

# Former gang member excels in Baylor's SMART Program

**Special to Sentinel-Voice**  
HOUSTON — "If you are not in a gang, there is something wrong with you." That is how Jimmy Ruiz looked at life as a 13-year-old growing up in Waukegan, Ill., just outside of Chicago.

As a 21-year-old, Ruiz attends Truman State University in Kirksville, Mo. and took part in the Summer Medical and Research Training

(SMART) Program at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

The program, designed for students interested in scientific research, offers first-hand work experience in laboratories conducting biomedical projects.

So how did Jimmy Ruiz turn from gang member to a young man interested in pursuing both an M.D. and

Ph.D.?  
"One night when I was 15 years old, I was standing on the corner with other members when rival gang members drove right in front of me waving a gun," said Ruiz. "It was at that moment that I knew I had to leave gang life."

Ruiz slowly disassociated himself from the gang. By age 16 he was free. He turned to education.

He had always done well in school, and loved to study, but was often ridiculed by other

gang members for studying so hard and, in their words, trying to be "something he was not."

He credits his parents, who did not have a formal education themselves, with encouraging him to work hard in school.

"I would see my parents come home late at night very tired after working two or three jobs," said Ruiz. "They always stressed education because they said they didn't want to see me go through what they went through."

Ruiz did not dream of one

day going to medical school and becoming a doctor. It came to him by accident.

"One night I was in a movie theater, and suddenly the lights came on, and a man four seats down was having a heart attack," said Ruiz. "The man died, and I felt guilty that I couldn't do anything to help him. I took that as a sign from God that I should become a doctor."

Ruiz believes a lack of positive role models leads many kids down the wrong path

to gangs and violence. He says most of his old gang members are either dead, in jail, or still on the streets selling drugs and participating in drive-by shootings. He wants to be a positive role model.

"The SMART Program has given me a lot of confidence and shown me my goal of becoming an M.D., and Ph.D. is within reach," said Ruiz. "After I become a doctor, I want to go back to Waukegan and tell kids education is the way to go."

## Conference

(Continued from Page 2)

children even though she was only mildly handicapped.

Joining forces with other concerned and assertive education activists, Rutledge found that parents can bring about changes in federal laws and school district policies to "make the system work for their children and their communities."

Rutledge expects that parent networks formed at the conference and other similar events will "strengthen the effectiveness of our school district and our community." The conference schedule includes a first-ever African-American parents coast-to-coast videoconference, in which local participants will be hooked up by video with African-American parents in Washington, D.C.

Rutledge says the conference will provide scholarship awareness and serve as a strong entry into the school year in relation to discipline, school testing, after-school opportunities for educational enhancement, and many other facets of school programming.

Rutledge is putting the radio station's resources on the line to bring African-American parents together to discuss the crucial issue of education. Last year, the station also began sponsoring a scholarship program. "This is a win-win situation" for parents, Rutledge said. For more information or to sign up for the conference, contact Rutledge's assistant, Mrs. Diedre Holland, at 648-0104.

## Economics

(Continued from Page 5)

Washington, D.C.—the home of the most talk and least action on the planet. Over 30,000 of Black America's most talented and empowered leaders attend the Black Caucus' meetings each year. But, at the end of the three days of festivities, trade exhibits and networking, the question will remain: "Where is the leadership, commitment and concern to help blacks come together in a collective toward community ownership of businesses?"

When will we wake from our daze? Much of the talk we do is about what white people don't do for us. But, whose fault is it that substantial disparities exist between blacks and whites in wealth-building?

Hotels, restaurants, commercial districts, movie studios, theaters and banks were properties of blacks during the late 1800s and early 20th century. So, when will we start talking about reviving our entrepreneurial spirit toward saving with each other; investing in black enterprises; as well as buying shoes, clothes, groceries, cars, liquor, homes and services from each other.

If we don't make changes in our minds, leadership and actions, we'll continue as wards of the state. If more of us got our minds off waiting for government largess, we'd change our thinking and recognize our empowerment can only come from within.

If we are really working toward economic empowerment and creating black wealth

we will talk and act like this: "Every chance we can...put that dollar in another black hand."

## Women

(Continued from Page 5)

explaining the state system for accounting.

- An ongoing task force of public, statewide representation from the private sector to monitor the new system. Romer signed an executive order to do that.

- That minority and women-owned businesses be part of the job description and that work performance evaluations of those responsible for buying, as well as their supervisors, should be provided regularly.

- That two or three specific procurement areas reflecting the under the private sector and minority-owned businesses be identified.

- And new pilot programs be developed to use race and gender-conscious methods to improve their use.

Romer said he believed any new administration, Republican or Democrat, would likely continue the work started to eliminate disparity in business contracts, and he did not expect it to be abandoned once he left office.

**\$2,250 TOTAL MOVE-IN\* OR FREE BIG SCREEN TV\***

## SIMPLY THE BEST

HERE ARE 7 GREAT REASONS WHY...

1. **BEST VALUE:** From the Low 100s!
2. **BEST DESIGNS:** One- and Two-Story Homes!
3. **BEST FLOORPLANS:** Up to 2,400 sq. ft. and up to 5 bedrooms!
4. **BEST HOMESITES:** Pool-sized!
5. **BEST LOCATION:** Convenient to new schools, shopping and great freeway access!
6. **BEST FINANCING:** Total move-in of \$2,250!
7. **ALL FROM PEOPLE WHO REALLY CARE...** and know how to make your dream for a new home a comfortable reality!

EXCEPTIONAL VALUES FROM **\$116,990**



(702) 642-5808

Sales Office Open Daily  
10 am to 6 pm



Take I-15 North to Cheyenne Avenue.  
Turn right on Revere Street and left  
on Alexander to Highlands.



\*On Select Homes

