

Stand up for rights of at-risk CMS students

Post article puts spotlight on manipulation of dropouts

By Richard Hanners
SPECIAL TO THE POST

It is with great sadness that I write concerning the recent article in the Charlotte Post concerning "Closing the books on at-risk students" in highly regarded Myers Park High School.

As a school psychologist in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, I along with thousands of others within the education profession, have worked tirelessly in order to uplift the "at-risk" students in Mecklenburg County. According to the Post article, the past principal, Bill Anderson, and others at Myers Park have deliberately coerced students into dropping out, prevented them from returning, and then misused the very reporting system designed to prevent our students from dropping out by falsely coding the reasons for their leaving school.

There can be no doubt that the CMS system has provided increasingly higher qualitative education to students for the past several years. One can only wonder what would provoke administrators and staff to pervert a process in which others have toiled for so many years. Indeed, many sacrifices have been made to uplift our children and protect their God-given rights to educated, productive lives.

There are still administrators of school that choose to do the right thing and should be commended. That the documented actions of Dr. Anderson and others were unethical, immoral and probably criminal certainly goes without argument, but we, as citizens and educators of Mecklenburg County, must search within ourselves for other conclusions. What conditions contribute to the darker, self-serving part in some of us that this situation exposes?

Survival comes to mind, as do monetary rewards (bonuses for administrators and teachers are awarded for low drop-out rates and high test scores with state and federal funds.) Reputation and acclaim have long been motivations among some to justify any means to attain them. Perhaps there is no one answer and pre-existing conditions, such as stress, could never justify throwing our children away. Whatever causes exists, we as employees, citizens and students deserve better, more humane treatment from our — educational leaders.

That there has been no outrage over or even reaction to this article is puzzling and, in the mind of this writer, a contributing cause itself. Do we read about abuses such as this and not care? Do other news organizations within our great city not read each other's journalistic reporting? Do not our representatives on the school board read the front page of our newspapers? We have a great paper, The Observer, and television stations affiliated with media giants that could benefit from reading from The Post, a brave, privately owned paper, designed to reach out to the African-American community within our metropolitan area.

This article, in the opinion of this writer, reveals a present and continuing danger to all of our children and calls out for social justice. What else needs to be said? Our "at-risk" children have suffered life-long wounds with which we all should empathize as parents, educators and most importantly, human beings. Why are we not willing to react and protect our children from desperate people, whoever they are, who do them harm?

Is it not time for our newspapers to show their greatness and report to the people in Mecklenburg County and throughout North Carolina what the Charlotte Post has begun?

If not our journalists, then who?

Do not our schools exist for the success of our students rather than the success and advancement of administrators?

RICHARD E. HANNERS, Ed.D. lives and works in Charlotte.

Our "at-risk" children have suffered life-long wounds with which we all should empathize as parents, educators and most importantly, human beings.

Happenstance forces black America into the mainstream

During America's racial segregation era some black mothers taught their sons the danger in having love affairs with white females because once the interracial relationship became public the black male could expect to get hung for rape to preserve the public image of the white female.

On the other hand, today as the racial segregation psyche continues to be displaced by racial integration an unexpected consequence is that black females find themselves in a very competitive market for the available mainstream caliber black male spouses. High black male incarceration rates coupled with their low educational attainment and the U.S. Supreme Court knocking down the miscegenation laws decriminalizing interracial relationships have helped to diminish the pool of marrying aged black males for indigenous black families.

Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia, offers a prospectus on today's growing white female pursuit of interracial marriage with black males. "African American men are 2.5 times more likely to be married to a white spouse and 3.3 times more likely to be cohabitating with a white person, as compared to their African American female counterparts.

Research yields that 7 percent of married African American men are with white wives and 15 percent of African American men cohabit with white women."

We get a feel for the impact of this white female competitive threat on high potential black males when we ponder the August 2005, Census 2000 Special Reports, "We the People: Blacks in the United States" by Jesse D. Mc Kinnon and Claudette E. Bennett reporting on college graduate black males. "The proportion of black men (13 percent) with a bachelor's degree was one-half that of men in the total population (26 percent). The proportion of black women (15 percent) with a bachelor's degree was two-thirds that of women in the total population (23 percent)."

Mc Kinnon and Bennett continue, "In 2000, a higher proportion of black women (30 percent) than black men (20 percent) was in management, professional, and related occupations. A higher proportion of black men (28 percent) than black women (10 percent) was in production, transportation, and material moving jobs. The highest concentrations of employed black men were in these two occupation groups."

Yet their black marriage statistics are troubling. 31.2 percent of black females were married and 39.7 percent were never married. 41.5 percent of black males were married and 41.5 percent were never married. Clearly marriage is an exception instead of the rule for black females. Hence, one might expect black females to become very protective of their marriages or relationships.

In July 2006, I chatted with six marrying aged professional black women in western Alabama to understand their concept of marriage and relationships. These ladies made it clear that they found male players to be totally unacceptable for partners or spouses.

