

Minority foster children used in biased HIV tests

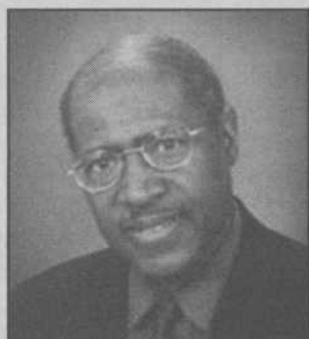
By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Here we go again. The Associated Press has reported that some minority foster children who are HIV-infected have been used in medical experiments to test potent AIDS drugs by federally-funded researchers without the proper protection of their rights.

The research was funded in the 1990s by the National Institutes of Health for foster care agencies in Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Colorado and Texas, which were seeking treatment for the disease for poor and minority children. The trade-off, however, appeared to be that children were delivered into the hands of researchers who did not abide by the formal guidelines for "Protection of Human Subjects" that all researchers are expected to follow. The result was that many of the children in these studies suffered unknown harm to their health. Others suffered side-effects, such as rashes, vomiting, sharp drops in infection-fighting blood cells and even higher death rates. The guidelines are applicable to most universities and research institutions in the country and mandate that the researcher inform the research subject who is cooperating with the study of the possible side-effects and other aspects of the process.

But the problem is compounded when children who have not reached legal age and who do not have parents are included in such studies, because parents or legal guardians are the ones who consent to the involvement of children in such research. Because there were no parents in the case of this AIDS research, researchers promised NIH in writing that they would use advocates for each child even though they failed to do so. The Associated Press indicated that Illinois officials believe none of their foster children in the Chicago Children's Memorial Hospital study were afforded such protection; Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City found advocates for about one-third (142 of 465) of the children used by researchers in their state; and John Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore said they provided no advocates for the children in their study.

Oddly enough, the office for the Protection of Human Subjects at NIH was created after the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis experiments that involved Black men in the 1930s, however, the record of this office has been spotty at best in protecting minority children from medical exploitation.



RON WALTERS

I was involved in a medical research case in the early 1990s funded by NIH in several cities that sought to find out whether minority youth who committed violent acts were susceptible to violence because of their genetic heritage. This research came to light because a director of the Alcohol and Drug

Abuse Institute said that he could deal with the problem of youth violence by just finding a "genetic marker" for violence and treating the youth with a violence-inhibiting drug before the age of five. The outrage to this plan attracted the attention of the Congressional Black Caucus and the new Secretary of Health and Human Services (the parent body of NIH), and before long, this director was gone. He was gone, but the research continues until this day!

The fact that we have yet another Tuskegee-type case of illegal and unethical medical experimentation involving Blacks and other minorities should again invite vigorous examination by the CBC and other leaders in the Black community. One major reason for such oversight is that Blacks harbor legitimate suspicion about medical experimentation due to such cases that keep feeding it. In 2003, a report was released by the Institute of Medicine, also at NIH that, in part, supported the view that racism was a powerful source of the gap in a variety of diseases of Blacks and Whites. The report suggested that because racism contributed to the reticence of Blacks to seek medical assistance the gap might be narrowed if they had more confidence in the American medical establishment.

Another change might also help. When we were attempting to bring attention to the responsibility of NIH to monitor research proposals to exclude the racist research involving genetics and violence, I proposed that changes should be made to the process involving the human subjects' protection.

The NIH board for the Protection of Human Subjects is made up largely of scientists, but there needs to be more ethicists and even social scientists whose job it is to be sensitive to the social implications of such research. The NIH has responded to this recent case meekly by looking at an institution in one state, but funding for all of them should be halted and the process strengthened. And our medical sentries should see that it is done.

Ron Walters a professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland-College Park.

Clinton: Blacks need to win over White voters

By Jamal E. Watson
Special to Sentinel-Voice
(2nd of Two Parts)

NEW YORK (NNPA) - Former President Bill Clinton says that he's encouraged that more African-Americans are running for national office, but is surprised that there is only one African-American currently serving in the United States Senate.

In a recent interview with the *Amsterdam News* at his Harlem office, Clinton said that he's excited about the candidacy of Kweisi Mfume, the former president of the NAACP who is seeking to return to politics after resigning from Congress in 1996 to lead the 95-year-old civil rights organization.

