

CASA: Foster care scares Blacks

Special to Sentinel-Voice
PORTLAND, Ore.

(NNPA) — The findings from a National Online Harris Poll, commissioned by the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association, show 93 percent of African-Americans believe improving foster care should be a national priority.

The poll also found that although the community deems the issue important, 87 percent of African-American adults polled know little or nothing about the experiences of children in foster care, and more than half (49 percent) know nothing at all about these children.

Furthermore, when the responding adults do think of children in foster care, only a minority (13 percent) cited positive impressions about these children and the foster care system that serves them. Most often, adults picture foster children as poorly treated, facing a hard life and in need of sympathy; 31 percent of knowledgeable adults believe these youth in foster care face unsuccessful futures.

However, when you talk to the youths themselves, you see an entirely different picture.

A national focus group study of 50 current and former foster youth (more than 70 percent were African-American) also commissioned by the National CASA Association, found these youths see themselves as uniquely empowered by overcoming adversity, determined not to repeat the mistakes of their birth parents,

Powell

(Continued from Page 10) there so they can stay home and make a decent living."

His armed forces experiences, the Bronx-born Powell said, demonstrate how immigrants can be effectively integrated into our society. "If we reach out to help them, they will respond in kind," he said.

What can be done to integrate immigrants faster and easier into the American society was the underlying theme of this conference, which was enlightening, but at the next one it might be rewarding to delve into the impact of illegal immigrants, particularly as it relates to the job picture for African-Americans.

Herb Boyd writes for the Amsterdam News.

and were optimistic about their futures.

"I have a constant fear of failure. My parents failed, and my parents' parents failed. But I am not giving up" said a female San Diego foster youth who participated in the study.

"Yes, I have been through a lot of hell and high water, but because of that I am a stronger person. I'm still standing," said a male Dallas foster youth who participated in the study.

"African-American children represent 32 percent of America's 510,000 children in foster care but only 15 percent of the general population. Not only are these children disproportionately over-represented in foster care, but once in the foster care system, children of color tend to receive fewer services, stay in care longer, and generally have worse outcomes than White children," said Ernestine S. Gray, National CASA Board President and Orleans Parish Juvenile Court Judge in New Orleans.

Despite the lack of awareness by the general population of foster care, 80 percent of African-American adults agree that they have the po-

tential to positively influence the lives of foster children.

"These are people we — and our foster youth — so desperately need," said National CASA CEO Michael Piraino. "We know that when a CASA volunteer is involved, children are 95 percent less likely to re-enter the foster care system. There are people out there who are willing to help, they just don't know how."

When asked what foster children want they say it's simple — "we just want someone to be there to listen. We trust people who are willing to listen to us."

"There are a number of ways caring adults can become involved in the lives of these youth, not only as foster parents, but also as mentors or CASA volunteers," said Piraino. "By becoming a CASA volunteer adults provide the stability that foster youth often lack. That stability helps these children transition from care into successful adulthood and helps ensure that each child has the opportunity to reach their fullest potential."

The conclusions from the African-American respondents of the online Harris

Poll indicated African-Americans were:

- More likely to know foster parents;
- Much less likely to have negative impressions (though still significant) of foster parents;
- More likely to want to be foster parents;
- More optimistic about the children's future;
- More likely to believe in their power to help.

To volunteer, or for more information on the national studies on foster care, please visit the National CASA Association website, www.nationalcasa.org. You can also call 1-888-805-8457.

In 1977 a Seattle judge, concerned over making decisions about abused and neglected children's lives without sufficient information, conceived the idea of using trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of these children in court. So successful was this program, that judges across the country began utilizing citizen advocates. Today, more than 950 CASA/GAL offices operate in 49 states, with more than 59,000 men and women serving as CASA/GAL volunteers.

Conference

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pation is to work to try to change the direction in which the review conference is heading," it said. "We hope to work with other countries that want the Conference to responsibly and productively address racism around the world." The statement stressed that U.S. attendance at the planning meetings "does not indicate — and should not be misconstrued to indicate — that the United States will participate in April in the World Conference Against Racism itself."

"Nor does it indicate that we will necessarily participate in future preparations for the conference," it said. "These decisions will be taken at a later date, depending on the results that we see from the negotiating process." Israel, which announced in November that it would boycott the conference, has been pressing the new Obama foreign policy team to stay away from the meeting, according to U.S. officials. The Bush administration had left a decision on whether to attend to the next administration, but voted in the U.N. General Assembly last year to protest the conference.

LEGAL NOTICES

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION OF SOUTHERN NEVADA SOLICITATION NO. 09-040 SOLICITATION FOR APPLICATIONS-COMPETITIVE TRANSPORTATION SELECTION PROCESS-FOR JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE GRANTS

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC) is seeking applications from qualified firms and organizations for projects to be funded under the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Grant program.

Solicitation No. 09-040 will be available beginning February 24, 2009 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday at the Regional Transportation Commission's Administrative Building, First Floor Reception Desk. Requests for Solicitation packages may be submitted via facsimile at (702) 676-1588 or via e-mail to bilynskyl@rtcnsnv.com, and should be directed to the attention of Lydia Bilynsky, Sr. Purchasing and Contracts Analyst.

An Informational Meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. Pacific Time, Tuesday, March 10, 2009, Room 296, at the RTC, 600 S. Grand Central Parkway, Las Vegas, Nevada 89106. Questions on this solicitation may be submitted in writing, preferably electronically to Lydia Bilynsky, Sr. Purchasing & Contracts Analyst at bilynskyl@rtcnsnv.com by March 24, 2009, 5:00 p.m.

Applications must be received on or before April 14, 2009. Applications must be time stamped no later than 5:00 p.m., Pacific Time, on the due date. Applications time stamped at 5:01 p.m. or after on the due date will be returned unopened. Applications should be sent to:

Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada
Attention: Lydia Bilynsky- Sr. Purchasing & Contracts Analyst
600 S. Grand Central Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89106

The successful respondent shall cooperate with the RTC in meeting its commitments and objectives with regard to ensuring non-discrimination in the award and administration of U.S. DOT assisted contracts and shall use its best efforts to ensure that barriers to participation of DBEs do not exist.

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