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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Risk of STD up in Black youth

By Lorinda M. Bullock
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - A new study says even though Blacks ages 18-26 are practicing safer sex than their White counterparts are, they still are "nearly 25 times more likely to be infected than White young people engaging in the same behavior."

The study, "Sexual and Drug Behavior Patterns and HIV/STD Racial Disparities: The Need for New Directions," shows Black youth in this age group aren't drinking, smoking or using drugs as much as Whites their age, but, statistically, they have a greater chance of having sex with someone who has an STD because the prevalence is so high in the Black community.

"The interesting thing about the paper is that it's saying for African-Americans, it's not about your behavior. It's more likely about your partner's behavior and whether your partner has a sexually transmitted infection," said the study's lead author Denise Hallfors.

Hallfors, a senior research scientist at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation in Chapel Hill, N.C., said her findings were based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescents. Nearly 9,000 young people, Black and White, were surveyed in 1995 and data was collected again in 2001.

In addition to asking the young people about their sexual behavior, Hallfors said they were also tested for STDs. Then, researchers classified the participants in 16 different behavior "clusters," ranging from what Hallfors said was "everything from never had sex, never did any substances, to people who sell sex for money."

She said that for young Blacks who tended to have the least risky behavior — fewest sexual partners and little or no drug or alcohol use — the chances of them catching an STD was eight to 10 times higher.

"For African-Americans even in the lowest risk, most conventional group, instead of 3 percent for Whites, it was 20 percent that had some kind of HIV or STD," Hallfors said.

This news was especially disturbing to 22-year-old Howard University student Shari Logan.

"Immediately, I thought that the odds are always against us as a young African-American. You're trying to do what's right and you're saying, 'Okay I'm not going to be stupid and have sex with everyone, I'm still just going to kind of play it safe and use a condom' and yet you're still — you're chances are greater? So, I thought, 'Wow, what can you do, except, maybe, just complete abstinence?'"

Jennifer Kates, Vice President and Director of HIV Policy for the Kaiser Family Foundation, said Logan is right and that abstinence is the only 100 percent effective way to prevent STDs.

"The Centers for Disease and Control, National Institutes of Health, and most organizations recommend if you choose to have sex, use a condom correctly every time. So, the message [of the study] is not a message that what you're [Black youth] doing is not what other young people might be doing sexually; it's that if you choose to have sex, you have to have safer sex. The chances of a Black young person coming into contact with somebody who's HIV positive when they have sex are higher," Kates said.

Hallfors said there were a number of reasons why it's easier for a young Black person to come across a partner with an STD.

"African-Americans have sex with other African-
(See STD, Page 4)

