

Encouraging Academic Achievement in NonWhite, so-called “Black”
African American Students in the U.S.: While Countering the Effects of the White Racist
Supremacist Educational System

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Abstract

This paper contributes to dialogue and streams of awareness that serve to uplift NonWhite, so-called “Black” African American students (NSBAAS) in the U.S. who, through innocence, become unsuspecting subjects of psychological damage due to the effects of the “White” supremacist educational system. Encouragement, promotion, and maintenance of academic self-concept and achievement in affected students are paramount for their emotional well-being throughout their lives. More importantly, special attention must be given to reversing the effects of White supremacy on these students who are trapped in the White supremacist educational system itself. How can NSBAAS resolve the pernicious effects of White supremacy to adequately meet performance standards set by the White supremacy educational system? This paper offers suggestions, recommendations, and interventions for positive change.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Global Self-Esteem, Earned Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation

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Encouraging Academic Achievement in NonWhite, so-called “Black”

African American Students in the U.S.: While Countering the Effects of the White Racist Supremacist Educational System

Why does an educational achievement gap exist between Black and White students in the United States and what interventions can be utilized to close this gap? I became acutely interested in these questions when I read about the “doll experiment” of 1954 by psychologist, Kenneth B. Clark (Edney, 2006 p.1). I was subsequently outraged when I read about the most recent doll experiment in 2010 by Spencer for CNN and the fact that the results were similar to those of the first. Early Black racial identity research, in particular that conducted by Eugene and Ruth Horwitz (1939) and Kenneth and Mamie Clark (1939), suggested that Black self-hatred manifested in a preference for White over Black among African American children. I wondered why this was so after all the work our people had done and are doing in our fight for justice. I concluded that low self-esteem in Black students had caused them to choose the White doll as being more beautiful and smarter than the Black doll because of their racist programming in the U.S. It is a catalyst for self-hate.

Spencer stated that the doll test showed what is called “White bias” because the White children picked the doll that was closest to the color of their own skin as having “positive attributes” and the darker skinned doll as having negative attributes. Acknowledging that all children are aware of stereotypes at some point in their lives, she noted that Black children also showed bias toward the doll that was described as White, but that they did this less often than the White children, and further that the White children are “learning or maintaining” those stereotypes with more intensity than the Black children.

White parents only have to deal with helping their children with subject matter. Black parents have to do that as well and in addition nullify the negative messages their children receive from society. Spencer states that this suggests “a level of entitlement” for White parents who do not have to carry that additional burden for their children.

The year 2010 still finds us forced to deal with stereotypes of dark skin as being ugly, though admittedly some Black children did find the White doll to be the ugly one, which was a rare scenario. Spencer states that the problem in America regarding race is that most people do not want to speak about, hear about, or talk about it, as a way to avoid it. This attitude implies that it will go away if not acknowledged. However, acknowledging that racism does exist and giving it a voice would validate its existence so that its very existence could be challenged (Spencer, 2010).

Children are influenced early in their lives, even from infancy, by the images and messages which surround them. Parents, educators, librarians, and others can help them to have and maintain positive self-identity by providing them with realistic cultural images and messages that mirror who they are as opposed to whom one may want them to be. They have their own perspectives that must be honored and understood if we intend to help shape them to be the best that they can be. Infants as young as four weeks old enjoy looking at human faces in books and notice the color of those humans. By the age of two, they ask questions about the differences they see in the physical appearances of people (Hughes & Hassel, 1992).

It has been my opinion for some time that children notice skin colors that are different from theirs and react to the differences they see with curiosity, fear, and sometimes fascination. These insights became more vivid to me in my experiences as an early childhood teacher in a variety of racial settings and contexts where they would sometimes cry, come to me (dependent

upon their individual experiences) or when their curiosities overwhelmed their fears. Therefore, I easily related to the title from the CNN special, “Black or White: Kids on Race” because I have had personal experience with Black children who believe that it is better to have White skin than Black because of the messages they have received in their environments that Black skin is ugly.

In the doll experiment of 2010 on which this program was based, dark skin was described as ugly as it had been in previous doll experiments in America. When asked which doll was the ugliest, Black and White children chose the dark skinned doll as they had in previous doll experiments. The persistence of racism and White supremacy in America is the backdrop against which the views of the children can best be understood. Children learn by what adults say and do. Consequently, their choice of dolls is guided by the examples they have heard, seen, and experienced in the adult world. Without an honest dialogue to end it, racism as an institution continues to thrive. Black children and their families continue to suffer, and ignorance maintains its rule in racist, White supremacist America, to the detriment of all.

The denial of a dialogue on race is equivalent to denying or invalidating the realities in the lives of the victims of racism. It is a denial of the existence of Black people by stifling our voices. Without a voice, one cannot participate in the very decisions that may counter one’s progress.

The title, “New ‘Doll Test’ Produces Ugly Results,” stated what I already knew, that most Black children would choose the white doll as being smarter and more beautiful than the black one. How do I know this? Life in America as a dark skinned Black woman has taught me through the messages consistently relayed to me and other Black women that we are ugly and dumb, especially if our skin is very dark (Edney, 2006). If we are ugly, so therefore are our children and we sometimes pass these messages on to them unbeknownst to us. As a result, the

self-image of Black children is being destroyed by the promotion of Eurocentric beauty standards via media and other forms of communication in direct, indirect, and subtle ways, that unless we look like or try to approximate the physicality of Europeans, we are definitely ugly.

On May 17, 1954, Supreme Court Chief Justice, Earl Warren, announced the court's decision to desegregate schools in *Brown v. Board of Education* (Edney, 2006). Clark's doll test was one of his citations as proof of the psychological damage to Black children. Black psychologist, Julia Hare, stated that Black children are overwhelmed by negative self-images every day in media and communication of all kinds and have been for a long time. The messages are basically that the lighter and closer to White that your skin color is, the smarter and more beautiful you are. She states that, "Our children are bombarded with images every day that they see on television screens and on coffee tables either the light-skinned female that everybody is pushing or they give preference to the closest to White images." (Edney 2006, p. 2). Therefore, she stated that she was not surprised by the results of the doll test in which Black children chose the white doll over the black doll. The fact that the doll experiment of 2010 revealed that Black children remain psychologically damaged in terms of their self-esteem due to their self-denial means that racism remains firmly entrenched in America (Edney, 2006).

Dr. Frances Cress-Welsing is a Black psychiatrist who views racist constructs as White people's fight for genetic survival. She explains the psychological dynamics behind Black children choosing a white doll instead of a black doll in the following example: A black gorilla gave birth to a white gorilla, but the baby ran from itself when it looked in the mirror and saw that it did not look like its mother (Cress-Welsing, 1989). The question becomes who am I if I don't look like you who gave birth to me? The answer is that I do not know who I am. Therefore, I am afraid of myself. I only belong if I look like I belong to you because it is only through you

that I recognize myself. If you do not know who you are, you will think you are someone else. The answer to self-acceptance is knowing who one is. “Know Thyself” was a quote of wisdom widely used in Africa and placed above the doors of many holy temples. Adler confirms these thoughts about self when he states that:

Social interest is a feeling of belonging to others and not being ‘outside’...Adler on striving for completeness and belonging (1950s to present, contemporary Adlerian authors). Here the goal is to contribute and to belong. Individuals try to find a place among people. They try to answer the question: How can I fit in and also be all that I can be? (Oberst & Stewart 2003, p. 19 and 21-22).

Adler relates to this dilemma when he states in regard to social interest and belonging that, “Anyone who doubts his own value always overestimates the capacities of other people.” (Dreikurs 1950, p. 23). In the same regard, an African American child is brought up in contexts and environments where dark skinned people are continuously being bombarded with direct and indirect negative images and regard, particularly through various media, while the White child is cushioned in “unconditional positive regard” at all times through the same media and in all contexts and environments. The Black child therefore concludes in the selection of the White doll that, since this doll symbolizes the child who is presented as being the smartest and most beautiful according to the world, then this is the child that he or she wants to be in order to be smart and beautiful and have a sense of belonging in the world.

It is hard to have a sense of belonging without external or internal social interest. How can I be socially viable if no one validates my reality? This is an extremely important question and foundational matter. It requires time and exploration to understand because it determines to a great extent the psychological health of Black children futuristically and their place or lack of

place in the world. What we see when we look in the mirror within cultural, historical and contemporary contexts may or may not hurt us.

What people say about how we look may hurt us in relationship to our individual backgrounds and experiences. An excerpt from a book about a student who won a literary contest illustrates this point, “In fact, the book concludes Maleeka wins a literary contest for her diary. It is also through this vehicle that she rewrites and thus re-envision an image, a vernacular, and a life-story of an imagined Black female adolescent with whom she identified, eventually saying to her tormentors, ‘Call me by my name!...I am Maleeka Madison, and, yeah, I’m Black, real Black, and if you don’t like me, too bad cause Black is the skin I’m in!’ (Flake, 1998, p. 176). In other words, acknowledge that my name and what it represents is who I really am. Call me by it. The other reality is that my skin is extremely dark and I don’t care if you dislike me because of it because I was born in it and accept its reality as my own. Adler concurs with this expression when he states that “Social interest is not inborn [as a full-fledged entity], but it is an innate potentiality which has to be developed.” Further, he states that:

Like the character traits which depend on it, social interest can come to life only in the social context. By social context, of course is meant the child’s subjective understanding of the same. The decision [as to how he will interpret the essentially ambiguous social context] rests in the creative power of the child, guided by the environment, and educational measures, influenced by the experience of his body, and his evaluation of it. (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 134).

