

Controversy Still Boiling Over Fate of Annetta Petty

By HENRY D. LOCKE JR.

Western New Yorkers have expressed outrage and indignation over the way local social agencies handled the case of Annetta Petty, the 15-year-old Buffalo girl who was forced into prostitution and slain before she could tell her story in a court of law.

Their outrage and indignation were outlined in letters and telephone calls to The Courier-Express following the publication Dec. 1 to Dec. 6 of a series of articles entitled "Who Cared About Annetta Petty?"

In addition their concerns have been expressed at meetings of clubs, teachers' organizations and community groups.

As a result of community concern over the case, City Court Judge Samuel L. Green, the Buffalo Youth Board and BUILD (Build, Unity Independence, Liberty and Dignity) have formed a task force to develop rehabilitation programs to aid teen-age prostitutes.

With Judge Green as chairman, the group has invited nearly 50 representatives from social agencies and members of community groups, clergymen, police agencies, the district attorney's office and parents of troubled youths to a meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in the YWCA 180 Franklin St.

The Black Student Union at the University of Buffalo also is mapping plans to start a program to aid youthful prostitutes by providing recreational and cultural enrichment programs for them. Miss Petty was black.

In addition, Mrs. Joyce Dade, supervisor of youth programs at Prince of Peace Temple Church of God in Christ, at 1551 Jefferson Ave. is actively seeking young women to join the church's free programs in crafts, ceramic creations, paintings, home economics and crocheting.

Motivation Sought

Mrs. Dade who called The Courier-Express after she became concerned about the welfare of young girls, said the program has as its basic aim to prepare members to be future homemakers and to offer practical motivation for young

homemakers.

Although most of the responses to the articles in The Courier-

Express called for more direct action by social agencies to head off young girls before they got into serious trouble, some of the callers complained that The Courier-Express had put the blame on "society" instead of on the victim's homelife.

James Williams, principal of Woodlawn Junior High School, 450 Masten Ave., the school Annetta last attended, charged that the articles were sensational and merely designed to sell more newspapers.

A businessmen's group on Niagara Falls Blvd., in the area of the Rip Van Winkle Motel where Annetta's body was found in a bathtub Oct. 21, charged that the articles had hurt the small businessmen in that area.

Compliment Paid

Donald C. Mitchell of Eggertsville described the articles as "a great series on Annetta—thought provoking and hard hitting where it counts. I hope that the power structures takes heed and acts responsibly," he wrote.

Mrs. Phyllis J. Mammaser wrote: "I can sympathize with this girl's (Annetta) problem. I found that some of the so-called experts advice almost ruined my son."

"We believe there is a lot to be desired in the way schools operate with the emotionally disturbed child. It takes a lot of gumption to uncover and expose to the public the wrongdoings of the higherups."

"There are so many laws that need change and so many things that should be brought to the public's eye. Today, not enough people care and that's what's wrong with our world," Mrs. Mammaser's letter added.

Girl's Story Told

Two young girl's, now in a home for unwed mothers, called and said they had been persuaded to work as prostitutes

when they were 15 years old. They said their procurers took them to see such movies as "The Mack, Superfly, Cleopatra Jones" and "Blackbelt Jones," and other movies in which women were exploited, encouraging them to be prostitutes so they could provide incomes for the men they thought they loved.

The girls said they were beaten many times when they failed to earn enough money to pay for something their procurer wanted to buy or to pay a bill.

Mrs. Sarah D. Lawrence of West Seneca wrote and said she had experienced problems with Family Court and the Erie County Probation Dept. for about five years and her family has been treated as a number, rather than as humans during that period of time.

Mrs. Lawrence supplied The Courier-Express with a detailed list of the many times she had talked to various persons in Family Court and the probation department, including the time of the day the conversations took place and the name of the persons and their replies to her problems.

Teacher Opposed

Charles M. Breinin, a school teacher, condemned the articles. He wrote: "The needless death of a child, no matter what the cause, is a sad affair. But to assume the behavior of one child is the responsibility of a school system that has overwhelmingly given us normal, hard working and honest people is ignorance at best."

Breinin asked: "Was Annetta the only child each of her teachers had to deal with? Were all social workers obliged to ignore other children to heed the call of Annetta? Indeed, is a public school even expected to provide the therapeutic environment Annetta seems to have needed?"

Arthur R. Carmichael of Buffalo wrote and said: "The tragedy of Annetta Petty was her character, her environment and her associations. No school, public or private can or will ever be able to endow a person with good character, good environment or good associates. The school can and does provide the education so that a person can better himself."

Bible Quoted

Mrs. Virlie M. Payne of Buffalo wrote and said: "My Father wrote and said: 'My Father said to train a child in the way he should go; spare the rod and spoil the child.'

She suggested that parents should maintain tighter control over their children and in turn will be more afraid to get in trouble.

Kevin Beiter, a teacher in Buffalo School system, suggested that more after-school programs would be helpful providing activities that would keep youths out of trouble.

Black Student Union

Paper CEX P. 1-9
Date 12/15/74
Code ONE