More black women inmates

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enter the prison system.

Scholars have several theories, including the war on drugs; crackdown on welfare leaving single mothers without a safety net and a history of sexual abuse.

Peterson, who graduated from N.C. Central and received a two-year degree in law enforcement in New Jersey, worked over a year in a N.C. Department of Correction women's prison.

"What is happening is more black women are head of their households, and they have children they have to take care of," she said. "Most of these women only get a certain amount of money for their children. Drugs are easy to market and sell to generate income for themselves and their children."

A 1991 Bureau of Justice special report found that one in 11 women are substantially more likely than men to be serving time for drug offenses and less likely to have committed a violent crime. Nearly six in 10 females grew up in a household where at least one parent was absent and about half reported a family member had also served time. More than four in 10 reported a history of sexual abuse.

Pearlie Williams spent two years in prison for a parole violation.

"It was hot. It was grueling. It was degrading, but also it was educational and very eye opening," said Williams who now works at the Triangle Empowerment Center in downtown Durham.

Williams said going to prison was a generational problem in her family, but the cycle can be broken.

"It can be done, but it takes a person to say enough of this madness is enough and do what you're supposed to do to help break the cycle," she said. "I had to say 'Jesus I can't do this alone, show me how to do this.' Christ was my foundation through it all."

Williams said the JobStart program at the Raleigh Correctional Center for Women was instrumental in turning her life around.

"Something about the program motivated me from getting into a deeper life of drug addiction," she said. "It was a seed that was planted in me, that even when I relapsed, the tools that I had in me I used them to get out of the situation that I was in."

Dr. William Farrell of the UNC School of Social Work, along with his colleagues, has worked with a reentry program for inmates in Wake, Durham and Orange counties, said the community needs to do more.

"I don't think the African-American community focuses enough on this, because we found tremendous cooperation with correctional officials and superintendents of both black and white prisons," he said. "Many of them have started their own employment programs by trying to ease their reintegration into society. More has to be done by black institutions outside of the prisons, the church, sororities, fraternities and the like."

Sharonda James, who has been in and out of prison three times, said, the Triangle Residential Options for Substance Abusers, a two-year residential program in Durham, is making a difference.

"I feel like I've got my life back again," she said.

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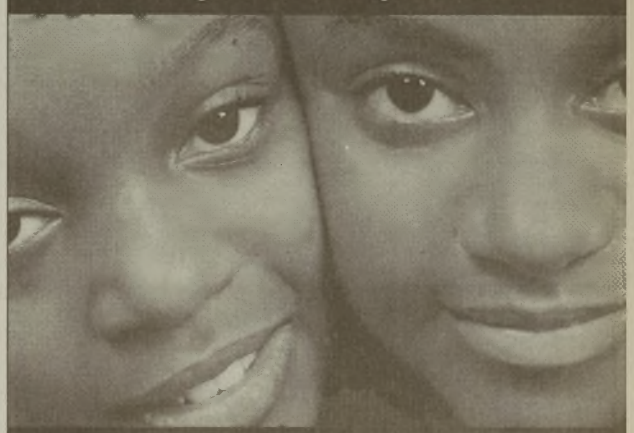

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PEOPLE OF NOTE

Cody to lead sorority alumni

Cody

Antoinette Cody has been elected president of Delta Sigma Theta sorority Charlotte Alumnae Chapter.

Cody, a Kinston native, is a semi-retired Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools educator. The Charlotte Alumnae Chapter has over 400 members and is the fifth largest chapter in the country.

Ma. Scott

• **Matthew Scott** was recently elected to Davidson College's Honor Council.

The council is a student-led disciplinary body that is the primary judiciary organ at Davidson. It is responsible for hearing cases involving alleged violations of the Honor Code and Code of Responsibility.

Scott, a junior, is a West Charlotte High School graduate. He plays football, serves as a resident advisor and a member of the Black Student Coalition. He is the son of Leon and Odishi Scott, both graduates of Johnson C. Smith University.

Mo. Scott

• **Mordecai Scott**, a Davidson freshman, was elected a Student Government Association senator. Davidson senators bring concerns of the college community to weekly SGA meetings for consideration by the full Senate.

Scott is a West Charlotte High graduate and younger brother to Matthew Scott.

• Fifteen Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools students have been named semifinalists for the National Achievement Program. The students are among 1,600 African American high school seniors competing for achievement scholarship awards worth $2.5 million based on their 2005 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test scores.

The semifinalists are:

Jennifer Bower (East Mecklenburg) **Jaleesa Ledbetter and Quentin Robinson** (Harding); **Frederick Evans and Arielle Reid** (Independence); **Caryn Wilson and Jonathan Wise** (Myers Park); **Stephen Bailey, Leanne Duhaney, Marisa Eades and Randolph Jenkins** (North Mecklenburg); **Debra Armour and Gary Chavis** (Providence) and **Liaren Harris and Sterling Scott** (Vance).

The field will be reduced to 1,300 finalists, then 800 will earn achievement scholarships in April. The National Achievement Program, is privately financed and honors academically promising black students and provide scholarships to the most outstanding participants.

PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Sharon Harrison, Miss South Mecklenburg High School 2006, is escorted by her father Charles during festivities at halftime of the annual homecoming football game last week.

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