



Protecting witnesses an uphill political fight

David Pomerantz

As Boston's 2007 homicide count continues to rise, some politicians are trying to devote resources to help murder witnesses come forward and aid law enforcement authorities.

City Councilor Rob Consalvo has called for a hearing to propose a program that would offer anyone who provides information that leads to a homicide arrest a \$10,000 reward through the Boston Police Crime Stoppers Tipline.

At the same time, state Sen. Dianne Wilkerson has criticized state district attorney's offices for failing to aggressively use the Witness Protection Fund, a \$1 million statewide fund to be used by district attorneys to relocate and protect witnesses of violent crimes.

The fund was created last year, but Wilkerson argues that it faces a

\$500,000 cut in the state's 2008 budget because prosecutors have underutilized it.

Politicians like Consalvo and Wilkerson face an uphill battle in combating witness intimidation. Of the 74 homicides that were committed in Boston last year, police identified or arrested suspects in only 28 of those cases, a clearance rate of 38 percent.

The numbers have been similar thus far in 2007. Of 20 homicides committed since Jan. 1, police have made arrests in only six cases as of Tuesday, a clearance rate of 30 percent.

Reasons for the "code of silence" that keeps witnesses from cooperating are varied.

Some fear retribution or intimidation. Sixty-four percent of Massachusetts teens who participated in the recent study, "Snitches Get Stitches: Witnesses, continued to page 10



Just in time for Mothers' Day, Kenneth Guscott gestures to a portrait of his late mother, Rubina Guscott, at a ceremony on Saturday, May 5 that named an iconic building at the corner of Warren St. and Blue Hill Ave. after the family matriarch. The

building was built in the same year of Rubina's birth in Jamaica, and was dedicated in honor of her immigrant roots and contributions to public life. The building will house a branch of One United Bank, the nation's largest black bank. (Lolita Parker Jr. photo)

Calif. schools mark decade of race-blind admissions

Michelle Locke

BERKELEY, Calif. — A fit of spring-cleaning led Eric Brooks to a box of old newspaper clips from 1997. That's when he was the lone black student enrolled in the incoming law school class at the University of California, Berkeley, following the end of affirmative action admissions.

He didn't read them. That box

doesn't hold pleasant memories.

"I felt bad for myself at the time because of my situation, but worse for the people who were denied admission," said Brooks.

Ten years later, the numbers of underrepresented minorities at UC have rebounded at the undergraduate level, although they haven't kept pace with high school graduation rates. But more blacks and Hispan-

ics are also going to lesser-known branches of the 10-campus system and fewer to the flagships of Berkeley and UCLA.

Meanwhile, the movement toward race-blind admissions is spreading in the United States. The states of Florida, Texas and Michigan have rewritten their admissions rules. Ward Connerly, the UC regent who started it all, is taking his campaign for race-

blind admissions to as many as five more states next year, including Colorado, Missouri, Oklahoma and Arizona.

"If things unfold the way I am predicting they will unfold," Connerly said, "I think we are witnessing the end of an era."

The debate over affirmative action begins with how you define affirmative action.

To Connerly, it's a system of "racial preferences" that drive a wedge between people. To his opponents, it's a way to recognize that not everyone starts with the same advantages.

The debate came to UC in 1995 when, in a bitterly contested 14-10

vote, the system's governing Board of Regents voted to stop looking at applicants' race, effective for graduate students in 1997 and for undergrads the following year.

In 1996, Connerly took the movement statewide with Proposition 209, which banned consideration of race in public hiring, contracting and education.

A similar measure passed in Washington state in 1998, and Texas affirmative action policies fell in 1996 with a federal appeals court ruling.

In Florida, Connerly launched a campaign similar to Proposition 209. Then-Gov. Jeb Bush opposed the measure as divisive, but implemented it. California, continued to page 12



Floyd Mayweather Jr., left, lands a left on Oscar De La Hoya at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. Mayweather remained undefeated in his career with a split-decision victory. (AP photo/Kevork Djansezian)

Lost and found: A Sudanese love story

Daniela Caride

Rebecca Madut and James Deng were deeply in love.

After dating for three years, they got married in 2004 at the First Lutheran Church in Lynn. Sudanese and American guests rejoiced with a banquet of African dishes served at the church's hall after the ceremony.

This "typical" love story is actually an abnormality in Sudan, the couple's homeland. There, Southern Sudanese men — generally polygamists — pay for arranged marriages and assume control of their women's lives.

Even though the couple does not agree with those traditions, they asked Rebecca's mother and James' uncle to organize two rituals. So their families decided on a bride's price — 110 cows, paid by James — and prepared a ceremony.

"We are different from people from Sudan," said Rebecca, but "we

didn't want to forget our culture. "You have to keep something."

Rebecca is one the Lost Boys and Lost Girls of Sudan, a group of 3,800 Sudanese refugees now living here since the United States government established a resettlement program with the United Nations in 1999. The Sudanese refugees arrived here in 2000 and 2001. Of the 3,800, only 90 — less than 3 percent of the group — were women.

In the refugee camps in Ethiopia, girls were placed with foster families while boys stayed together to adhere to cultural traditions. Joan Hecht, president and founder of the nonprofit Alliance for the Lost Boys of Sudan, said that girls became part of the families in some cases.

But "in other cases, they were used as labor," Hecht said, and "weren't allowed to go to school."

Fostering Sudanese girls was also attractive because brides' dowry was high. Sudan, continued to page 26

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