The student is impacted by the social environment and also has the capacity to make an impact on it depending on subjective viewpoints that may or may not surface easily due to a variety of factors and particular contexts. Social interest is innate. This means that one is also interested in

one's self as a social being, which could be likened to looking in a mirror at your own self-reflection. External social interest plays just as vital a role as internal social interest by serving as a mirror that one is safe in the world. At the same time, internal social interest plays another role so that when I look at myself in the mirror, I am acceptable to me. Where does that come from? Adler explains this when he describes "the individual's total dynamic situation as unitary and self-consistent, modified only in its direction by the degree of social interest as this becomes effective in the striving" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p 134). Does social interest necessarily equate to self-esteem? If it does or does not, does self-esteem lead to academic achievement?

There is no proof that self-esteem alone definitely leads to academic achievement or success, though it has been lauded in some quarters to do so. Psychologist, Neely Fuller, states that "self-esteem comes from doing." N. Fuller (personal communication, 2011). It is earned. Accordingly, "earned self-esteem is based on skills and achievement, while global self-esteem is not self-esteem at all, but a manipulated ploy by parents, teachers and other authorities to praise students without discretion though disconnected from achievement." (Lerner 2013, p.2). Consequently, the major difference between earned self-esteem and global self-esteem is that the former is based on performance while the latter is based on whatever the educational community decides that it is at any given time. Students may generally feel good about themselves and separate these types of esteem by placing their focus on self-praise or generated self-praise as opposed to earned self-esteem. Earned self-esteem can only be achieved by working for it (Lerner, 2013).

Throughout my life, I assumed that self-esteem could be applied to all aspects of one's experiences, including learning. However, after researching this topic in depth, I learned that self-esteem cannot be generically placed on everything in life, but that there are particular

branches of it as for example, earned self-esteem or self-efficacy that focus on what one achieves as opposed to applauding anything one does or does not do, void of achievement. In addition, I learned that there are layered aspects to self-determination such as intrinsic motivation that originates from the self so that a student looks within for the will to learn, and extrinsic or external motivation that originates outside the self and may or may not be a catalyst for student learning (Cokley, 2003). I did not know how to protect my mind or feelings from racist attacks during childhood and early adulthood, though I knew cognitively that I had not earned them and that they were certainly not achievements. In time, I learned strategies that empowered me to protect myself to some degree. The most powerful ones come from within.

My experience with racism in the U.S. as a Black immigrant and student was that my skin was dark and, therefore, ugly and that I was dumb and ignorant even when my intelligence was evident to me and others, and further that I deserved the stereotypical labels that were hurled at me even though they had nothing to do with my name, nationality, or origin. In my attempts to counter these onslaughts, I limited my speech so that my accent would not be so evident. I felt so out of place that all I thought about was how much I hated America and wanted to go home.

The trust that I had always possessed as it regarded my physical and psychological safety fast eluded me. I was taught as a way of helping me to cope with racism and other negative energies not to trust a Black man, but never to trust a White man. I translated this to mean that when I might take a chance and trust a Black person, I would still never trust a White one because trusting one and risking betrayal may cause me to inherit an inferiority complex and great pain. I wished to achieve and fly like a bird without being weighed down by racist constructs about my supposed inferior intellectual capacities and capabilities. I am sure that my self-esteem was negatively impacted because of the racism I experienced and am still

experiencing in America. How did racism impact my education and the education of other NSBAAS?

After researching my questions about the achievement gap, I learned that Black students separate self-esteem from academic achievement to protect their feelings about themselves. They do so by attributing their lower grade point averages (GPAs) when compared to White students to the injustices that they are subjected to by the racist U.S. educational system, racist teachers, environments, etc. These attributions, though justifiable, have created an environment in which most Black students shun academics because of the cloak of racism that overshadows it and undermines them, while missing the education that they need to survive in life (Cokley, 2003). Therein lies the dilemma. These questions are of major significance because the injustices of this racist educational system causes Black students and their families to experience needless great pain and hardship based on the color of the skin they are gifted with in nature and places everyone's rights to an equal education at risk. This is supreme injustice. As stated so eloquently by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his letter from Birmingham jail, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." (The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, 1963, p. 1). What affects one sooner or later affects all. We are all interconnected.

The lives of millions of Black students and their families in the U.S. are being negatively impacted by the educational achievement gap between Black and White students in regards to economic status and quality of life matters. Closing the achievement gap will provide Black students and their families with equal opportunities in education, employment, and quality of life that most White students and their families have always enjoyed and taken for granted. This will then be justice manifested.

There are many people individually and institutionally who have made significant contributions to this conversation about educational justice. Among the foremost and most convincing voices were those of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III, Dr. Barbara A. Sizemore, Mr. Neely Fuller, Jr., Dr. Frances Cress-Welsing, Dr. Israel Tribble, Ms. Marva Collins, Mr. Geoffrey Canada and Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu. Their valuable contributions have been revealing and their interventions have been proven.

Jawanza Kunjufu in particular has written extensively about the educational achievement of Black students as being a matter of great concern to those of us who want them to achieve. He advanced my understanding of the many nuances involved in motivating Black students to achieve academically in the U.S. Other concerned voices are also acknowledged.

Individual Contributors to the Encouragement of Academic Achievement in NSBAAS

What are the evidence-based interventions that in past and present times have helped to narrow the educational achievement gap between Black and White students? What are the historical conditions that led to the achievement gap? Dr. Carter G. Woodson offers his insights:

Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Historian

Saving the African American Child echoed the central thesis of Dr. Carter G. Woodson's classic book, *The Mis-education of the Negro*. (1933): education in America was conceived to control the minds and labors of Black Americans. Dr. Woodson, Ph.D., Harvard, the father of "Negro History" in America contended that education in the United States was intended purposefully to make people of African descent feel inferior and people of European decent [sic] believe in their superiority. That purpose was then and is now still manifested in curriculum in instruction, in books, newspapers, broadcasting and

films and, most importantly in public philosophy and public policy. (EuroCentric National Core Standards, 2012, p. 1).

Dr. Woodson explored the historical and contemporary factors leading to the achievement gap between Black and White students in the U.S. by explaining that this system was deliberately constructed for NSBAAS to be unsuccessful in achieving their goals. Its solutions require that people of African descent become proactive in the education of NSBAAS in order to save them from psychological decline or obliteration. We must institute educational curriculums that promote academic achievement and cultural self-knowledge. These manifest as a way of being as a people so that cultural and historical heritages are honored. Black people in the U.S. cannot expect others to do what we can best do most efficiently when we know who we are. Research has shown that African centered education has increased the achievement of NSBAAS over the years and continues to do so. Dr. Leonard Jeffries is another scholar who supports the inclusion of an African-centered curriculum in the educational institutions of the U. S. and written extensively about this subject.

“Our Sacred Mission”

**African Blood Siblings: An African War without an African Army is an African Genocide
by Dr. Leonard Jeffries**

The above title is from the text of a speech that Dr. Leonard Jeffries made at the Empire State Black Arts and Cultural Festival in Albany, New York on July 20, 1991. In other words, Africans of the diaspora must be proactive in the battle for the African mind or we will be destroyed as a people.

Dr. Jeffries begins his speech with a quote by Onitaset Kumat that “Ours is a problem of not building African Blood Siblings Community Centers (ABSCC), communal spots of

restorative consciousness to raise us into loving, knowledgeable and wise Africans” (Jeffries 1991, p. 1).

This quote summarizes for me what Jeffries means by “*Our Sacred Mission*” in the title of his speech. In other words, African people have a holy obligation to restore our people to our original greatness. This is our divine right. We can best do it for ourselves. Only in so doing can we transfer our values to our children so that they will believe in themselves and their ability to achieve academic success and independence in all aspects of their lives.

Jeffries states that the New York State Curriculum of 1987 is a war on Africans because it has excluded African history from world history and is so doing has distorted world history through racism. African people therefore have a mission to correct this great injustice by demanding the inclusion of African history in U.S. curriculums so that the truth of our contributions can be taught. Above all, Africans must educate our children at home, at school and in our communities for educational justice to be manifested and prevail for our development as a people.

Jeffries states that culture, economics, politics and education are inextricably intertwined. Therefore, the exclusion of African history from the educational curriculum is to place Black people in a state of arrested development and survival mode when what we need is a system of development. He states that Black people have the tremendous task of making the educational system work to our benefit by teaching the truth to NSBAAS and all other students.

He continues that the reason why the State of New York fought against the inclusion of an African curriculum in the New York school system was economics and racism. The economic reason was that Whites did not want Blacks to have access to the money it would take to

manifest this curriculum, as for example in teacher training and other necessities. They wanted to maintain total control of funding and how it would be spent as they always had (Jeffries, 1991).

