

Pastors

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that sin."

Hundreds of ministerial leaders stepped forward at the Jakes conference, confessing to weaknesses, failures and sins that they would normally preach about to their congregations. Following the conference, Jakes has been directing pastors to the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) in Forest, Va., which has a network of 7,000 counselors across the country.

Timothy E. Clinton, president of the AACC, says many ministers are conflicted. "In ministry, we're often placed on a pedestal and expected to be perfect. And in many ways, that is scriptural. God expects for us to lead from a position of strength and to be 'blameless' like the word says in I Timothy 3:2," Clinton explains. "And out of that I think we first detach ourselves almost from being human. So it's the human parts of ourselves that get hidden. They say, 'If I do show some type of weakness or sin in my life, where do I turn without being betrayed and sold out?'"

Steve Gallagher, president of Pure Life Ministries, a Dry Ridge, Ky.-based counseling center for Christians plagued with sexual misbehavior, is not as sympathetic.

"Number one, if a man is serious and really wants help, if he's to the point that he's desperate for help, he is going to find it," says the former Los Angeles police officer. "And number two, the Lord is a factor in this as well because when a man starts crying out for

help to the Lord, God answers and He will do what he can to help a person."

Dennis, the pastor from Richmond, did not cry out for help.

"People see their minister as a kind of a robot, I guess. And if you reach out for help, it shows that you are human. People don't want their minister to be human. They want a god," he says. He pointed out that most biblical heroes had flaws. David, for example, was an adulterer and murderer. Paul had persecuted Christians. Dennis says, "That why God used them."

Dennis, whose story has made headlines in Richmond, says he feels better now that he has no more secrets about his lifestyle. His congregation voted to keep him as pastor. "I've lost a bunch of so-called friends," he says. "I don't get to preach at other churches anymore. Other than that, I'm okay."

Jakes says pastors play a special role in Black America.

"The Black community has never had a president, only a preacher. And from Frederick Douglass to Martin Luther King to Jesse Jackson to Al Sharpton to T. D. Jakes, it doesn't matter who you want to name, they're always clergy," he says. "And so, if we lose our clergy, what then? We must preserve them. And when they're sick, we must heal them. And when they're broken, we must fix them."

No one knows how many pastors need to be fixed. A "Christianity Today" magazine survey discovered that 23 percent of the 300 pastors who responded to its survey admitted to having been sexually involved with someone other than their wife.

Hasani Pettiford, author of the book, "Pimpin' from the

Pulpit to the Pews, Exposing & Expelling the Spirit of Lust in the Church," writes that sexual immorality has been the church's dirty little secret.

"Sex has not been given the attention that it deserves within the body of Christ. For this very reason, it has been one of the most overwhelming problems in the church," he writes. "A former Baptist preacher once said that sex within the church is so bad that condoms should be passed around in offering baskets and preachers should be the first in line to receive them. Dirty deacons, evil elders and perverted preachers have relentlessly sexually preyed on their own congregations."

In his latest book, "HEMOTIONS, Even Strong Men Struggle," Jakes observes: "Our men are in crisis. It's hard to be everybody's hero. Even Superman has got to take his cape off sometimes and be Clark Kent. And I think that it's vitally important that pastors find that refuge."

The "Leading While Bleeding" conference was just a beginning, Jakes says.

He plans to build a center where troubled pastors and their spouses can get help out of the public spotlight.

"You can't just go to a secular place when you have a spiritual problem. You are a spiritual being so your [perspective] affects how you process sin, how you process marriage, how you process lust. It's all filtered through this religious filter," Jakes says. "And I would love to be a part of lighting a candle for pastors and their wives."

Texas board recommends unique death row reprieve

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (AP)—The Texas parole board Tuesday recommended delaying the state's first execution of a Black woman to give her lawyers more time to investigate her claims of innocence.

Gov. Rick Perry can agree with the board's 5-1 vote or allow the execution to go ahead as scheduled Wednesday. There was no immediate comment from the governor's office.

"I'm cautious until the governor endorses the recommendation," said David Dow, one of Newton's lawyers, noting that Perry rejected a clemency recommendation earlier this year for a mentally ill inmate.

Frances Newton, 39, was convicted in the 1987 shooting deaths of her husband and two children, ages 20 months and 7. Prosecutors said Newton killed her family to collect \$100,000 in insurance benefits.

The parole board recommended delaying her execution for four months so her attorneys can conduct new ballistics tests on the pistol prosecutors said was the murder weapon and chemical analysis on the clothing she was

wearing.

On Monday, Texas' highest criminal court refused to delay the execution, as did a federal appeals court in New Orleans on Tuesday.

