

Spend on Schools, Not Prisons, L.A. Commissioner - Omaha World-Herald (NE) - June 25, 1996 - page 33sf

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Americans eager to curb juvenile crime should focus more on addressing educational inequities than on building prisons, a Los Angeles Municipal Court commissioner said.

"What I disagree with is where the emphasis is in trying to prevent crime or reduce the incidence of crime," said Beverly E. Mosley, an Omaha native who is to appear here this week. "I hate that we're spending all this money making room to put people in jail and not equipping our schools properly or paying our teachers what they're worth or educating our children so they're prepared for the future."

Commissioner Mosley is scheduled to be the keynote speaker Saturday at the Urban League of Nebraska Guild's annual Dorothy B. Allen Scholarship Luncheon. The event is a fund-raiser for the guild's scholarship program.

Commissioner Mosley said Omaha public schools prepared her well to succeed in life. She attended Long and **Howard Kennedy elementary** schools, then graduated from Technical High School in 1966 and the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1970.

She taught grade school in Los Angeles for six years and went to law school at night for three of those years. She worked as a city prosecutor, then as a lawyer in private practice, from 1978 until 1987, when she was appointed a commissioner of the Los Angeles Municipal Court.

Commissioner Mosley was the first black woman to be appointed to that position. In Los Angeles, judges appoint commissioners to help with a workload that exceeds the number of judges who have been appointed by the governor or elected. Commissioners have the same duties and authority as judges.

"It's not a power trip, but I like being able to make the decisions I have to make," Commissioner Mosley said from Los Angeles.

"I think I'm very fair. And it's good to have diversity on the bench. Because of the area that I'm in, I see mostly African-American and Hispanic people in my courtroom. I think they like seeing me up there on the bench, even though they don't always like what I do."

Speaking on education, Commissioner Mosley said some schools in the poorer parts of Los Angeles are short on books and lack computers entirely. A 48-year-old mother of three, Commissioner Mosley belongs to several private-sector organizations that try to help at-risk children.

One such group, the Harbor Area Chapter of Links Inc., coordinates a project for students in what

are known as "opportunity" high schools in Los Angeles, which are for students who don't succeed in regular schools. With supplies from the Links, the children make dolls and record stories. Then they give the items to children who attend an elementary school for the homeless.

"The main idea to show high school students feeling unfortunate - and they are - that there are people worse off than they are," Commissioner Mosley said. "I think it's really important for children to learn how to share. The first year we did it, the older children were so happy about it that they wanted to do it every year."

Saturday's luncheon is scheduled for noon at the Omaha Marriott, 10220 Regency Circle. Tickets are \$20, and may be obtained by calling Mary Sells, 734 - 2189; Lorraine Sales, 451 - 5809; or the Urban League, 453 - 9730.

CITATION (APA STYLE)

Burbach, C. (1996, June 25). Spend on Schools, Not Prisons, L.A. Commissioner Says. *Omaha World-Herald (NE)*, p. 33sf. Available from NewsBank: America's News - Historical and Current: <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/12DE62DCA708B4D0>.

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