

Program targets youth violence

By Alan King
Special to Sentinel-Voice
 WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Fourteen years ago, Kemba Smith was serving a 24-and-a-half-year sentence on charges of conspiracy, money laundering and lying to authorities to protect her boyfriend at the time — Peter Hall, leader of a violent drug ring that moved as much as \$4 million in cocaine and crack cocaine between New York and Virginia; it was a four-year operation that began in 1989.

Although she was not a major player in the drug-trafficking scheme, Smith — who was a student at Hampton University when she met Hall — was found guilty by association.

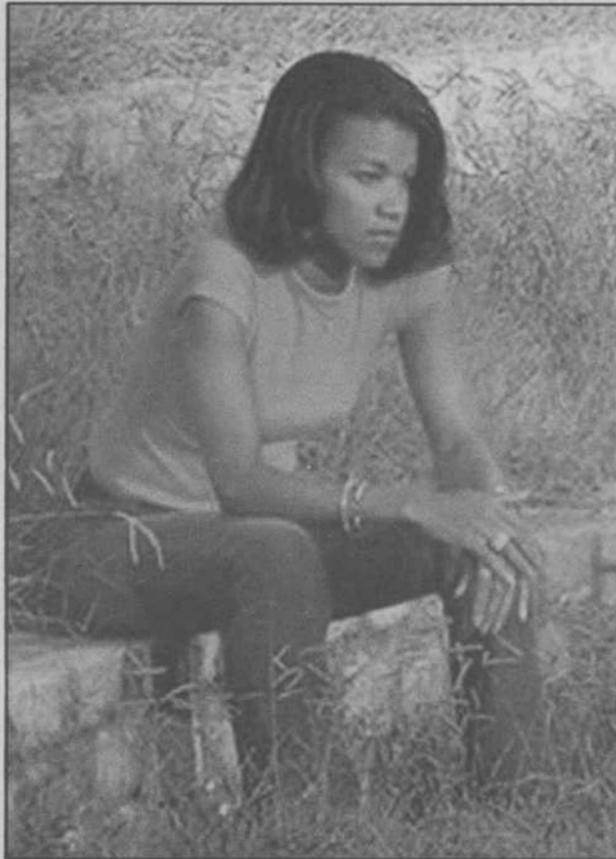
“I could remember feeling this sense of hopelessness, being scared to death; it was the first time I had ever been in trouble before,” she told more than 40 elected officials, parents and young people Nov. 7 at the 2nd Annual Alive & Free Conference held at the historic Lake Clifton Campus — home of both Doris M. Johnson and Heritage High Schools. The two-day conference included three workshop topics: Anger, Fear and Pain; Commandments of Violence; and Rules for Living and Risk Factors.

“It really should be stuff like that everyday,” said Brian Tibbs, 17, a junior at Heritage High School.

“If you had stuff like this in your life, you won’t have to turn to stupid stuff; most of the stuff is common sense.”

Based on the premise that violence is a social disease, the Alive & Free Movement was created as a cure to identify and combat the risk factors and what is called “symptomatic thinking” that put young people at risk of violence.

“Our children have been neglected by us and we need, as a community, to turn around and let our children know that we care about them; that the needless deaths that are going on need to stop; and we need to give them a structure for how society is supposed to function,” said Nzinga Oneferua, co-founder of Safe Healing Foundation — a nonprofit that brings vocational, entrepreneurial and violence prevention training, plus modeling, poetry and other activities to its after school program that services the Lake



The Alive and Free Movement aims to end teenage violence.
 Clifton campus.

Since 2006, Alive & Free has focused on recruiting, teaching and developing street soldiers — people committed to eliminating violence in their own lives and in their communities.

“I’ve assembled this army, literally, around the world; there’s power in this army,” said Dr. Joseph Marshall, founder and president of the Street Soldiers National Consortium and the Alive & Free Movement, which has been employed by more than 60 anti-violence programs nationwide. It is utilized in detention facilities, schools, community-based organizations, after-school programs and in treatment facilities.

