

Study finds drug war targets blacks

NEW YORK (AP)—The war on drugs in the United States has been waged disproportionately against blacks, with about twice as many blacks in prison on drug-related charges than whites, according to a study released last week.

Nationwide, blacks make up about 62 percent of prisoners incarcerated on drug charges, compared with 36 percent of whites, according to research done by Human Rights Watch. Census figures indicate that blacks make up about 13 percent of the U.S. population and whites — including white Hispanics — about 82 percent.

Black men are admitted to state prison on drug charges at a rate about 13 times that of white men, the study said. On average, 482 of every 100,000 black men sentenced to prison are sent there on drug charges,

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compared with just 36 of every 100,000 white men. The group said the numbers are especially striking because of federal studies that show white drug users outnumber black drug users 5-to-1.

"These racial disparities are a national scandal," said Ken Roth, executive director of the New York-based human rights group.

The study was based on 1996 figures provided by 37 states to the Justice Department. The study doesn't include data for states that did not report statistics that year.

The study did not differentiate between individuals

imprisoned for drug dealing as opposed to drug use.

Experts at the Bureau of Criminal Justice Statistics, a division of the Justice Department, say one reason for the disparity could be that drug abuse among blacks tends to be more chronic and involve harder drugs such as crack cocaine and heroin.

Barry McCaffrey, director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, told The New York Times that the high rates for blacks imprisoned on drug charges stem from the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s.

The report found that Illinois has the worst rate of racial disparity among drug offender admissions in the country: Black men are sent to prison on drug charges at 57 times the rate of white men. And blacks comprise 90 percent of all prison admissions in that state for drug charges — the highest percentage in the country.

"We as a nation can't afford to have such an astonishing percentage of our population in prison, especially when so much of it has to do with drugs," said Jamie Fellner, Human Rights Watch associate counsel and author of the report.

Fellner said that the solution to the inequity is "not to incarcerate more whites, but to reduce the use of prison for low-level drug offenders and to increase the availability of substance abuse treatment."

O.J., Denise Brown exchange insults on TV

NEW YORK (AP)—O.J. Simpson and Denise Brown exchanged insults in a televised confrontation last week, with his ex-sister-in-law calling Simpson "a pig" for suggesting she wanted to have sex with him.

Simpson called in to a live Fox News Channel discussion that included Brown. He was angry that Fox News Live host Shepard Smith had suggested Simpson testified that he had taken a polygraph after his ex-wife's murder, something Simpson has denied.

The discussion quickly turned personal.

"What makes you think you could pass it now?" said Brown, who was interviewed in a studio in Anaheim, Calif. "You murdered Nicole and you know you did it."

Simpson was acquitted of criminal charges in the 1994 murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend, Ronald Goldman. However, he was found liable for their deaths in a subsequent civil trial and was ordered to pay the victims' families \$33.5 million.

During the show Thursday, Simpson and Brown bickered over money, with Simpson saying he had been generous to the Brown family before his ex-wife's slaying and that Brown had profited from the attention she received in the aftermath of the court cases.

"I avoid the media as much as I can," said Simpson, who called from an undisclosed location. "If there's a door opening, you guys are showing up. You put your faces on

TV so you can make money. You're the only person who's benefited from this, Denise. You've made money. You're not on welfare anymore."

Brown said she and her family never received money from Simpson.

"We didn't get along because you couldn't control me," she said.

Simpson retorted: "We didn't get along because Nicole was afraid you were going to have sex with me."

"Your ego is riding a little bit too high," Brown said. "Simpson, you're a pig."

Fox News Channel's Smith tried unsuccessfully to get Simpson to commit to taking a lie-detector test.

"I'm not going to be some dancing monkey for you guys," Simpson said.

Simpson hung up after

further discussion about the polygraph.

Brown, appearing on a later Fox News Channel show Thursday, said that after the argument, Simpson called her mother and apologized for some of his comments.

Williams guest presenter at Rose Awards

Sentinel-Voice

Veteran actor Billy Dee Williams has committed to passing out a special community recognition at the 15th Annual Rose Awards at the Alexis Park Resort on 375 E. Harmon Ave.

