

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

## PART VII - CHILDREN AND THE 1983-84 SCHOOL YEAR: THE QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE

*"America's schools are not only failing to prepare our youth for the rapid changes of tomorrow; they are failing even to maintain the standards of yesterday . . . ."*

The Presidential Commission on Educational Excellence

by Maudra Jones

More than a decade ago, the Silberman report on the nation's public schools drew nationwide attention and was felt by some educators to have major impact on educational debate in the United States. Reporting the result of a three-and-a-half year study commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation titled "Crisis In The Classroom," Charles E. Silberman found that "most schools not only fail to educate children adequately, but also are oppressive, grim and joyless." The study report was termed an unusually outspoken indictment of the nation's public schools. Specific recommendations were made, in the report, for a "radical reordering of the classroom. . ."; examples of successful reform were cited and hope was found in the belief that change within the system is possible.

It was Dr. Gerald Durlley, who cautioned in the 70's that we are losing the potential for educating the next generation. The voices of Black educators were being raised throughout the country signalling the fact that education often fails because it is a reflection of our society and calling for the serious commitment of all to become concerned and involved in re-shaping the education process in our nation's public schools.

Norman Cousins wrote in one of his essays in the late 70's:

"Education has failed to educate about education. It has failed to provide adequate understanding of the centrality of education in a creative society. Schools have somehow failed to get across the biggest truth of all about learning: that its purpose is to

unlock the human mind and to develop it into an organ capable of thought — conceptual thought, analytical thought, sequential thought . . . ."

In 1981, Newsweek Magazine published a Special Report titled "Why Public Schools Are Flunking," giving a clear and comprehensive picture of the state of public education in America.

Now in 1983 we read the statement published by the Presidential Commission on Educational Excellence, led by Gov. Jim Hunt of North Carolina:

"America's schools are not only failing to prepare our youth for the rapid changes of tomorrow; they are failing even to maintain the standards of yesterday. The condition of education in America today constitutes a crisis that requires our immediate and committed response."

The simple truth found in statements like these is that we have lost years in debate on the subject and made no significant gains in alleviating the causes of failure in our education system — for the benefit of all children and to the detriment of most Black children.

The case for excellence in education has been clearly made. What remains is the application of serious, total concern for a reality which threatens our nation's security — that reality is seen in the moral decay and the deteriorating quality of the nation's human resources. What remains is the application of our serious, total commitment to the quest for excellence on every level of family and community life — a commitment that is deep and abiding. Yes, "Hope springs



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eternal" in a decade which offers us the challenge and the opportunity to transform our educational system. Jesse Jackson's appeal for massive involvement and massive effort is one we should all take to heart — we have so much work to do. We must all become advocates of the PUSH for EXCELLENCE program.

We must begin by becoming informed and involved participants in

the current national campaign for education excellence. We must recognize and appreciate the value and meaning

charged with the following tasks:

"1. Development of an action plan for the improvement of education

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of the Governor's Commission on Education Excellence in our own state.

In every community, we must all become active participants in drawing Governor Richard Bryan's proposed "Blueprint for Educational Excellence in Nevada Public Schools. Nevada Public Schools" a blueprint "that will incur basic skills and education for a lifetime of learning in a rapidly changing world."

The governor's 16-member commission is

in grades K-12.

2. Creation of partnerships between the public schools and other segments of the community — especially the business community.

3. Examination of the resource base for schools, so that the existing resources are best used and additional resources produce the greatest added educational value.

4. Consideration of ways to enhance the profession of teaching so that the best teachers stay in teaching and good students enter the

profession.

5. Enhancement of the academic experience through more demanding academic requirements, a strengthened curricula and increased duration and intensity of learning time.

6. Examination of methods to assure quality, such as measurement of teacher performance, in addition to testing for minimum competency entrance requirements for higher education."

Let us answer the governor's call to the citizens of Nevada "to help formulate the direction our schools and children follow in the years ahead." Let us not waste any more years — let us valiantly take our places in this important process and become contributors to and designers of our children's future.

### RUMMAGE SALE AIDS ADOPTION GROUP

The United Methodist Women's Mission of Zion United Methodist Church will sponsor a Rummage Sale and Old-Fashioned Soul Food Dinner on Saturday, Sept. 24 at the church. The Rummage Sale will begin at 7 a.m. followed by the dinner sale beginning at noon in the church Dining Room. The Rummage Sale will be on the church parking lot. Items for the sale have been donated by Zion members and several local businesses.

This will be a day of good bargains for shoppers. The menu will consist of baked ham, fried chicken, candied

yams, black-eyed peas, salad, assorted desserts and several vegetables. A donation of \$3. will be required for the dinners.

The United Methodist Women's Mission will be raising money to contribute toward their church projects and to aid a local adoption group.

Mission members are supportive of the programs of M.A.M.A. (Members and Advocates for Minority Adoption) that help residents through the adoption process to become parents to abandoned children. The Mission members view this pro-

ject as an opportunity for them to support community programs and to assist children in need in our community.

The public is invited

to participate in this Rummage Sale and Soul Food Dinner to help support these worthy programs. Hours will be from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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