



## Black Education

In my “Education Disaster” column (12/22/10), I presented National Assessment of Educational Progress test data that demonstrated that an average black high school graduate had a level of reading, writing and math proficiency of a white seventh- or eighth-grader. The public education establishment bears part of the responsibility for this disaster, but a greater portion is borne by black students and their parents, many of whom who are alien and hostile to the education process.



Let’s look at the education environment in many schools and ask how conducive it is to the education process. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, nationally during 2007-2008, more than 145,000 teachers were physically attacked. Six percent of big-city schools report verbal abuse of teachers and 18 percent report non-verbal disrespect for teachers.

An earlier NCES study found that 18 percent of the nation’s schools accounted for 75 percent of the reported incidents of violence, and 6.6 percent accounted for 50 percent. So far as serious violence, murder and rapes, 1.9 percent of schools reported 50 percent of the incidents. The preponderance of school violence occurs in big-city schools attended by black students.

What’s the solution? Violence, weapons-carrying, gang activity and student or teacher intimidation should not be tolerated. Students engaging in such activity should be summarily expelled.

Some might worry about the plight of expelled students. I think we should have greater concern for those students whose education is made impossible by thugs and the impossible learning environment they create.

Another part of the black education disaster has to do with the home environment. More than 70 percent of black children are born to unwedded mothers, who are often themselves born to unwedded mothers. Today’s level of female-headed households is new in black history. Until the 1950s, almost 80 percent of black children lived in two-parent households, as opposed to today’s 35 percent.

Often, these unwedded mothers have poor parenting skills and are indifferent, and sometimes hostile, to their children’s education. The resulting poorly behaving students should not be permitted to sabotage the education of students whose parents are supportive of the education process.

At the minimum, a mechanism such as tuition tax credit or educational voucher ought to be available to allow parents and children who care to opt out of failing schools. Some people take the position that we should repair not abandon failing schools. That’s a vision that differs little from one that says that no



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black child's education should be improved unless we can improve the education of all black children.

What needs to be done is not rocket science. Our black ancestors, just two, three, four generations out of slavery, would not have tolerated school behavior that's all but routine today. The fact that the behavior of many black students has become acceptable and made excuses for is no less than a gross betrayal of sacrifices our ancestors made to create today's opportunities.

Some of today's black political leadership is around my age, 75, such as Reps. Maxine Waters, Charles Rangel, John Conyers, former Virginia governor Douglas Wilder, Jesse Jackson and many others. Forget that they are liberal Democrats but ask them whether their parents, kin or neighbors would have tolerated children cursing to, or in the presence of, teachers and other adults. Ask them what their parents would have done had they assaulted an adult or teacher. Ask whether their parents would have accepted the grossly disrespectful behavior seen among many black youngsters on the streets and other public places using foul language and racial epithets. Then ask why should today's blacks tolerate something our ancestors would not.

The sorry and tragic state of black education is not going to be turned around until there's a change in what's acceptable and unacceptable behavior by young people. The bulk of that change has to come from within the black community.

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