

A Series: THE BLACK FAMILY AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE 80's

PART VI - OUR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION IN THE '80S

By Maudra Jones.



Maudra Jones

text, please bear with me.

I recall that in writing that speech, I had some very real problems with what I called "Begging The Question" on the importance of education. My frustration came with a question to myself, and that was: "Why are we still trying to convince our people of the simple fact that education is important when history tells us that our forefathers risked their

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At a time of increasing national attention and controversy, this treatment of the subject of education will be confined to a general discussion of history, current issues and implications for the Black family. This series, however, will in no way reach the depth or magnitude of contributions made over the past several years by Dr. Thomas E. Wilson, Professor of Education at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, in his article "Education Is Power". I would, therefore, commend to all parents and educators, Dr. Wilson's invaluable "Guide" to parent education, which should be clipped and preserved as a ready reference for study and action.

Upon approaching this point in my discussions, I was compelled to "Dust Off" a speech on "The Importance Of Education", which I have not had an opportunity to deliver (for reasons beyond my control). So, if you are among those with whom I have shared the printed

very lives to educate and to become educated? What happened? When did we lose our stride, and why?

I began my speech with the question that James Farmer posed in an article published in the American Education Journal during the '70s. He asked: "Why is it that the passion for which education on the part of Blacks, was like a consuming fire during pre-civil War days and even greater after, no longer exists? That burning question led me to take another look at history. In so doing, I was reminded that the history of Black education has at every stage reflected the conditions of Blacks in the nation's society.

Pre-Revolution there were schools in the Northern Colonies providing rudimentary education for Blacks, geared chiefly toward Bible reading as ultimately many of these schools became part of the public school system and inferior to those attended by whites. Yet as the Revolution accelerated demands by



Then....

Blacks for emancipation, so it also stirred the hunger for education by Blacks. Blacks both free and slave viewed learning as the road to freedom and eventual equality. But it also stirred resistance to Black education on the part of those who

Black churches in woods. When schools were found they were broken up only to be started again and to survive their martyrs.

That passion for education was indeed a consuming fire during those days. All who could read felt a com-

"EDUCATION IS THE GUIDANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL TOWARDS A COMPREHENSION OF THE ART OF LIFE: AND BY THE ART OF LIFE, I MEAN THE MOST COMPLETE ACHIEVEMENT OF VARIED ACTIVITY EXPRESSING THE POTENTIALITIES OF THAT LIVING CREATURE IN THE FACE OF ITS ACTUAL ENVIRONMENT."

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

disagreed with its desirability. Thus education of slaves in the post Revolutionary War South was largely by stealth-an act of civil disobedience. The teaching of Blacks came to be forbidden by law - penalties were harsh and punishment extreme. Yet, teaching went on in barns, in

pulsion to teach others their priceless skills. And Black education was more than a self-help operation. During Reconstruction, Northern teachers poured into the South with missionary zeal, Black churches and fraternal organizations also participated in the drive to educate. The



Ernest Crichlow

White Fence #2, acrylics on wood, 1970

....and Now

story is told that children, parents, grandparents and even great grandparents everybody flocked to the classroom - small

(To be continued next week.)

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