These black ladies stunned me by giving vivid depictions of what bodily harm they would do to a man attempting to be a player while in a relationship or marriage with them. It was bone-chilling to listen to their proposed aggressive actions such as mutilating players. Since the reputation for revengefulness of a scorned woman is well known, I took these ladies' comments very seriously and I worried about the foolish chaps who might underestimate their resolve.

I asked one young lady who appeared to be in her late thirties or early forties what she would do if her husband walked in on her in a compromising position. She responded, "He should understand I don't want you anymore." She did not expect this man to take aggressive action similar to what they had been espousing during much of the conversation. The other women quickly corrected her by pointing out that she should expect a similar bodily harm from her spouse or boyfriend as to what she had been espousing.

A young black fellow, in his early 30s, joined in the conversation. When this young fellow attempted to offer the male prospectus on relational deviance these black women turned like a school of piranhas and they mercilessly tore into his positions. This young chap was forced to retreat out of the conversation.

I stood my ground even when these ladies aggressively challenged my every point. I decided to throw these black ladies a curve to put a fissure in their strategy of unified female attacks on male positions. I said, "I always loved nerdy girls. My wife of 42 years is a nerd. I needed someone that I can learn from in a conversation. I abhor bimboes."

They first attempted to question my spousal selection, and then they told me they respected my ability to stand my ground. These ladies also said my wife was a very lucky lady to have someone to love her for such a long time.

SHERMAN MILLER is a syndicated columnist.

Connect with The Post

Send letters to The Charlotte Post, P.O. Box 30144 Charlotte, NC 28230 or e-mail editorial@thecharlottepost.com. We edit for grammar, clarity and space. Include your name and daytime phone number.

Letters and photos will not be returned by mail unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Working poor: Beware federal minimum wage hike proposal

Last month's news of the U.S. House of Representatives mulling a hike in the minimum wage before they left for August recess filled me with much hope.



MARC MORIAL

Just two days earlier in my keynote address kicking off the National Urban League's 2006 annual conference, I had called upon Congress to raise the wage as a small but symbolic step to close the economic chasm that exists between whites and minorities in this nation.

It was as if Congress was reading my mind until I read the fine print. It was not enough for U.S. House lawmakers — with fall midterm elections on the horizon — to approve a raise in the current minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour — or \$10,712 a year for full-time workers, which is slightly above the poverty line for singles but well below the roughly \$20,000 threshold for a family of four.

They had to sweeten the deal by incorporating a hike to \$7.25 an hour over three years into legislation significantly scaling back the estate tax — the so-called death tax — to 30 percent and shrinking the pool of estates subject to it. The resulting measure won approval by a vote of 230 to 180. It failed in the Senate.

Under current law, estates are subject to an estate tax of 46 percent above \$2 million for individuals and \$4 million for couples. Under the House-passed bill, they would be subject to a 30-percent tax above \$5 million for individuals and \$10 million for couples.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the U.S. Congress has enacted legislation lowering the estate-tax burden in eight of nine past years since last raising the minimum wage nearly a decade ago. If this year's proposal is enacted, it will only benefit 8,200 very large estates, the center predicts.

Even the second wealthiest man in the world — Bill Gates — opposes the estate tax. Gates along with philanthropist George Soros and nearly 2,200 millionaires who are subject to the tax lent their signatures to a Call to Preserve the Estate Tax sponsored by Responsible Wealth, a project of the Boston-based nonprofit United for a Fair Economy. That group also found in a survey of 910 registered voters conducted earlier this year that 57 percent opposed a repeal of the estate tax.

Just what kind of toll a repeal of the estate tax will exact upon the federal deficit runs the gamut. The Joint Committee on Taxation projects that it will cost \$38.3 billion per year over seven years, while the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities sets it at \$100 billion a year over 10 years.

There's no doubt that a raise to \$7.25 an hour will lift some of the working poor out of poverty. An employee currently earning minimum wage 40 hours a week will receive a nearly 50 percent annual raise to \$15,080, which is nearly \$5,500 above the poverty line for individuals and slightly above that for families of three.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 1.9 million Americans earn minimum wage or below. The majority of them — 1.4 million — fall under. Furthermore, another 4.1 million or making above the current wage but below the proposed one stand to benefit, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Where the most progress has been made on the minimum wage is at the state level. Just recently, the state legislature in Massachusetts raised the wage to \$8 an hour, the highest in the nation, in spite of a veto by Gov. Mitt Romney that was overridden.

And, according to a recent New York Times report, there are also more than a dozen states, including Michigan, Arkansas and Missouri, that have already raised their minimum wage above \$5.15 an hour or have ballot initiatives in the works for the upcoming November elections.

Draining revenue from the U.S. treasury while at the same time giving the working poor a raise sounds like voodoo economics to me. This is just another example of legislators' inability to seriously address economic disparities between Whites and minorities in this nation.

MARC M. MORIAL is president and CEO of the National Urban League

THE BOONDOCKS

by Aaron McGruder

