

FORUM

N.C. NAACP and Forward Together Moral Movement: Our response to so-called achievement schools



William J. Barber
Guest Columnist

Gov. Patrick McCrory and the extremists in the General Assembly have been engaged in an extreme attack retro-

gressive campaign against public schools since the day they came to power.

As of July 2, Governor McCrory has on his desk another ideologically-driven attack on public education, House Bill 1080, which would allow for a back-door corporate takeover of public schools through so-called "Achievement School Districts."

Just like the voucher system the extremists put into place, this scheme would drain public education money into unaccountable private hands. This is contrary to the intent of our state constitution. In other states, Achievement School Districts have been plagued with corruption, fraud and mismanagement due to this lack of accountability. Studies in Louisiana, Michigan and Tennessee have shown these virtual districts to decline in student achievement or to show negligible improvement. High staff turnover produced chaos and a decline in the number of experienced teachers. These schemes also

WHO ELSE HAS TRIED ASDs?

- New Orleans, LA, Recovery School District – controversial results
- Michigan's Educational Achievement Authority – an abject failure
- Tennessee's ASD – not as successful as district-led efforts

foster more re-segregation.

North Carolina's constitution explicitly bars the use of public school funds for anything but public education. Giving those funds to private corporations plainly violates the state constitution and also drains money away from proven programs that support parent engagement, inclusive leadership, expanded pre-K programs, and professional development and coaching for teachers.

In this scheme, a politically-selected superintendent would create a virtual district comprised of five of North Carolina's lowest-performing public elementary schools. That superintendent would grant charter school operators multi-year contracts to take control of these schools.

The charters could be for-profit corporations based in other states. They would take control of the schools away from local elected school boards. The same rules and standards that the state demands of other public school systems would not apply to these "Achievement School Districts," so that the charter operators would get tax dollars without any public accountability.

North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction already has a program to turn around failing schools that has produced proven results. Turning Around Lowest Achieving Schools or TALAS has been in place for five years. Sixty percent of schools operated under TALAS outperformed the state average performance change and 75 percent outperformed the

state average growth, proving that struggling schools can make significant improvement. Unfortunately, funding for TALAS has been cut so low that it can only reach a fraction of our hardship schools. Instead of funding a proven program, the extremists in the General Assembly seek to channel public school funds into private and unaccountable hands.

Our public school dollars would be better spent on proven programs like Pre-K for every child, greater instructional time, teachers' aides for individual attention to struggling students, and recruitment and retention of our best teachers. We also know that poverty is the real problem; all of our struggling schools are high-poverty schools where nutrition, mental health, healthcare and social services could make the most difference.

Instead, a cynical game of politics and an unbending devotion to extremist ideology continue to suffocate research-based approaches to education and undermine the foundation of public education in North Carolina. It is time for voters to hold elected Governor McCrory and the extremists in the legislature accountable.

The North Carolina NAACP and the Forward Together Moral Movement are based in Durham and are led by Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II.

Are Black Farmers in 2016 the New Dred Scott of 1857?

Black farmers to protest at U.S. Supreme Court



Eddie Slaughter
Guest Columnist

On Friday, July 8, at 9 a.m., farmers from the Southern Region and others who believe in justice and equality will descend on the U. S. Supreme Court to once again seek and demand justice through the courts and to bring to light and awareness of the unfairness of the settlement of the Pigford Class Action, and the continued discrimination by the USDA, "The Last Plantation." The theme is "Are Black Farmers in 2016 the New Dred Scott of 1857?"

The protest will be held on the First Street NE sidewalk directly in front of the Supreme Court. The complaint at the Supreme Court is regarding Eddie and Dorothy Wise, farmers from North Carolina, who were foreclosed on and evicted from their 106-acre farm on January 20, 2016, by 14 militarily-armed Federal Marshals and several Nash County, North Carolina deputy sheriffs without ever being granted a hearing. Farmer Eddie Wise is a retired Green Beret and his wife, Dorothy Wise, is a retired Grants Manager. The

Wise's situation is akin to the Dred Scott Decision of March 6, 1857 (<http://www.ushistory.org/us/32a.asp>) because black farmers are still being denied full due process. This is one of the most important issues that should be brought before the United States Supreme Court.

While many people in this country think that black farmers across the nation got justice during the Pigford Class Action (Pigford v. Glickman 1999), the opposite is the truth. Black farmers who have been discriminated against by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), formerly called Farmers Home Administration (FmHA), continue to be put out of farming, denied opportunities to make a living, and lose land that impacts the quality of life for them and the rural black communities in which they live.

The time has long expired on the unremitting discrimination and breach of The Pigford Consent Decree. Black farmers are continuously denied due process; in particular, a right to have a formal hearing on the merits of their case before the Administrative Law Judge of The USDA.

Congress has expressed its intent for the Agency to hold the formal hearing on the merits in the 2007 Pigford Remedy Act, which was incorporated in the 2008 Food Energy and Conservation Act or "Farm Bill." In addition,

the USDA is denying all claims and hearings by black farmers, fomen farmers, Hispanic farmers, and Native American farmers. This denial of the formal hearing before the Administrative Law Judge allows 180 days for the Agency to correct its own mistakes, is unlawful, unjust and contrary to Congressional intent pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act and The Pigford Consent Decree.

If you are a supporter of justice and equality, support black farmers, seek healthy and safe food, join with the black farmers and Eddie and Dorothy Wise, other speakers from the American Agriculturalists Association, the North Carolina-based national Black Farmers & Agriculturalists Association (BFAA), The Cowtown Foundation, Lawrence Lucas, President Emeritus, USDA Coalition of Minority Employees, and others to bring this issue before the United States Supreme Court. These farmers are asking the question: Are black farmers in 2016 the New Dred Scott of 1857?

Eddie Slaughter is president of the American Agriculturalist Association.