



Education Is Power

By Thomas E. Wilson, Ph.D.

"School is a drag!" - "I can hardly wait to graduate!" - "Twelve years of schooling is enough for me!" - "I'm getting a job so that I can quit school!" - "No college for me, I'm getting married!"

These are remarks often made in boredom, disgust, rebellion, etc. The attitude that they all have in common is to bring education to a quick halt. The issue is far less simple than that. Education continues, in one form or another, for as long as we live. Much of it is done independently and is necessary because of the need to function more efficiently.

Once we enter the job market, there is a continuing need to advance or to at least be able to perform the job more efficiently. Efficiency saves energy and time, and makes work more pleasant. Therefore, one often seeks out "tips" from trade magazines, newspapers, TV programs, workshops, seminars, supervisors, co-workers, and even from casual acquaintances. This gathering of information is a type of educative experience.

Advancement in our jobs depends to a large extent, on how much education we have and how well we can apply the education we have attained.

It has become the common thing for many of our Black students to become disgusted with school and become our "drop-outs." These young people will get menial jobs, buy a car, some good clothes, and make an erroneous assumption they have "arrived." The society in which they have been brought up demands much more, and eventually they realize too late that life would have been much fuller for them if only they had continued their studies and had put into their education the effort that would have provided them with the tools for making a better living.

We as Black parents must share some of the responsibility for the high drop-out rate among our youths. Several other minority groups insist that their young people at least finish high school. It appears that we as Black parents owe it to our children and the young people to insist that they study and get from the educational system what is rightfully theirs. It is up to us as Black parents to first recognize the value of an education ourselves, and then to instill within our youth the idea that we can improve ourselves through making good use of our time while in school.

One of the methods that we as Black parents can use to help our youth understand the importance of an education is to return to school ourselves. If at all possible we could take one course to get ourselves back into the school spirit. The school system and the Community College together with the University offer classes for adults at all levels. These classes run the gamut from rug-weaving to graduate level courses. They may be secured for a minimal price.

It appears feasible that if our youth see us as parents interested in school, they too will become interested. We may have to set the example.

Another way that we as Black parents can help our young people is to make sure that there are places and materials for proper study. Our Black students deserve the best education we can possibly give them.

Become interested in what is going on at your child's school. Most administrators in this county welcome parents who come to school to see how they may help with the education of their youngsters. Spend some time with your child's teachers, ask questions, and see to it that our Black students get a fair deal. Without being obnoxious, make sure that the teachers know that you support them, and that you also support your child. Trust the teachers, and build trust in the child. See to it that the teachers trust you.



Benjamin L. Hooks

FCC
Commissioner

Folks of my generation (I was 51 this year) didn't talk back to our radiosets in early years. It never occurred to us that we could. And there were no TV sets in those days. Even today, when times have drastically changed, most black folks find it hard to talk back (protest) to the tube or radio.

In the early years radio was, to all intents and purposes, lily-white. Blacks and minorities, then, were bombarded in communities throughout the U.S. with programming that either ignored them completely or insulted them as comic buffoons or persons with a criminal bent.

Protesting would have done little good, even providing blacks knew where to carry their complaints. The Federal Communications Commission was the regulatory agency with jurisdiction, but it was a far different agency in those days, just as the climate in which it operated was radically different.

So if the idea of complaining about the kinds of programming beamed into the black communities or the exclusion of blacks from meaningful employment in radio occurred, it was dismissed immediately and properly so. For there was no reason to believe that anything of a positive nature would be forthcoming as a result of such complaints.

Thus, we suffered in silence through all those early years of gratuitous insults in programming and flagrant exclusion from hiring at stations that were by law licensed to program in "the interest convenience and necessity" of their listening audiences. The presumption is, of course, that if employment is representative, programming will be also.

In the late 1940's and early 50's, as television began to take hold and siphon away some radio audiences, radio began to look around for hitherto overlooked elements on its listening audiences and suddenly discovered black folks. Thus, a few white owned stations made the plunge and began to program blacks.

Entranced by hearing on radio for the first time positive things about ourselves, hearing radio speak of our concerns and air programs about our churches, social clubs, schools, lodges, athletic programs, theatrical and nightclub figures and carrying news of our births, marriages and deaths, we gratefully turned out white radio and zoomed in on black-oriented radio.



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The programs of news and public affairs supplemented the weekly fund of knowledge so valiantly circulated among us for decades by the Black Press, and so both sides -- white station owners who took the plunge were better off because the gamble paid off handsomely in dollars and cents. Many became millionaires.

And for blacks it was a new day. Because for once in our lifetime, radio began to look at us as human beings deserving courteous and respectful treatment. It was a glorious day. Yet I look back on it as a sort of mixed blessing. For this was also the time when the black deejay made his hip entry and the era of jive talk and groovey sounds on the airways was launched.

And far too many stations programmed too much of this finger poppin' mindless music; catering to the lowest common denominator, it seemed. Unfortunately, some of that era is still with us. Recently a group of blacks representing 56 black owned radio stations and two black TV stations, met in Washington, D.C., under the sponsorship of the National Association of Broadcasters, an organization of which most were members.

During their three-day affair, they dealt with such urgent topics as how to secure national advertising for black radio, programming, measuring black audiences, etc. It was a noteworthy meeting, and I praised them for having the foresight to come together.

I reminded them that the nagging problem of discjockeys who fill the ears, minds and very souls of our young people with frothy finger poppin' music and mindless jive talk, is still too prevalent.

Most of us have seen the youths of our cities, wired for sound, snapping their fingers on buses enroute to school, or larger youths, packing high flat radio-recorders, dressed platform shoes, ditty bopping down the streets, blasting the eardrums of innocent folks in stores, restaurants or on public conveyances.

It is not enough to say we have it made now that blacks have acquired some broadcast properties, if all black radio is/or become a chocolate-covered replica of the mindless music and vulgar jive talk palmed off on us by some white-owned, black-oriented stations. I'm not putting all white-owned, black-oriented stations down. For they did give us our first positive programming. And even today, many of these stations strive to bring excellent and relevant programming to black listeners.

But black stations must be even more vigilant in their programming than others. For with the privilege of owning the station comes the responsibility to see that the programming they air nurtures the mind as well as the spirit of our communities, especially our young who are our most precious possession.

"YOU'VE GOT AN HOUR COMING" -- Shell Slayton, Miss Greater Los Angeles Press Club, reminds everyone to turn their clocks back one hour to mark the return of Standard time which officially begins at 2:00 a.m., Sunday, October 31, 1976.