

State and Local

Old problem needs new attention

Homocide of blacks an 'epidemic'

HOUSTON (AP) — The high homicide rate among blacks is not a new problem, but one that has been going on for years and deserves more attention, the former president of the National Medical Association says.

Edith Jones, a physician practicing in Houston's inner-city neighborhoods since 1953, says the homicide rate among blacks in Houston is reflective of the national problem.

"It's an epidemic," she said. "It is a disaster and one that much attention should be given."

Records show homicide is the

leading cause of death for black males ages 15 to 44, Jones said.

A federal report showed that since 1981, 40 percent of Houston's homicide victims were black, even though the black community makes up only 18 percent of the city's population. Whites, who make up 73 percent of the population, comprised 26 percent of the city's homicide cases.

Homicide figures from the Houston Police Department show that about 45 percent of the perpetrators of those homicides were black. The figures also indicate that the victim

and the perpetrator knew each other in at least 60 percent of the cases.

"The reason homicides are more frequent (among blacks) is because of the environment they are exposed to," Jones said. "Any explanation I've heard doesn't justify it. But it is a problem — a societal problem — and must be dealt with from all sides."

At a recent NMA conference doctors suggested that each physician spend more time routinely screening black patients for violent or homicidal feelings and help patients who are inclined toward violence.

Dr. Paris Bradford, who attended the conference, said the suggestion is a practical one.

"Physicians need to understand what is going on behind the patient's eyes," Bradford said. "There certainly are socioeconomic factors that should be looked at beyond checking a man's high blood pressure and giving him a bottle of pills."

Jones sees other problems in society that need to be resolved.

"Blacks are still the invisible ones," she said. "The last hired and the first fired. They fight only with the weapons they know how to fight with."

Chat with governor leaves teacher happier

AUSTIN (AP) — A chance meeting Monday gave teacher James C. Robertson what many of his colleagues would like — a chance to tell Gov. Mark White what he thinks of the teacher competency test.

It may have won White a vote.

"He has changed my mind. I will now consider voting for him, whereas I would not have until I met him personally," said Robertson, an

11th grade English teacher at Clear Lake High School in League City.

Robertson, who is entering his 33rd year of teaching, was touring the Capitol when he unexpectedly bumped into White as the governor was leaving his second-floor office.

The chief topic of conversation was the Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers, the mandatory competency test re-

quired under school reform legislation White pushed through the Legislature in 1984.

White's Republican opponent, former Gov. Bill Clements, says he opposes the test as given. Clements has said teachers with 10 to 15 years experience should not have been required to take such an exam.

Robertson told White the test was very unpopular among veteran tea-

chers. White pledged that they won't face another exam.

"If I can go back and tell our faculty that you said there will never be another test during your administration, I think you'll get overwhelming applause from the faculty," Robertson said.

"You can tell them that," White assured him.

Tarrant County drops emergency aid for illegal aliens

FORT WORTH (AP) — Undocumented aliens in Tarrant County no longer will receive emergency food, rent and utility assistance, county commissioners decided Monday.

The commissioners' action came a week after Assistant District Attorney Joe Lockhart issued a legal opinion that the county has the right to

exclude such aliens from emergency benefits.

County Judge Mike Moncrief asked Lockhart to work with Hamilton's office on a policy that would satisfy the commissioners' wishes and the requirements of the law.

During Monday's session, Hamilton denied claims by caseworkers in her department that she changed

the department's longtime policy of not issuing aid to undocumented aliens.

The caseworkers, all of whom requested anonymity because they feared reprisals, said Hamilton changed office procedures in late 1985 to eliminate any restriction against undocumented aliens.

"That's the way I was trained,"

one caseworker said. "It was an unwritten policy that if people were in the country illegally, we would refer them to other sources (of assistance)."

Hamilton told caseworkers several times they must stop asking questions about an applicant's citizenship during interviews for county benefits, the employees said.

New bill could resolve 2-year museum battle

DALLAS (AP) — A congressman's bill that would permit the Museum of the American Indian to move onto federally owned property in New York is the latest chapter in a two-year battle over its location.

Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz., filed the bill last week as an alternative to computer magnate H. Ross Perot's offering a new building in Dallas for the collection of Indian artifacts.

If passed, the bill would allow the museum exhibits, which are now at a site on Manhattan's upper west side, to be relocated at refurbished Customs House in lower Manhattan.

But settling the matter may be months away.

"It's awfully hard to estimate," the museum's director, Roland Force, said.

"Every time I think I know how much longer it will take, I'm impressed with how wrong I was."

A New York Supreme Court judge has ruled that the financially strapped museum is not forever bound to a location inside New York state by a 1916 deed of trust filed by its founder.

But the judge still must conduct a hearing on other aspects of the proposed move and issue a final ruling, Force said.

Meanwhile, Udall's bill has been referred to a House Governmental Operations subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Jack Brooks, D-Beaumont.

"It's not clear what our timetable is," said Bob Walker, legislative director for Udall. "We'll just have to wait and see."

If the bill runs into problems, it may come from Texas representatives who support Perot's \$70 million Dallas plan, Force said.

