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Civilians Seek To Ease Unique Hardships of Black Female GIs

By ANN M. SIMMONS

Los Angeles Times

January 24, 2008

BAGHDAD, Iraq — At a pre-Christmas "packing party" almost 8,000 miles away in Los Angeles in December, [Dawn Sutherland](#)'s living room was strewn with piles of goodies such as black hair products and manicure sets, T-shirts and the latest issues of *Essence* and *Ebony* magazines.

They weren't Christmas gifts for family and friends.

They were to go into care packages for "sister soldiers" in Iraq.

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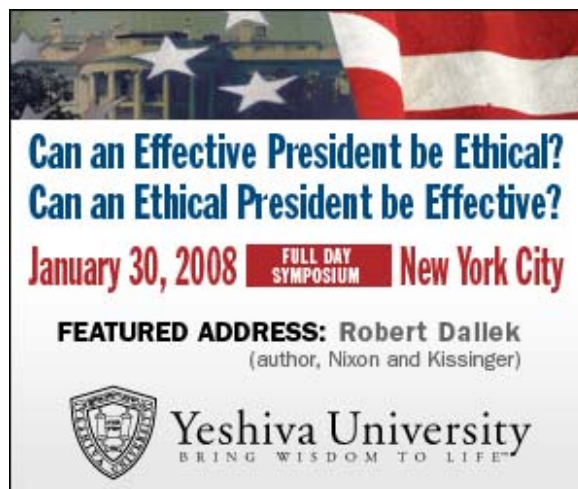
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Moved by the particular challenges many black women say they face when deployed in war zones, Ms. Sutherland and her book club, a group of professional black women called Sisterfriends, have "adopted" about 40 servicewomen.

"We wanted to reach out as black women to other black women in need," a member of Sisterfriends, [Myraline Morris Whitaker](#), said. "We thought we were looking at our younger sisters. We wanted to get them what they need to make them feel comfortable and make them feel positive about themselves."

Ms. Morris Whitaker, a hotel consultant based in central [California](#)'s San Luis Obispo County, got the idea to help after a conversation with a former Marine who said one of her strongest memories of being deployed was the struggle her black roommate faced in dealing with her hair.


So Ms. Morris Whitaker began surfing the military support Web site [anysoldier.com](#), a kind of clearinghouse for care package wish lists.



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