



Racial Trade-offs

Trade-offs apply to our economic lives, as well as our political lives. That means getting more of one thing requires giving up something else. Let's look at some examples.

Black congressmen and black public officials in general, including Barack Obama, always side with teachers unions in their opposition to educational vouchers, tuition tax credits, charter schools and other measures that would allow black parents to take their children out of failing public schools. Most black politicians and many black professionals take the position of the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who is on record as saying, "We shouldn't abandon the public schools."



Taking such a political stance is understandable because black congressmen and other black elected officials are part of a coalition. As such, they are expected to vote for things that other coalition members want in order that those coalition members vote for things that black politicians want. There's no question that these black public officials are getting something in return for their support of teachers unions and others who benefit from the educational status quo. The question not addressed by black people is whether what black politicians are getting for their support of a failed educational system is worth the sacrifice of whole generations of black youngsters, educationally handicapping them and making many virtually useless in the high-tech world of the 21st century.

Though many black politicians mouth that we should fix, not abandon, public schools, they themselves have abandoned public schools. They see their children as too precious to be sacrificed in the name of public education. While living in Chicago, Barack Obama sent his daughters to the prestigious University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. When he moved to Washington, President Obama enrolled his daughters in the prestigious Sidwell Friends School. According to a report by The Heritage Foundation, "exactly 52 percent of Congressional Black Caucus members and 38 percent of Congressional Hispanic Caucus members sent at least one child to private school." Overall, only 6 percent of black students attend private school.

It's not just black politicians who fight tooth and nail against parental school choice and have their children in private schools. When President Obama's White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel resigned and became mayor of Chicago, he did not enroll his children in the Windy City's public schools. He enrolled his son and two daughters in the University of Chicago Lab Schools. And members of Congress, regardless of race, are three to four times likelier than the public to send their children to private schools.

According to a 2004 Thomas B. Fordham Institute study, more than 1 in 5 public school teachers sent their children to private schools. In some cities, the figure is much higher. In Philadelphia, 44 percent of the teachers put their children in private schools; in Cincinnati, it's 41 percent, and Chicago (39 percent) and Rochester, N.Y. (38 percent), also have high figures. In the San Francisco-Oakland area,



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34 percent of public school teachers enroll their children in private schools, and in New York City, it's 33 percent.

Only 11 percent of all parents enroll their children in private schools. The fact that so many public school teachers enroll their own children in private schools ought to raise questions. After all, what would you think, after having accepted a dinner invitation, if you discovered that the owner, chef, waiters and busboys at the restaurant to which you were being taken don't eat there? That would suggest they have some inside information from which you might benefit.

I don't think anything that black politicians get from the NEA, the AFT, the NAACP (many members are teachers), the National Urban League or others who have a vested financial interest in a failed educational system is worth committing whole generations of black youngsters to educational mediocrity. The prospects for a change are not good, particularly in light of the new fact that the NAACP is being wooed to join the AFL-CIO.

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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