

# Mockingbird Times



Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth

July 2004

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

Volume IV, Issue 7

Visit us online at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)

## Engaging the Court in Keeping your Family Safe

DARIUS REYNOLDS



**DO YOU WANT TO FIND A WAY TO KEEP YOUR FAMILY TOGETHER?** Well, the Mockingbird Society and the Children's Alliance are sponsoring an educational forum on ARY/CHINS petitions on July 12<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 4:00 at the Catholic Community Services Randolph Carter Learning and Family Center 100 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. South Seattle, WA 98144.

I interviewed **Kaki Dimock, At Risk Youth Program Manager for the King County Court House**, for more information about the forum and these petitions.

**Darius:** What is the purpose of this forum?

**Kaki:** The Children's Alliance is holding this educational forum on the At-Risk Youth and Child in Need of Services petitioning process to learn more about how the process works, how system participants and clients perceive the effectiveness of the process and how the systems of care do or don't work well together.

**Often the At-Risk Youth or Child in Need of Services petition is the first public acknowledgement that things aren't going well at home and can be an opportunity for youth and their families to try something different.**

-Kaki Dimock

The At Risk-Youth (ARY) and Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petitions were started to help families stay together and work out their problems with the help of the court system.

The ARY petition can only be filed by a parent or guardian. It can be used to get a court order for an at-risk youth (defined as a youth who has been away from home for at least 72 hours, is beyond parental control or has a substance abuse problem) to attend counseling, treatment and/or school.

A CHINS petition can be filed by a youth, parent, guardian or DSHS. With a CHINS petition a youth can get a court order to be placed outside of their home; youth can also request services that the parents may be refusing to give them.

The upcoming forum is designed to educate people on the ARY/CHINS petitions and discuss what is working for people and what isn't, as well as looking at ways to improve the petitions and explore differences across the state.

The primary goal is to have a structured conversation about these petitions and find out as much as we can about the process. We also hope to identify any clear differences in the way counties implement this law and serve youth and families.

**Darius:** Please describe the CHINS/ARY petitions for our readers.

**Kaki:** Both the At-Risk Youth and Child in Need of Services petitions were intended to help parents and children get access to services they need. The statute provides this process for youth who are using drugs or alcohol, have run away from home or placement, or are in danger of hurting themselves or others. The court may assume jurisdiction over a youth and order that the youth and their parent or guardian participate in services designed to keep them together.

**Darius:** What do you see as the benefits of both these petitions?

**Kaki:** Some youth have found the Child in Need of Services petition helpful in getting needed basic services that their parent or guardian cannot or will not provide for them. Some parents have found that youth who have refused to participate in counseling before, will engage in needed services, like family counseling or drug or alcohol treatment, as a result of an At-Risk Youth court order. Many people believe that the At-Risk Youth and the Child in Need of Services petitions help keep families together and avoid the need for youth to live outside of the home.

**Darius:** What are the major misconceptions about these petitions?

**Kaki:** Many families report that having the authority of the court has been helpful in gaining access to services. Other families, however, report that going to court many times is difficult for them and may place their employment at risk. And still others, report that the relationship between the youth and the rest of the family got worse after their

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## Race Doesn't Add up in Foster Care

ECHO SPEED



**RACIAL DISPROPORTIONALITY IS AN IMMENSE PROBLEM** and setback that has from the beginning taken root in America's system of child welfare. Along with many other structures in our nation, the child welfare system is plagued with alarming racial disparities. For starters, there is a great deal of overrepresentation for African American and Native American children in our country's foster care population. This means that even though these groups make up only a relatively small percentage of youth across all of America, they make up a significantly greater percentage of youth in the foster care system.

Although statistics show that Hispanic youth are actually underrepresented in the foster care system, analyzing the different states individually shows acute overrepresentations, according to a report prepared for the Annie B. Casey Foundation on racial disproportionality in the foster care system ([www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)).

The history of foster care plays a major role in this problem, because sadly for decades discrimination by exclusion against children of color has thrived on in the system. Interestingly, the first child welfare services were established in the late 19th century by elite charitable organizations to "rescue" destitute and deprived white immigrant children. It's quite different now; children of color aren't being excluded from the system at all... instead they're being excluded from many of the same opportunities that white children receive ([www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)).

There is also evidence that the treatment for children of color is rather substandard once placed in care. They're more likely to be removed from their parents and placed in foster care, reside in foster care for longer periods of time, and are less likely to be either returned home or adopted ([www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)). In addition to their numerical disproportionality, children of color are disadvantaged by Child Protective Services that are not culturally competent. For example, there are not enough Spanish-speaking caseworkers and foster parents to serve Latino children and Asian-Pacific Islander providers of child welfare services are also scarce (Tsang 2001).

