

UMOJA NEWS

July 1991 Vol. 1, No. 1 A SELF ESTEEM PROGRAMS/ELIOT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH PROJECT

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN ROXBURY

ACCEPT NEW FAMILY TRADITIONS

My Name is Glenn S. Cofield, I am fifteen years old. Born and raised in Boston, I had a good childhood because I grew up close to my mother through the age of eight. At that time my father popped back on the scene. As long as he keeps my mother happy, I'm happy but he's not very good with children. They're getting married this summer and my mother asked me to give her away. I said I would because marriage is a decision she has thought about for eight years and I really feel that it



GLENN S. COFIELD, 15

cont, on pg. 7

TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE



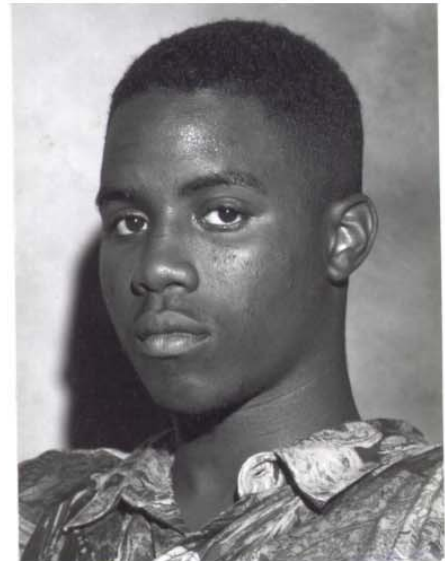
SHAWN NEWTON, 17

I think there is an injustice with the jobs situation in Boston. There seems to be a lot of jobs but the employers aren't giving the brothers (young Black men) a chance. They seem to believe the rumors going around that Blacks are low-life, un-educated, crumb-grabbin, ghetto-living, drug-dealing, non-bath takin, dress-only-on-certain-occasions, nappy-headed, unemployable workers.

cont, on pg. 7

UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS

Substance abuse and violence are two different topics and should be dealt with in different ways. Only in the minds of the police and other law enforcement agents do they seem to collide into this word: "gangs". To me, a "gang" is defined as a group of people. And since this definition is correct, there are "gangs" everywhere. The "inner-city" is seemingly the most troubled with these groups of young black and Hispanic and men and women they grew up with each other, are related, or a few of them are drifters. Sometimes all



JIBRIL HAYNES, 18

cont, on pg. 7

ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT



MICHELLE HAYWARD, 14

My community is made up of many drug dealers. I don't like it and I feel there are some things that can be done. One of them is to change the way the media is allowed to tell false stories. Another way is for the people in the community to find ways to help the community leaders, such as having marches and making sure they follow through with their speeches.

I feel that I can influence and encourage people, although I can't seem to have long talks with my parents. I feel that I am very intelligent, and can outsmart my peers when competing for education. Because of this, I feel my life impacts other

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POSITIVE FAMILY SUPPORT

My name is Suquilah Sitwell and I come from a large family of eight including myself. I grew up having a lot of attention because I am a twin. I work at being a Peer Leader with the UMOJA project and I babysit for my niece. My career goals are photography and psychology and I have thought about college because two of my sisters have gone. I've never met anyone famous but I know a community leader. Her name is Francis and she works at the YMCA Roxbury.

I think Roxbury is a nice community, but it does need to be cleaned up because of the litter, drugs, and the gangs. I also feel that alcohol abuse should not be tolerated in our streets.

Without drug dealers, there wouldn't be any drug abuse and the violence is only caused by rage. That rage is only in the gangs. We need to stop gang violence and start gang peace.

I stay away from drugs and violence in my community because I have people looking out for me. If I get into all of that mess then I will let my family and friends down. I want to finish my father's work in artistry, and teaching in my church's ministry. *

MAXIMUM SENTENCES



KARL BLAKE, 18

I think violence right now is at its peak in Roxbury and Dorchester. Roxbury for one has been the focal point for violence for the past fifteen years. Dorchester has in the 90's, steadily worsened: crime and killings have increased at an alarming rate, almost double the crime of Roxbury last year, making Dorchester the most violent community in Boston to date.