"I recognize there may be some opposition from Texas members who may like to see the museum go to Texas," Walker said.

"But we haven't heard any words of personal opposition from the chairman yet. I would hesitate to say we perceive any problems at this point."

Force and his staff continued work on technical innovations that will be introduced to the expanded exhibits when, and if, the museum makes its move.

The master plan that now sits on Force's desk calls for expansion of the current 15,000-square-foot Museum of the American Indian to about 100,000 square feet.

That means the bulk of the artifacts collected by the museum finally will be pulled from storage.

Currently, the museum has room to show off only about 1 percent of the 1 million objects it owns.

Thousands of baskets, jewelry, weapons, masks, carvings and pottery assembled over the years are boxed in a research building 12 miles from the museum.

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The county's Human Services Department issues vouchers to help poor people with bills for food, rent and utilities. The department has a budget of almost \$1.2 million.

If an applicant who was an undocumented worker was genuinely hungry, caseworkers would issue food vouchers, the caseworker said.

Mother kills daughter's attacker

DALLAS (AP) — A teen-ager who tried to rape a 13-year-old girl in her bedroom was chased down and shot to death by the victim's mother, police said.

The woman said she had warned Thomas C. Phifer, 17, to stay away from her children after he harassed and attempted to sexually assault her older daughter three years ago.

Phifer died of a single gunshot wound to the chest at Parkland Memorial Hospital just before midnight Friday.

The youth reportedly forced his way into the back of the family's West Dallas home at 10:50 p.m. Friday and found the girl in her room, said police homicide investigator Don Ortega.

After a struggle, the assailant threatened to kill the girl unless she remained quiet, police said.

The youth, who lived in the same neighborhood, was attempting to rape the girl when her aunt walked in the room and screamed, Ortega said.

After hearing the scream, the girl's mother grabbed a pistol she kept in her home and chased after the youth, who had bolted from the home.

In an interview with the *Dallas Times Herald*, the woman said after she found Phifer a few blocks away from her home, she confronted and shot him. Phifer ran away from the scene and collapsed in the yard of his mother's home.

What's up

Tuesday

INDIA ASSOCIATION: Dr. Popli will talk on "A Strategy for Teaching the Underprivileged" based on his work among tribals in India at 9:30 a.m. in 410 Rudder. For more information call 845-1809.

COMMODORE BRAZOS USERS' GROUP: anyone interested in free tutorial on Commodore 64 or 128 systems can call David Gruben at 845-8889.

Wednesday

MSC CAMERA COMMITTEE: Bill Meeks, chief photographer of the *Eagle*, will present "A Day in the Life of a Photojournalist" at 7 p.m. in 604A-B Rudder.

Thursday

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE: Any junior and senior in the department of biology, chemistry, mathematics or physics who entered his current major prior to catalog 107 and who has not previously taken the English Proficiency Examination should plan to do so this semester. The exam will be administered by the English department on Thursday. Please contact Marilyn Radke in 152 Blocker for details. Advance registration is required.

Items for *What's Up* should be submitted to *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald, no less than three days prior to desired publication date.

Lobbyists seek tax increase to head off education cuts

AUSTIN (AP) — Momentum for a state tax hike grew Monday as two powerful groups opened lobbying efforts to head off cuts in education spending.

At the Capitol, 30 public education associations — including some who have been enemies on other issues — announced they were joining to back a tax hike.

"Our favorite tax?" asked Will Davis of Austin, a former State Board of Education member. "We don't have a favorite tax. But we have none that are off limits."

Davis is chairman of the coalition. At the University of Texas, more than 400 well-financed and politically well-connected supporters of the school held what amounted to a tax-hike pep rally.

UT System Chancellor Hans Mark said there are clear consequences of the kind of cuts that would be needed to balance the budget without a tax hike.

"I personally don't believe that

this state wants to be another banana republic," Mark said.

The legislative special session opens Wednesday to deal with the projected \$3.5 billion deficit. Gov. Mark White has yet to lay out his plan, but has said the first efforts at denting the deficit should come through spending cuts, not tax hikes.

The public education coalition that Monday announced its support for a tax hike includes the four major teacher organizations, several administrators' organizations and a variety of education specialty groups — including some representing minority students.

"We'll be here for the next 30 days in record numbers," Davis said. "They picked the wrong time to have a special session if they wanted to avoid educators because school is out and the Legislature is on."

At the UT meeting, Regents Chairman Jess Hay recruited the crowd as lobbyists for a tax hike.

"At risk, and make no mistake about it, in this special session will be nothing less than the future of Texas," he said.

Hay said massive cuts could send the state to the "backwaters of also-rans, content to reside their with recollections of a glorious past."

Several business leaders announced support for a tax hike. Bobby Ray Inman, chairman of the Microelectronic Computer Technology Corp., said the increases should be in such "consumption taxes" as the sales tax.

Hay and others encouraged the UT backers to tell lawmakers there can be political life after a tax hike.

"We asking them to do what many of them view as politically painful," Hay said. "Be courageous enough and direct enough to say, 'You and I both know this problem cannot be solved in a fiscally responsible way with budget cuts alone.'"

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