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## LIFESTYLES

## Black men lag behind

By Leon Stafford  
THE LEXINGTON HERALD  
LEADER

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Had Martin Luther King Jr. lived, he probably would be saddened by the grim statistics about the quality of life for black males in America today.

Overall, the numbers show that the dream King worked so hard for has never been realized. For many, it is a nightmare.

In Kentucky, the general trend holds true: Black men are more likely to be in prison, less likely to graduate from high school or college, and less likely to enjoy good health.

This is a far cry from the world that seemed possible for black men during King's fight for equality.

After decades of legal discrimination kept blacks out of the mainstream, the doors to the American dream began to open in the 1950s and 60s.

In the years that followed, Andrew Young became ambassador to the United Nations, Alex Haley's "Roots" was a national best-seller, Bill Cosby created the No. 1 television show, and Michael Jordan.

Today, we have Colin Powell, who was sought as the Republican presidential nominee, and Douglas Wilder, the grandson of slaves, who was governor of Virginia, the heart of the old Confederacy.

So why, in 1997, among all citizens, do black men have the highest rate of unemployment, in the United States (10.6 percent)?

Why are black males ages 15 to 34 dying of firearm-related injuries more than any other group? Why do black men make up one-third of the inmates in U.S. prisons when the total black male population is a little more than 5 percent in the United States?

Nashid Fahkridd-Deen wishes there was a simple answer.

"The numbers function as an alarm clock," said Fahkridd-Deen, director of minority affairs for the University of Kentucky community colleges.

There was a time in the black community when expectations were great for men who were gifted, Fahkridd-Deen said.

"If you went to college, when you went home to church, they wanted to know ... 'How you doing in school? How are your grades?'" Fahkridd-Deen said. "You knew you had to face the whole community because a lot was expected of you."

But times have changed. More than half of black children grow up in single-parent homes headed by women.

George Rowan, director of the David Walker Research Institute at Michigan State University, said the statistics reflect black men's reactions to an unequal and unfair environment. Institutionalized racism has made black men the epitome of all that is wrong, he said.

"You see an individual who is suppressed and who is suppressing himself," he said.

High unemployment contributes to a higher rate of black men being absent from the home.

The solutions are as varied as the men and boys who will benefit from them. They include schools specifically designed to educate black boys, self-esteem programs, rites of passage ceremonies and traditional mentoring.

Whatever the answer is, black men will be responsible for making it work.

Fahkridd-Deen would like to see the black community get back what it had before integration, when children were the responsibility of everyone in the community.

## A true likeness



Roberts captured the joy and the sorrows of black Columbia. During his 16 year career, he created the first black church directory, as well as promotional pamphlets for local black colleges. Below, daughter Wilhelmina Roberts Wynn, 1919.

By Jeri Young  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

For 15 years, Richard S. Roberts ran his photography studio from a small shop on Washington Street in Columbia, S.C.

His props were hand-made:

there could be photographed in a field of flowers or before a stained glass window.

From its opening in 1922, until Roberts' death in 1936, his studio was the center of black Columbia.

"You see the pictures of African Americans in there," Roberts' daughter Wilhelmina



A fur stole that transformed a simple dress into a ball gown. A large artificial lighting cabinet. He designed a posing chair — a throne really — with ornate removable arms and back. His backdrop was a large gothic montage, romantic, yet serviceable. Black Columbians who had their pictures made

Wynn said. "The black lawyers and doctors. We knew they were important and they were the best. But they didn't get respect in the white community. My father showed them their worth."

More than 10,000 of Roberts' pictures survive, 175 captured

in "True Likeness," (Bruccoli Clark Layman, Writers and Readers Publishing, 1986) a collection of some of his best and most haunting works.

An exhibit of Robert's craft hits Charlotte Friday at the Museum of the New South.

The negatives, more than 8,000, were found in the '70s in basement of Roberts' home. In excellent condition, the glass negatives were developed by University of South Carolina professors Thomas Johnson and Philip Dunn. Thomas and Dunn enlisted the aid of several South Carolinians to identify as many photographs as possible.

The images, dignified and unsmiling, capture the essence of the community and of her father, Wynn said.

The book and exhibit showcase the life's work of a simple man who never knew his significance.

"He was important," Wynn said. "But no one, not even us, knew how special he was."

## Columbia in the '20s

Columbia in the '20s was a southern Mecca for African Americans.

A booming town, with USC at its center, it was a city of contradictions.

Its population had swollen to more than 37,000, but Columbia ranked near the bottom of almost every category of social and economic well-being.

But Columbia was one of the few southern cities where blacks were allowed any measure of autonomy.

Benedict College and Allen University thrived there, educating generations of black teachers and doctors. Blacks also built sizable homes and businesses. The Manigaults, among those captured by

Roberts, built a successful funeral home. African Americans were almost 40 percent of the population in 1920. But Jim Crow was entrenched in Columbia's psyche.