At the same time, George Bush was in the process of bringing in a New World order for mind control in the schools. This ran counter to an African centered curriculum that rejects racist and white supremacist perspectives which marginalize, omit and negate the contributions of Africans and other nonwhite people in world history (Jeffries, 1991). This researcher is in total agreement with Dr. Jeffries' arguments in this article based on the comparisons that I have made between my educational experiences in my birthplace of Jamaica, W. I. and the U. S.

Lack of knowledge of Black and other nonwhite people in the educational curriculum was evident to me based on some of the ignorant assumptions and stereotypes me and my sibling were bombarded with upon our arrival in America and our initial contact with the Minneapolis public school system. We were asked by Black and White students if we lived in trees in Jamaica, if we had tails, and if we fought lions and tigers there. I was shocked and thought that everyone in America was ignorant and crazy but then again it was the Tarzan era when television's portrayal of Africans was stereotypical, usually out of context, and racist. No respect was given to our cultures or nationalities. It is a sickening experience. Evidenced by this article, the educational system typically marginalizes African descended and other nonwhite people or omits them from world history. In hindsight, my experience in America was to be expected given its racist history.

From elementary to graduate school I have been assaulted by racist attitudes, systems and manipulations that negatively impacted my education and caused me varying degrees of emotional and psychological pain.

As an AfriJamerican, I hold a dual perspective on my education in America and know that my cultural background helped me to cope with the racism in the classroom and society.

Therefore, an African centered curriculum is mandatory for the inclusion of Black and other nonwhite people in world history to correct the grave injustices of omission and forced self-alienation. This researcher agrees with Dr. Jeffries that our development as a people is our responsibility and that we must understand and work with economics, politics, education, and culture holistically because they relate to each other and are unified in their impact upon our lives.

We must educate ourselves about African history in our homes, schools and communities as part of our lifestyle if we are to combat the debilitating effects of racism so that we can move forward in our development. Our movement is critical to the world as we look back while moving forward. This is the wisdom of Sankofa which our wise ancestors bestowed upon us to help us survive. Dr. Jeffries also critically reviewed the New York State Curriculum as requested by their educational authorities and with his team uncovered specific and glaring racial injustices.

Review of the New York State Curricular Materials K-12

Focus: African American Culture

by Dr. Leonard Jeffries

Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Chair & Professor of the Department of Black Studies, City College of New York, November, 1988

This title informs me that Dr. Leonard Jeffries believed that there was a need to review the K-12 curriculum in New York State in regard to African American Culture because he was dissatisfied with its contents.

The marginalization and exclusion of African Americans and other nonwhite people in the curriculum of New York State is a pattern that began when America was founded. It continues today.

The denial of the contributions of enslaved Africans and other nonwhite people in the making of America is immoral in that it presents a fraudulent, incomplete, and distorted picture of a history that was greatly impacted by Africans and other nonwhite people. It demands acknowledgement and respect.

Racism and White supremacy has largely through greed and insecurity denied the world of the opportunity to honor Africans and other nonwhite people who made America a symbol for justice and freedom though their oppression is maintained.

Jeffries states that *The United States History: The Black Perspective – A Guide for Eighth Grade Social Studies* by University of the State of New York Bureau of Secondary Curriculum, (1970) is a model of uplift for the self-esteem and respect of African American people and their contributions to U.S. and world history. It is a refreshing change from the degrading and disrespectful treatment African Americans typically receive in all the domains of their lives particularly in regard to documented history (Jeffries, 1988).

Based on the positive upbringing and educational experiences in my life prior to my arrival in America, I have always known and appreciated being comfortable in my skin because I never had to think about it. In America, I learned that life was more about the skin I am in than who I am.

This researcher agrees and have always known that an African centered curriculum is what is needed to close the achievement gap between Black and White students. I believe that all students benefit when all are served justly within their cultural contexts and histories.

Dr. Jeffries is requesting truth and justice for African Americans and other nonwhite people in the school curriculums of the U.S. He states that the Constitution of the United States was created for rich White men with property when it was founded. Accordingly, the educational, economic, political, psychological and social systems of the U.S. were based in this context in support of racism and White supremacy. Therefore, African Americans and other nonwhite people should not expect justice to prevail for us in education or any other arena unless we bring it about for ourselves.

This researcher was most impressed with the thorough examination Jeffries did of the New York State curriculum by exposing the specific aspects of marginalization, negation, distortion, and omission of the contributions of Africans and other nonwhite people in the U.S. and the world.

He also stated that due to the deeply embedded nature of racist hostility for generations, it is unrealistic to expect that merely changing the curriculum will sufficiently address and eliminate the hatred born of ignorance. He believes and I agree that only relentless and productive positive change can bring educational justice to African American and other nonwhite people for the uplift of all human beings. Dr. Israel Tribble, Jr. expresses similar sentiments regarding the importance of Black self-help in education.

Making Their Mark: Educating African-American Children -A Bold New Plan for Educational Reform

Dr. Israel Tribble

The title of Dr. Tribble's book above suggests that African American students have academic excellence to contribute to the world through his plan for educational reform. He states that all the programs that have been in place for the educational progress of Black students have

not brought them to the level of achievement they should have long acquired due to the negative impact of racism in their educational lives and all areas of their lives in general. His strong belief is that Black people should take leadership over their education and culture by creating reforms that promote educational excellence in our children once and for all, so that they can be fully equipped to take their rightful place as wise, progressive and prosperous people in the world.

Low Expectations

Tribble continues that African American students are faced with low expectations and inhospitable environments housed in racism every day. This has caused them to fail at disproportionately high rates when compared with White students. The noninclusiveness of Black students in the curriculum and social life of schools in the U.S. has caused them to feel discouraged because they do not feel a linkage with their schools. This has led to decreased achievement (Tribble, 1992). Tribble examines many underlying factors that impact the achievement of NSBAAS in America.

He writes holistically in regard to closing the achievement gap between Black and White students in the U.S. in stating that African Americans should always keep an eye on history while moving forward and remember that institutional racism is and has always been in place because the educational system was not built with Blacks in mind, but to maintain the White status quo. The education of Black students would be antithetical to their stronghold on power. Consequently, the rise of Black people would simultaneously be the downfall of White people.

Therefore, this situation demands that Blacks build our own supplemental, cultural and educational institutions to move our students to educational excellence once and for all times, using models that work and creating new ones as needed. Tribble speaks of what he calls “principal attributes” to manifest his perspective that learning experiences in and out of the home

and part-time community schools should always be maintained within cultural contexts for NSBAAS. He also states that parents must always be an integral part of the educational curriculum and activities, along with other role models from the community. He promotes learning through books and other resources and stresses the importance of emphasizing to Black children that they are expected to achieve. He is progressive in a most down-to-earth and understandable manner that involves the entire community and surrounding contexts. Consequently, he supports and promotes African Centered Curriculums in supplemental and all other learning environments and the importance of caring and committed teachers like Marva Collins (Tribble, 1992).

Marva Collins, Educator

An educator who, with great determination and hard work overcame many challenges to achieve her dream of motivating Black children to achieve is Marva Collins. She is a teacher in and founder of Westside Preparatory School in Chicago. She believes that nurturing Black teachers who believe in themselves, and Black students who are motivated to believe in themselves, while ignoring the negative labels society tries to place on them, helps them to succeed academically if they are determined to do so. Racist people and racist educational systems in the U.S. have promoted the belief that Black students cannot achieve academically. Marva Collins has proven that these beliefs are false because her students have achieved academically (Marshall, 1985). Adler states that, "In reality the united personality with its consistent purposiveness underlies and transcends all apparent contradictions...Individual variety is the outcome of the lifestyle, which varies with every single individual and is characteristic of him alone" (Dreikurs 1950, p. 56). Teachers who believe in themselves nurture Black children by modeling values and behaviors from which they can learn. Additionally, when students like

those at Westside Preparatory Academy are given a creed that they recite every day, they consciously and unconsciously internalize it. This creed encourages their will to succeed academically no matter what stereotypes or labels society or institutions might hurl against them. For example, some NSBAAS in New York have been very successful academically because of another great educator, Geoffrey Canada.

Geoffrey Canada, Educator

This remarkable and famous U.S. educator is Geoffrey Canada who also advocates for NSBAAS on a national level through his Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) and Baby College, using a community wide approach. He increases the academic achievement of children from preschool to college and maintains their attendance in school. He demonstrates that support for Black children from preschool to college by the entire community will ensure their academic success. The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is also referred to as the Northside partners because they have a program that is patterned after Geoffrey Canada's Baby College. It helps preschoolers and their families gain skills in early childhood. Canada encourages them to maintain their work with children. He states that the graduation of more than 900 students from Harlem Children's Zone and Baby College is proof that with determination, hard work, collaboration, and the support of the community from preschool to college, African American students excel academically (NAZ, *Insight News, 2012).

Geoffrey Canada was interviewed about the Baby College and Harlem Children's Zone that he founded by Tavis Smiley on his talk show which aired on KMOJ radio 89.9 in Minneapolis, Minnesota on September 26, 2008. He stated that the problem with American schools is that we have created a culture of failure because we wait until children are 16 years

old to start preparing them for college, and that is oftentimes too late. He affirmed that we need to get them on the path to college very early, get them on grade level, and keep them there. We need to get involved, instead of looking on helplessly from the outskirts. He continued that schools work when parents work and that parents should require that their children go to bed on time; ask where they can obtain resources that can help their children; seek help from their children's principals if the teacher does not help them, and show up whether something happens or not. He pointed out that successful teachers see parents as partners. Patterning after new models and successful charter schools can help all concerned to lessen emotional issues and help NSBAAS to obtain college degrees. He concluded by stating that we should invest in schools and not in prisons to close the achievement gap. This researcher was inspired by Canada's values, hard work, determination and knowledgeable responses and solutions to challenging inquiries. He is an outstanding example of what I learned next.

