

Overhauling American education

By Hugh B. Price
SPECIAL TO THE POST

We're not doing a very good job of educating our children. Yet a public debate has been raging for years over such questions as: "What should our children learn in school?" and "Should we have national academic standards?"

On the surface, it would seem that the answers would be yes to both questions. Some 80 percent of the American public and teachers reportedly think we should make our schools stronger and more equal with reforms.

But inside and outside the educational establishment there are entrenched bureaucracies that resist change on political or ethical grounds. Meanwhile, our students lag behind France, Germany, Japan, Denmark and several other countries in academic achievement.

I attended the 1996 National Education Summit in upstate New York hosted by governors and corporate leaders who sought to grapple with the questions and problems of establishing educational standards.

The legislators were skeptical at attempts to set national standards, but promised to set higher goals for their students over the next two years. Corporate representatives said they would give preference to states with the higher academic standards when making decisions on hiring, expanding or relocating their businesses. Governors and corporate leaders are to be applauded for their efforts.

It makes good sense to have corporations make it clear what sort of general educational proficiencies students must have to make them employable. The summit contributed to developing an understanding of the need to have some common statements of standards and proficiencies.

However, it did not get to the critical question involved in lifting people to those standards. It's one thing to set standards and design testing mechanisms to see if students can reach them. It's quite another to organize schools and to reach the parents so they can provide students with support in the homes so they can meet those standards.

The education of African American children is of critical importance to the National Urban League. Children growing up in the inner city are being cheated of the education that will be so crucial to their success. There's little mystery about how to better educate poor children. School reformers and dedicated teachers have shown it can be done with high expectations, challenging material and flexible, instructional techniques.

But this effective teaching by motivated teachers occurs mostly in isolated classrooms, seldom permeating entire districts. That's because districts aren't genuinely committed to reform nor have they equipped their principals and teachers to meet the challenges.

I believe that what is missing is not the way to change, but the will. We need concerted outside pressure from parents and community groups to prevail on the school system to improve the education of our inner city children.

I see organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, fraternities, sororities, churches and other groups joining with the Urban League in mobilizing parents and community leaders to become more sophisticated and insistent consumers of education for their children.

Neighborhood by neighborhood, house by house we have to help parents in inner city communities understand, in layman's terms, precisely

A crusade to do what's right and moral

By Michael Sessions
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

In an interview with radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh, Larstella (Star) Parker did not hesitate to condemn community leaders for their role in inciting their followers to be unlawful: "... I have two girls, and I tell them what it takes to be successful in life. But after the L.A. riot, they had to witness our legislators and some pastors coming out to protect the criminals. They watched me struggle to piece my little business back together. I had employees - young men who go to Bible study Wednesday nights, who had never been in a gang or taken drugs all their lives - and I had to let them go. My daughters watched me have to fire them because I could no longer keep them on, while Congresswoman Maxine Waters is running gangsters

out to Washington, patting them on the back, telling them how they're victims of society ... Jesse Jackson is saying 'desperate people do desperate things' after they burned down our neighbors. The Koreans were supplying our communities with goods and services that no one else was. Yet they burned them down, and then justified it. What message does this send to my daughters? What education is my teenager getting from this madness?"

Shortly after these riots, Parker founded the Coalition on Urban Affairs to inform, impact and influence Black America with a political, social and economic agenda rooted in moral absolutes. Prior to becoming active in her community, Parker lived more than three years on AFDC as a single mother in Los Angeles, without a dime in her pocket -- refusing to take any more income from

the local welfare office despite being unemployed for three months - Parker founded N.F.T.A. Christian Magazine in 1984 after returning to college and receiving a B.S. in Marketing from Woodbury University. NFTA now works with more than 100 pastors, 30,000 church members, and 500 local business owners in the Los Angeles area

The 1992 Los Angeles riots marked a watershed in the emergence of new voices in the black community. The evident self-destruction of the riots sparked many people to start to speak out against those who chose to riot and speak to the concerns of small business owners and everyday citizens who seek protection from criminal activity. Moreover, these new voices in the black community put forth a new vision on how the condition of our inner cities has reached such a crisis point. These new leaders explain that the root

causes of many social problems in urban areas is attributable to the absence of moral examples and absolutes, rather than just external factors or material concerns such as racism or poverty. Emerging black leaders point to the sad irony that during past chapters in black American history when racism was more prevalent and black family incomes much lower than they are now, the current mayhem of pathology was not as serious. Specifically, the new leadership points to government policy as a culprit in undermining Black America's traditional conservative values of self-sufficiency, self-restraint and marriage. As spoken by community activist Star Parker, "Conservatism and liberalism are the two ideologies vying to define the causes and solutions for the devastating pathologies plaguing our communities. Liberals respond

with affirmative action quotas and job training programs, while conservatives back changing moral attitudes and radically reforming welfare and the public educational system."