This past May 27<sup>th</sup>, I attended the King County Racial Disproportionality Initiative Stakeholder Coalition. Apparently there are many in the County (WA State) who recognize the problem and want to fix it.

While racial disproportionality frustrates our juvenile justice system as well, this meeting was strictly focused on Washington's foster care system. Before anything drastic can take place there is a great need for more research and information. The whole of this particular

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## Letter From the Editor

**THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY IS PROUD TO PRESENT** this issue of the *Mockingbird Times*. It is especially rewarding to give some well deserved attention to the young people who have graduated from high school or earned their GED. It is inspiring to give witness to the remarkable stories of so many young people who have managed to graduate from high school while navigating the stormy waters of trauma, foster care and/or homelessness. Please join me in offering these young graduates congratulations and best wishes as they embark on a new journey.

Speaking of high school students, I want to extend our deepest appreciation to the many students from **Bethel High School** who took the time to write letters to members of the *Mockingbird Times* reporting team (see Letter To the Editor). Our reporters work very hard producing each monthly issue and it is wonderful for them to receive feedback, especially from their peers. I strongly encourage all of you to send letters or emails letting us know what you think of the paper.

August marks the Mockingbird Society's third anniversary and we are busy preparing for an **Open House** in our beautiful new office space, set for August 13th. We are working on some very exciting developments including a project in which youth will produce three videos that focus on the trials and tribulations faced by kids who are in foster care or homeless. **Wild Geese Productions** will be donating their expertise, equipment and time to mentor Mockingbird youth and staff through the process. This is a remarkable opportunity for youth to be on both sides of the camera learning skills, earning money and telling their story.

Additionally, Mockingbird and a Seattle-based community newspaper are in conversation about the

possibility of *Mockingbird Times* being an insert into their paper, similar to our circulation in the *Real Change* newspaper. This venture will expand the *Mockingbird Times* circulation to between 60,000 and 70,000 monthly copies. Keep your fingers crossed! Finally, I want to thank the young people at Mockingbird Society who invest so much of their energy, thoughtfulness and responsibility towards their work. Not only do they produce a fabulous newspaper but they represent Mockingbird and their peers at community meetings, speak at conferences and meet with public officials and decision makers. Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July to the Mockingbird staff and to you our valuable readers.



Jim Theofelis  
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

### Letter To the Editor

Dear Darius,

I read your article, "Homeless Youth Illustrate Endurance" in May's issue. I was struck by the exhibit's considerate participants who [showed] lots of courage to allow strangers to videotape them talking about their personal lives for others to see. I agree that it's an inspiring eye opener, and a reminder of the things people have to go through to survive in this world.

What also struck me was [the advice to] "never give up on yourself no matter what obstacles get in your way, whether it is a drug addiction, homelessness or constant ridicule from strangers." These things give people who listen a better understanding of what the homeless go through. I appreciate your showing a solution in the article--spreading understanding and inspiring people to support the homeless. Our class is teaching us to not judge. I highly believe in that.

Sincerely,  
Ashley

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involvement in the court. It is important for youth and families to have a realistic understanding and expectation of the process. The parent and the youth remain responsible for monitoring the court order and bringing the matter back into court if something goes wrong. This is sometimes a greater burden than people anticipated and they would rather seek other solutions to their family situation. There are also some families who wish to have youth ordered into inpatient mental health or drug or alcohol treatment as a part of the ARY and/or CHINS process when the court simply does not have the authority to do this.

**Darius:** What do you think are some outcomes for the youth?

**Kaki:** Often the At-Risk Youth or Child in Need of Services petition is the first public acknowledgement that things aren't going well at home and can be an opportunity for youth and their families to try something different. The judge or commissioner can help take the pressure off youth and parents by setting some boundaries for the family. This can include setting curfews for youth and asking parents to enroll in parenting classes. Many families say that while the court order gets the family to access help, it's the services that really help change the dynamic in the home. Many youth return home, return to school, get treatment, or get clean and sober with the help of these services. Many kids and parents learn new ways to relate to each other as a result of these services. 