The most significant answer that I found to my research questions is that all the solutions for closing the achievement gap between Black and White students have always been in existence and utilized. The commentary in much of the research and elsewhere has generally been that an educational achievement gap exists between Black and White students in the U.S., but that no one knows why or what to do about it. How can this be when this knowledge is available to everyone? Jawanza Kunjufu is another educator who researched and found answers to this question in his evidence based curriculum, SETCLAE.

An African Centered Curriculum: Self Esteem through Culture Leads to Academic Excellence (SETCLAE)

The curriculum entitled, *Self Esteem through Culture Leads to Academic Excellence (SETCLAE)* by Jawanza Kunjufu and Folami Prescott has provided African American students

with an answer to closing the achievement gap between Black and White students (Kunjufu & Prescott, 1988). Homeschooling my daughter with this curriculum was a wise choice because it helped her to achieve great educational success while being comfortable, confident, and secure in her skin.

As a Jamaican child who attended school in Jamaica at an early age before migrating to America, I am thankful that my educational foundation emerged from within my culture. My abrupt entry into America's educational system left me hungering for home. Meeting with labeling, stereotyping, ridicule, condescension, and sometimes physical attack made me wonder what was so great about America. It is a major reason why I homeschooled my daughter. My self-esteem took a beating and may have led to feelings of inferiority about which I may be unconscious. I know that my education through culture saved me from psychological and educational destruction because it was natural and positive. I wanted the same for my child.

This curriculum alludes to the fact that culture is the most important vehicle through which self-esteem can be elevated and academic success achieved in NSBAAS. Parents, teachers, students, and the community at large make up the key elements in what must be a collaborative effort to close the Black and White achievement gap in order for NSBAAS to achieve academic success.

SETCLAE encourages self-esteem, persistence, hard work, self-pride, self-discipline, and collaboration. It is adaptable to most educational curriculums. Its strategies and interventions have helped NSBAAS to attain extraordinary success with their academic goals. The SETCLAE curriculum offers a holistic approach for the enhancement of self-esteem and academic achievement in NSBAAS who are not working to their full potential, by its flexibility and adaptability to teachers, parents, and educational institutions. It is an impressive and evidenced

based answer to closing the achievement gap between Black and White students while respecting and honoring African-American culture and its great contributions to the world. However, the inability to read would present a great challenge to successfully navigate any educational programs and daily life (Kunjufu & Prescott, 1988). Having excellent reading skills is mandatory for getting through high school and college, but first comes the matter of learning how to read and then improving one's reading skills.

Barbara Sizemore Stresses Test Preparation to Help Poor Black Children

Dr. Barbara Sizemore, Educator

Sizemore was interested in test results in the education of African American students. She states that it is racist for Black children to be in school for a year and can't read and classist for White children to be in school for a year and can't read. She believes that all children could succeed academically if educators are serious about helping them to learn (Bradley, 1996).

Therefore, she created the School Achievement Structure (SAS) process for which twelve schools signed up as part of her experiment. She used "10 routines to accelerate and to elevate for success." (Bradley 1996, p. 1).

In Sizemore's schools, standardized tests determine what gets taught. The wall charts break down the skills included on the tests and function as the curriculum guide.

Sizemore wants teachers on their feet, moving around classrooms, constantly checking to see if students have understood and mastered concepts. (Bradley, 1996, p. 5).

Sizemore was passionate about the ability of Black children to learn. She had no patience for teachers and other educators who did not have the zeal to manifest achievement in them. I was initially ambivalent about Sizemore's philosophy of teaching for the test, but I respect the fact that she succeeded in getting Black and White students to achieve academically.

This researcher also respects the fact that as members of The National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), Dr. Barbara A. Sizemore and Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III agreed to co-author a report originated by the NABSE entitled, “Saving the African-American Child,” which mirrored Dr. Carter G. Woodson’s concerns about the undividable unity of academic and cultural excellence.

A Report about “Saving the African American Child” by The National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) and Members and Co-authors Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III and Dr. Barbara A. Sizemore

The NABSE’s Response to the Educational Document of 1983 entitled, “A Nation at Risk” by the Federal Government under President Ronald Reagan’s Administration

The National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) noted that the educational document entitled, “A Nation at Risk” of 1983 was neglectful because neither the challenges of urban cities nor the nation’s Black students were mentioned in its analysis and recommendations. Consequently, at the request of the NABSE, Hilliard and Sizemore co-authored a document entitled “Saving the African American Child” in 1984 which they distributed nationally. It called for much higher educational standards than any other educational reform document of the 1980s. It stated that:

The process of educating African American students requires pedagogy and curriculum whose objective is the combination of academic and cultural excellence. The essential cultural excellence dimension is to correct and reverse the emotional, historical and cultural damage of white supremacist distortions and untruths about students’ African origins, the enslavement of their ancestors, and to renew their self-esteem; to help students of African ancestry understand the deliberately omitted history of the

African origins of civilization and the origins of scholarship in almost all the academic subjects studied at present. (NABSE, Hilliard & Sizemore, 1984, pp. 1-2).

These statements are just as powerful and relevant for Black students in 2013 as they were in 1984 because NSBAAS face the same challenges of omission, distortion and neglect pertaining to their historical contributions and those of their ancestors. NSBAAS must be taught that their legacy did not begin with enslavement in the U.S. but with the very beginning of civilization. The encouragement of their self-knowledge will help to stop the debilitating impacts of racism, academic underachievement, negation, stereotyping, and exclusion.

African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Native American, and European American Educators did not validate the document entitled “Saving the African American Child.” Sizemore authored an essay in the 1980s that spoke to this phenomenon. Its thesis was “Hardly Anybody Wants Something All-Black to be Excellent.” The lack of response of these educators to this report proved that her statement was true.

Institutional Contributions to the Encouragement of Academic Achievement in NSBAAS Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD): Sankofa Reading Program

The Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD): Sankofa Reading program in St. Paul, Minnesota provides solutions for preschool and elementary readers by fortifying parents, teachers, and educators with strategies that work. The implication of this network is that “It takes a Village to Raise a Child.” There is strength in a unity that provides for the development of NSBAAS, particularly as it relates to encouraging them to read using proven strategies. More importantly, NdCAD continually fortifies cultural unity (NdCAD, 1997).

Great contributions to the education of African American students have and continue to be made by NdCAD in this regard because having excellent reading skills is mandatory for getting through high school and college, but first comes the matter of learning how to read and then improving one's reading skills through programs like NdCAD. There are other movements that are not so clear and quite controversial as to what they are attempting to accomplish in the education of NSBAAS. One of them is the reauthorization of the *No Child Left Behind* bill which just passed the Senate Committee on June 13, 2013, but is not guaranteed to pass the House.

The Arguments for and Against the No Child Left Behind Act and Race Based Academic Goals

There are mixed sentiments about the passing of this bill in the Senate, since research has revealed that some of the contingencies it has placed on schools to meet certain criteria for funding, particularly in schools where students are predominantly NSBAAS, are viewed as unfair. This is because this Act does not take into account the conditions and limitations of certain inner city school districts, thereby placing NSBAAS at risk in their pursuit of academic success. Hopefully, the bill rehaul contains improvements that address these concerns, particularly the more stringent conditions regarding school receipt of federal monies. This bill may or may not be passed into law. However, if it is, obtaining federal money will be easier for some schools. The overhauled Act introduced by Senator Harkin is entitled, Strengthening America's School Act. This title is at least more positive and the requirements for low income schools are not as harsh as in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), in which the receipt of federal money was based on standardized test scores requiring teacher accountability. The NCLBA is considered to be unfair and unacceptable to some people due to the fact that many low income schools were not provided with the resources that teachers needed to fulfill federal

requirements (Harkin, 2013). It also appears to have been a double-edged sword from the standpoint that if low income schools did not meet federal government guidelines, they could not receive federal money. However, lack of money is the reason why these schools could not meet the government's guidelines in the first place. It appears that the recently passed Senate bill has more merciful remedies for these schools.

Helping low income schools at the front end so that they would be enabled to meet federal government requirements would be a logical initial step to take for schools that are struggling economically, since the NCLBA requires that states and participating schools must meet performance standards in order to receive funding. Schools that do not meet the achievement requirements of NCLBA are initially given two years to meet them and then offered various interventions and/or sanctions if they do not achieve designated standards within governmental allotted timeframes. Educational institutions must meet and report satisfactory yearly performance on tests and other measures within designated group size requirements as well.

This article provided a more in depth understanding of how the NCLBA operates. Schools are given opportunities to improve academic achievement standards when they fall short of the required goals that make them eligible for funding. There are many layers to this process that complicate rather than simplify the process of helping lower performing schools.

