



Tuskegee Airmen dolls donated to 12 schools

Ted Carry, right, an officer in the Nevada Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen, hands a Tuskegee Airmen G.I. Joe Classic Collection doll to Fitzgerald Elementary School student Kiara Davis, left, as School Board Member Shirley Barber looks on. The Nevada Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen donated 12 of the new collectible dolls to various schools in the Clark County School District in celebration of Black History Month. A fact sheet about the Tuskegee Airmen was also provided to each school to acquaint students and staff with the historical significance of the airmen. The Tuskegee Airmen were black fighter pilots who flew missions in the Army Air Corps during World War II. Their heroic exploits were even celebrated on the silver screen in a recent movie starring actor Lawrence Fishburne.

Mandatory drug sentences unfair

By Gillian Foster

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The American prison population is being etched in a new and disturbing face: Female, young and black.

One of the most well-known belongs to Kemba Smith, the daughter of a teacher and an accountant.

She was at the beginning of a promising college career at Hampton University in Virginia, when she fell in love with Peter Hall, reputedly the head of an East coast drug ring.

The starry-eyed romance soon dissolved into an abusive relationship and Kemba, fearing for her safety and that of her parents, did what she was told.

One might have thought that her nightmare would end when Hall was found murdered by an unknown assailant, but it had just begun.

Kemba, then three weeks pregnant, was advised by prosecutors to plead guilty to cocaine-conspiracy charges, even though she had never sold or used drugs.

Her family thought she would receive leniency. Instead, under mandatory drug sentencing laws, she got 24 years without the possibility of parole.

Law enforcement officials described Kemba as a "mule,"

an insignificant player in a drug operation who physically carries drugs from one point to another.

There are hundreds of cases like Kemba's across the country. According to NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund President Elaine R. Jones, many of these female inmates are victims of physical and emotional abuse and often participate in crimes under duress.

Under mandatory sentencing laws, such mitigating factors are not taken into consideration. As a result, the number of women prison inmates has skyrocketed — with the rate reaching as high as 828 percent over a five-year period.

"Kemba's story provides a window into understanding how the impact of sentencing policies are placing a generation of first-time, non-violent youthful offenders into the criminal justice system," said Jones, who will file a petition to reopen Smith's case.

"Non-violent offenders, who have historically been given short sentences and often assistance with job training and educational opportunities are now being locked up for years. Sentencing policies are waging a war on our communities, especially our youth who are

being robbed of their futures."

The expanding prison population is rooted in the disparity in sentencing laws that punish defendants of crack cocaine — largely African-American — with penalties 100 times more severe than defendants convicted of powder cocaine, which is the drug of choice for Whites.

A person convicted of possessing five grams of crack cocaine can expect to receive the same sentence as a person possessing 500 grams of powder cocaine.

President Clinton supports Pa. rep's education proposal

Bill would educate disadvantaged children on pell grants

By Robin Leary
Special to Sentinel-Voice

U.S. Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.), has been a strong advocate of education issues throughout his political career. And now that he has President Clinton and some 120 Representatives backing his 21st Century Scholars Act of 1997, Fattah is pushing even harder.

Clinton referred to the legislation, which requires the federal government to notify disadvantaged students in urban areas of their eligibility to receive federal aid for college by the time they reach eighth grade, in his State of the Union address.

Fattah said the president's endorsement of his bill "goes far beyond dealing with the next election, it goes towards giving hope to the next generation. Regardless of their economic circumstances, these young people will have the opportunity to live out the American dream."

Fattah said he realizes he may still have trouble getting the bill through a GOP Congress, but he is optimistic about its chances since a number of Republicans support it.

Specifics of the Scholars' bill call for disadvantaged children and their parents to be informed before the children enter high school, that if they stay in school and get the grades necessary for admission to college, they will be guaranteed a Pell Grant.

The bill will target grammar schools with a significant number of students in economically

disadvantaged families and where dropout rates are the greatest.

The bill is designed to be an incentive for kids to stay in school and ultimately pursue post-secondary education.

While these students currently qualify for the Pell grant, early notification of its availability gives students an added advantage. It has been shown that early notification has stimulated learning and the desire to attend post secondary institutions in students participating in private programs.

Fattah said the 21st Scholars Program is based on private sector models such as the late Dr. Ruth Hayre's "Tell Them We Are Rising Program" and the "I Have A Dream" programs started by Eugene Lang in East Harlem.

In Lang's original class of students, 90 percent eventually graduated from high school or earned GEDs in a school where the projected graduation rate was only 25 percent. Further, the study found that 60 percent of those students did pursue higher education.

"It's critical that we try to encourage and motivate these children early," Fattah said.

By expanding the idea of the private programs to encompass the Pell Grant program that goes out to millions of students, Fattah expects to see the results that occurred at the private sector increased many times over.

Robin Leary writes for the Philadelphia Tribune

Formula

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You will want to make sure your baby will take a bottle by the time you return to work. Introduce bottles as early as 2 to 3 weeks of age, so the baby will learn to suck on the rubber nipple. A bottle of breast milk at least twice a week will help the baby adjust to going back and forth from the breast to the bottle.

It is also important to inform your employer of your plans. Hopefully, your boss will provide

you with a private area to pump and access to a refrigerator, or small cooler to store your milk. Allow about 20-30 minutes to pump both breasts.

It will take a little getting used to, but remember by breast feeding your baby you are providing the best possible nutrition.

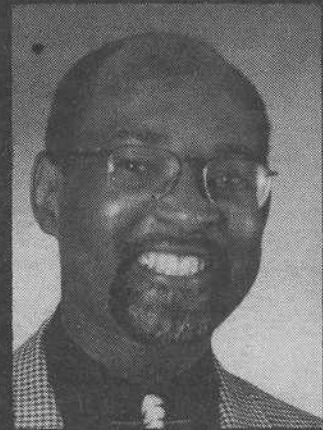
Send questions to: Kids' Nutrition Q & A, USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center, Baylor College of Medicine, One Baylor Plaza, Room 176B, Houston, TX 77030.

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