Star continues: "There are two main reasons I reject the liberal argument that stricter affirmative action laws and government-subsidized job training programs will remedy the welfare crisis affecting Black Americans. Number one, I believe that affirmative action has significantly hindered the economic potential of Black Americans by de-emphasizing entrepreneurial empowerment, which prevents Black Americans from developing a financial foundation. Rather than just talk about these problems, Star Parker is doing something about them.

MICHAEL SESSIONS is a syndicated columnist for the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

Overcoming fear not impossible

By Junious Ricardo Stanton
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Freedom fighter and the first President of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah once said, "The secret to life is to know no fear." The Dictionary of Psychology defines the word "fear" as: "A strong emotional reaction involving subjective feelings of unpleasant agitation and desire to flee and hide and accompanied by widespread sympathetic activity." Fear is a reaction to a specific present danger, anxiety to an anticipated danger. Phobia is a persistent irrational fear.

All of us at one time or another have been paralyzed by fear and dread. Whether it was stage fright, fear of a physical examination, confronting an adversary, strange noises or shadows on the wall at night. We all know what it feels like to be petrified by fear on one level or another. Suppose you are the type of person that is afraid all the time. Afraid of life, afraid to die, afraid of failure, afraid of success. What makes you so fearful, full of fear? How can you expect to accomplish anything great in life if you are afraid all the time? Is there a cure for fear, trepidation and timidity? Yes; the solution lies in controlling your mind.

Remember the definition stated fear is an emotional reaction. All emotions (energy in motion) are the direct result of our thinking, our cognitive processes that help us perceive and define the world about us. Unlike years ago, most situations Africans in America face are not life threatening. Yes, there is a degree of danger and uncertainty to living, especially with the mendicidal pathology rampant in our communities. But it is nowhere near as bad as during the holocaust of slavery or post-reconstruction!

There is no need for us to be in a constant state of agitation, or in the fight or flight mode. If things are not to our liking, we have an obligation to change them by first changing ourselves and our attitudes about them. Notice also that the definition refers to subjective feelings of unpleasantness. Subjective means individual interpretation. For example, when we were children, we might have been afraid of a strange noise. The adults knew it was only the wind causing the house to creak, they weren't afraid. Their interpretation and understanding was different from ours.

The point I'm attempting to make is this:

We have a choice. We can choose not to be afraid. We can choose confidence; con meaning 'with,' fide meaning 'faith.' We can choose to walk with faith - faith in our ability to see and understand things right. Like the difference between confident, knowing adults and ignorant, fearful children.

Even when confronted with real danger (not a perceived challenge to our egos or social status), our systems have the ability to prepare us to confront the danger or flee. If we begin to train ourselves not to panic, but wait and examine the situation confidently, we will be in a better position to deal with it. We can not think or respond intelligently in a state of panic or irrational fear. The greatest boost to our confidence is the knowledge and assurance that we are not alone! There is a magnificent power within us that is greater than any challenge we might face - a power wiser, stronger and more resourceful than any situation we will ever encounter, even a potentially life threatening one. This is true, but you must believe and have confidence in it. Remember: Your perceptions are subjective. Two people can experience the same situation and respond in totally different ways because of their perception of it, their personality and other factors. I am not suggesting throwing caution to the winds, so to speak, but I am saying you don't have to be afraid. Many people are anxious, upset and nervous about anticipated events. We are "awfulizing" - picturing in our minds things that have not happened. We're envisioning the worst. Stop it! Use your mind and imagination to generate confidence images of success, healing, and prosperity.

Stop projecting your fears into every situation. Project confidence instead. We all have problems. Life is full of them. We must realize we have the where-with-all to surmount and transcend our problems when we use our minds correctly. This is not a philosophy of mind over matter! It is about focusing your thoughts and concentrating so the resulting emotions (energy in motion) are positive and eustressful (the good kind of stress), instead of fearful and distressing.

A wise man once admonished his followers during a time of uncertainty: "Let not your hearts be troubled neither be afraid. 'All of us have the power to eschew fear.'"

JUNIOUS RICARDO STANTON is a syndicated columnist.

Egypt: The ancient homeland of man

By Conrad Worrill
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Until recently, there had been a scholarly debate among European intellectuals, and joined by some blacks, on what they referred to as the peopling of ancient Egypt.

