

# FORUM

## America, what do we do after Charleston?

I am a native South Carolinian. Charleston is my maternal ancestral home. My great-grandmother was born during slavery. My great-grandfather, I have been told, was a plantation overseer. Never have I been more proud and more ashamed of my dueling ancestral heritages than in the aftermath of the terroristic murders of nine Black Christians engaged in Bible study at Charleston's historic Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church by a

racially instigated terrorism through hate groups like the KKK during the Jim Crow era. And it continues to be reflected in the unjust racial profiling and killings of Black boys and men by law enforcement agents and a mass incarceration system. Millions of Black and Latino children and people of color are trapped in a cradle to prison pipeline lodged at the intersection of race and poverty. That Black children are the poorest, most miseducated, most incarcerated, most unemployed, and most demonized of any group of children in America is a continuing legacy of slavery and Jim Crow that must end now. Let's seize this latest tragic racial terrorist act to confront our history and how we teach our history. And we must all act together to reject our present day racism in all its structural, cultural and hidden manifestations with urgency and persistence. We must pass on to our children and grandchildren a more honest and just nation and a future free of the violence of racism, poverty and guns.



**Marian Wright Edelman**  
Guest Columnist

*"For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labor. And can the liberties of a nation be thought*

*secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever . . ."*  
— Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XVIII

"The Negro race in America, stolen, ravished and degraded, struggling up through difficulties and oppression, needs sympathy and receives criticism, needs help and is given hindrance, needs protection and is given mob-violence, needs justice and is given charity, needs leadership and is given cowardice and apology, needs bread and is given a stone. This nation will never stand justified before God until these things are changed." — "Declaration of Principles" of the Niagara Movement, a forerunner of the NAACP's founding.

young White man infected by what Dr. King called, after President Kennedy's assassination, "a morally inclement climate."

The young White visitor to the weekly Bible study came with a troubled spirit and racial rage inflamed by a White supremacist website. He was enabled to become a mass killer by readily accessible and largely unregulated guns — over 310 million in citizen hands and only 4 million in America's law enforcement and military hands. But his dastardly deeds were bathed in an amazing spirit of forgiveness among the victims' families.

I hope this latest chapter in America's pervasive history of domestic terrors against millions of Black citizens victimized by slavery and Jim Crow terrorism, denied full citizen rights throughout our history, relegated to subhuman three-fifths status in our Constitution and treated like beasts of burden to fuel our unjust economic system can be squarely confronted. Until the United States sees and cures its profoundly evil birth defects of slavery, Native American genocide, and the exclusion of all women and non-propertied men of all colors from our electoral process, these birth defects will continue to flare up in multiple guises to threaten our Black community's and everyone's safety, our nation's future, and render hollow our professed but still inadequate commitment to ensuring equality for all.

Slavery was followed by thousands of lynchings and

I believe we are called in the aftermath of the Charleston massacre, the latest in a long and egregious history of unjust Black deaths, to confront the realities of our true history so that a new generation of White youths does not carry forth the poison of racial supremacy and White privilege. We also must act so that millions of Black, Native American and Latino children, soon to be the majority of our country's children in a majority non-white world, do not have to continue to struggle against overt and covert culturally ingrained racism. We must firmly reject all symbols glorifying slavery and hatred that divide us. We must reject all efforts to subvert fair and democratic election processes including the precious right to vote. We must end mass incarceration and ensure equal justice under the law for all. We must confront massive inequality of wealth and income and end poverty, beginning with child poverty now.

It is time to commit America to become America and to close the gap between creed and deed. After this Fourth of July, let's send a ray of hope throughout our nation and world that we are committed to honoring our dream of equality for all. What an amazing grace moment we have been given to help our nation move forward together.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund. For more information go to [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org).

## Learning what makes summer programs effective for middle school students



**Tiffany Gueye**  
Guest Columnist

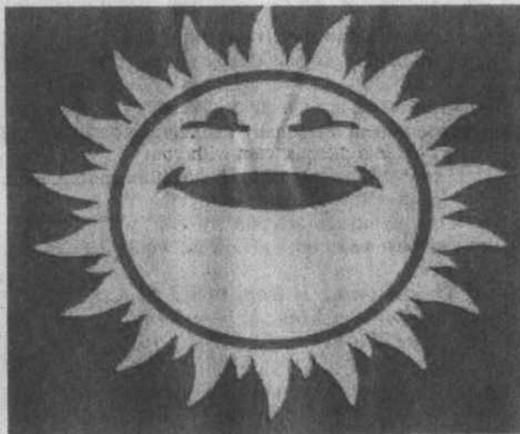
yields positive student outcomes.

This study was particularly unique and important because little evidence exists about effective learning models for middle school students. MDRC, the research firm responsible for conducting the evaluation, designed the research to learn more about how summer learning programs can improve the academic achievement of middle school students and to better understand the context in which summer programs are implemented.

The research found the impact of summer learning may be greater on students' math achievement than on reading achievement. It also found that it is possible to deliver high-quality programming that middle school students will voluntarily attend at a high rate.

