

Opinion

Public Education: My Views

By Laurence De Shields

One of the most serious tragedies of life in black America is the dismal record of performance of our children in the public school system around the country. Every year, published test scores inform us with maddening regularity that black children are falling further and further behind educationally. This is at a time when the demand for the skilled and the educated continues unabated.

Stories exist about the high school graduates who are being shoved out of the system barely able to read, write and lacking any real comprehension of what it takes to function in today's society. A basic education is no longer an option, it is a necessity. If the present trend in education persists, implications for the fu-

ture will be devastating. Thousands of young people will have consigned themselves to the backwaters of American life, their futures foreclosed by a system designed to liberate them to a cycle of dependency, but one which has failed them.

The search for the villains in this scenario are endless. There is blame enough for everyone. Yet, it is our society which must shoulder most of the blame because of its institutional racism which brands blacks children interior from birth. One of the first lessons black children learn as they seek an integrated quality education is that they are not wanted.

This fact of life is reinforced consciously and unconsciously by school teachers who have low expectancy levels of black and minority students.

Teachers are encumbered by unreasonable fears of their pupils whom they label disruptive and uneducable, thus transferring the responsibility of the students' lack of accomplishment from themselves to the pupils.

Of course there are good and bad teachers with that great majority of average teachers in between. I suspect that teachers have looked upon their profession simply for the security of it all and the pupils are really secondary.

After years of being underpaid teachers have become more organized, but their hard-won gains seem to have outstripped their concern for their pupils. In a sense there is a lack of accountability with the children who are not being educated being the real losers.

Education has always been viewed as a way out. A good

education is not an option, it is absolutely necessary if one is to achieve anything. "School is a place to learn-not simply to be taught." It is not enough for students to go to school to be fed with knowledge.

The sad irony of our present situation is that for centuries it was a crime for blacks to be able to read and write. This was sanctioned by a society bent upon reducing us to "nobodies". Today we seem bent upon allowing ourselves to be imposed with a substance which our ancestors fought so desperately to lift. The public school system has failed us in many palpable ways, but the fact is that parents have primary responsibility for seeing that their children are taught.

Education is the key. But it is not the system that will free us, it will have to be ourselves.

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If you have any questions or letters to the editor, write to

The NEWS ARGUS

318 Hall-Patterson

WSSU Campus

750-2327

Letter to the Editor

It has come to our attention that in the spring semester of 1990, articles that have been submitted have not been published in the Greek Corner. The most recent article was submitted for the March Issue.

In order to express concerns about publication in the News Argus, we would like to know the guidelines by which articles are chosen for publication.

We would like the article that was submitted for the March Issue to be published in the April Issue.

Thank you for your cooperation.

The Women of Gamma Lambda Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Best Wishes Class of 1990 !

