

Group prepares women to be independent

By Sheri Madison Kwarteng
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Thirty-seven-year-old Barbara Terrell recently graduated from her Women in All Trades career training and placement program. It is a program that has helped her land a job as a construction contractor doing windows.

But just two years ago, Terrell's morbid outlook on life did not render the possibility of such an accomplishment. She had been stabbed 12 times by the father of her twin boys, she had lost her home, her children and her job, making her physical and mental recovery process a daunting task. Following her month-long hospital stay, Terrell had nowhere else to turn but a chain of Washington, D.C., homeless shelters, in which she found it impossible to retain her personal belongings.

"People would steal in the shelters, so I had no clothes — I had been stripped all the way down to nothing," said Terrell, a Brooklyn, N. Y., native who has been a D.C. resident for the past seven years. "Even if I did have my clothes, I had lost five sizes after being stabbed, so nothing really fit me anymore."

But Terrell recalled a place where she had built a network of support two years before the stabbing and decided to once again seek refuge. She was welcomed with open arms.

"I came back home, back to the source and was greeted by the same smiling faces," said Terrell. "I was given a suit and a lot of support and encouragement."

The "source," also known as Dress for Success, is an international non-profit organization that has suited and mentored over 400,000 women worldwide since its inception in 1996. Its Washington, D.C., affiliate has been operative since the fall of 2002, and takes pride in the fact that it has suited over 40,000 women alone.

Mormon

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Martins, was a member of the Second Quorum of Seventy from 1990-95. He died in 2005.

In Africa, more than 2,000 men serve in local and regional leadership posts, spokeswoman Kim Farah said.

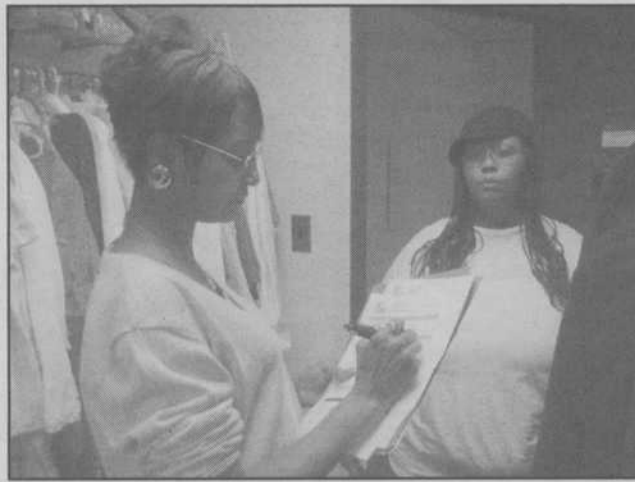
Gray and Wolsey said the change in 1978 was good for all members of the church, not just for Blacks.

"It removed an impediment that stood between the brotherhood and sisterhood that needed to be removed," Gray said. "It has allowed Blacks and Whites — not just Blacks — to be more open about these issues, to embrace one another and to be the Christians that God intended us to be."

Dress for Success was started in New York by Nancy Lublin who was a law school student at the time. With the support of three nuns from Spanish Harlem, who were well versed in running public service programs, and a \$5,000 inheritance she received from her father, Lublin launched Dress for Success New York in 1996. Just two years later, in the fall of 1998, several other women established Dress for Success affiliate locations in 20 additional locations. Within a year, the number of affiliate locations had more than doubled to 50. Today, there are more than 75 Dress for Success affiliate locations within the U.S., New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Dress for Success prepares women in the midst of socioeconomic transitions for career placement. To become a client, a woman must be referred to Dress for Success by an agency partner; these are usually career placement organizations. Once referred, a woman is given the opportunity to work with a Dress for Success personal shopper to select a suit, shoes and accessories for an interview. When a client lands a job, she is welcomed back to select another suit and coordinates for her first day on the job. Dress for Success also provides career consulting and has a number of job retention programs.

Each location is staffed adequately with passionate and caring individuals that go above and beyond the call of duty to assist their clients. One of those smiling faces that welcomed Terrell was Melissa Frazier, the Dress for Success D.C. program manager. "It's such a blessing for me just to be a part of the process. For some of women, it's the first time they've ever worn a suit," said Frazier, a 27-year-old New Mexico native. "It's an incredible feeling to be able to make this



Sentinel-Voice photo by Sheri Madison Kwarteng

Dress for Success office manager Cynthia Coleman helps a client shop for a suit. The group helps empower women.

type of contribution to someone's life on a daily basis."

Frazier's screen saver says it all: "I am the vessel."

Since finding refuge in Dress for Success two years ago, Terrell has been on the

rebound, stopping at nothing to rebuild her life. After enrolling in Arbor Development and Training, a workforce development program that shares a facility with D.C.'s Dress for Success organization, she has

remained employed, regained custody of her 6-year-old twin boys and has established permanent housing. Six months ago, Terrell decided to pursue another career path in construction, and she is well on her way.