I live in an untouched corner of Dorchester. My household consists of six people, my mother, father, two sisters and myself. No one in my family has been involved with drugs or street violence. Although at times I've seen violence at parties. I've never been involved. Many people ask what can be done

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INTROSPECTION



ALGERNON TAYLOR, 15

I grew up with a large family: 3 sisters, one brother, and my aunts, uncles, and cousins. All of them were there for me. My mother taught me to respect for other people and the difference between right and wrong. I had as much good influence as bad with drugs, theft, and violence in my neighborhood. I often chose to follow the bad influences because they seemed like much more fun. I stay away from drugs and violence now because I've learned it will eventually take me to death. I care about what my family thinks and before I die I want to make them feel I tried hard to work

cont on page 9

COMMUNITY UNITY

EDWARD DENNIS, 18

Life can be hard for kids these days if they don't have anyone they can look up to or anything they can look forward to.

Some families don't care about what their kids are doing. The mothers and fathers are not there for them, and the kids don't have anyone to lead them in the right direction.

The media blames us for bringing drugs and guns into this country and we know it is the white business man who is the one behind all of the money and power to do this.

The only way drugs and violence can be stopped is for all of the families who live in the drug infested neighborhoods to get together and fight them, not with violence with the police and the local political officials who back them. There will have to be a lot of meetings in the neighborhoods, and a lot of information exchanged about raising kids and drug treatment programs. They will also have to be able to start more programs for the kids to get jobs, and have big brothers and big sisters in order for us to get more out of life. *

SET GOALS

BASIC NEEDS HIERARCHY



NAKIA COREN, 15

I'm fifteen years old and I go to a suburban high school through the Metco Program. I've thought about college since the 7th grade because my brother went to college. I think I'm good enough to get to college on a track and field scholarship because I've been running since seventh grade. I'm in the ninth grade and I've been playing freshman basketball, football, and running track this year. I really enjoy playing sports. I have dreams of running in the Olympics. If I work hard enough maybe it will happen.

I think part of the violence problem has to do with the lack of control parents have

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ACCEPT INDIVIDUALISM



CONRAD PHILLIP, 15

I grew up in Boston and I don't hang around gangs the way the media portrays that all young black men do. I have a few special friends.

My favorite rap artist is KRS 1 (Knowlege Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone) because of the positive and important cultural and historical lyrics he uses to teach youths through his music. I learn things through rapper's songs that I have yet to learn in school. School is boring because the things they teach me don't have anything to do with my culture

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SET YOUR OWN ADJENDA

NAKIA SNOW, 15

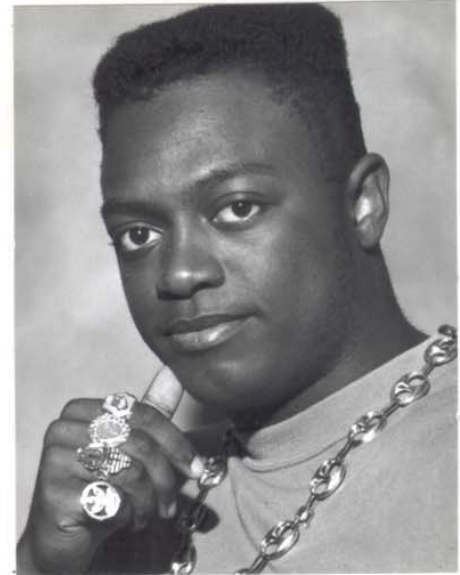
My daily activities include getting up early, going to school, working part-time, having dinner with my family, and getting ready for the next day. I earn my money as a part-time shoe sales person and I often baby-sit.

