

Scholarize America

BY ARCHON MELVIN ISADORE DOUGLASS
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

“Scholarize America” is a phrase I coined following a conversation I had with prominent educators regarding the plight of American K–12 schools. Most of the concerns revolved around American students’ lack of mastery in key areas that dictate success rates, which include writing, research and oration. In an effort to encapsulate the myriad problems ailing many schools’ ability to educate students properly, I use the word “scholarize” to denote the act of educating beyond proficiency. Scholarize intimates an attitude and action the American educational system should have to improve and enrich the quality of life for all.

Having schools develop ambassadors of intellect and discourse is essential. Too many graduates across the country are still unprepared to tackle the academic demands of college and workplace, as a result of a lack of intellectual prowess and drive. Scholarized is an attitude that students can aspire to and schools, particularly public schools, should encourage. Some might argue that college preparation is not for everyone. I strongly disagree.

According to the article “U.S. Students’ Academic Achievement Still Lags That of Their Peers in Many Other Countries,” published by the Pew Research Center in 2017, U.S. students, compared with their peers around the world, are doing poorly. The article stated: “Recently released data from international math and science assessments indicate that U.S. students continue to rank around the middle of the pack, and behind many other advanced industrial nations.”

It goes on to cite: “One of the biggest cross-national tests is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which every three years measures reading ability, math and science literacy and other key skills among 15-year-olds in dozens of developed and developing countries. The most recent PISA results from 2015 placed the U.S. an unimpressive 38th out of 71 countries in math and 24th in science. Among the 35 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which sponsors the PISA initiative, the U.S. ranked 30th in math and 19th in science.”

The PISA ranked the ten advanced industrial nations that top the United States of America. These nations, in order of rank, are South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Finland, United Kingdom, Canada, Netherlands, Ireland, and Poland.

This is cause for alarm and ought to evoke a call to action demanding educational reform. People may ask, What kind of reform is needed? Several of these educational reforms are outlined in the insightful article entitled “Reform School” by Archousa Gay Bullock, Ph.D. According to Archousa Bullock, the educational system is in desperate need of repair and needs to encourage more teacher–student engagement. To address this, Bullock has identified five levels of engagement to understand in promoting better teaching and learning. They are persistent engagement, purposeful engagement, enterprising engagement, negligent engagement and reluctant engagement.

Teachers and students in the realm of persistent engagement are operating at the highest level of engagement as a result of enduring determination to continue the course of action despite difficulty or opposition.

Teachers and students in the realm of purposeful engagement are operating at high levels as demonstrated by their determination or resolve for a task. This level of engagement is noticeable during test time. Students appear to be focused and motivated by the sheer fact that they are taking a test and want to do well.

Enterprising engagement is more spontaneous in nature, making it a risky and daring mission or undertaking. Although the outcome may be unpleasant, the invitation to take part is outweighed by the possibility of success.

Negligent engagement has solely to do with failing to take proper care in preparation and thus assuming the attitude that others around you have deeper understanding.

Reluctant engagement is the unwillingness or hesitation to partake in tasks or undertakings.

I don’t mean to suggest that Archousa Bullock’s research and article contain all the answers required to help scholarize America. However, her many years of experience as an outstanding educator and years of conducting insightful scholarship contribute greatly to the academy’s intellectual discourse on educational reform and student academic achievement. In order to encourage the intellectual discourse that will possibly bring about change, other entities, such as individuals, groups and organizations, must get involved. One national organization that stepped up to the plate to address the need for educational reform is the I, Too, Care Movement, which created the concept behind the I, Too, Care Charitable Foundation.

The I, Too, Care Charitable Foundation aims to scholarize (educate beyond proficiency) American K–12 students by improving educational opportunities and ensuring that all students leaving secondary school are prepared for college or technical training and the workforce. While it offers scholarships, several of the foundation’s initiatives are largely focused on enriching students’ K–12 experiences.

The foundation recognizes that parenting is the most important and demanding endeavor one could assume. Parents are the first teachers a child will come to know, and the home is the first learning environment. The endeavor should be purposeful, systematic and curriculum driven. Successful students have supportive families who actively participate in their intellectual growth and development. If the parent teaches what is valued by learning institutions, then the child will experience educational success.

Educational success does not occur by happenstance. It comes from what we deem continuance and continuity. Continuance theory is the theory that schools function best as an extension of family, academic and social values. When they mesh, the student has an easier transition and a more rewarding academic experience. Continuity theory states that as the child progresses, the family educational, cultural and social values must keep pace. The I, Too, Care Charitable Foundation ensures the continuance and continuity between the family, school and communi-

ty through the Two Generations of Progress program, which allows all the adults in a child’s life to collaborate with industry professionals to keep abreast of the latest trends in education. All colloquia, conferences and workshops are led by experts representing a variety of fields and are designed with parents, administrators, teachers and community stakeholders in mind.

The organizers of the I, Too, Care Movement and cofounders of the I, Too, Care Charitable Foundation are leaders in their respective fields of endeavor and associated with Alpha Sigma Boulé. Archousa Bullock is an expert in K–12 education, differentiated education, multicultural education, curriculum and instruction and leadership development. Archon Thomas H. Watkins, Jr., is a major contributor to education, lecturer, publisher and chief executive officer of the Challenge Group. Archon Melvin I. Douglass, Ph.D., is an authority in early, secondary and higher education, purpose-centered education, multicultural education, social studies and educational, urban education, curriculum and teaching, organizational administration and supervision, African-American life and development, and anthropology and archaeology.

The organizers’ campaign goal is to raise \$15 million for the I, Too, Care Charitable Foundation in order to help ensure that the educational system in underserved communities educates and does not intimidate; that it scholarizes and does not victimize. I, Too, Care Charitable Foundation can assist with turning things around for K–

12 students by encouraging them to display what I refer to as the “twice as good syndrome.” If students evince the syndrome proudly, they will study twice as hard to improve their academic skills and ranking in the world.

This article was originally published on the *Boule Journal’s* Winter 2018 issue, Vol. 82, #4.

Archon Melvin Isadore Douglass is a Past Sire Archon of Alpha Sigma Boulé and a William Montague Cobb Scholar. He has earned degrees from the following universities: Vincennes, Tuskegee, Morgan State, New York, Columbia and Harvard.

Have an Opinion? Let us Know

letters@wschronicle.com



FIND YOUR STYLE AT AFFORDABLE PRICES

STOP BY FOOD LION AND PICK UP YOUR
HAIR STYLING PRODUCTS TODAY!



available in select stores

FOOD LION