The best remedy for narrowing the achievement gap between Black and White students is to provide equal funding and performance standards for all schools. However, after reading the title, "What you need to Know about Race-Based Academic Goals," and the article itself, which was actually a description of the NCLBA, a new understanding emerged. Goals can be relevant and valid if they are housed in authentic cultural contexts that harmonize with course

requirements. If, however, those goals are considered to be culturally neutral (if that is even possible), then the well-meant intentions of those goals could backfire into what some may view as “reverse discrimination,” whether that is a valid assessment or not.

Wisdom demands caution and caution is suggested in this matter. The federal government has required low income schools to close the achievement gap between Black and White students in the U.S., and offers them waivers as incentives to do so. The waivers are controversial because schools are only awarded them if they agree that teachers are evaluated based on student test score outcomes. The other factor is that neither most low income schools nor their students have the resources needed to successfully close the achievement gap in a year or even six in spite of designated interventions. Academic goals based on race or incomes are unfair because expectations are lowered for the academic achievement of these students though the purpose of the *No Child Left Behind Act* is purportedly to close the achievement gap between Black and White students. Again, all students should be encouraged to achieve their highest potential in learning no matter what their race, individual status, or circumstances might be (McNeil & Klein, 2013).

This article is informative and objective in its analysis of the pros and cons of the race based academic goals that are the basis of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Basing optimum educational achievement of students on race or income is counterproductive presently and ultimately because the arguments are and remain that basing federal government funding on race or income is discriminatory to other students who may also need help for a variety of reasons. The solution to closing the achievement gap lies in providing funding, resources, and teachers with the highest qualifications who have proven evidence of their ability to help all students

achieve academic success at all schools in the nation. However, schools also need strategies to help students learn.

Walking the Talk: Using Learning Strategies to Close Performance Gaps

“Walking the Talk: Using Learning Strategies to Close Performance Gaps” is an article that offers evidenced based strategies that will close it if they are adapted and used. These strategies are learner centered. They are also culturally sensitive and based on the premise that all students can learn. The five proposed strategies for closing the achievement gap between Black and White students are:

“(a) providing professional development to faculty and staff, (b) delivering responsive, culturally-mediated instruction, (c) utilizing culturally attuned methods for academic preparation, (d) customizing student support services, and (e) implementing a hospitable institutional climate.” (McKusick & McPhail 2012, p.138).

We must nurture, cultivate, and maintain educational achievement in our valuable gifts, our children. Therefore, racism must die an unnatural death like its unnatural birth, so that the gifts of creation can manifest through each and every student in order to uplift the planet to higher planes of enlightenment. We are arrested at a most immature level at present due to the existence of racism. We must remember that racism was first used to codify plants. It was then used to codify humans for monetary gain. There were attempts to enslave White and Native American people in the U.S., but they were unsuccessful. One of the main reasons that Black people were enslaved and called “Black Gold” is because we had great skills and human achievements in Africa that could benefit White people and we made a lot of money for them by picking cotton for their cotton industry. What made us even more valuable was the fact that we could not disappear into the population because of our color. This factor made us easier to

recapture if we ran away. Therefore, our color represented a convenient money-making commodity. This is why among other reasons that slavery was maintained through us.

Our oppression was never initially about color, it was just made to look as if it was. Finally, some people came to believe that our oppression was indeed about color, even though it was really about the greed for money. This explains my earlier statement that racism is an unnatural construct that must die an unnatural death like its unnatural birth. Negative attributions, labeling and stereotyping were used against us to justify enslavement and assuage any guilt regarding our captivity. We were made to look as if we deserved to be enslaved. This ploy worked so well that it endures to the present and is still making money for those who enslaved us and their offspring. Many people: Black, White, and otherwise, truly believe that Black people are inferior beings, especially if they have not studied history from a Black perspective and learned about the great civilizations and empires that we built. The mystery behind the pyramids we built endures to this day. How could such tremendous monuments have been built without the technological tools we have today, some ask? These are questions that engage and demand consideration. Consequently, the permanent destruction of racism will bring positive uplift to NSBAAS and all the people of the planet.

What I have come to understand and appreciate more fully is that there are myriad students who we must remember are individuals with unique ways of looking at and understanding the world inside and outside of their cultural contexts. They have much to teach us and we have much to learn from and teach them. The greatest heights of educational achievement would be manifested by all in a world without racism because we would be united in our quest to elevate the planet to the heights the creator intended when we were brought to it. I believe that this knowledge may enlighten readers to think about racial matters in a way they

never have before. It confirms my conviction that I must continue to be a part of the dialogue about race that models the importance of self-knowledge. It is about the courage to be who we are. It will eradicate the fear of being myself and will help others to eradicate theirs.

The worldwide exchange of knowledge can only enhance us all. Otherwise, we lose the unique insights of many brilliant people all over the globe, past, present, and future. Intelligence and capability are race neutral. They do not compute with racism. So, what is the National Black Agenda doing to remedy this situation? It is confronting EuroCentric National Core Standards and their impact on the education of Black students and sharing them with us.

The National Black Agenda

The words, *EuroCentric National Core Standards* in the title of this article do not represent NSBAAS. This is acceptable except for the fact that NSBAAS are usually co-opted into these standards without concern or consideration for their historical or cultural contributions. It is a repetitive pattern that is quite familiar to those of us who know and understand how racism operates in America. It suggests that the Black nation is at risk. Therefore, NSBAAS are also at educational risk because historically, educational reforms do not include them in a way that acknowledges our unique cultures and historical backgrounds (National Black Education Agenda, 2012, p. 4).

Institutional Contributions to the Encouragement of Academic Achievement in NSBAAS

African American Achievement Gap Guide

The MAT students at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota concur with the above views in their *African American Achievement Gap Guide*. They wrote this guide to help African Americans understand just what is meant by the “achievement gap” and the background underlying its birth.

They state that the closing of the achievement gap between Black and White students in America is achievable and further, that the proof of it is that there are and have always been Black students who have achieved great academic success. They support the duplication of these models as well as the provision of funding and other resources to close the achievement gap for good. Prolonging this waste of talent has been and still reeks of racist intent. They applaud the achievement of Black students in spite of racist individuals and institutions that establish roadblocks to halt their academic progress. What is needed now is to apply proven strategies to close the achievement gap. That is their mantra.

Their guide is comprehensive in that it offers the historical background and causes based in racism that have created and maintained the achievement gap between Black and White students in the first place. It states that the solutions have been ever present and evidenced by the fact that Black students have always, do now, and continue to achieve academic success. The unwillingness to apply the solutions to close the gap constitutes racism (Christ, Ruf & Slye, 2006). Minneapolis boasts a high school that is manifesting strategies to close the achievement gap between Black and White students so that NSBAAS can attend and graduate from college.

Minneapolis College Prep

“One Hundred Percent College-Bound” at Minneapolis College Prep is a very positive title because it affirms the success of students who attend. This institution’s leaders are determined to close the achievement gap of NSBAAS in Minnesota, which has been revealed to have one of the worst achievement gaps in the nation. Their goal is to have all their students graduate from college. They state that what has happened at most high schools in the nation is that there is an intense focus on getting students to finish high school, but limited focus on motivating students to attend college.

Minneapolis College Prep has focused their students on attending and graduating from college with high achievement. It is proactively mentoring students through their college prep program to place their focus on college attendance, achieving academic success, and graduating.

Their attitude toward students is confidence in their ability to conquer their coursework and attain their dreams. It is a refreshing and optimistic approach as opposed to the attitude that if we can just get you through high school, we will have done our job (Colbert, 2013).

When students learn what racism is and how it impacts their learning, they will be better able to challenge themselves to achieve because they will understand the factors that led to the achievement gap between Black and White students in education and the interventions that are available for them to close it. Accordingly, Mr. Neely Fuller Jr. states, "If you do not understand white supremacy (racism) _____ what it is, and how it works _____ everything else that you understand, will only confuse you" (Fuller, 1971, A). Racism is intricate and complex in its manifestation, which is sometimes direct, indirect, subtle and confusing. Oftentimes one does not realize that one has been racially impacted until after its occurrence. Likewise, persons who exhibit racist behaviors and attitudes often state that they were not aware that their actions were racist because they do not consider themselves to be racist. Racism and White Supremacy is a systemized, complex and psychological construct that requires systematic and psychological deconstruction to annihilate it.

Challenges to the Encouragement of Academic Achievement in NSBAAS

Racism is the Cause of the Achievement Gap between Black and White Students in the U.S.

What is the relationship between academic disidentification, racial identity, and academic achievement? It has to do with a feeling of disengagement from academics in part due to struggles with racial identity, which then impacts race. Adolescent NSBAAS, particularly Black

males disidentify with academics when they perceive that their racial identity rather than who they are is the focus of teachers, staff, administration, other students, and the community at large in negative ways. The harsh treatment that African American males receive in school explains why they lose interest in academics and become increasingly frustrated (Cokley, McClain, Jones & Johnson, 2011). African American females, on the other hand, are not treated as harshly and achieve higher grades. The punitive measures taken toward Black males in school are quite racist and divisive in that they keep the Black male from achieving academically, while often creating enmity between the Black male and female. This results in broad divisions that continue the historical legacy of the breakup of the Black family. If Black males and females shun each other as natural mates, then racists will not have to worry about the birth of more Black babies whom they perceive to be genetic threats to their existence (Cokley, McClain, Jones & Johnson, 2011). The academic achievement of NSBAAS is impacted by their perceptions about their sex and school bonding.

