, I believe. The regime of Tom Keith ends Nov. 30, 2009, when he officially retires. Thank you, Jesus!

*Charles A. Hall
 Dan River Prison Work Farm*

Unjust Justice System

To the Editor:

My name is Tashawn Wilson and I am an inmate currently in the North Carolina Department of Corrections.

Before I begin with my reason for writing The Chronicle, I want to let you know that I am not trying to justify criminal behavior or receive any special treatment. I am only asking the State of North Carolina to treat every ethnic group with equality and I am also looking for equal repre-

sentation in the media.

I am a 31 year-old African American male who has been incarcerated since the age of 25 years-old. I am in prison, basically charged with as a habitual felon. I was given more than one sentence, including two habitual felons, giving me a combined time of 25 years.

I wanted to tell you a little bit about me, but my letter is not just about me but the thousands of inmates, families and communities that are being affected daily, not by just the excessive time, but the mental abuse sustained while incarcerated. My goal with this letter is to hopefully have a voice, through The Chronicle, not for inmates, but for humans looking for fairness and justice afforded to us and paid for by the bloodshed of our forefathers.

There are many issues that have merit, from sentencing disparity between blacks and whites in North Carolina, to cruel and unusual punishment, selective prosecution. I can go on and on. To show that certain crimes go unnoticed until whites are affected.

In 2008, when Eve Carson

(a white UNC student) was killed, she was the 500+ victim of a murder committed by someone on probation, but it took 500 people before this became a statewide crisis. It took a white female dying before it was media worthy.

I want people to see the fathers and sons in prison together or how drug dealers are getting more time than murderers and rapists. I want the many families affected by this mass incarceration of our people to see why their kids leave prison more aggressive and prone to violence once released from prison. Young men are being locked up in isolation for 30 days and more for having extra socks because they are cold. There is so much going on and I would love to share this with your paper.

I'm asking The Chronicle for help exposing the truth and bringing awareness.

I want to bring awareness to this situation by any means.

Thank you for your time.

*Sincerely,
 Tashawn Wilson*

SILENCE ISN'T ALWAYS GOLDEN



David Burnett
 Guest Columnist

(NNPA) - Let me start by saying that I am thrilled that Tiger Woods is healthy and was not seriously hurt in that accident outside of his home the other night. I selfishly want to see him continue to lay waste to his peers, because I am a huge Tiger Woods fan.

But that said, there are still some things I've heard and read about this accident that seem to defy common sense, and because of that, the old reporter in me is overriding the fan.

Making it worse is the fact that we have heard nothing from Tiger. This story is begging for a response from the world's greatest golfer.

As I write this, it has been more than 48 hours since the accident happened and there are still significant unanswered questions about what now appears to be a bizarre domestic incident. But Tiger Woods has said nothing to anyone, not even the police to adequately clear this up.

For me the smoking gun is the report that the air bags in Tiger's Escalade didn't deploy, which unless there was a major malfunction, means the vehicle was not traveling very fast at all



Tiger Woods is making international headlines this week.

when it hit the fire hydrant and a tree. And you have to wonder how do you hit a fire hydrant in the first place - unless you are greatly distracted or enraged?

Further you question how Tiger actually got his

busted mouth and was knocked unconscious from what is being called a minor accident.

The other suspect detail is that Tiger was trapped in the SUV and his wife Elin, in the house, heard the noise

from the accident and upon seeing Tiger trapped had to use golf clubs to break out the car's rear window to get Tiger out.

The timing for this could not be worse. It happens just as the tabloids are screaming that Tiger is having an affair. And the generally reliable TMZ is reporting that Tiger and his wife, Elin, were arguing about that alleged affair just before the accident.

It is certainly possible that an angry wife dealing with rumors of an affair could do a lot of damage with a golf club. I'm not saying that's what happened, but most of us would understand if it did.

Obviously, I am speculating. But what else am I left to do? I'm human and celebrities, even the ones I like, are fair game to wonder about. We all do that.

I want to be wrong about all of my doubts, but what we know about this accident is coming from everyone but Tiger Woods and his wife.

And that is never good. With millions of dollars in endorsements on the line, a reputation to protect, and a legacy to leave, Tiger Woods has a lot to lose by mishandling this incident.

Indeed, silence is not always golden.

Award-winning journalist **David Burnett** is former president of the Washington, D.C. Association of Black Journalists and founder of www.Sportssense.net.

Submit letters and columns to:

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