



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on May 12, 2016

Fiddling Away Black Futures

Most black politicians, ministers, civil rights advocates and professionals support Hillary Clinton's quest for the presidency. Whoever becomes the next president, whether it's a Democrat or Republican, will mean little or nothing in terms of solutions to major problems that confront many black people. We've already seen that even a black president means little or nothing. Politics and political power cannot significantly improve the lives of most black people and may even be impediments.



Blacks hold high offices and dominate the political arenas in Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore and other cities. Yet these are the very cities with the nation's poorest educational outcomes, highest crime rates, high illegitimacy rates and other forms of social pathology. Let's look at this pattern, focusing just on Philadelphia, Detroit and Baltimore, cities with large black populations and black-held political power for nearly a half-century.

In Philadelphia, only 19 percent of eighth-graders score proficient in math and 16 percent in reading. In Detroit, there is only a 4 percent proficiency level in math and 7 percent in reading. In Baltimore, it's a 12 percent proficiency in math and 13 percent in reading. These results are even more depressing when one tallies the percentages of students scoring "below basic" on the National Assessment of Education Progress test, often referred to as "the nation's report card." Below basic means that a student is unable to demonstrate even partial mastery of knowledge and skills fundamental for proficient work at his grade level. In Philadelphia, 47 percent scored below basic in math and 42 percent in reading. In Baltimore, it was respectively 59 and 49 percent. In Detroit, 73 percent scored below basic in math and 56 percent in reading.

In terms of murders, shootings and other kinds of criminal behavior, these three cities are at or near the top. They also experience high rates of illegitimacy and single-parent households. Let me be absolutely clear about what I am saying. I am not saying that blacks having political power is the cause of these problems. What I am saying is that the solution to the problems confronting black people will not be found in the political arena. I am also saying that blacks working to secure the presidency of Hillary Clinton or Sen. Bernie Sanders are wasting resources that could be better spent trying to reverse the tragic destinies of so many black youths.

The Obama administration, as well as black and white liberals, expresses concern with disproportionate numbers of black students suspended or expelled. They have created a practice called "restorative justice," where students are called on to repair the harm caused by their bad behavior. Under this regime, cursing a teacher or assaulting a teacher is no cause for traditional discipline. Instead, there's talking and pleas. But I'll bet the rent money that the black and white liberal elite would never send their own children to schools where teachers are routinely assaulted and cursed. They would never send their children to schools so unsafe that students must enter through metal detectors so as to prevent the introduction of guns, knives and other weapons.



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The disgraceful academic performance by black students is not preordained. In other words, it just doesn't have to be that way. The Washington, D.C., Opportunity Scholarship Program, a school-choice voucher program, has an excellent record, with 91 percent of its "at-risk" students graduating. But the Obama administration, doing the bidding of teacher's unions, has attacked the program. U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., questioned Secretary of Education John King Jr. about the D.C. scholarship program during confirmation hearings. King replied, "I do not personally believe that vouchers are a scalable solution to the equity and excellence challenge and prefer the route of public school choice." I would have asked Mr. King how that position differs from a position that says: "No black children shall be saved unless and until all black children can be saved." I don't think black people can afford such a policy perspective.

Walter E. Williams is a professor of economics at George Mason University. To find out more about Walter E. Williams and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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