

FORUM

Amber alert! Black and brown boys missing from the education pipeline in N.C.



**Dawn X
Henderson**
Guest
Columnist

I have been doing research on interventions for suspended adolescents in North Carolina for the past five years and am well aware of the disparities that exist in our public education system.

An article released by The Washington Post jolted me back to some of the issues I observed while conducting interviews with suspended adolescents.

The report shared examines the achievement gap in Florida between males and females. Two findings from the report were rather alarming: (1) females from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to graduate from high school than males from similar backgrounds, and (2) after controlling for family characteristics (e.g., educational attainment, income, etc.) males of color remain at a significant disadvantage in the public education system.

So how can Florida become a mirror to North

Carolina?

In North Carolina, when black and brown males transition from third grade, they are less likely to be performing at grade level. Black females are more likely to be represented in Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) programs; American Indian boys have little to no representation in AIG programs across North Carolina.

Black and brown males are disproportionately suspended and less likely to complete advanced courses. Continuous suspension from school contributes to prolonged absence and, to some extent, higher dropout rates.

Black and brown males are roughly three times more likely to receive a short-term suspension in school when compared to their peers.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction revealed females had higher four-year graduation rates (89.1 percent) than males (82.2 percent) yet more males attended K-12 schools; Hispanic males had the lowest graduation rate (73.1 percent) when compared to their peers.

If you do not complete advanced or college prep courses, you are less likely to persist in college. If you are

not graduating from high school, you do not go to college.

According to the University of North Carolina system, 63.9 percent of females graduate in five years compared to 54.4 percent of males. Males account for less than half of the student population in the UNC-System. Schools reporting predominately African-American or other ethnically diverse populations, on average, have a female to male ratio of 2 to 1.

Where are our black and brown boys?

The rate of female and male births is relatively the same; however, somewhere our males, specifically males of color, disappear from the education pipeline.

Recovering our black and brown boys from the wastrel landscape of the "lost" and, to some extent, the criminal justice system, requires a community of collective agents, universities, and organizations.

Consider this an issued AMBER Alert aimed to ignite a community response to search for and recover our lost boys.

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The Black Lives Matter movement should broaden its perspective



**James B.
Ewers Jr.**
Guest
Columnist

I grew up in a time when gun violence was not as pervasive as it is today. Quite honestly, I wonder if anyone in my neighborhood owned a firearm. If they did, we as children certainly didn't know about it. You know, just as it is today, kids talked back in the day. I didn't hear any of my friends say their parents owned a gun.

The only people I knew that had guns were the police. Growing up, even through high school, we didn't have any encounters with the police. In fact, we didn't get close to the police much less their guns. The father of one of my friends was a detective, but we never saw his weapon.

As we all know, now there is a "Black Lives Matter" movement that has taken hold in this country. It may have been the Trayvon Martin killing by George Zimmerman that made more people pay attention. The Black Lives Matter movement has made America take stock of the number of black men in particular losing their lives because of white police officers. Arguably, there aren't a lot of states in the union where this scenario has not played out a time or two.

Yes, it's hurtful to see white police officers use their weapons to kill or maim young men and women of color. The level of aggression and force is unacceptable. Some states like South Carolina have prosecuted police officers for being trigger happy and insensitive.

These incidents happen too frequently so the Black Lives Matter movement has taken city and state governments to task and rightfully so. It is my opinion that more stringent laws need to be put in place so that the police don't overuse their power and



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abuse their privilege of being law enforcement officials.

We as citizens must not become lethargic in our efforts to see justice done. We can no longer accept the "administration's

answer". Take Baltimore, Maryland for example. What happened to Freddie Gray inside of that police van? When we last saw Freddie Gray before he stepped into that van, he was alive. Now he is not. I

believe we need the Black Lives Matter movement because it keeps us all vigilant. It serves as a type of moral checks and balances.

However, it is my hope that the Black Lives Matter movement will broaden its

focus and perspective. We only have to watch the news to see that we as black people are killing other black people at an alarming rate.

Recently in New Orleans, Louisiana former

New Orleans Saints player, Will Smith, was killed by Cardell Hayes over a fender bender. That's right, a fender bender! Hayes killed Smith and wounded his wife. All involved were black. Will Smith was set to be inducted into the New Orleans Saints Hall of Fame in the fall. Smith's funeral was held on Saturday. Hayes is in jail charged with second degree murder and his bail is set at one million dollars. New facts in the case are unfolding every day. Where is the outrage when we see brothers killing brothers?

The killing which I just described occurs way too often among us. It seems at times that we wake up mad, go through the day mad and before you know it something bad happens. Instead of standing at the corner of hope and opportunity, some of us stand at the corner of despair and disappointment.

We must be proactive in our communities to stop the violence among us. The Black Lives Matter movement has an opportunity to lead the way in this effort. Partnering with places of worship, city agencies and schools will be necessary in order to grow and sustain a new message.

All of us have a part to play! It starts with us and where we live. Replace the frown with a smile, replace fault with forgiveness, and replace a quick temper with patience and tolerance.

The verdict is in and we can do it! Some many years ago now, the Godfather of Soul, James Brown sang, "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud." Stop the violence against each other today!

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