

Sentence for false slavery reparations tax claims

By Justin Bergman
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WARSAW, Va. — Crystal Foster's father advised her to spend the \$500,000 income tax refund she got two years ago. When the government came looking for its money, the Fosters said it was their rightful reparations, since their ancestors were slaves.

Though there is no federal reparations program, Foster had spent the money in eight days, buying a \$40,000 Mercedes Benz, paying off her student loans and helping her brother pay for his first year at Virginia Tech.

Foster's father, Robert Lee Foster, prepared her tax forms and was convicted along with his daughter of trying to defraud the government. He maintains he did the right thing.

"Black people are not treated as humans, but as things by the U.S. government," he said in an interview at the Northern Neck Regional Jail. "We were used as resources to enrich this country and we get no inheritance from the wealth we brought."

According to the Internal Revenue Service, more than 80,000 tax returns were filed in 2001 seeking nonexistent slavery tax credits, totaling \$2.7 billion. More than \$30 million was mistakenly paid out in slave reparations in 2000 and part of 2001.

That number dropped significantly last year after stepped-up scrutiny of tax returns and an aggressive media campaign targeted against scam artists promising to secure tax credits for blacks.

But the government has also begun quietly cracking down on filers of false claims after years of looking the other way.

Foster and his daughter each were convicted in July of conspiracy to defraud the government. Robert Foster also was convicted of four counts and Crystal Foster of one count of making false claims.

Both were scheduled to be sentenced in U.S. District Court in Richmond on Thursday. Defendants in similar cases have received up to seven years in prison.

The case against Robert Foster has taken several bizarre turns.

Foster renounced his U.S. citizenship in jail and professed allegiance to the Moab Tiara Cherokee Kituwah Nation, an obscure Charlotte group whose members claim they are descendants of African Moors who came to the New World before European colonialists.

Foster filed papers in U.S. District Court seeking to vacate the judgment against him based on lack of jurisdiction by the U.S. government. The judge rejected the motion.

Foster also tried unsuccessfully to fire his attorney, Thomas Johnson, and hire an "indigenous attorney" who identified himself as justice secretary for the Kituwah Nation.

Foster, a 51-year-old tax return preparer, said he endured years of racial discrimination during his career with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in Richmond. In 2000, he sued

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Women racing clock on family and career



By Artellia Burch
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Donnetta Collier, 39, knew at a young age she wanted to complete college, travel, become financially stable and get married.

But what the Charlotte loan officer didn't know is by the time she would be ready to do so, the small pool of eligible and compatible men would make her dream of having kids a long shot.

"I grew up with sisters who were teenage mothers," Collier said. "After sharing a room with one of them, I knew I wanted to live life, get properly educated and financially stable. What I didn't know is waiting for those things would greatly reduce the prospects for marriage as well as reduce my chance to conceive."

Women who postpone pregnancy face a number of difficulties. Fertility and hope of a healthy

pregnancy decreases with age. Studies show women over 35 are more likely to need help for infertility.

A growing number of women are choosing to put off motherhood. Collier is one of the 26.7 million women age 15 to 44 who are childless, a record number, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. They represent nearly 44 percent of women in that age group.

The number of women in that age group forgoing or putting off motherhood has grown nearly 10 percent since 1990, when roughly 24.3 million were in that category.

Direct comparisons before 1990 are not possible because the bureau didn't track women younger than 18 until then.

The latest numbers reflect the well-established trend of more women going to college and entering the work force, then delaying

motherhood or deciding not to have children. More also are choosing adoption, said Martha Farnsworth Riche, a demographer and former head of the Census Bureau.

"I'm not one of those people who have chosen not to have kids," said Collier. "I wanted to have a husband first then a child. But since I put off getting married and having children to later I have less suitors, which has reduced my chances of ever getting married and children."

The percentage of women 40 to 44 — those at the end of their child-bearing years who have not given birth — has hovered around 18 percent since 1994, up from 10 percent in 1976.

Women without diplomas and those with bachelor's degrees were most likely to be childless. Also, women with higher incomes had the highest childless rates, in part a

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Parental support group gets personal

By Hillel Italic
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Toni Morrison sits in the crowded parlor of an old Brooklyn mansion, a cup of tea, slightly tipped, in one hand. From her high-backed chair in the corner, she leans forward and carefully surveys the room.

"So," she begins, "what did you think?"

Seated around her, squeezed together on sofas and chairs, are 13 members of the Mocha Moms, a nationwide support group for at-home parents of color. They all hold copies of Morrison's new novel, "Love," a multigenerational tale set at a coastal resort. Many feel as if they lived through the story themselves.

Tammy Greer-Brown, a mother of two from New York City, confides that she was getting a manicure-pedicure while reading the book. She became so upset during one chapter, a rape scene, that she left the salon in tears.

"It made me reflect on my life and situations where it could have been me," she tells Morrison. "You helped me to clear my mind about my own fears, my past, my present, my future. ... And I am so grateful to you for that."

The 72-year-old Morrison, a Nobel laureate whose novels include "Beloved" and "Song of Solomon," will spend much of the fall giving television interviews and speaking at book fairs on behalf of "Love."

But on this recent afternoon, she meets with readers at the Akwaaba Mansion, a 19th-century home converted several years ago into a bed and breakfast. For Morrison, the gathering can be likened to a rock star making a club appearance.

"Publishers generally prefer the thing that gives you the biggest bang for the buck. But I really and truly like to talk to readers," says Morrison, whose publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, had heard about the Mocha Moms and helped arrange the discussion group.

"They relate. It's all very deeply personal, and that's good. I'm very accustomed to the lit crits (literary critics), which is fine, but this level of reading, which is the first level, is the heart for me."

The Mocha Moms was founded in 1997 by four women in Maryland. It now has more than 1,100 members, predominantly women of color but the group also includes men and whites. The mission is "to support and encourage women of color who are making parenting a priority in this sea-

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Breast cancer risk high with gene mutation; exercise can help

By Paul Reger
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Exercising and maintaining a healthful weight when young can delay the onset of breast cancer in women at very high risk of the disease, according to a study of women with a genetic mutation that gives them an 82 percent lifetime risk of developing the disease.

Researchers also found that

women with mutations in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene have a 23 percent to 54 percent risk of ovarian cancer, depending on which gene is affected.

The study, appearing last week in the journal Science, showed that lifestyle during adolescence played a role in when these high-risk women developed breast cancer. The finding was consistent with earlier studies suggesting that among women in general, exercise

and healthy weight early in life can reduce a woman's risk of developing breast cancer after menopause.

"The possibility that lifestyle changes such as increased exercise and weight control could modify the impact of genetic risk has very intriguing implications, not only for BRCA-related cancers but for other breast cancers as well," said Dr. Larry Norton, head of the divi-

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