For more information about this exciting event, contact Jon Gould from the Children's Alliance at jon@childrensalliance.org or call 206-324-0340x19

"SUCCESS IS A JOURNEY, NOT A  
DESTINATION"

-BEN SWEETLAND

### Meet Our Staff

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**Thank-You's:**  
Seattle Post Intelligencer, Bill Stephenson at CPC, Kaki Dimock at the King County Courthouse, Ted Greenblatt at Treehouse, Bob Geballe, Frances DeMarco, Kikora Dorsey, Janis Avery, Valerie Douglas, Sabrina Schongalla, Bethel Senior High, Elaine Estes and Northwest Children's Fund, in particular Victoria Helm, Anne Lokey and Bobby Forch

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**ABOUT US:** The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents in foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 28,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. All donations to The Mockingbird Society are tax-deductible and greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright 2004 The Mockingbird Society.

### A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox:

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## Positive Power: Mental Health and You

COURTNEY KONIETZKO



ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY, A MENTAL ILLNESS IS "ANY OF VARIOUS CONDITIONS characterized by impairment of an individual's normal cognitive, emotional, or behavioral functioning, and caused by social, psychological, biochemical, genetic, or other factors, such as infection or head trauma." In other words, a mental illness is a condition that affects a person's ability to function and enjoy his/her life.

A mental illness is NOT something to be ashamed of. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, "an estimated 22.1 percent of Americans ages 18 and over – about 1 in 5 adults – suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. When applied to the 1998 U.S. census residential population estimate, this figure translates to 44.3 million people."

Becoming healthy is not just popping a pill to make everything better; it doesn't work that way. Talking with a therapist and learning new ways to change your thinking and behavior can be really helpful and is often used with medication, though sometimes just talking with somebody who really understands can help by itself.

It is okay to ask for help and a valuable resource to get help is called the Community Psychiatric Clinic. CPC exists to serve the needs of the mentally ill and drug addicted in Seattle and surrounding areas. CPC serves both youth and adults and has a variety of

### CPC PROGRAM DETAILS

CPC RUNS TWENTY CLUSTER HOMES WITH THE CAPACITY TO HOUSE 3-5 CLIENTS IN EACH HOUSE.

HOUSES ARE SEMI-INDEPENDENT LIVING WITH A MIX OF PERMANENT AND TRANSITIONAL PLACEMENTS.

CPC OWNS SIX APARTMENT BUILDINGS WHICH ARE COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT LIVING.

CPC ALSO HAS CONTRACTS WITH OWNERS OF OTHER APARTMENT COMPLEXES TO PLACE PEOPLE THERE TOTALING 80 UNITS.

CPC HAS CONTRACTS WITH THE SEATTLE HOUSING AUTHORITY FOR 97 VOUCHERS, THE KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY FOR 55 VOUCHERS, AND 70 HUD BASED SHELTER VOUCHERS.

CPC RUNS ONE TRANSITIONAL LIVING HOME CALLED CEDAR HOUSE, AN 8 UNIT HOME THAT IS GEARED SPECIFICALLY TOWARDS HOMELESS YOUTH WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES. IT IS A TWO YEAR PROGRAM FOR YOUTH AGES 18-24.

programs to help people. CPC is also sliding scale and accepts Medicaid and Medicare. The programs and services offered include: assessment services, community support, specialized support which involves child and family services, the adult outpatient program, criminal justice diversion, and vocational services, residential and housing services, and the Chemical Dependency Recovery Program.

I interviewed Bill Stephenson, Program Manager for Housing Services for Community Psychiatric Clinic to

find out what role CPC plays within the community. According to Stephenson, "This department runs one of the largest housing programs for people with mental illness in Washington State and maybe the United States. Our housing program places emphasis on case management – every person involved with CPC has a case manager to assist with personal needs like future housing." The hope is that once a person is done with their stay in transitional living (on average two years) they will be able to make the transition smoothly into an apartment or some other long term housing. This doesn't always happen and people are sometimes forced to continue recycling themselves through transitional home after transitional home because of a severe shortage of enough permanent housing.

If money were not an issue, Stephenson stated that he would want CPC to hire more case managers. Currently, CPC Case Managers have a huge caseload, with about 70 clients each. Medicine providers have a caseload of about 200 clients each. Stephenson also expressed that, "changing the emphasis towards the recovery model" and that, "services being more team oriented rather than individual case management" would also be helpful. Stephenson stated that money is not needed to make this kind of change.

If you or someone you know is in need of mental health or drug and alcohol treatment, contact the Community Psychiatric Clinic at (206) 461-3614 to set up an assessment. "To help assure access for everyone, CPC offers fee adjustments based on income and family size." "As a fully licensed behavioral healthcare organization, our services are eligible for coverage by most private insurance plans, Medicare, and Medicaid." Asking for help is a really hard thing to do but it can change your life for the better. 🐦



## Mockingbird Congratulates 2004 Graduates

The Mockingbird Society congratulates all of the young people across the nation who graduated this June, especially graduates of Interagency School, Southlake High School, recipients of the WA State Governor's Scholarship Award and graduates who attended the Treehouse Graduation Event in Seattle.

