

Snoop rallies for Crips co-founder Williams

SAN QUENTIN, Calif. (AP) - Rapper Snoop Dogg urged Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Saturday to grant clemency to convicted murderer and Crips co-founder Stanley Tookie Williams so he can continue his work with young people. "Stanley Tookie Williams is not just a regular old guy, he's an inspirator," the rap-

per and former Crips member told a crowd of about 1,000 outside San Quentin State Prison. Schwarzenegger said this past week that he was "dreading" the decision. In prison, however, he gained international acclaim for writing children's books about the dangers of gang life. An award-winning tele-



Rapper-actor-television show host Snoop Dogg, top right, above the crowd outside of the San Quentin State Penitentiary at a rally for death row inmate Stanley Tookie Williams in San Quentin, Calif., on Saturday. Williams has become a role model since incarceration.

me to want to do something positive with my life and to go touch the kids."

The rapper had wanted to visit Williams on death row, but his application was denied by prison officials because of his criminal record. Snoop Dogg has been arrested several times for weapons and drug-related offenses, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Organizers played a new Snoop Dogg song called "Real Soon," which promotes Williams' advocacy work.

Todd Chretien, who works with the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, an advocacy group that helped organize the rally, implored the governor to grant clemency.

"There is no reason on Earth to kill him, and there is every reason to keep him alive," he said.

Are HIV diagnoses falling in Blacks?

ATLANTA (AP) - The rate of newly reported HIV cases among Blacks has been dropping by about 5 percent a year since 2001, the government said Thursday. But Blacks are still eight times more likely than Whites to be diagnosed with the AIDS virus.

"The racial disparities remain severe," said Lisa Lee, an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The falling rate among Blacks seems to be tied to overlapping drops in diagnoses among injection drug users and heterosexuals, CDC researchers said.

The study was based on 2001-04 data from 33 states that have name-based reporting systems for HIV. Health officials do not know which diagnoses represent new infections and which ones were infections people had for years but had just discovered.

The CDC found that overall diagnoses in the 33 states decreased slightly, from 41,207 cases in 2001 to 38,685 in 2004. The rate fell from 22.8 cases per 100,000 people in 2001 to 20.7 per 100,000 in 2004.

The decline was more pronounced among Blacks — the rate dropped from 88.7 per 100,000 in 2001 to 76.3 in 2004. Among Whites, the rate rose slightly from 8.7 to 9.0.

At least part of the decline among Blacks appears to be tied to a 9 percent annual decline in diagnoses among injection drug users, who can get the virus from contaminated needles. More than half of the drug users were Black, Lee said.

The decline is also linked to a 4 percent decline in diagnoses among heterosexuals. About 69 percent of the heterosexuals diagnosed with HIV were Black.

Diagnoses among men who have sex with men remained roughly stable from 2001 to 2003 but climbed 8 percent between 2003 and 2004. That was true for men of all races, CDC officials said. But they could not explain the recent increase.

In New York, needle exchange programs helped explain declining HIV infection rates, said state Health Department spokeswoman Claire Pospisil. New York introduced needle exchanges in 1992, and 114,500 people have participated, she said.

Most public health researchers say such programs have been clearly effective against the spread of HIV, but some argue they work against efforts to fight drug abuse.

"The AIDS virus is spread through voluntary behavior. An unlimited supply of needles will not alter behavior patterns of irresponsible and often psychotic addicts," the conservative Family Research Council said in a statement.

The government does not know exactly how many people have HIV. Roughly, 25 percent of people living with HIV do not know they are infected, health officials said.

The study for the first time includes data from New York, which accounted for more than 20 percent of the diagnoses seen in the 33 states. The inclusion of New York data gives a "more representative picture" of what's going on," Lee said.

California and Illinois are among the states still missing from the database.

vision movie starring Jamie Foxx, "Redemption," was based on his life.

Snoop Dogg, 33, whose real name is Calvin Broadus, said Williams inspired him to work with young people. The

rapper said he was once a gang member and now does youth outreach activities, including running a football league for youngsters.

"I didn't get this from somebody that was on the

streets. I got this from Stanley Tookie Williams, a brother that was locked up on death row," he said, wearing a white T-shirt with huge black letters that said savetookie.org. "He inspired

Tookie

(Continued from Page 1) scenes could be linked to Williams. A witness' description of a suspect seen leaving one of the scenes did not fit Williams, either.

A shotgun shell supposedly matched a weapon Williams had bought several years earlier, but that gun was in the possession of a couple facing serious felony charges. After they claimed that Williams had confessed to them, the investigation

against them was dropped.

The trial was later moved from Los Angeles to Torrance, a predominantly White, conservative area, and prosecutor, Robert Martin, not only successfully challenged all the African-Americans in the jury pool, but was said to have used inflammatory, "racist" language.

In his closing argument, Martin likened Williams to a Bengal tiger in the zoo and

said that "in his environment," he would behave like the tiger in its natural habitat.

The state Supreme Court later censured Martin twice for his racist practices. Death sentences he won in two other cases were overturned because of racism.

In the clemency petition filed to California Supreme Court, it calls on Schwarzenegger to "save Stanley Williams in the name

of so many who see this man as a symbol of hope and purpose in their own lives."

As the countdown approaches, a lawyer for the Williams camp, Jonathan Harris, expressed hope of a victory.

He said, "I think Gov. Schwarzenegger is a conscientious man, and we trust that he will take this matter very seriously."

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