

NEWS CLIPS

MURDERS, SUICIDES RISE SHARPLY AMONG U.S. TEENS

WASHINGTON (IPS) — Two weeks after a shooting spree left 15 people dead at a high school in Colorado, a nationwide survey showed that there has been a sharp increase in the incidence of murder and suicide among U.S. teenagers during the past 20 years. The report by the independent Public Health Policy Advisory Board says that adolescent homicides and suicides now represent the No. 2 and 3 causes of death among all U.S. children, ages 1 to 19. "Increasingly, homicide and suicide pose some of the biggest risks to children in this nation," says Maria New, head of the Pediatrics Department at Cornell University Medical Center in New York. "We need to recognize that the sad events in Littleton, Colorado are indicative of larger trends in teenage violence."

BOOK HIGHLIGHTS HISTORY OF BLACK UPPER CLASS

NEW YORK (IPS) "Being Black has for too long meant that one grew up in a poor housing project, that one is not well-educated, that one does not have a father at home," said Lawrence Otis Graham, the 38-year-old author of "Our Kind of People: Inside Black America's Upper Class." In his 418-page book, Graham, a product of the Black upper class has set out to reveal a mostly ignored Black upper class world of million-dollar homes, expensive all-Black boarding schools, summer resorts, debutante balls and social clubs. Many of today's best known Black leaders from Andrew Young, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, to Vernon Jordan, the well-known corporate lawyer and confidante to President Clinton, have their roots in this Black upper class. "Not every successful black person has to be a singer or a basketball player," said the attorney, professor and author. "We need a broader definition of what it means to be Black in America."

AOL CHAIRMAN: INTERNET BECOMING A CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE

WASHINGTON (AP) — Citing figures indicating that blacks and Hispanics have less exposure to the Internet and its countless services, AOL Chairman Steve Case told an audience of civil rights advocates last week that equal access to online services is "the civil rights issue of the 21st century." "It's a question of how we make these tools available to all Americans," Case said at the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights lunch at the National Press Club. Using figures from a 1998 Commerce Department study on minority access to the Internet, Case said whites are more than twice as likely to own a computer as blacks and Hispanics. "I want the Internet to be part of the solution, not part of the problem," he said. Case also called for work place diversity and said that low numbers of minority students graduating in the technical sciences gave him reason to be concerned. But Case said AOL will try to do the best it can with strong recruitment and outreach efforts. Neither Case nor Corporate Relations Vice President David Eisner could provide figures of minority employees at AOL. With 12,000 employees, AOL is the world's largest Internet access and online service provider.

ANSWERS SOUGHT IN NYC 911 FAILURES

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City's 911 emergency response system has failed three times this year, including once in January, when a man requiring medical aid died of a heart attack. The breakdowns have left city officials and Bell Atlantic, which maintains the network, pointing fingers and fumbling for answers. No one can say precisely what's gone wrong or guarantee the \$200 million system won't fail again. While the January failure was blamed on a power outage — and the failure of a backup system — the two most recent instances, on April 28 and May 4, remain unexplained despite extensive tests of the system. "We want to get to the cause of this, to find out, 'What is it?'" said Bell Atlantic spokesman John Bonomo. "We want to make sure the system is fail-safe." On a busy day, police operating 911 in New York City receive some 30,000 calls, dozens of which are life-and-death situations. During the January service disruption, 41-year-old John Audy of Vermont, who was in Queens to celebrate his girlfriend's 40th birthday, suffered a heart attack. His girlfriend dialed 911 three times but got busy signals. Finally, she ran barefoot in 23-degree weather to a police station nearby. Audy died by the time help arrived.

Court rules on welfare payments

WASHINGTON (AP) — In its most important welfare ruling of the decade, the Supreme Court banned states from paying lower benefits to newcomers than to longtime residents.

The 7-2 decision Monday dashed the plans of California and 14 other states, and was a defeat as well for Congress and the Clinton administration. Advocates for the poor were elated.

"This is a terrific decision," said Mark Rosenbaum of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California. "California and other states now can take down their 'Poor People Keep Out' signs."

"The decision will be especially welcomed by mothers and children fleeing domestic violence."

The court said California's desired treatment of new residents would violate their constitutional right to travel. The word "travel" is not in the Constitution, yet the freedom to move from one state to another has long been considered a bedrock right.

"The state's legitimate interest in saving money provides no justification for

its decision to discriminate among equally eligible citizens," Justice John Paul Stevens wrote for the court.

"Citizens of the United States, whether rich or poor, have the right to choose to be citizens of the state wherein they reside," he said. "The states, however, do not have any right to select their citizens."

California's policy, enacted as a law in 1992 but never enforced because of lower court rulings, would have given people who lived in the state for less than a year only the amount of welfare they would have received in their previous home state.

For example, a mother and one child is eligible for \$456 a month in California but only \$275 in neighboring Arizona. The policy would have limited the California monthly benefits to \$275 for such a family's first year in the state.

California's annual welfare budget is a whopping \$2.9 billion. In any given month, some 2.6 million Californians receive some welfare benefits. The 1992 policy was aimed at saving about \$11 million a year.

Stevens said states are free

to save money by reducing welfare benefits across the board, but they cannot discriminate between longtime residents and new arrivals.

"The governor did the prudent thing and budgeted the money in the event that the court might do what it did," said Michael Bustamante, a spokesman for California Gov. Gray Davis.

The 1992 law had been supported by then-Gov. Pete Wilson, a Republican, and later by Davis, a Democrat.

It was challenged by three California women who had moved to the state to escape abusive family situations in Louisiana, Oklahoma and Colorado, respectively. Their lawsuit said the limits on their benefits, coupled with California's high cost of living, could deprive them of the basic necessities of life.

The Supreme Court in 1969 invoked the right to travel as it struck down state laws that flatly barred welfare payments to anyone who had not lived in the state for one year.

Stevens' opinion Monday included a rare high court discussion of what it means to be a "citizen" of a state,

and what "privileges and immunities" accompany that citizenship — rights the 14th Amendment provided after the Supreme Court ruled in 1866 that former slaves could not claim state citizenship.

The 14th Amendment says all people born in the United States are U.S. citizens and also are citizens of the state where they reside.

Stevens was joined by Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Antonin Scalia, Anthony M. Kennedy, David H. Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen G. Breyer.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justice Clarence Thomas dissented. "A person is no longer 'traveling' in any sense of the word when he finishes his journey to a state which he plans to make his home," Rehnquist wrote for the two.

Other states that have laws on their books providing for differing levels of welfare benefits based on length of residency are Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin.

Court to rule on whether cops can stop those who flee

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court will try to decide whether people who run away after seeing a police officer can be chased, stopped and questioned.

The justices agreed two weeks ago to use a case from a Chicago high-crime neighborhood to clarify on-the-street police powers vs. individual rights.

While many Americans might assume police have the power to chase and question someone who flees at the sight of them, lower courts have been deeply divided on the issue. The justices' decision, expected sometime in 2000, could resolve that split.

At the heart of the dispute is the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures. Courts long have interpreted that protection to mean police without court warrants cannot stop and question someone without a "reasonable suspicion" of wrongdoing.

State courts in Alaska, California, Colorado, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey and Utah have said police generally cannot make investigative stops after pursuing someone who flees after seeing them.

But state courts in

Connecticut, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin have ruled that fleeing from police can create a reasonable suspicion of criminal conduct and justify a police stop.

Federal courts also have

disagreed on the issue.

The Illinois Supreme Court used the Chicago case to bar police most often from making such investigative stops.

In appealing that ruling, state prosecutors said a

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