

# Marable

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assume that he/she cannot compete on par with whites; that this student is somehow "culturally disadvantaged." Even if, objectively, the black student's work is identical or superior to that of a white pupil, the grade received is lower. The cultural expectation of failure and inferiority transcends the objective merits of one's work.

Students tend to learn quickly if the material relates to their cultural or social experience in some direct way, or if the overall environment reinforces their desire to excel. If their curriculum is structured to negate their heritage and culture; if their teachers expect only the "minimum level" of competency from them; if they are not constantly reinforced in the classroom and in campus life generally, their failure is almost preordained.

The myth of equality in American education is based in part on the assumption that recruitment of representative numbers of black and Hispanic students ultimately will produce a pluralistic society. Equal access

to college enrollment, however, does not guarantee retention. According to Alexander Austin, author of "Minorities in American Higher Education," the percentages of all college-age young people who entered universities in 1982 were 38 percent for whites, 29 percent for blacks and 24 percent for Hispanics. The percentages of this group who graduate from colleges are: whites, 23 percent; blacks, 12 percent, and Hispanics, 7 percent. Of those who enter graduate or professional schools: whites, 14 percent; blacks, 8 percent, and Hispanics, 4 percent. Whites still comprise 86 percent of all students in academic institutions, and nearly 92 percent of all graduate and professional school students. Of every 100 black students who enter high school, only 72 graduate, 29 go to college and only 12 receive degrees.

Other than at historically black colleges, an Afro-American student is usually at a tremendous disadvantage within the university. The bulk of his or her white counterparts find that the

cultural and social environment is directly designed for them. Black professors are few and far between -- statistically, only 1 percent of the faculty at predominantly white institutions are black.

Much of education occurs outside the classroom.

Professor Jacqueline Fleming, author of "Blacks in College," has observed that most Afro-American students are placed in a second-class status at white institutions. Many white professors ignore them, and students sometimes experience "a loss of motivation and thwarted intellectual growth." Some students "may begin to accept a minority status, that of not really being a part of things."

Professor Fleming's study also shows that black students have a higher rate of intellectual development in black institutions: "Although they came to college with lower test scores ..., these things were overcome because they were encouraged and supported by peers, ad-

ministrators and faculty members."

The struggle for racial equality does not mean that all blacks should attend all-black colleges, but it does mean that greater emphasis must be placed to create structures which provide positive reinforcement and an environment of cultural pluralism for blacks within predominantly white institutions.

Equality is not a color-blind, invisible status which condemns black youth to insecurity, isolation and failure. It means taking the logical steps to guarantee real cultural pluralism -- more black professors and staff, expanded funds for black cultural and academic programs and institutional links between campuses and black communities.

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# Counterpoint

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alive and well.

In defense of the movie, there are those who would say that it provided a vehicle to showcase black talent and a black author in a medium that has largely ignored them.

For the crumbs that "The Color Purple" provided in these realms, we must weigh the price that was paid. As a black man who is a child and adolescent psychiatrist by profession -- a husband and father by choice -- I say the price tag for this movie is entirely too high.

Professionally, I spend a significant portion of every day fighting to help children, women and men who have been abused by each other and the system. At a time when our children and families throughout the world are struggling for freedom, justice and their rightful role in self-determination, we can ill afford setbacks of the type this movie promotes.

The issue of having the vast talent in the black community ignored cannot and should not be addressed with the sham that this production provides. Given the so-called choice between continued obscurity on the movie screen and the perpetuation of self-hatred and self-defeatism leading to family genocide -- the "choice" ought to be clear.

The irony of a black woman accepting the white man's dollar (begotten through the dehumanization of her and her people) to insult her black man and black male children would be comedic if it were not so tragic.

In a time when one out of every two black children is growing up

in this country living in a single-parent, female-headed household, often in poverty, anything that serves to widen the gap between our men and women cannot be ignored or tolerated.

At a time when our black male children are killing each other and themselves via heroin, cocaine, PCP, alcohol, tobacco, guns, knives, speeding cars or, worse yet, through corporate-controlled and -induced military conflicts, can we afford to promote a vehicle that, under the guise of entertainment, gives credence to their societally taught self-hatred and self-defeatist behavior?

The answer is an emphatic "no!"

Since our ancestors came to these shores, American society has worked overtime at destroying the fabric of the black family.

Initially, their actions were blatant and easily seen -- families were separated via the auction block. With the passage of time, the tactics have become more sophisticated.

Thoughtless and irresponsible attempts at "entertainment" as seen in "The Color Purple" serve only to re-open wounds that have never fully healed without any focus on the source of the wounds themselves -- white-male-dominated and oppressive society.

Instead of focusing our attention on the root causes of our mistrust of one another, which has led to our inability to love each other or parent the children we produce -- we end up fighting each other even more by design and a projected devaluation.

We are all familiar with Hitler's "Final Solution" to the Jewish "problem." There is no question that this movie amassed brilliance, compassion and talent unequalled in any production now on the market via its actors, author and producers. It is a damn shame that it never came close to utilizing its vast potential to provide an accurate or balanced depiction of our people and our life -- our children and our community deserve and need so much more.

It's about time we recognize and stop colluding with a sick segment of American society pushing the "solution" to the black "problem."

# Opinion

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He felt equally at ease singing an operatic aria, a Negro spiritual or a Yiddish folk song.

Most importantly, no matter what the extent of his artistic or intellectual prowess, they paled in comparison to Robeson's fierce individualism and his defiance of racism.

The tall, eloquent black man with the commanding baritone voice and menacing stare would not compromise his principles.

In response, Robeson was labeled a Communist traitor. His concerts were banned in the United States. He was forced to live abroad. But still he didn't waver.

"If you were young and idealistic -- 'socially conscious' -- in those days, Paul Robeson became your idol," said Jewish writer Yaacov Luria in a *Miami Herald* column.

Amid the attention justly given the first Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday three days earlier, Jan. 23 quietly marked the 10th anniversary of Robeson's death. Many probably didn't know that.

Youngsters who aspire to be like Moses Malone and Dr. J probably don't even know who Paul Robeson was. But they need to know. They need to know that you can catch footballs and recite Shakespeare.

So we salute Paul Robeson, a giant of a man in every way one can be a giant. Youngsters need to know that some have stood by their convictions regardless of the consequences. They need to know that one of America's truest Renaissance men was black.



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