Sex, Self-Perception, and School Bonding in Predicting Academic Achievement

This is about sex as in being a male or being a female, and how one sees one's self and school bonding as a way of predicting the academic achievement of African American adolescents. The academic achievement of middle class NSBAAS during early adolescence is mediated by their sex, self-perceptions, and ability to bond. The understanding of how these factors interact to impact their achievement aids in the development of effective interventions.

There are psychological and environmental factors that affect the educational achievement of African Americans during early adolescence other than sex, such as how they see themselves, their ability to lead, and emotional factors. More in depth studies help to produce the interventions that educators can utilize to help their students achieve (Eisele, Zand & Thomson,

2009). What stands out foremost in this article is that early adolescence is a very vulnerable time for all adolescents. This is particularly true for NSBAAS because they have the additional burden of having to navigate racism, which they may or may not fully comprehend. They do this while having to deal with the normal challenges of adolescence. Certainly, these students need increased attention and interventions that help them to cope and become successful learners. They do not need the added burden of having to choose between an ethnic and academic identity.

Challenges to the Encouragement of Academic Achievement in NSBAAS: Self-Esteem or Academic Achievement?

Gifted Black Males and Tension between an Ethnic and Academic Identity

Is it “acting White” to achieve academically? High achieving African American male students are under great academic stress because they have to work so much harder than others just to be counted, in addition to the stress of being told that they are “acting White” by their own ethnic peers when they achieve academically (Graham & Anderson, 2008). However, these gifted males allow nothing and no one to arrest their academic achievement. They do not buckle to the accusations that they are “acting White” because they use their respect and pride in their manhood and Blackness to lift themselves to the highest heights of achievement. They frame their educational achievements within the context of their Blackness, which they consciously put in service of themselves and their communities as their duty and obligation to bring uplift through voice, service, and achievement (Graham & Anderson, 2008).

Most nations educate their young people for future governance of their communities. This is precisely what these gifted African American males are doing. They manifest through their achievements, dedication, and actions that nationhood prevails no matter what the obstacles may be and that their achievements cannot be separated from their service to their people.

Increasing the Educational Attainment and Performance of Black Males

Black Male Students and Educational Achievement

Black males presently need even more attention than Black females because they are having a more difficult time meeting educational goals states Antoine Garibaldi, an educator who was part of a 1987 task force that identified more than 20 solutions to help Black males achieve academically, attend college, and obtain post graduate degrees. This happened after the recognition that Black males were lagging behind Black females in educational achievement and caused much concern among educators who wanted to help them achieve.

Research studies find that Black males have higher suspension, dropout, and expulsion rates than all other students nationally. This is proof that they are still in crisis 20 years after the New Orleans study, though they have made some educational gains. This is unethical and demands change (Garibaldi, 2009). Therefore, it is mandatory that parents, educators and other concerned citizens solve the crisis in education for Black male students.

Their plight has been orchestrated for them and is most unjust. They must be afforded the concern, resources, and motivation with the same intensity as all other students in the nation. Shame in this matter is maintained in America until this is morally concluded. It is also a shameful diversion for Whites to use the natural repugnance against racist hostility by posturing it as the reason for low academic achievement in Black students when that energy should instead be used to close the achievement gap between Black and White students.

Self-Esteem or Academic Achievement?

The Answer Should Not Be a Choice

Another concern for African American males is the relationship between cultural identity and achievement (Irving & Hudley, 2008). This article begins with a historical synopsis and

acknowledgement of the injustices perpetuated against people of African descent since enslavement. There was a predominant sense to indirectly control the reaction of NSBAAS to racism by singling out “oppositional identity” as hostility against Whites that correlated with low academic achievement in NSBAAS. What this article refers to as oppositional identity in NSBAAS is opposition to racism while affirming strong affiliation to the Black race, which is NSBAAS’ own race (Irving & Hudley, 2008).

A fear of Black backlash in the predominating arguments to squelch oppositional identity and the warning that maintaining it would cause NSBAAS to suffer with lower academic achievement constitutes fear tactics and “whitemail.” It reads as if Black students should abolish oppositional identity for the safety of White people so that they can achieve, because their oppositional identity is supposedly arresting their ability to achieve. This argument is very disconcerting and confusing based on the fact that an earlier statement was made that oppositional identity promotes academic achievement in NSBAAS because it validates their experiences of and reaction to racist hostility directed against them.

Cultural Identification and Academic Achievement of African American Males

All ‘degreed up and nowhere to go: Black Males and Literacy Education

Tatum expresses in his title that Black males may get degrees, but what about jobs? What is meant by literacy education as it pertains to work in the world for Black males?

Tatum is basically stating that Black males are by and large discouraged by the fact that after achieving their degrees (most of which they fell into), they are not getting jobs nor are their peers and many other Black people in their communities and they wonder what is the use of their degree. They are usually only encouraged to enter the world of sports and entertainment, but they

are largely oblivious to other business and career opportunities in which they could be successful.

When the most prominent opportunities for livelihood placed in front of the Black male are sports and entertainment where real money can be made, he often wonders what the purpose is in pursuing a degree in other fields where he cannot get a job. Further, in the event that he does gain employment, it is usually low paying. Education must be placed in the forefront of the Black male's mind so that he can be exposed to worlds of opportunities and their potential offerings (Tatum, 2003).

Tatum's article was enlightening. It placed a spotlight on the world most Black men occupy that the schools and society in general appear to be unaware of, are unaware of, and do not seem to care to know when it is brought to their attention. It is as if Black men are locked into an unseen prism that limits or denies their right to learn of opportunities to maximize their potential. The entire society must act to reverse this travesty so that Black males can be successful and the world can share in the gifts of uplift they bring to the world on material and spiritual planes.

Pride and Identity: A Positive Educational Strategy for Black Youth

This title suggests that the foundational success for academic achievement of Black youth lies in a consciousness of self-love in the context of one's cultural immersion with a distinction that one looks up to. This is what is needed for NSBAAS because they have been historically assigned a "compensatory" or "acculturistic" educational model that is Eurocentric in that it is focused on making up for the supposed deficiencies of NSBAAS in regard to their education. Deficiencies here translate to mean not Eurocentric enough nor institution centered. Authors, White and Johnson suggest that pluralist models are best for the education of Black students

because they are student centered, so that the needs of students come first (White & Johnson, 1991).

When educators use strategies with Black students that offer fewer options for their learning and are outside of their cultural contexts in addition to being biased and racist, they do them grave injustice. Black students must be offered the same number of options as White students, so that they can compete as academic equals, progress, achieve their academic goals, and then embark on their career paths on level playing fields. Only then will Black students be enabled to take leadership roles and rise to their highest academic potential for themselves, their people and the world.

What impressed me most about this article is that it placed the African American students at the educational center of their world, which means that educators must learn from them and then create educational strategies that are in harmony with their acculturation. Students achieve best when they are impacted by environments where they feel safe, comfortable and secure. Forcing African American students to be educated in someone else's reality to the neglect of their own has no relevance to their well-being and constitutes a crime.

Interventions

Parental Support

How does perceived parental support, self-efficacy, and ethnic identity impact future education orientation? Kerpelman, Eryigit, and Stephens are concerned with these terms as they seek to prepare adolescent NSBAAS for adulthood so that they believe that they can accomplish their desires in spite of any challenges regarding their identity and whether they have the parental support that they need or not. It is important to begin orienting NSBAAS during adolescence toward their future goals in life by helping them to explore their interests and establish realistic

goals to achieve them. They need the help and support of parents, educators, mentors and counselors more than ever at this time in their lives to maintain their belief in themselves and their ability to accomplish anything that they desire.

Future education orientation involves helping African American adolescents to envision possible selves as they move toward adulthood. Doing so helps them to achieve academically. This article is a very hopeful one for NSBAAS adolescents because it affirms that they have a future for which they need to prepare. It gives them a focus that at the same time connects their academics to real life survival in the future and links their school experiences to coming adulthood (Kerpelman, Eryigit & Stephens, 2007). The approach of adulthood helps students to look more closely at self and their responsibilities thereto. Besides parental support, NSBAAS need teacher support and evidenced based strategies that aid them in increasing their academic achievement.

200+ Educational Strategies to Teach Children of Color

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu illustrates by his title that there are hundreds of educational strategies that can be used in teaching students of color if we are serious about doing so. Kunjufu's strategies all derive from direct observations in classrooms all over the U.S. that have been proven to elevate the academic success of African American students if they are manifested. In other words, his strategies are proven and evidence based. They are not conjectures about what he thinks might work nor mere academic jargon for its own sake. He is only interested in strategies that work.

Kunjufu has performed statistical and social research in his fervor to learn why the educational achievement gap exists between African American and White students and most importantly has used the strategies of master teachers and created some of his own for the

purpose of closing that gap for good. He states that this gap has been consistent for too many years, but acknowledges that what has also been consistent and tiring for him are the weak excuses of teachers and others who blame parents, students, poverty, and genetics for the gap instead of becoming proactive, committed, and driven in helping African American and other students achieve the heights of their academic goals by encouraging and supporting them through the use of evidence based strategies to ensure their academic success (Kunjufu , 2009).