We plugged the findings from the study into our continuous assessment process, along with data collected annually from pre- and post-program formative assessments, teacher & parent surveys, attendance records and quality metrics. Since 2012, we have focused on enhancing three core program elements that are closely tied to strong student outcomes: staff training, curriculum and assessment.

When it comes to train-



ing, we have learned to better harness schools' talent to prepare staff to hit the ground running at the start of the summer. We also have learned to better harness schools' talent in customizing training and providing ongoing coaching and support to improve the quality of instruction. By shifting to a "train the trainer" model driven by school and district partners, we have increased the alignment between summer programs and school culture & priorities while creating leadership and professional development opportunities for teachers.

We transitioned to Common Core-aligned reading and math curricula, which incorporate more non-fiction texts and algebraic reasoning. While it is tough to measure, the benefits of creating extra time

and space in the summer for teachers to plan, collaborate and experiment has yielded benefits in terms of increased comfort and familiarity with CCSS standards and assessments, leading to increased quality of instruction. Another advantage to the new curricula: It's fully consumable. Students can bring books and other materials home at the end of the program to read and share with siblings and friends. The change to consumable curriculum has reduced costs, eliminating the need to manage, transport and store program materials and supplies.

We also learned more about and improved the summer assessment process so that teachers and scholars are in position to succeed. We began utilizing computer-adaptive

assessments aligned with Common Core State Standards to help teachers better use time strategically to teach the skills scholars need most. These assessments can be administered quickly and easily by deploying iPads and laptops, minimizing the time required for assessment and improving the quality of insight into scholars' learning needs. This transition has necessitated strong relationships to utilize schools' computer labs in the summer and employ mobile solutions to connect schools that lack appropriate technology.

Our recent experience investigating summer learning for middle school students also has sharpened our sense of what else we need to learn. The study was conducted at schools implementing BELL's model for the first time; now we need to learn more about the impact of well-established programs. We need evidence from large-scale studies that can yield stronger conclusions. And we have more to learn about how to best measure student outcomes because academic achievement is only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to raising smart, healthy, confident and determined students.

We've increased our focus on socio-emotional

learning in addition to building core reading and math skills. A big part of this is fostering a "growth mindset" that helps scholars learn that despite any challenges they can improve, overcome adversity and take ownership of their success. That requires an emotional buy-in from middle school students as a precondition for academic progress, so setting a positive tone and culture from Day 1 is a must. The summer is such a great opportunity to cultivate a can-do mindset as teachers have more time, space and flexibility to support scholars' individual needs.

We encourage schools, community organizations, donors and partners to continue exploring these questions to gain a deeper understanding of how and why summer learning boosts student achievement. Every question and every answer will help us better meet the learning needs of adolescents.

Dr. Tiffany Gueye is the chief executive officer of BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life). She holds a Ph.D. in educational research, evaluation and measurement from Boston College and sits on the board of the Center for Effective Philanthropy.

Editor's Note: Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) will partner with school districts, business and philanthropic groups in four North Carolina cities this summer, including Winston-Salem, to help an estimated 4,500 elementary and middle school students boost their reading and math skills while participating in a camp-like experience.

Summer learning can increase student achievement. But when it comes to middle school students, how can we continuously improve our approach and produce the greatest return on investment for children, families and schools?

In 2012, a Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service gave my organization, BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life), an opportunity to conduct a randomized controlled trial and better understand how and why summer learning

## A Democracy North Carolina summer brings grassroots experience

BY VASHTI HINTON, KEITH CHAPPELLE AND AMANDA BILLIPS

This summer, Linda Sutton, a proud native of Winston-Salem, N.C. and known freedom fighter, is working with three brilliant college students in the Piedmont Triad area. Her goal is to expose us to the world of full-time organizing and all that it entails, and how to work together with various people in the Triad. From phone banking to canvass-



Sutton

ing downtown, we have been able to do it all. As interns for Democracy North Carolina, a nonprofit and non-partisan organization, we have focused on civic engagement, research and advocacy.

While this summer may be the busiest summer of them all because of the federal court hearing on North Carolina's voter suppression laws [scheduled for July 13], we are truly enjoying ourselves. We have met with elected officials, community leaders, and many members of their community. Each day



Submitted photo

In the photo (L-R) are Vashti Hinton, Keith Chappelle and Amanda Billips.

presents something new, and the foundation is being laid for us to continue com-

munity organizing after the internship comes to an end.

"This summer has been extremely busy, but I have learned and am still learning how valuable grassroots organizing is. People don't understand what it takes to be at the very root of it all, doing all the dirty work because you believe in a better tomorrow."  
— Vashti Hinton

"It is at the heart of the community where change emerges. This is something I learned from studying history and political science, but I have been able to experience this firsthand through my internship. If you want to bring about change for the better, it is imperative that you have the active support of your

community."  
— Keith Chappelle

"We really do not realize what things entail until you are actually doing the hands-on, grassroots work yourself. You cannot complain about how things are if you are not engaged yourself. I urge you to get involved immediately, for if you don't, as my supervisor often reminds us, 'for evil flourishes when good people do nothing'. Our democracy depends on your participation."  
— Amanda Billips

For more information, contact Linda Sutton at 336-870-2168.