Now 81 and a retired educator, Wynn looks back on Columbia with pride and trepidation.

Blacks could not attend USC, nor walk in certain areas.

And there were lynchings. Less than five years since the "Red Summer" of 1919, when whites rioted to keep black soldiers returning from World War I in check, lynchings were at an all-time high. Five were recorded in Columbia in 1920. Many more probably happened, Wynn said.

"Everything in the South was segregated back then," she said. "It was horrible. But we still had our community."

"We lived 18 blocks from our school. To get there we had to pass USC. We were so frightened, we didn't even walk on that side of the street. I didn't touch anything on that campus until 1986, when I was invited there to eat lunch in the faculty dining room."

Wynn and her five siblings — Gerald, 87, Beverly, 85, Cornelius, 83 and Willy, 81 and Miriam who died in 1985 — experienced Jim Crow firsthand.

Wynn, who is light-skinned, was asked to give up her seat on a crowded bus.

"A neighbor got on and tipped his hat to me," she said. "The white man sitting next to me told the driver, who told me to get up. I got up — we didn't know anything about Rosa Parks back then."

## Perfect pictures,

Outside Roberts Studio was

See ROBERTS on page 10A

## Profile of a gossip: do you fit?

By Christina Ferchalk  
THE ALTOONA MIRROR

ALTOONA, Pa. — I was loading groceries into my car when I saw a man approach. I knew him only slightly, for which I am extremely grateful. He is, without a doubt, one of the biggest gossip-mongers I have ever known.

He never has a good word to say about anyone, casting stones at his fellow man with the intensity of an automatic pitching machine in a batting cage. I did not care for this man.

He immediately started in. "Did you hear about so and so? blah, blah, blah ... and so now she doesn't even know who the father is."

I let him go on for a while before interrupting. Then I told him he looked well and seemed to be recovering nicely from that nasty little social disease he had contracted. He wanted to know who had told me such a terrible thing about him. I gave him the impression that everyone and his brother was discussing his unfortunate health problem.

The man was furious, insisting there was absolutely no truth to the rumor.

I said, "Oh, I believe you." Wink, wink.

Actually I did believe him. I knew he was being truthful because I had made up the rumor about him right there on the spot. I lied to the man, deliberately and with malice. I will probably burn for that particular sin, but I'll take my punishment.

Over the years this man's vicious tongue has caused needless pain for so many people, so I took it upon myself to let him know how it feels to be the victim of malicious gossip.

I've been on a rant and a roll lately. I've had all I can stand of the stone-casters and gossip-mongers. These lowlifes circulate among us, spreading their filth like disease-ridden rats. Gossipers are usually depicted as being women, middle-aged or older, swapping lies over the backyard fence.

This isn't necessarily the case. Those who take pleasure in maligning their neighbors are not restricted by age or gender. From what I've been able to ascertain, and I've done my research, the most notorious gossips are found among the barflies.

It is from the mouths of those who warm the vinyl seats of a watering hole on a daily and/or nightly basis that lies are propagated and reputations destroyed. These people deem it their right and privilege to say anything they chose about anyone they please. If they don't have any good dirt on an individual, they'll make something up. No one is beyond the reach of their spitefulness, not even the youngest of our children.

And they get away with it! For years I took pride in the fact that I paid no mind to these people. I avoided them whenever possible and didn't repeat their ugly stories.

I realize this is not enough.

## Married most likely to refuse drink, drugs

By John Hughes  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT — A study released today confirms the old adage that people settle down after marriage.

People reporting marijuana use and heavy drinking dropped by one-third during a two-year period when they went from single to married, according to a University of Michigan study of 33,000 young adults from 1976 to 1994.

"If you feel a responsibility to and for another person, then you are more apt to control your own behavior and play a role in controlling the partner's behavior," said Jerald Bachman, one of the study's five authors at the Ann Arbor-based university's Institute for Social Research.

Couples who lived together but were not engaged or married showed no such drop in drug use. Bachman said such

couples apparently had less commitment to one another, which meant fewer changes in their drug habits.

Those who stayed single continued to be a high proportion of drug and alcohol users, the study showed. Drug use also increased for people when they divorce, only to decline once again if they remarry.

The data is based on a questionnaire given to graduating high school seniors across the country. The participants were

questioned every two years, tracing their use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs up to 14 years beyond graduation.

Bachman said he was hardly surprised by many of the results, such as young, unmarried adults usually increasing their alcohol, marijuana and cocaine use when they left home, often to attend college.

The results are published in book released today titled "Smoking, Drinking, and Drug

Use in Young Adulthood."

Bachman added that the "marriage effect" so helpful for reducing drug and alcohol use brought only a slight reduction in cigarette smoking habits.

Typical young adult smokers were regular users before they left high school. Of those who smoked a half-pack or more when they were high school seniors, three-quarters continued smoking at age 22 and two-thirds at 30.