I have been to a few places outside of Boston: Richmond, Virginia; New York; and Washington DC. I don't think about college, but I have career goals. I am interested in becoming a famous drummer, although I've thought about becoming a lawyer.

The violence I see is mostly gang fights. The community needs to stop the violence themselves. They need to begin with ending the gun and drug sales. I think the media is cruel and I don't like the things they have written or talked about. They are not helping the community with the way they do things.

I stay away from drugs and violence because I don't want to die early. I think the drugs in this world are killing black people but I'm not sure how to stop it. I would like to see things change in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. *

GET YOURSELF TOGETHER



LESTER LICONA, 18

My home country is Honduras. I've been in Boston for years, but I still feel very attached to Honduras even though I am so far away.

I was brought up to respect my elders whoever they are. My family life here is very good and I live in a nice, quiet, area of Dorchester.

I feel I am the kind of person who can do anything if I put my mind to it, and I have the encouragement of other people.

My daily activities include school, sports, and chillin' with my friends. I try not to get bored because I know

cont, on page 10

DON'T ASSIMILATE GANGMEMBERS

LOOK FOR GOD

SEEK HELP WITH PROBLEMS



MAURICE BLAKE, 16

I live in Dorchester near Codman Square where its kind of rough. I get out of the neighborhood when I go to school; I go to East Boston High. I chose East Boston because they have a better basketball system than my old school which was Wayland High.

I find the teenagers will accept you for who you are if you are kind of cool with everybody. So many black teens are in gangs because they feel they need someone to watch their back, but I'm not into all of that.

The reason they are out there selling drugs is

cont on page 8

MARCOS V. PENA, 18

I grew up in the violence of New York. I became a victim of that violence, and I've been suspect for violent crimes. The neighborhoods were rough and it was all about street survival. I saw my friends and relatives die of violent crimes, and I've just learned to go on.

I live in Dorchester now. Crime is in many of the neighborhoods, and something has got to be done. The system of America is ruining minorities and the minorities keep reacting to the system. I wish the system was more honest because they are killing us off.

I completed my G.E.D. while serving time for a shooting case and many things have changed since then. I have real friends now, and I am making plans to attend college. I am also looking at getting married one day and buying a house and a car.

I have a lot of impact with kids on the streets, so much that I have started an underground ministry. I have 35 kids that meet with my church every week who would otherwise be in gangs. My dreams are coming to pass now, but we need all the youths to get together and walk that hard walk. #



RAQUEL HAYWARD, 15

The neighborhood that I live in is very rowdy and there are a lot of drugs around, but I think that alcohol abuse is the worst problem we have in the community. There needs to be more AA meetings in Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan if they really are trying to help people control their addiction.

Drugs are a national problem and the politicians in control need to create a way to make them stop coming into the country illegally. People are dying from "substance" abuse and the violence created by the percieved need for more.

The communitis are having a hard time dealing with the

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THINK HIGHLY OF YOURSELF



JOHN MOSES, 17

I consider myself a guy who has been under a lot of pressure all of my life. My parents expect a lot from me, they think I was born smart - so they have expectations that I often feel are beyond my desires.

I keep my grades up at Boston Latin Academy and I keep myself in good physical condition.

My interests are rapping, poetry, and speech. I plan to make music my career in the future.

My parents want me to become a lawyer. They are successful and that does have its advantages.

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WE ALL NEED TO CARE

YARMI LAMART COFIELD, 17

There should be more attention paid to the drug trade coming into the community, because once they stop the drug traffic from coming in - it will be easier to get control of what is going on inside Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan.

The second focus needs to be the treatment centers in Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan. They need to be expanded and improved in order to really help those who are sick with addiction.

Third, the city is not doing enough to stop gang violence. The police department needs to be beefed up and the city can create more activities within the community to give the teenagers alternatives that are positive for recreation and jobs.

Gangs are a result of teenagers who are just trying to be cool or down with other youth.

Violence is a result of drug use and sales, lack of communication, and money.

