

Blacks Receive Jail Time Twice As Often As Whites

Blacks convicted of drug crimes in Alabama are nearly twice as likely to receive jail time as White offenders, and nearly two and one-half times as likely to receive prison terms of one year or more, according to an analysis by the Birmingham Post-Herald. The study of nearly seven years' worth of drug convictions found that Blacks and Whites have equal chances of being found guilty. The disparity comes in the sentencing. Within every drug category, from misdemeanor

marijuana possession to felony cocaine trafficking, Blacks stand a greater chance of getting jail time than do Whites.

For example, 64 percent of Blacks convicted of cocaine possession received prison time, compared to 48 percent of Whites. On marijuana possession, 35 percent of the convicted Blacks received prison time, compared to 31 percent of Whites. For some critics of the Alabama legal system, the discrimination starts with the judges on the bench. As of late 1996, there

were only six Black district judges of the 92 in the state. Of the 131 circuit judges there were only five Blacks. U.S. Representative Earl Hilliard (D-AL), said there is a "leniency factor" towards Whites because the judicial system is predominantly White. "We know for a fact Whites will get a more lenient sentence from a White judge," Hilliard said. "The disparity will remain in the prison system until there are more Black DAs (district attorneys) and more Black judges."

The Shelter Care Campaign

The Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon is a private, non-profit agency that provides short-term shelter care for children and youth to age 18. The agency has recently launched a public education campaign to help meet the December 31 deadline. Yet, the agency is dependent upon shelter parents to provide for quick placements to serve its 24 hour a day, 7 day a week program.

According to the most recent status of Oregon's children report published by Children First

for Oregon, Multnomah County is 196% behind the teen pregnancy benchmark set by the state in 1995. The number of children living in poverty is 40% behind the state benchmark. The Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon shelter unit staff say that these numbers demonstrate the need for help for children living in Multnomah County that is almost in epidemic proportions.

The Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon offers weekly community-based orientation, infor-

mation and public speaking sessions for anyone who is interested in becoming a shelter parent or who may have questions about the program. Please call 503-222-9661 x258 for a meeting schedule or call the shelter parent information line at 503-222-2358. According to Shelter Parent Program Recruiter Jonathan Kipp, there is no special season or time of year that shelter homes are especially needed. Kids are in crisis every day.

The Future of Public Hospitals

Cont. From Front

Public hospital provide a significant share of all hospital care for those who are socially and economically underprivileged. As hospitals of last resort, they have become a health care safety net because of their policy of admitting anyone, insured and uninsured alike. They also have a tradition of striving to be culturally sensitive. Finally, public hospitals provide essential medical services which few clinics can offer and private hospitals often find unprofitable such as emergency care, trauma care, burn care, and neonatal care, and they provide these vital services for the entire community.

The importance of this situation is brought into sharper focus by the increase in the number of uninsured. The most recent data suggest that there are more than 40 million people in the United who lack health insurance. The number of uninsured is growing steadily as the cost of insurance continues to rise and as full-time, full-benefit employment remains scarce for the urban population. Many full-time positions are being replaced as well by temporary, contract or part-time jobs without health coverage.

Many large, urban public hospitals also conduct medical education and research, which benefits the en-

tire health care system. Many serve as teaching hospitals, where they train students. In addition, some urban public hospitals are major employers in the cities they serve. Closing these hospitals therefore increases the potential unemployment of both skilled and unskilled workers not only in the health care industry but in other related industries as well.

Many states have modified their Medicaid programs by shifting their method of delivering health care to managed care. Federal waivers now allow states to require that their Medicaid recipients enroll in managed care organizations, and many states have already modified their Medicaid programs with this new requirement. As of June 1996, this changeover had been carried out by 29 states and the District of Columbia.

This change in Medicaid policy is causing public hospitals to lose a large percentage of their patient base to managed care organizations.

Approximately 43 percent of public hospitals' patients are covered by Medicare, Medicaid or other public insurance, and an equal proportion are uninsured. Even more important, 50 percent or more of these hospitals' revenue has been based on Medicaid payments. Unless they can effectively compete for low-risk Medicaid patients, they may soon lose so

much revenue that they will simply have to close.

In addition to the managed care changeover, Congress plans to cut the Medicaid funding that has long been given specifically to public hospitals that serve large numbers of Medicaid, low-income Medicare, and uninsured patients. This special assistance, known as Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) payments, is set to be reduced by \$10.3 billion over the next five years according to the proposed Balanced Budget Act of 1997.

According to the National Association of Public Hospitals, federal DSH payments account for 13 percent of public hospitals' total revenues and pay for 40 percent of the cost of treating uninsured patients. The pending budget cuts are therefore going to shrink public hospitals' revenues far below what is necessary to meet the many health care needs of those who rely on this system for care.

Public hospitals today are suffering from a condition that, if left untreated, may prove fatal. The importance of their survival needs to be recognized and addressed. If we lose these safety-net institutions, many people will no longer have access to any medical care. The health of the people who live in urban communities depends on public hospitals remaining viable American institutions.

RELIGION

The Two Headed Coin

Have you ever noticed the trouble and effort people go through to avoid what's best for them, in exchange for what's toxic or bad for them?

I'm talking about the choices they make that affect their long-term quality of life.

You can see examples of it all the way from Childhood-days through final-days of their lifetime.

For example: Little Bill's mother told Billy on Tuesday that if his room wasn't properly cleaned up by the weekend, he wouldn't be able to go to the movies with the rest of the children on his block.

All the parents go together and

coordinated a once-a-month, neighborhood-children movie day for the summer months.

This coming weekend is the last outing for the summer, with the gang.

All week-long the weather had been gorgeous, beautiful sunny days with warm gentle evening breezes.

Little Billy enjoyed them to the fullest. He was looking forward to the weekend with grins of delight, every time he thought about it.

The popcorn, and candy, the video games during intermission being with the rest of the neighborhood kids, and just the excitement of it all filled his body

with a tingly sensation.

Little Billy had totally ignored his mother's instructions and conditions regarding his eligibility to be with everyone on the weekend.

The weekend is now here, Saturday late-morning and little Billy's room is not clean. Billy's mother made Billy accountable for his actions.

As Billy watched the gang all gather across the street from his house, they all got into the parents cars and everybody left. Billy was alone! He had made his decision based on his actions. The result, he missed out on something wonderful!

Let's take a brief look at another example! Look at the effort expended to keep religion out of schools, offices and civic functions, governmental departments and procedures, and countless other areas of the world that re-

late in some manner to finances.

Now! Take a good look at our various denominations of currency, both coin and paper. Notice it reads: "In God We Trust". The irritating part about the whole thing is: people are using the name of God for their personal monetary growth, when what they actually need is the Word of God. You can't have it both ways!

In other words, if you live by His law, everything else will take care of itself.

The government today, is experiencing the same thing little Billy experienced.

Both selected the actions that yielded instant gratification, when the more sensible choices would have generated rewards of longer lasting happiness.

Making the choice of living your life according to God's will, will guarantee you will be eli-

gible to attend the movie of eternal happiness.

And when you compare the short time we have on earth, to the time of eternity, what do you

have to lose by living for God? You'll lose the misery and pain of despair, loneliness, depression and any other negative emotion.

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