Cynthia Coleman is another testament to the Dress for Success mission. She held steady employment until she was laid off in 2004 and had to rely on public assistance.

Realizing that she needed to retool her administrative skills, she enrolled the Arbor Development & Training program in 2006, and was referred to Dress for Success after scheduling her first job interview.

"I was really nervous during my first suiting, but then I began to feel more comfort-

able with the people here and environment," said Coleman.

So comfortable, she returned to apply for a job with Dress for Success last year. Now, as office manager and personal shopper, Coleman has the opportunity to give that same warm welcome to incoming clients that might have some anxiety about the process.

Roslyn Woodland from northeast D.C. was all smiles on her way out of the Dress for Success facility. She was referred by Miriam's Kitchen eight months ago, a D.C.-based program that provides breakfast to the homeless every weekday morning.

She said smiling, "I'm starting a temp assignment next week, and I just picked up an outfit and some shoes — all Anne Klein."

Job fair for ex-felons has crowd

By Chris Levister

Special to Sentinel-Voice

SAN BERNARDINO (NNPA) — When former crane operator Benjamin Glass, 38, parked his beat up Ford truck at the site of a job fair near the corner of Base Line and L Street in San Bernardino recently, he fully expected to see many of the big companies who paid him a dollar an hour for prison labor during his incarceration for drug possession.

He couldn't have been more wrong. What he found were nine, mostly local, employers set up in the parking lot of Spirit of Love Church and close to 2,000 probationers and parolees waiting in a line that wrapped around the corner.

"It was sheer pandemonium. There was an air of hope and desperation. People were filling out applications on the backs of other people, hoods of cars, anyplace they

could find to write."

By noon, Glass had been waiting three hours, he was among a glut of job seekers who turned out for a job fair in which the one trait they have in common is typically the last thing they would put on their resumes: All of them have criminal histories.

"I paid my debt. I have a skill. I've been clean for five years," he said. Job seekers were required to take a drug test before they could start

the application process.

"I want a second chance to work in my field, but no one will hire me. I made a mistake and got involved in drugs, but it shouldn't ruin my life," said Glass dressed in a black shirt and tie, clutching his tattered resume.

He was one of hundreds of unemployed ex-inmates turned away after organizers ran out of drug test kits and were forced to shut down two

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Byrd

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A decade later, according to Diggles, some people are still afraid to visit Jasper, a town of 8,000 where the main intersection is a cluster of fast-food places and restaurants offering chicken fried steak specials. Some businesses have been reluctant to come to town, which is badly in need of industry.

However, Diggles and many others say there is a hopeful part of the story too often overlooked: The murder forced the people of Jasper, a town whose population is almost evenly divided between Black and White, to confront their prejudices.

"Afterward, people came together, worked together and healed together," said R.C. Horn, who was mayor at the time and is Black. "Some people were not even aware of what was going on inside themselves. But after it happened, everyone took a look at themselves to see what was inside."

Byrd's murderers were quickly arrested and convicted, offering some comfort that justice was served. John William King and Lawrence Russell Brewer are now on death row. Shawn Allen Berry is serving a life sentence.

Clergy — both Black and White — called on the people of Jasper to stay calm and stay home when the Black Panthers and the Ku Klux Klan came to march. And the residents did. Many also saw the response of the Byrd family ("We are not hating; we are hurting," James Byrd Sr. said after his son's murder) as inspiring, ennobling.

"This was a mother who lost her son in the most cruel way, yet she showed and taught her family by her example that she is able to forgive," said Rev. Ronald Foshage, a White priest at St. Michael's Parish. "If people can for-

give, and if I can learn to forgive in that fashion, then this tragedy can have a deep impact on our lives."

After Byrd's death, the family created the James Byrd Jr. Foundation for Racial Healing, which conducts diversity workshops, awards scholarships to minorities and helped win passage of a hate crime bill in Texas. The foundation also runs an oral history project on racism; more than 2,600 people have described their experiences.

Foshage and other townspeople said that before the killing, Blacks and Whites sat separately at football games and in other public settings. But now, they say, they see less of that, with Blacks and Whites mingling more, and they attribute that to the Byrd family's efforts to fight bigotry.

Similarly, townspeople are attributing the Black majority on the City Council to changed attitudes.

Betty Byrd Boatner, Byrd's younger sister, said that before the killing, she didn't see Whites and Blacks playing basketball together. As for the segregated graveyard, the iron fence came down a few years ago.

On Saturday, as they have every year on the anniversary of Byrd's death, the Byrds will hold a service — not just as a memorial, but also as a challenge to those still shackled by prejudice.

"When you do things that hurt someone else, you need to remember that that person is someone's child," Boatner said. "My brother was someone's child. If it was your family, your brother, your sister, how would you handle it?"

There is still work to do. A few years back, Byrd's gravesite was vandalized and defaced with slurs.

"We're getting there," Boatner said, "but it just takes time."