Street soldiers learn how to frame violence at the community and individual level as treatable and avoidable; identify specific precursors of violence as avoidable; identify young people — especially perpetrators of violence — as victims of the disease of violence rather than as “bad people,” while at the same time placing responsibility to reduce the risk of violence on the individuals themselves; and they provide specific methods and tech-

niques for individuals and organizations to prevent violence in themselves and in their communities.

Smith, now 37, had served six-and-a-half years of her prison sentence when President Bill Clinton granted her clemency in 2000 — four years after her story first appeared in *Emerge* magazine. Since then, she’s been a street soldier sharing her story with young people across the country.

“There was a period of time between high school and college where it was a particular lifestyle that seemed interesting to me, despite my mother and father and the morals and values that they had instilled in me,” Smith said in her keynote address at the Alive & Free conference.

“I was attracted to the thug and, basically, looking for love in all the wrong places and not fully understanding what love was; or what a healthy relationship was; or understanding that I should have kept Hampton and my education a priority while I was there.”

Smith’s message resonated with Jearl Ward, who attended the conference with his 14- and 16-year-old

daughters. “That was one of the most powerful points of the entire conference,” said Ward, a sponsor of the event. It showed “how violence and negativity can come to anyone’s door.”

In his remarks, Baltimore Public Schools CEO Andres Alonso talked about the significance of the Alive & Free Movement. “Violence is a virus... when we’re dealing with a virus, we must eradicate it. This program contains so much force for good. We need to learn from the testimony of people,” Alonso said. To the young people, he charged: “Carry the lessons of today to other kids because you are your own best teachers.”

Mayor Sheila Dixon presented a similar challenge. “If you don’t leave here with a commitment inwardly to make a difference for yourself, your neighbor or people in your community, this is all a waste,” Dixon said. “You’re going to help drive us in making that difference. What you do today will impact you tomorrow.”

Alan King writes for the Afro-American Newspapers.

50 Cent all about biz in MTV’s show

NEW YORK (AP) — 50 Cent has a new show on MTV, where business-savvy contestants compete for a shot at fame and a huge cash prize. But the rapper says he’s not following the path of that other famous reality show hosted by Donald Trump.

“Immediately when you say a reality show that has a business spin to it, they think ‘The Apprentice,’ and the difference is these people don’t actually want to work for me,” the 32-year-old said in a recent interview.

“They have their own business ideas that they created and they’re competing for \$100,000 in seed money.”

“50 Cent: The Money and the Power” debuts this week. It features 14 contestants competing to show that they are the best entrepreneurs. 50 Cent will chop down the number of contestants until the winner is crowned.

The rapper and mogul

said the show is like a visual companion to his upcoming book, “The 50th Law,” with Robert Greene, who wrote “The 48 Laws of Power.”

“Ahead of my actual music taking off, I would have wanted to be on the show,” he said. “\$100,000 would have been great, and the MTV exposure.”

People will be seeing a lot of 50 Cent in the next few months. Besides the MTV project, he is releasing his latest album, “Before I Self Destruct,” on Dec. 9. The CD includes an accompanying feature-length film with the same title.

“I’m excited, it’s the first project I wrote, produced and starred in,” said 50 of the flick, which comes free with the CD.

The deluxe version of the album features yet another film — this one a documentary on former mentor, Run-DMC’s pioneering DJ, Jam Master Jay, who was slain in 2002.

p u r e .
 p o w e r f u l .
 a r t s .



Song and Dance Ensemble of West Africa
 Wednesday, November 19 • 8 p.m.
 \$35 - \$50 - \$80

Performing Arts Center
 UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS
 2008 - 2009 season
 pac.unlv.edu • (702) 895-ARTS (2787)
 LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Capture The Moments
 PHOTOGRAPHY
 by Marty Frierson

ph: 702-205-0874
 ctmomentsphotography@yahoo.com
 www.martypix.com