What this question really posed was this: Who were the ancient Egyptians? Were they black, white, mulatto, etc.? This issue has been at the core of European history or better yet European historiography (the science of how history is written) for more than 200 years. This framework of European hegemony over the history of the world has had a devastating impact on African people and the African mind. It is in this context that we understand the intellectual devastating of the European conceptualization of the world

order. Let me use renown African thinker and scholar Dr. Jacob Carruthers in a paper he wrote on the "Race of Ancient Egyptians" in helping clarify this subject. It gives us the insights we need to understand in this regard.

Dr. Carruthers observes that "The doctrine of white supremacy was launched by philosophers like David Hume who asserted in 1749, 'I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites.' This position was expressed in a different context by Montesquieu about the same time."

We are guided by Dr. Carruthers when he explains, "In the Spirit of Laws, Montesquieu asserted it is impossible for us to suppose these creatures to be men, because allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not

Christians. Montesquieu was justifying the enslavement of Africans, which was one of the major reasons for inventing the doctrine of white supremacy."

Diop points out that Herodotus "after relating his eyewitness account informing us that the Egyptians were blacks, then demonstrated, with rare honesty (for a Greek), that Greece borrowed from Egypt all elements of her civilization even the cult of gods, and that Egypt was the cradle of civilization."

Our scholars, thinkers and researchers should never again raise the question of who were the ancient Egyptians. Clearly they were black people. This question has been resolved.

CONRAD WORRILL is chairman of the National Black United Front in Chicago.

Letters to The Post

Government won't create equality for all

Racial parity is a worthy and noble goal, but your April 25 issue was filled with articles on exactly how not to achieve it.

First, it is hypocrisy, not political astuteness, to declare Harvey Gantt to be the black candidate while accusing whites of racism when you imagine them anointing Charlie Sanders or Jesse Helms as the white candidate. That is why Helms almost tied the Republican record in a statewide election against Gantt in 1990. Blacks may be a large enough segment of Democrats to influence a primary, but in a general election, no candidate can win statewide by running as the black candidate. Black candidates can win, as Gantt did as mayor, in a predominately white electorate, but only by convincing people that he represents everyone, without regard to race.

Second, regardless of what Mel Watt or Maxine Waters say, economic parity can and should never come by government fiat. As long as black teenagers continue to reject educational advancement, they will always be unprepared and unqualified for the modern workplace. As long as two-thirds of black babies are born out of wedlock, no government program will ever save the black community's social ills. Affirmative action will never lift black people out of those conditions that they create for themselves. Only responsibility for self as a community value will change those things, and that can never be gained by confiscating it from someone else.

This is the real harm of affirmative action. While it divides communities and robs people of recognition for their personal achievements, affirmative action is particularly destructive in that it glosses over real problems thus sustaining them and creates a mirage of success by confiscating it from someone else.

-Chris Cole
Charlotte

Taxpayers put up with government folly

We, the American taxpayers have gotten, are getting and will continue to get screwed by the members of the United States Senate and United States House by allowing them to lie to us, set their own standards and morals and break the laws that other citizens have to honor. Some recent examples are Strom Thurmond and his assault of a flight attendant on an airplane.

Had this been the average citizen, they would have been met by the FBI and charged immediately with a federal crime. But a U.S. Senator can break the law and get away with it. Perhaps the citizens of South Carolina will solve Thurmond's ego for him and send him home.

The first of April, Rep Harold Ford of Tennessee announced he was leaving Congress after 22 years, clearing the way for his son, who is still a law student in college to claim his father's position as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Former House Speaker Rosty was convicted and is being sent to jail for stealing taxpayers money. Hell, why should we feel sorry for him, after all he is now a thief with an excellent pension he's going to collect from the citizens of America while killing time in a cell.

Americans should be really truthful with themselves and admit why our Congressional leaders will not ever pass term limits, why they will keep taking PAC money, why they abuse the laws they make, why they lie to us and why they can state at re-election time "that they need 2 years more or 6 years more to finish what they have started." Greed has now set in and they have become legends within their own mind. They are now above the law, not to be questioned as they now realize that the majority of voters are so damn stupid that they won't question them. Thus, they can pull a Jesse Helms and tell the News & Observer newspaper that he is so busy in the Senate that he doesn't have time to answer any questions. Jesse has been there too long as he has now lost contact with the voters.

Yes America, our forefathers would turn over in their graves, if they could see the clowns that are slowly but sure destroying the Constitution and forcing us into their new world order that they are leading us into. It's time for each of us to wake up, stop this destruction of the United States and elect leaders that represent us and not themselves.

-Vernon Hill
Atlantic Beach, N.C.

What's on your mind?

Send your comments to The Charlotte Post, P.O. Box 30144, Charlotte, N.C. 28230 or fax (704) 342-2160. You can also use E-mail - charpost@cht.mindspring.com

All correspondence must include a daytime telephone number for verification.