Kwanzaa honors unity

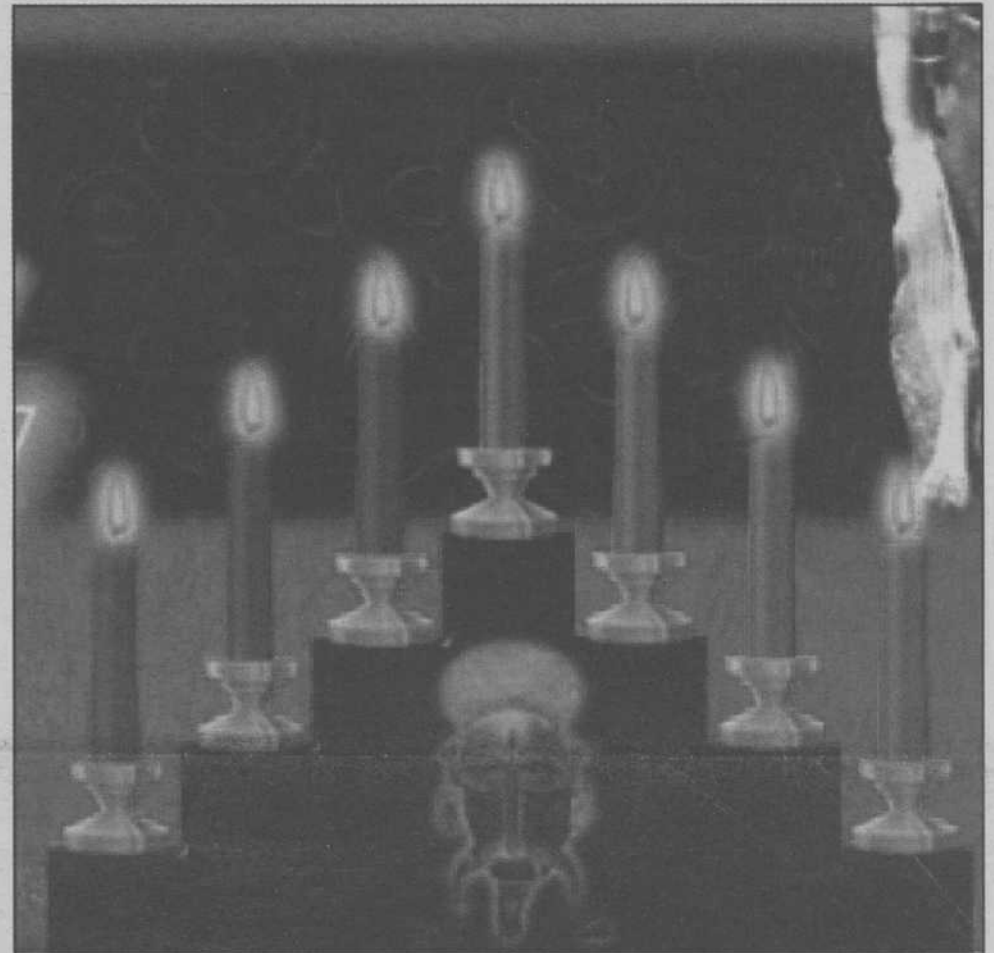
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Kwanzaa is widely celebrated internationally and is now a second to third generation tradition in the U.S. It is intended as a spiritual remembrance of the past and a festive celebration of the present and future.

The festive celebration was founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga. It is a time during which African-Americans celebrate and reflect upon their rich heritage. Kwanzaa is more symbolic than religious. The name derives from the Kiswahili phrase "Matunda Ya Kwanza," which means "first fruits."

On each of the Seven Days of Kwanzaa a specific guiding principle-of-the-day is the focus of discussion. Gifts may be given during the daily ceremony or during the final celebratory feast.

Some African-Americans
(See Kwanzaa, Page 2)



Officials look back, ahead

By Frank Armand Albano
Sentinel-Voice

Three African-American elected officials, making their bids for re-election in 2007, recall notable accomplishments, some of the challenges and share what they envision ahead for their respective areas.

Las Vegas City Council member, Lawrence Weekly, represents Ward 5, encompassing the Historic Westside community and several surrounding neighborhoods. North Las Vegas Council member and Mayor Pro Tem Bill Robinson represents North Las Vegas Ward 2. Clark County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates represents District D. She is in her fourth term.

Councilman Lawrence Weekly, who was first appointed to the council seat in 1999 by Mayor Oscar Goodman, made two successive election bids and is now seeking his third term. He spoke by phone from his

home in an exclusive interview.

"First of all, in representing Ward 5, it looks easier than it really is. I have to juggle everything, and there's always two or three people who are still not happy. I've had a varied three and a half years, and although it may not look like it to some, I've accomplished

a lot," Weekly said.

"Ward 5 takes in most of West Las Vegas and has more of a predominantly Black population than the other six wards that make up Las Vegas," he continued.

"But of all the projects that have come before me, some written in stone, the one that stands out is the grocery store issue... The issue

has ruffled feathers and caused a huge community outcry," Weekly said.

"Last year, the city received a letter of interest from recruiter and developer DLC UrbanCore. The recruiter has until December 31 [this year] to recruit a Krogers-type grocery store to anchor the Las Vegas Enterprise Park Project. Located at MLK and Lake Mead Blvd. The recruiter has yet to recruit the 40,000 sq. foot grocery store," he stated.

Weekly named getting a "grocery store up and running" as "my first goal in 2007," adding "so the folks don't have to go two miles to get to the nearest supermarket. It's long overdue."

He named as another key goal a personal desire to "do better."

"I know we have poor communications between my office and the community, and I will work with [the elected official] in Ward 1
(See Visions, Page 2)



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

North Las Vegas City Councilman William Robinson reflected on his advocacy and talked about the area's future.