

Black Caucus: Clinton should end disparities in dietary guidelines

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Responding to the racial disparities in federal nutrition policy, the Congressional Black Caucus sent a strong letter to President Clinton. The timing for the letter is right as the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which form the basis for all federal nutrition programs, are being revised by a committee chosen by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services.

The letter states: "Of particular concern are the differences in the prevalence of lactose intolerance, and the gaping disparities in disease prevalence – especially for hypertension, diabetes, stroke, obesity and prostate

cancer – between people of color and Caucasians."

"We applaud the Congressional Black Caucus for taking the initiative to address this important issue, recognizing the disproportionate toll chronic diseases take on people of color," states Neal D. Barnard, M.D., president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

Affecting 70 percent of African-Americans, 90 percent of Asian Americans, 74 percent of Native Americans, and 53 percent of Mexican Americans, lactose intolerance is a major problem. More worrisome are the disparities in diet-related diseases. Prostate cancer is common among African Americans: 145.8 per

100,000 compared to 107.3 per 100,000 Caucasians. Stronger dietary recommendations could reduce the toll of these serious conditions along with diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.

According to Congresswoman Christian-Christensen, "Nutrition plays an important part in good preventive health and lifestyles. In light of what we know about disparities in African Americans and dietary implications in the diseases that we suffer from, it is important that the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans reflect these differences to ensure more accurate dietary recommendations for all Americans."

Herpes

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said. "I think it's a lot more prevalent than we think it is."

Brian Reid, a student HIV/STD Peer Education leader at CSU, said he is bombarded with questions on herpes by fellow students. "Students are very receptive," Reid said. "Once they get the information, they really understand the gravity of the situation."

Currently, the National Association For the Equal Opportunity works with Historically Black Colleges and Universities to train students to be HIV/STDS peer leaders on their

campuses.

College health centers are also filled with HIV/STD information. However, Reid said, "They'd rather ask their friend."

The NMA study recommends the development and use of vaginal microbicides or herpes vaccine as an effective approach to halt the epidemic.

There is no cure for genital herpes, but there are medications to reduce symptoms and outbreaks.

The illness is not deadly, however it can cause complications for babies born to infected mothers. Women who want to test for genital herpes should consult a physician.

Stun

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Amnesty International report, started using the belts in 1994 at its 12 high-security prisons. The 40 belts are used only in rare instances, such as transporting high-security prisoners to medical facilities, and none has ever been activated, Craig said.

A warden must approve use of any stun belt, and only a senior lieutenant can hold the remote control that activates it. The bureau prohibits use of the belts on prisoners with heart disease, epilepsy or other medical conditions, Craig said.

The U.S. Marshals

Service, which provides security for federal courts and transports suspects, has been using stun belts for disruptive prisoners since 1986, spokesman William Dempsey said. The belts have been activated "very few times," Dempsey said.

Stun belts have received wide attention since a defendant was shocked while serving as his own lawyer in Long Beach, Calif., last year. A judge ordered Ronnie Hawkins shocked because of his repeated interruptions during a sentencing hearing.

Hawkins later sued for \$50 million. A federal judge

issued a temporary injunction barring the use of stun belts in Los Angeles County courts.

The ACLU's National Prison Project also has sued in Louisiana, arguing inmates of the segregated HIV/AIDS unit of New Orleans's Old Parish Prison must wear the belts during transportation between the prison and a hospital.

Attorneys for New Orleans Parish Sheriff Charles C. Foti Jr. said in court papers that the stun belts are now used for transporting all prisoners, including the AIDS patients.

Potential

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realize that we must give thanks to both the ancestors and to God for guiding us in overcoming this struggle on graduation day.

It was our great elder stateswoman Barbara Jordan whom declared, "Education remains the key to both economic and political

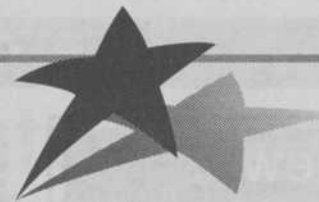
empowerment. That is why the schools charged with educating African Americans have, perhaps, the greatest, the deepest challenge of all."

Class of 1999, we are so proud of you and we are here for you as you begin your next set of endeavors.

Before you go out into the world, hang your diploma in

a prominent place for all to see, then let the cookouts and well-earned celebrations begin! Harambee (Let's pull together).

Richard M. Cooper is a motivational speaker, a member of the Association of Black Cultural Centers and is on the faculty of Widener University.



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