Mfume is running for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Paul Sarbanes, who announced that he would not seek re-election. Clinton also expressed optimism in the candidacy of Rep. Harold Ford, Jr. (D-Tenn.), who is running for the U.S. Senate seat in his state, hoping to replace retiring Republican Senate Majority Leader Bill Frisk, who will retire next year.

"The thing I like about Kweisi Mfume is that he doesn't hide from his tattered past," Clinton said, referenc-

ing Mfume's early run-ins with the law before he was elected to the Baltimore City Council and then to the U.S. Congress.

"He's a devoted father, and he's really smart, I mean really smart — and a very able and articulate public servant, so I'm hopeful about him," Clinton said.

A win by Mfume and Ford would mean that for the first time in U.S. history there would be three African-Americans serving simultaneously in the 100-member legislative body. Barack Obama, of Illinois, is currently the lone African-American in the U.S. Senate. Prior to his win, Carol Moseley Braun, also of Illinois, was the last Black elected to the U.S. Senate. She served from 1992-1998.

"The thing I really liked about what Barack Obama did was he proved that if you said the same thing in every place and you weren't afraid of people and you went out and met them where they were, you could get Whites and Blacks to vote for you," said Clinton.

A win by Ford in the state that former Vice President Al Gore lost to President George W. Bush in 2000 would result in a major coup

for the Democrats, Clinton said.

"Harold has a proven ability to get everybody at least to give him a listen," said Clinton. "And if he can win Tennessee, it's really big, because Tennessee has been turning Republican."

Clinton said that he was surprised that more Blacks had not been elected to national office given that there is so much talent in the community.

"Now, the only thing I've ever worried about is that there are so many opportunities for gifted African-Americans in the private sector now that we may not have as many good people in politics as we need," he said.

"But I think we need more African-Americans who can win, in majority White environments. I think it would be great for the country because most people's racial prejudice or reserve is not based on something being wrong with their heart; it's based purely on a lack of experience, a lack of personal contact, a lack of knowledge," he said.

It is very obvious after one step into Clinton's Harlem office, that he has had a long fascination with
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level of income, or wealth, that you are no longer a member of the group that paid the price, in some form or fashion, for you to get there. It is inappropriate for those of us at the lower end of the economic continuum to be envious of and try to pull down those who have done well.

All over this country, we see inappropriate behavior by Black adults. In our political arena especially, we see "politricksters" smiling and doing the election-year mating dance that often turns into the "stomp" after they get elected. We see more and more of our preachers capitulating to their selfish desires to have more money and more stuff, and sliding deeper and deeper into the abyss of immorality and unethical behavior.

In Detroit, we see a city that is 85 percent Black, with a Black mayor, and cannot get together on building a Black business enclave like several other ethnic business areas in that town. Washington, D.C., the original Chocolate City, still has Black folks mired in a rut of marginalization and lack of ownership and

control.

In Harlem, what used to be called Black is now a potpourri, a veritable hodgepodge of ethnic groups, all owning their businesses and selling their wares to a Black population in which its men have a 50 percent unemployment rate.

In North Carolina, we see Bennett and Barber Scotia Colleges barely hanging on financially, despite a statewide economic initiative for Black colleges.

In Cincinnati, nearly 50 percent Black, inappropriate behavior by Black folks includes duping their own people out of their homes, selling their people out for personal gain, corruption by Black political officials, and slick ministers looking for their next handout — or payoff.

Until we discontinue our inappropriate behavior, we have no reason to expect appropriate behavior from our children. So let's stop the hypocrisy.

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minister and her mother, Angelena, was a school teacher. The *Washington Post* profile revealed, "On both sides of her family, Condi Rice is descended from White slave owners as well as Black slaves; and the slaves were mostly 'house slaves,' as opposed to 'field slaves,' according to Connie Rice

[Condoleezza's cousin]."

Many middle-class Blacks waited for working class African-Americans to bring down barriers that would especially benefit better educated African-Americans.

"Condi Rice says her father embraced [the movement's] goals, but not its means," the profile of her explained. "My father was not

a march-in-the-street preacher,' she says. He strenuously opposed the tactic that ultimately broke White business resistance to ending segregation in stores downtown — recruiting children to march into police commissioner Bull Connor's phalanx of officers, police dogs and fire hoses, and overflow the jails. 'He saw no reason to put children at risk,'

Rice says. 'He would never put his own children at risk.'" But others did. And their courage should not be politically exploited by those who stood on the sidelines and refused to take similar risks.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com.