Kunjufu has done his homework extraordinarily well because he has based his book of over 200 learning strategies for teaching students of color on his personal observations of students and teachers in their classrooms all over the U. S. They use them and provide him with irrefutable evidence that they work. His diligence, thoroughness, and commitment to helping NSBAAS and other nonwhite students to achieve academically is most admirable and should be modeled extensively. Kunjufu emphasizes that these strategies should be applied in relationship to the abilities of each student as an individual.

The Individual Student

How does one's individual makeup impact academics and the motivation to achieve in school? When students center on an academic domain, it increases the value of that domain for them. Strategies to help students identify the domain or domains that are most appealing to them help them to secure their interest and their interest then returns to them so that they become even more interested in focusing on one or more domains. Sometimes students cannot see how their coursework relates to their long-term goals in life. Strategies that teachers can use are to relate students' coursework to real life by showing or allowing them to discover for themselves how concepts they have learned relate to individuals in a number of career fields (Osborne & Jones, 2011). The importance of the impact on the individual of one or more cognitive domains has

great implications for learning with precision and cannot be stressed enough because when a student's energy centers on a particular domain or domains, that energy returns to the student. This then causes the student to become even more interested in the domain. The process is circular, self-feeding, and self-subsisting. Many strategies can be used to help students seek out and focus on a domain or domains that are of interest to them (Osborne & Jones, 2011). The HBCUs have graduated very successful African American students in this regard.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

The involvement of the entire community is essential in promoting and maintaining academic success from preschool to college as is referred to in the title, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child." This is also referred to as social capital. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) became virtual havens for NSBAAS when they were restricted from attending Predominantly White Colleges and Universities (PWCUs). Ironically, HBCUs are again under governmental restriction, resulting in their decline. This is unfortunate. Hopefully, the HBCUs will rise again because every student has a right to the peace and comfort of their own village in order to achieve their heights. The African American males who were participants in this study attending an HBCU reported feelings of welcome, warmth, encouragement and motivation that helped them to achieve academically with satisfactory GPAs (Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Historically Black colleges and Universities (HBCUs) should be maintained. They are equivalent to Historically White Colleges and Universities (HWCUs) where Blacks were at one time not welcomed. Everyone has a right to be in a comfort zone where they do not have the added burden of being judged by their skin color so that they can concentrate on their academics.

Integration of schools served a particular purpose for a particular time. It did not work out as many had expected. Racism still exists. A new dynamic, which is actually old, is required.

The best learning takes place when and where students feel most at home, like most White students feel at the colleges where they predominate. This is the historical reason inclusive of racism why many Whites did not welcome Black students at their colleges. They wanted it for themselves and themselves alone. They did not want to share that space with people in whose presence they felt uncomfortable. They did not want to feel uncomfortable on what they considered to be their own turf. They wanted to be comfortable. This is what Adler means by a sense of belonging when he states that “we all have one basic desire and goal: to belong and to feel significant.” (Adler Graduate School, 2013, p. 1). White students were historically sharing space in the classroom with Black students only because Black schools lacked the opportunities and resources that most White schools had. The intent was never for anyone to feel uncomfortable. However, if discomfort was involved in educational justice then it predominated because NSBAAS need the same opportunities, finances, and resources as White students to achieve educational success. On that premise, an examination of the colleges and universities where NSBAAS do their best and where they do their worst helps them to make more educated choices about the institutions they attend that are evidence based in more consistently graduating the highest numbers of African American students in the U.S.

College Graduation Rates: Where Black Students Do the Best and Where they Fare

Poorly Compared to their White Peers

This title suggests that *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* in 2010 examined the college graduation rates of Black students compared to Whites and determined the institutions at which Black students do poorly as well as those in which they do their best in the U.S.

Retention of Black students in college to increase graduation rates that are equal to or higher than White students is attainable if Black students research to learn which institutions may be most favorable to their academic success.

Factors that influence the dropout rates of NSBAAS at U.S. universities and colleges include hostile racial climates, feelings of being unwelcome, racial harassment, discrimination, inadequate preparation for college level coursework, lack of understanding and support when a student may be a first generation college attendee, lack of finances, the necessity to work in order to support their families, and finding that work and attending school at the same time is overwhelming (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2013).

Colleges and universities that provide adequate financial aid for NSBAAS and retention programs meet with greater success in reducing NSBAAS dropout rates and increasing retention.

For example, The Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE) at Florida State University helps African American students by recruiting them from the sixth grade on up, building relationships with the students and their parents, and providing summer and after-school programs that help students prepare for college. Students who elect to attend college at Florida State can take a summer program to orient them to university life. CARE also provides tutors for students who request them. Students who are not working up to expectations are required to attend tutoring sessions to increase their learning strategies and improve their grade point averages. African Americans comprise two thirds of the students in the CARE program (*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 2013).

This article deals with the closure of the achievement gap between Black and White students in the U.S. by the identification of colleges and universities where African American students consistently graduate at rates equal to or higher than those of White students.

The JBHE compiles statistics on colleges and universities where NSBAAS graduation rates are lower than, equal to, or higher than those of White students. This article contains two tables that list these colleges and universities by name, Black graduation rate, White graduation rate and the difference between them. One table is comprised of colleges and universities with the widest achievement gaps between Black and White students and the other lists the institutions with the narrowest gaps between Black and White students.

I greatly appreciate the work that the JBHE has done in compiling lists that are accurate and specific in their statistics regarding where African American students do their best and where they do their worst at U.S. colleges and universities in comparison to White students. There is a valuable resource and contribution to the successful graduation of NSBAAS in the U.S., particularly when individual learning styles are acknowledged and addressed in encouraging the academic success of these students.

The Impact of individual Learning Style Strategies

Some schools have many opportunities that others lack and this is what has led to the achievement gap in education between Black and White students. Well roundedness in education has transferable qualities for cognitive achievement. Urban schools are lacking in enrichment and learning programs that many students nationwide enjoy because they have been left out of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) of the federal government. It is the right of these students to receive the same opportunities as all other students to enable them to rise to their highest academic potentials. The School Enrichment Model (SEM) introduced by Joseph Renzulli's original triad model, developed in the mid-1970s is an evidence based one that provides the enrichment urban school students need that the NCLB Act leaves out. Now all

students can be provided with the same opportunities so that the achievement gap will cease to exist.

School Belonging, Educational Aspirations, Participation, and Academic Self Efficacy in African American Male High School Students

When African American males feel that they have a sense of belonging, and hope that they will fulfill their dreams, they are encouraged to accomplish their educational goals. A study covering several years would help to determine by use of graduation rates and GPAs how African American males perceive their comfort levels in school, sense that they have a place, have hopes that they will achieve their goals and actually complete the work necessary for graduation, and have confidence in themselves as excellent scholars (Uwah, McMahon & Furlow, 2008). These writers captured what is necessary to first of all examine how African American males feel about their acceptance in school, faith that they have a future full of positivity, fulfillment of their goals, and belief that they will actually complete the work necessary to graduate from school.

Awareness, Pride and Identity: A Positive Educational Strategy for Black Students

The Relationship between Black Racial Identity and Academic Achievement in Urban Settings

The implication in this title is that there is a connection between identity and achievement of NSBAAS in urban settings. This link is positive or negative depending on a number of variables. Interventions by parents, teachers and others can be geared toward helping these students to feel proud of their identity and harmonize it with excellence in academic achievement as part of the positive identity of being Black in the world. A program entitled “Visions for Children,” which is evidenced based has been used successfully in urban middle class schools

across the nation to improve cognitive abilities in reading and other subject matters in NSBAAS. This raises their self-esteem because the curriculum that is used positively exemplifies and represents the success of Black people in the world from historical to contemporary times. These students are therefore encouraged to succeed and they do (Harper, 2009). Harper was very comprehensive in exploring perceptions and strategies regarding the self-identity of NSBAAS as they relate to their academic achievement. The interventions that were presented placed these students within their cultural contexts in a positive way that exemplifies excellence and self-esteem as inseparably the highest aspects of their Black identity.

A New Model for a New Generation: High Achieving Black Students at an Ivy League University

This is a positive title for NSBAAS because it suggests that the old model for school achievement was inadequate for them, but that the new model is helping them to achieve. NSBAAS have been portrayed for too long as lacking in their ability to achieve academic success. It is time to move in a new direction by exploring what high achieving NSBAAS perceive, think, and do in order to manifest extraordinary academic success. Strong relationships with each other and respect for themselves individually and as a people are what has helped these NSBAAS survive Penn's inhospitable environment (Curington, 2011). NSBAAS at Penn survived the racist environment there because they sought refuge in each other and therefore received the encouragement, warmth, cognitive, and emotional support that they needed in order to achieve the heights of academic success, and they did. The resilience of these students was the focus as opposed to the typical needy and deprived characterizations of NSBAAS.

Talking about Race, Learning about Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom

Race, Racism and College Campuses

Tatum suggests by her title above that race is something that is not discussed as often as it should be in the classroom and that she is calling forth a discussion about it. Once one talks about race, she postulates that it is necessary to learn about racism to understand how it manifests and then apply a developmental theory of racial identity in the classroom so that students of all races can be enlightened and understand what they may never have learned about racism. Tatum offers that educators need to employ processes on college campuses to deal with issues of race and racism across the nation to enable students to learn in peaceful atmospheres.