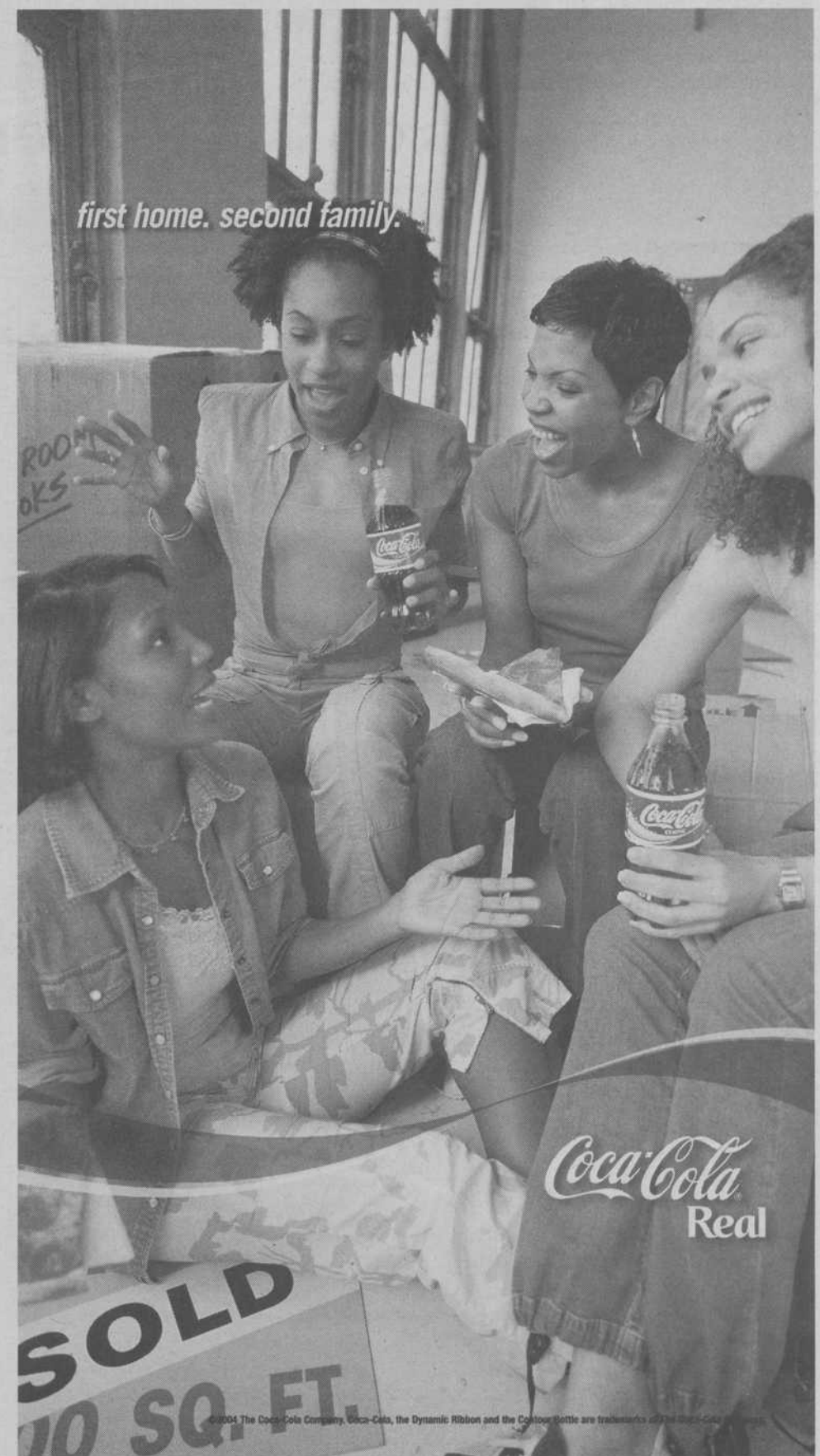
Prosecutors have opposed the requests, saying Newton's claims were resolved at her trial and are nothing new.

Ten women have been executed in the United States since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976, two of them in Texas. Newton would be the fourth woman executed in Texas since the Civil War.

Newton's punishment was shaping up as a relatively low-key affair, unlike in 1998, when hundreds of demonstrators and reporters flocked to the prison as Karla Faye Tucker was executed for hacking a man to death with a 3-foot pickax.

Two years later, 62-year-old Betty Lou Beets went to her death for killing her fifth husband.

About 50 women are on death row in the United States.



Ministers

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they were herded into refugee camps without access to food, clean water, shelter or proper medical care.

Susan Dilla spoke of the plight of children in the country.

"The greatest fear is that because the kids have no food and no clothes that many of them will die," she said. "The weather right now is cold and they don't have a place to sleep — just tents — so the mosquitoes bite them and they get sick."

After Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Sudan he declared that "genocide" had taken place in Darfur. The U.S. government has spoken out against the genocide and has sent \$300 million in aid to date for food, shelter, access to clean water, and basic health services. However, these efforts have not stopped the Janjaweed, and 300,000 refugees are likely to die this year.

The campaigners want the U.S. government to press the United Nations to impose

economic sanctions and prepare to send in a peacekeeping force if the Sudanese government fails to act. The Sudan's government, the National Islamic Front, seized power from the democratically elected former Sudanese government in 1989. As well as favoring ethnic Arab groups, it has sought to impose Islamic law — even though many Africans are Christian. Some refugees told of being jailed and beaten for preaching Christianity.

"They told me, 'Now if you go back to Islam, we will leave you alone,'" said Yual Ater, a bible college student who had to leave his wife and baby son in Sudan.

Ahmed Iya, a pastor from Ethiopia who has worked with refugees in Sudan, said governments need to look at what is happening on the ground, rather than dealing solely with people in power. That's why Rwanda happened," he said, "because no one was listening to people at the grassroots."

Helen Silvis writes for the Portland Skanner in Oregon.