The awards ceremony, which honors the achievements of minority women, will be held Saturday, July 15. The event starts at 6 p.m. with cocktails and is followed by the presentation of awards in six separate categories.

Church workers, caretakers, nursery school teachers and professional women will be jockeying for a Rose Award in the following areas: academic achievements,



BILLY DEE WILLIAMS economic/business achievements, community achievements, humanitarian (charitable/social/family), outstanding student, and the grand prize, the "overall" Rose Award presented by

Williams.

The Rose Awards is sponsored by the Professional Black Women's Alliance, a nonprofit organization which has been recognizing the contributions of women of color for the past 15 years.

The alliance provides seminars and workshops for young women to hone their marketing skills.

City Councilwoman Lynette Boggs-McDonald will emcee the event. City Councilman Lawrence Weekly, Assemblyman Wendell Williams and judges Michael Douglas and Lee Gates will present awards.

Those interested can call 631-0000 or 313-5257.

Springsteen sings about Diallo case

NEW YORK (AP)—Bruce Springsteen, in his warm-up performance before opening a 10-night stand in New York, introduced a new song apparently inspired by last year's police slaying of an unarmed West African immigrant in the Bronx.

The New Jersey rocker, playing Sunday night with his E Street Band in Atlanta, debuted "American Skin (41 Shots)" about a third of the way into the three-hour show.

Ed Cronin, 39, a die-hard Springsteen fan who attended the show, said the Boss never mentioned the victim, Amadou Diallo. "He just said, 'This is a new song called 'American Skin (41 Shots),' and they started playing," Cronin recalled.

The song opens with Springsteen repeating the words "41 shots, 41 shots" — the number of bullets fired at Diallo by four police officers who mistook his wallet for a gun. The 22-year-old man from Guinea was hit by 19 of the bullets and killed in the vestibule of his apartment building. The four officers involved in the shooting were acquitted of murder in February.

According to one fan, the song contains the line, "Is this your wallet? Is this your life?" At another point, Springsteen reportedly sings, "You can get killed just for living in your American skin."

The song is unrecorded and unreleased, and came as a complete surprise to the sold-out crowd in the Philips Arena.

"It's one of the great Springsteen songs of the last 15 years," said Cronin.

The song sparked much comment on the Internet, where fans who were at the Atlanta show universally agreed with Cronin.

"Wow!! What a powerful song," wrote one visitor to a site for Springsteen fans. "Powerful and poignant."

A Springsteen spokesman had no comment on the new material or its inspiration.

TONY BROWN ENDORSES LEGAL PLAN

A new kind of legal insurance that aims to protect minorities against racial profiling is selling faster in New York than anywhere else in the US, highlighting the City's increasingly strained police-community relations.

The novel plan arms policyholders with around-the-clock legal help and wallet-size cards to help clients assert their right to any attorney if ever stopped by cops.

The idea for the plan, offered through Pre-Paid Legal Services, came from Tony Brown. Brown is a New York journalist and host of "Tony Brown's Journal" on PBS. "Response has been excellent," said Brown, who also has a New York-based radio call in show that he has used at times to informally promote Legal Shield. "You don't have to tell black people they need it. It's like, 'where can I sign up?'"

Pre-Paid Legal Services was founded in 1972, mostly to help protect white-collar businessmen from civil suits. Harlan Stonecipher, the company's president, has expanded the plan's benefits so that Pre-Paid Legal Services now is to legal problems and attorney fees what medical insurance and HMO's are to doctor bills.

The idea behind Legal Shield is to "even the playing field," said Stonecipher, who used the name of Abner Louima — the Haitian immigrant tortured in a Brooklyn station house bathroom recently — in discussing the plan.

"If Abner Louima, as they were taking him to that bathroom had had a Legal Shield card, I don't believe it would ever had happened," said Stonecipher. "I can't prove that, but he was a Haitian immigrant who police probably figured was not aware of his legal rights."

"If he had had that card, they would have known that here is someone who not only has access to a lawyer, but he has a lawyer he can call at 2 a.m. It would have changed everything."

Persons interested in finding about Pre-Paid Legal Services locally can call Fred Willis at (702) 360-6665 or Ralph Shackelford at (702) 255-5433.

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