She states that the stance needs to be proactive and education centered as opposed to spontaneous and reactionary. Tatum states that when Black and White students are enabled in a safe environment to express their feelings, and experiences, growth regarding race takes place in the classroom. White students will learn about racism and share what they have learned with their friends and participate in campus organizations with Black students and be able to relate to and understand how they might feel racially and be able to contribute positively along with them about racial issues. Black students will be able to learn from their racial experiences rather than be diminished by them. They will also learn about any internalized racism they may have that has contributed to their own or another's victimization. This will lead to their own empowerment so that they can teach and help others to become empowered. Consequently, Black and White students can become change agents because of what they have learned (Tatum, 1996).

Reaction

Tatum's article is a very positive one as it relates to the importance of safe and supportive environments on U.S. campuses where racial dialogues take place through educational processes that all students can relate to for the purpose of eliminating racism through mind change. Her belief is that learning can only take place on campuses where racism is faced, dialogued about,

and understood. Otherwise, hostility, ignorance, hatred, and negativity will prevail and then rule to the diminishment of learning. We can make positive change when we call on our collective minds for solutions as the next writer divulges.

Psychology and the Black Experience: Many Approaches

Pugh's title above, though a simple one, suggests a number of in depth approaches that could be taken. For example, one could examine the psychological impact of the Black experience on Black people; how psychology has impacted the Black experience; how the Black experience has impacted White people; and how White people have impacted the Black experience, etc. This article applies some of these approaches and more.

Pugh posits that the Black student activism of the 60s was also that of White students because White students joined Black students at the lunch counters during the sit-ins and boycotts in the fight against racial discrimination. Through the years, this activism changed in the way it presented, as Blacks closed ranks to focus on Black leadership and autonomy. This battle has impacted Black and White students educationally in a positive way because it shows that our histories are inseparable. The prevalence of truth and justice in the education of all students will help to destroy racism. The will to take action in this accord can never be underestimated.

Black Students Take Action at Northwestern University due to Racist Treatment

During the 60s, an organized group of Black students at Northwestern University stated that they were frustrated with being deprived of the full benefits that they were entitled to and paid for as it related to their cultural, social, and academic well-being. This being so, they felt unable to affirm their worthiness and purpose while attending this campus in such a hostile atmosphere. Therefore, they demanded a "policy statement" from the administration "deploring the viciousness of White racism and insuring that all conscious or unconscious racist policies,

practices, and institutions existing now on campus will no longer be tolerated [“Documents,” 1968]” (Pugh 1972, p. 29). NSBAAS represented their campus well in the articulation of their demands.

Pugh’s article captured the fervor of the Black student activism of the 1960s and those of the White students who participated in the civil rights movement with Blacks through sit-ins and boycotts. He also explains that the necessity for Black independence and leadership was crucial for Black survival; therefore, Whites could not participate in this aspect of the movement because it was about Black self-help. This unity was crucial on the nation’s campuses where Black students often felt isolated and victimized by the racist hostility toward them that manifested in myriad ways and negatively impacted their academic progress. Pinkney also writes about racism, but from an institutional perspective.

Black Americans

Pinkney makes it clear in his book of the above title that he is only and specifically speaking of Black people and their descendants who were brought to America on slave ships. He states that historically, Black people in America have been denied formal education because of racism, and that when it has been granted, most schools have been inferior with inadequately trained teachers and lack of needed resources. Though Black institutions turned out most of the best Black scholars in the nation, their numbers have declined because they are no longer being funded by the White institutions that have always supported them. Further, Black people for the most part have not had the money to fund them on their own.

Pinkney concludes that the single most significant factor that has kept Blacks in America from attaining the financial security of other immigrants is racism. It has suppressed and

therefore delayed the educational achievement of Blacks so that historically the gap has been maintained and survives to the present day with no future end in sight (Pinkney, 1993).

This article affirms my perspective that the persistence of racism in the education of NSBAAS in America is the most egregious block to the closing of the achievement gap, and that this circumstance will remain intact until racism is obliterated for all times. What is absolutely amazing is that Black students have made the educational progress that they have in spite of racism.

Discussion

In his book entitled, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation*, Paolo Freire states that there is no way to separate education, culture, power, and liberation because they are part of one whole political dynamic whether one is rich, poor or middle class, and recognizes it as such or not (Freire, 1921).

Education in a real sense is about the freedom to create and maintain one's own society free of internal or external domination that builds wealth for the few while the masses suffer. Therefore, it is political in that most governments support and enforce the desires of the elite while ignoring or minimizing those of the poor in all aspects of living. The pretense that education is just an exercise of the mind with no relationship to reality is condescending to the masses.

When poor people are aware that their social conditions are oppressive and stifling, they want real answers that translate into moving them from mere survival to a more liberated life like the rich have, who use them in order to maintain their elite lifestyle (Freire, 1921). Education that is portrayed as knowledge for knowledge's sake that does not relate to or transform the lives of the people it impacts is an education that serves no purpose. Adlerian authors state it in this

way: “Social interest is a humanistic concept that stems from the idea of a progressive improvement of the human condition. One’s own improvement - physically, mentally, and psychologically - should go along with the improvement of mankind” (Oberst & Stewart 2003, p. 17).

Therefore, education should serve the progress of humanity and cannot do so if it is separated from it. We are intricate parts of each other’s destiny. Racism in education and elsewhere is an antisocial construct that can only destroy us all. It is not “social interest” in the Adlerian sense of the term. NonWhite so-called Black African American Students (NSBAAS) realize on conscious and unconscious levels that the education they are receiving is not serving their interests well and often does not relate to the realities of their present or future lives. Discouragement then follows with lack of interest in school. A serious reanalysis, restructuring, or destruction of the educational system in the U. S. must take place and a new one relevant to NSBAAS put in place so that they can receive the education that they are entitled to as human beings on the planet. Above all, the Black community must take leadership in the education of our children by providing them with supplemental educational alternatives as well as new educational institutions that are culturally based, so that NSBAAS can receive the education that they need and have a right to. Dr. Leonard Jeffries is an outstanding African American scholar who has taken leadership in this cause and has influenced and been influenced by numerous African and African American scholars such as Dr. Carter G. Woodson, The Right Honorable, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop, Dr. John Henrik Clarke, Dr. Adelaide Sanford, Dr. Asa Hilliard, Dr. Ivan Van Sertima, Dr. Jacob Caruthers, Dr. Ira Caruthers, Drs. Nathan and Julia Hare, W.E.B. DuBois and Dr. Rex Nettleford.

In 1987 when Dr. Leonard Jeffries was Chair & Professor of the Department of Black Studies at City College of New York, he was asked to help the state, commissioner, and task force evaluate the New York state educational curriculum. He stated that though he was quite busy, he agreed to do so because they were desperate. He convened a team to help him with this review as follows: Dr. Shirley Hune, an Asian scholar who completed the Asian and Asian-American part of the report; Dr. Carlos Rodriguez-Fraticelli who completed the Puerto Rican-Latino part, and Professor Lincoln C. White who completed the Native American part of the report.

For this review, the curriculum was divided into four categories: Humanities, sciences, special education, and social sciences. For more in depth analysis, the following areas were examined: Contextual relevancy and invisibility; Content stereotyping and marginality; Historical distortion and omission; Multicultural form and substance; Eurocentric conceptualization and modality; and Systems capability and development. They all concluded that the curriculum handled all of these groups in insignificant manners when compared to Europeans though they had never met or spoken in person or by telephone during this period. All of their reports were mailed to Jeffries and he submitted them in their entirety along with his portion and synthesis of the review (Jeffries, 1991).

Dr. Jeffries suffered vicious verbal racist attacks for the findings in the review of the insignificant inclusion of nonwhite people in the New York State curriculum. This was in spite of the fact that he was only one person on a team of scholars responsible for the review. The findings on the African and African American portions of the curriculum were the only parts attacked. None of the other scholars were named nor were their portions of the work even mentioned. Jeffries was attacked by racists as part of the war against Africans and African

Americans that he spoke about regarding the New York State educational curriculum, and for exposing the truth about its negations, exclusions, distortions and omissions courageously and unapologetically (Jeffries, 1991).

Clearly, Jeffries beliefs concur with Freire's that education must be an integral part of the development of a people for it to be of any use whatsoever. I wholeheartedly agree.

Conclusion

Nonwhite, so-called "Black" African American students (NSBAAS) who are encouraged, acknowledged, and motivated to strive for educational success have achieved academically as evidenced in research. Proof lies in the successful interventions of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), African centered schools, individuals and institutions with educational models that they have used to successfully increase the educational achievement of NSBAAS. The convergence of all of the above factors has led to the academic success of these students. Actions are now needed to close the achievement gap between Black and White students for all times. There are no more excuses and never have been any viable ones because they were based on racism. Racism is a greedy, boring, ignorant and institutionalized construct that robs the mind of logic and reason, has condescending postures parading as superior ones, and fosters delusions not based in reality that are downright dangerous mentally, physically, and emotionally. Abolish it so that NSBAAS can receive academic justice for their success. The solutions are here. The choice is ours to manifest them.

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