### Treehouse Honors Foster Care Graduates

ANTHONY GUESS



THE TREEHOUSE GRADUATION EVENT FOR FOSTER CARE YOUTH held in May was a success. Shayla Macababbad from Rainer Beach High School sang the National Anthem. Macababbad, a former foster care youth, will be attending Seattle Central Community College this fall. Macababbad and her peers celebrated at this milestone event where the talent, skills, and experiences of young people in foster care were recognized.

Everyone has a story, but what makes these stories different is that the young people telling them have experienced the foster care system, and for them to be fortunate enough to graduate from high school or other educational facilities is a blessing in itself. Statistics indicate that only 34% of youth in foster care graduate from high school (<http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/childfamily/pdf/fcedreport.pdf>)

Twenty youth attended the Treehouse ceremony. Even though this number is kind of small I believe that it's a start. It will open eyes of other foster youth and could dramatically change the percentage of those that graduate from school. The advice that many of these youth had to say to kids who are unsure about graduating, "Don't get discouraged, don't give up, believe you can overcome challenges to reach a goal, believe in yourself and know there is support to help you."

As a junior in high school, I can't wait to graduate. Even with this hope, it has been difficult to keep this goal from being a distant dream because of bouncing from one place to the next, not receiving help when needed, and really not having consistent people to depend on.

I am frequently asked, "Why do you try so hard?" and "Why do you want to graduate high school?" I simply

reply that I believe the situation or problem that you're in does not determine who you are—it's how you overcome or deal with it. Last but not least, I'd like to tell kids who have the ability to graduate to do so—no matter what people say or do. 🐦



Samantha Morales, Graduate at the Treehouse Event.

### Interagency Schools Celebrate in Style

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

CONGRATULATIONS TO INTERAGENCY ACADEMY SCHOOLS AND SOUTH LAKE HIGH SCHOOL class of 2004! The graduation was held on June 10th at the Asa Mercer school auditorium and the stage was beautifully decorated with rainbow lights and stars. As usual, it was extremely packed full of people, like traffic on the roads of Seattle with not enough seats. The crowd of well wishers was very enthusiastic and loud; whooping and yelling support to their graduates.

It was the biggest graduating class yet, with a total of 170 students. One of the highlights of the program was two young people performing a duet of The Beatles' Yesterday. One young woman received an award from The Orion Center (an Interagency Academy school site) for overcoming hardship and completing her GED. She was a mom of seven children and went back to school to obtain her GED after dropping out several years prior.

It is interesting to note Mockingbird published an excellent poem by one of the graduates in the June edition of the Mockingbird Times. Good luck with college everyone! 🐦

# Poetry Corner

## Ancestral Rage

BY MISTY LOU COOK

Rage is frustration and love amplified  
 Status Quo Defied  
 I am sick of being lied  
 To In the Name of Illusion  
 Puppetry of Sound, the Masses Diluted  
 Opinions of Democracy Polluted  
 By the Corporate Media Who Play  
 Games With Minds Every Day  
 Like Clay They Move Yuppie Sheep  
 With the Censors and Thought Police it's  
 Bleep, Bleep, Bleep  
 What they don't want you to hear  
 Is there a Revolution Near  
 This Nation Built On Fear  
 My Ancestors Labeled Savages  
 They Fuel Genocide, Rape and Ravages  
 Like they Take the Land  
 Say they stood here first on this sand  
 I take It All Like A Grain of Salt  
 They Can't Tell Me It's My Own Fault  
 No, You Impose This Racist Nation  
 On My Ancestral Bones  
 You Tell Me I Can't Live Without Taxes and Loans  
 The World Bank: The World Is Your Piggy Bank  
 A Blank Check In the Name of Slavery  
 Cause This Nation Is Too Blind to See  
 That In The Name of Survival  
 We're Seeing that the US Government Is Our Rival  
 This Isn't A Game, It's Not In The Books  
 We're Taking Back Our Earth Mother  
 With Pens Like Left Hooks  
 We'll Bomb You With Compassion  
 You Can't Sell Us Rebellious Fashion  
 \$60 for a T-Shirt that says Anarchy  
 We're sick of this lock and key  
 The key to this is persistence and understanding  
 Understand that LOVE is the chief that's commanding  
 One Nation, One Love, One World  
 It's All of Our Passion for Life Unfurled  
 We Uncurled, We Won't Play Victim Anymore  
 Because This Earth Isn't your Whore  
 So In the Name of Justice We Will Walk  
 And In the Spirit of Truth We Will Talk  
 So F\*\*\* You If You Can't Take Our Heat  
 You Fed Us Bull\*\*\*\* and Told Us to Sit  
 In Our Seat Our Feet Planted  
 You've Taken Everything For Granted  
 And Now We Walk Out of This Hypocrisy  
 F\*\*\* All Your Corporate Prisons and Chains  
 We'll Start Our Own Democracy.