If the communities and the city came together with the youths they could make many long lasting positive changes. *

LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE



TAZANA ARTHUR, 15

By the year 2000, two thirds of Roxbury will be dominated by white people and condominiums. I feel that substance abuse and violence is a direct result of neglect from the people who have the power to stop it.

Most of the problems we have in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan are more a fight between the rich and the poor than anything else.

The rich really don't understand how the poor are hurting because of their negative actions.

The poor really don't understand how the rich are laughing because they have fallen into their traps.

cont, on page 10

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ACCEPT NEW FAMILY TRADITIONS
cont, from pg. 1

means so much to her, I really want to see her happy. It's not that I don't like my father. He works hard and supports the family very well. I think he is right for my mother.

Growing up, my mother, aunts, and uncles made sure their children were close so that we would have a stronger family for the next generation. The only two of the neices and nephews that have remained close are my cousin Lamart and myself. He is two years older than me but it seems like we're the same age- wherever you find him you'll find me, and vice versa. We even work together. If he weren't my cousin, he would definitely be my best friend. He has influenced me in a lot of things, especially barbering. Lamart started cutting hair three years ago when he was 15, and a year later I started. I'm better now than he is and I like it enough to make a career out of it. I cut a lot of the guy's heads around my neighborhood as well as the guys from school. It's the way I earn extra money.

I think change in the community is a small thing to ask, but a big thing to accomplish: although with everyone's help, I believe it can be done. And it needs to be done for as long as it takes.*

TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE
cont, from pg. 1

In early childhood, I'm sure that many people have the idea that they will become successful in life, but with the lack of opportunities and support from the community anyone will be forced to find "other" means of support.

With false-steriotyping, minorities seem to be forced more than non-minorities into alternative life-styles. The best known life-styles are drug selling and living the life of the "gangsta".

Teenagers never get praised for the little things that they do, that is why there are downfalls with so many teens. I'm a quiet person and I've hung around older people. Some have done wrong, but I never have. I'm now a leader and as a result of my attitude, the guys I now hang around with are "chilled out" and try to do what is right.

People who do not wish to live a good life and fail to understand what is right become "total losers". I am not what one would call a "perfect gentleman", but I have enough sense to know that getting an education instead of dropping out of school will make me a more successful person in the long run instead of selling drugs and imitating financial success for a little while.*

UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS
cont, from pg. 1

it takes is one person to start doing something before everyone else starts. This eventually begins a cycle that won't stop until there is no longer a supply or demand. This so called "substance abuse" is part of the supply and demand routine. The demand is created through emotional oppression; drugs soothe it.

People think drugs are grown, mass-produced, and distributed within the "inner-city". It needs to be understood, that most drugs are grown and mass produced in other countries and brought here. The drugs come from the big dealers who are "White" to the little dealers who are the "Black and Hispanic" youths. The product comes in, is packaged, and sold for a set rate. The rate is set by the big dealers. The demand is created by oppression: ie. a shortage of well paying jobs, increasing educational costs, and increasing food and shelter costs.

Of course, the way to stop the cycle is to lessen the demand. The power to do so is not within me right now, but I can surely write about it.*

CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEM



ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT

cont, from page 2

people and I spend time talking to my friends about career goals, and my travels. I've thought about all kinds of careers and I think I've settled on becoming an actor who invests her money.

My household consists of two sisters and my mother, I'm happy with my family. My daily activities include going to school and working. Sometimes I babysit and I work in the peer leadership program. I depend on the money I make. When I'm alone I think about the future. I don't know how to apply for college yet, and sometimes I wonder if my life would be different if I lived in the suburbs. If I had one thing that I would like to do before I die, I would like to get married.*

CREDITS AND SPECIAL THANKS

Homocide Profile on pg. 11
AND Illustrations
Paul Bracy, M.Ed.

The Medical Foundation

Senate Committee Story pg. 9
reprinted from June 10, 1991
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Photography by
Donalexander Goss

DONT ASSIMILATE GANGMEMBERS

cont, from page 5

because they either were brought up in a bad environment or their parents are a bad influence and they just don't care.

The police need to change their attitudes. They can't just put in the hours because they are doing a job. They are going to have to believe in and care about their work.

I was brought up in a good environment. My parents are a good influence: they don't smoke, they don't drink, they go to church, etc. I feel that all teenagers look at their parents to see who they are.

This society needs to get together and help all of the teenagers get off the streets. We need jobs, consultants, and something constructive to do. The whole problem is that we are the ones who are putting our foot down, it is not up to the teenagers alone to make this change.

Sometimes I feel like the white people are looking at us and laughing. *

MAXIMIZE SENTENCES

cont, from page 2

to stop the crime, drugs and murder in Boston. I think the police on the street need to be doubled and the sentences given to those who are prosecuted need to be maximized. Lastly, the undercover police have been working effectively at catching drug traffickers and we need far more of them.

In conclusion, I hope that I am helping in the fight against substance abuse and violence with this effort.*

CREDITS AND SPECIAL THANKS

Photo on page 10, left to right: Donald Taylor, Michael Davis, Raquel Hayward, Michelle Hayward, Shawn Newton, Tazana Arthur, Lester Licon, Yarmi Lamart Cofield, Conrad Phillip, and Glenn Cofield.

Photo on page 12, left to right: Yarmi Lamart Cofield, Maurice Blake, Conrad Phillip, Paula Robinson, Glenn S. Cofield, Rev. Ozzie L. Edwards, Jibril Haynes, Karl Blake, Willie Dancey; front row: Shawn Newton, John Moses, Donald Taylor and Algernon Taylor.

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INTROSPECTION

cont from page 3

out my situation.

Substance abuse and violence will change with better education. The community needs to learn how it is really being affected by these influences.

I also think that too many tax dollars are not being accounted for and that social service programs waste half of their money on programs that don't work.

There are not enough jobs for youths between the ages of 12 and 15. We can do a lot of the jobs that adults don't have time to do—like cleaning up the streets, babysitting at community day care programs, and becoming young councillors.

I would like to be an electrician when I grow up other than that I don't really have any other interests, except for making money.

I don't feel the schools encourage us to work hard, nor do they challenge our minds; but I know that in order to get the job I want I must get an education so I stay in school. Peace! *

SEEK HELP WITH PROBLEMS

cont. from page 5

people getting killed every day and will probably never be able to deal effectively with the large scale of drugs coming into this country.

Roxbury is turning into a very bad community. There needs to be more working together with the state and the country in an effort to find better ways to deal with its problems.

There needs to be more activities and jobs for the teenagers to go to.

My career goal is to become a lawyer, but I'd like to model. I feel that I am lucky because my family life is very good and that it will encourage me to achieve my goals. *

SET GOALS

cont from page 3

over their children. There are also no places where a kid can have fun without getting into trouble.

I think about graduating from college, how much money I will make, and where I will live. I'd like to live outside of Roxbury; there is too much violence here. I would like to live somewhere peaceful. *

THINK HIGHLY OF YOURSELF

cont, from page 6

Maybe the only real problem with the kids who are in the streets is that they get no support from their parents and relatives at home. *

Senate Committee Hearing Testimony On Plight Of Black Men Gets Eye-Opening Lecture

It was a no-holds-barred hearing.

Clifford Alexander, the first Black to serve as Army Secretary, in a very real and raw testimony given before a U.S. Senate committee examining the plight of Black men, asserted White America looks at Black America through condescending eyes.

"You (White Americans) see us as less than you are," Alexander told the senatorial committee. "You think that we are not as smart, not as energetic, not as well suited to supervise you as you are to supervise us, that we are looking for something extra—a government program that gives us something we do not deserve."

Pausing, as the overflowing committee room listened in quiet shock, Alexander cut straight to the chase, claiming: "You think that our sons and daughters are taking the places in colleges that if the world were only 'fair' would go to your White children instead."