## Untitled

BY MILO HOOD

Must an entity such as myself  
 Sit you down for a discussion on your mental  
 health  
 Here's some white whine,  
 Cheese and crackers and fruit  
 One must execute the right rhyme to please these  
 sprackers of the youth  
 Obtuse is the way my mind must evade your  
 ignorance  
 Ignoring the snores and doors closing diligent  
 Stored in tunnel vision and misconception  
 Making it impossible to funnel some wisdom,  
 They miss the conscious inception  
 Submissive to icons intercepting perception  
 Administered false light through commercial  
 worshiping inventions  
 Only internal intervention,  
 Can dislodge these mind states  
 Dodging behind divine fates  
 Reality is harsh  
 In the fallacy you can't start,  
 To distinguish  
 Embark on distilled sequence  
 Billed by the demons  
 For cancerous streams of conjuring  
 Honoring devils on levels you were not aware  
 If the sky ain't falling before my retina, I guess I  
 don't care  
 Whitewashed in the form of despair  
 And a hint of consumerism share and share alike  
 We can all gather plastic products and bare an  
 artificial life  
 Assembling  
 Angels from anguish  
 As angles adjacent  
 Display a perpendicular path  
 The grain has only three dimensions to a more  
 intricate math  
 You can't raise the volume on mass  
 Grazed by the harpoon of cold cash  
 Call soon for your rebate  
 If you order now, we'll throw in a third eye so  
 you can see great.

## Need/Want

BY MATT HILL

You want something  
 But you know you can't get it  
 When you ask for change  
 But instead you get hit.  
 Hit in the heart  
 And hit pretty hard  
 The dealer gave you  
 A really nasty card.

You need something  
 But you don't know what  
 When you extend your arms  
 Your hands get all cut.

They say "reach for the stars"  
 Which one should you pick?  
 Your mind is racing  
 And your heart starts to tick  
 Shy in the day  
 Lazy in the night  
 You want to scream  
 And inside, you want to fight  
 Fight with the losers  
 Wait?!?!? Who's lost?  
 This battle's not won yet.  
 And everything will cost.

Ask for what you want  
 Someday you will get it.  
 Don't be afraid  
 The candle's already lit.

.....  
 ● RACIAL DISPROPORTIONALITY  
 ● CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- meeting was spent figuring out who is responsible
- for types of decision making pertaining to the
- problem at hand, based upon information gathered
- from focus groups at the meeting. This work will
- hopefully bring one step closer to undoing racism in
- our foster care system. Each focus group
- concentrated on one of the following key points:
- 1. **Referrals** and what goes into the decisions to
- investigate a referral.
- 2. **"Child Protective Services" assessment** process
- (founded, unfounded, and safety assessment).
- 3. **Placement** (in-home, or out of the home; kin or
- stranger).
- 4. **Reunification Efforts** (visitation, services offered).
- 5. **Kind of Permanent Plan** Chosen when not
- reunification (Guardianship vs. Adoption; family's
- role, fiscal issues).
- 6. **Termination Petition** (who decides, why or why
- not file, timing).
- 7. **Kids in care longer than two years.**

It is comforting to know that attention is being paid to the problem of racial disproportionality. And understand this; even though it may be true that white non-Hispanic youth are considerably underrepresented in the child welfare system (64% make up the nations population while only 31% make up the population in foster care), the fact remains that there are other factors feeding into racial disproportionality besides racism within the system.

For example, look at our nation and who makes up the majority of people in poverty... generally poor people are going to have it a great deal harder than people with money, and it's the youth with hard lives that usually end up in foster care. Looking at facts like these as well, and possibly working on the problems attached to them, could very well make quite a big difference in racial disproportionality not just in the field of child welfare, but in several areas suffering from the same problem. 🐦

To learn more about racial disproportionality, you can visit the Annie B. Casey website at [www.aecf.org/tarc/priority/respect/working\\_paper\\_4.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/tarc/priority/respect/working_paper_4.pdf)

**DO YOU** have poetry, drawings or photography that you would like to see published in the *Mockingbird Times*? Email your work to [newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org) or call Shannon at 206-323-5437 for more details.

# Shelter School Lesson Plan