The irony of Alexander's appearance before what he described as "the most prestigious segregated body in America—the United States Senate" was not lost during the hearing, which focused on the problems faced by Black men.

"White men and women can develop the solutions... (while) Black men can only nibble at the edges of power in America," summarized Alexander, who was appointed by President Jimmy Carter as the first Black civilian head of a military branch.

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ACCEPT INDIVIDUALISM

cont from page 4

or what I need to live out on my own in the future.

I feel I can be a leader and that I have an impact on my friends so I try to be positive. We hang around and look for girls but not for drugs and alcohol.

Sometimes I get so frustrated about what the gangs are doing to each other in the streets I wish that 5/0 (the police) would just let them kill each other off. In spite of education, without better paying jobs the community will never be able to stop the drugs from getting in. *

GET YOURSELF TOGETHER

cont, from page 4

I will become lazy. I know I will succeed in life and my career goal is to join the armed forces: the marines.

I think that the media could give the ethnic neighborhoods a little more respect because all they do is give news on the bad parts of the communities. I don't know a lot about Roxbury because I don't really hang around there, but I do have friends who live there.

I would like to see a lot of things change in Boston, like the violence and the drug selling. *

LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE

cont, from page 6

We need to unite and make Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan stronger and more powerful so that strangers can't come in, feed us drugs, make money, and take over while we're busy dealing with our problems.

Substance abuse has really gotten outrageous because people are not realizing what a serious effect this problem is having on all future generations.

People must realize that no real action will take place until the poor unite to fight against the real enemies: the ineffective and the destructive who are in office whether they are black or white. *



HOMICIDE PROFILE

To address the problem of youth violence, it is essential to understand the characteristics of, and the contributing factors associated with violent behavior of which homicide is the most extreme outcome. Stereotypes which suggest that most homicides are related to criminal activity, are premeditated, or racially motivated are incorrect.

TYPICAL HOMICIDE PROFILE

- MALE
(frequently poor, young, and a member of a minority group, males are many more times likely to die of homicides than females - 85% of male homicide victims are killed by men, 90% of female homicide victims also are killed by men).
- KILLED BY SOMEONE THE VICTIM KNEW
(50%-70% of the time).
- PRECIPITATED BY AN ARGUMENT
(47% of the time).
- SAME RACIAL GROUP
(80%-90% of the time).
- ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUG USE
(greater than 50% of the time the victims have elevated blood alcohol levels - National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates, conservatively, that at least 10% of homicides and assaults are drug related).
- HANDGUN IS THE WEAPON OF CHOICE
(50% - handgun, 13% - rifle/shotgun, 19% - knife/sharp object)

In 1986 there were 21,400 homicides. The racial distribution was:

- white victims approximately 50% or 10,700,
- black victims approximately 45% or 9,630,
- other victims approximately 5% or 1,070.

...research suggests that most homicide victims are young males who frequently are members of minority groups and who usually know their killers. Although the largest number of homicides occurs among whites, more lives are lost to homicide among blacks 15 - 34 years of age than to any other cause of death, including other injuries, suicide, heart disease, and cancer. Young black males are at especially high risk of death from homicide, with mortality rates 5 to 12 times greater than those of young white males.

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WE NEED TO HAVE VALUES



DONALD TAYLOR, 15

I think my community should be more involved with its youth by opening up more youth groups, helping the youth to find jobs, supporting more sports activities, and making education more interesting.

The media seems to turn the stories of black and hispanic people around so that they are not really true. They are quick to make them look bad in order to sell more papers and gain false reputations as reporters.

I would like to see the people in the communities

protest the bad media stories more often in order to make the media respect them.

The law enforcement officials could make the drugs and violence disappear with more Crime Watch programs spread throughout every street in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan.

I get a lot of family support and I think that I will be successful at my career goals, acting and singing, with their assistance.

If the families, community, law enforcement, and media really cared, we would care. *

