

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

by Maudra Jones

Our task is two-fold, as we begin the process of mobilizing for excellence in education — the struggle for excellence in education for Black Americans is both internal and external. The internal struggle belongs to us, because it is about us and our responsibilities as Black parents, educators, professionals, clergy and community. Hence, Jesse Jackson's admonition: "No one can save us from us for us but us . . ." We did it before, we can do it again — despite the societal forces that stand in the way. The same "tools" that have worked for us in the past represent our hope for the future — the "tools" that are found in strong family structures, extended family support, community spirit and togetherness, churches that are performance-oriented, are applying the teaching and philosophy of the Gospel to the daily, real-life situations of Black citizens. We must re-group, as Black people, to win the internal struggle to achieve educational excellence for our children.

We must rebuild the worn-down family and extended family structures, re-ignite and fan

the flame of community spirit and togetherness, re-establish the institutions that once existed in our churches, and as Black professionals, we must utilize our gifts and talents in supporting the quest for excellence in educating Black youth. We must mobilize for excellence on a total community level if we are to win the internal struggle to achieve excellence and attain equality and justice. Institutional change, as well as individual change, must be our goal.

The external struggle belongs to all Americans, because it is about an American System that is "failing to educate children adequately. . . ." Therefore, to win the external struggle for excellence in education, there must exist the total commitment and involvement of concerned individuals and groups, working together to counteract those social forces which have continued to affect our ability to provide adequate education for all our children.

To win the external struggle, we need a new social climate — one that will allow mutual respect and understanding to emerge among all groups of people, so that

the "blueprint for excellence" will be a "blueprint for change."

The ideals of freedom, justice, brotherhood and individual fulfillment have to become more than mere ideals — they must become living realities in the hearts of American people. This message comes through clearly in the Annual Report of the Pasadena Human Relations Committee published in 1974. Reaffirming its philosophy that "all citizens should have full participation in normal community life with the privileges and responsibilities attached thereto," the report stated:

"While laws have been written that also have these goals in mind, statutes alone are not sufficient to change the hearts of men." After all, it is people who really solve problems and affect change. It is that which is in the hearts and

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Annual Report
Pasadena Human Relations Committee, 1974

minds of people that determine the direction of education, equality and justice.

The problem of failing school systems in America is the problem of a whole people — a national problem beset

with prejudices, injustices and inequities. That is the true dimension of the education problem.

Addressing the subject "The Environment



Maudra Jones for Human Services in the 1980's" at the Annual Meeting of the Citizens Committee for Children in 1981, Alan Pifer recognized the implications of what is now being reported as the "Nation at Risk" (the report recently published by the National Commission on Excellence). Pifer said, then: "... the nation must

education and training role, Pifer stated, "The economic strength of the nation and its security in the troubled years from now until the end of the century will in the final analysis depend more than anything else on the

quality of its human resources, and equally its spirit, which in turn is a product of a sense of internal cohesion and the level of morale of the entire people." He asks the question: "Can the United States be as

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quality of the American people . . . how well educated we are, how healthy, how well-nourished, how well trained in science and technology and how strongly we feel indented with the society as a result of having had full access to its main stream."

Pifer called our attention to the young people in America who may never acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, where health is poor, who are malnourished, neglected and fall into delinquency and then crime. "All of these young people," he stated, "are going to be desperately needed — because the health, welfare and education of our children bear directly on the issue of our national security and defense capability." He makes the point, persuasively, that "a nation's security must also reflect the

strong as it must be if substantial portions of its citizens are inadequately educated or feel that they are being treated unjustly?"

Two years later the "answer" from President Reagan, as printed in a Washington (EP) report, was heard in a weekly broadcast from Camp David. The president told his radio audience: "It is time to face the truth . . . we must move forward again by returning sound principles that never failed us when we lived up to them. Can we not begin by welcoming God back in our schools and by setting an example for our children by striving to abide by His Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule?"

Therein lies the ultimate challenge — that of heeding our own Frederick Douglass' call to put democratic principles into practice.

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American Muslim Center To Hold "First Annual Pioneer's Day" Program

The American Muslim Mission (AMM) Center of Las Vegas will present its "First Annual Pioneer's Day" Program on Saturday, Oct. 8 at the A.D. Guy Center located at 817 No. "N" St., corner of Washington and Highland Aves., at 7 p.m. Guest speaker for the evening will be State Senator Joe Neal. Keynote Address will be delivered by Imam (Minister) Muhammad J. Abdullah. The theme will be "Let Us Save the Children."

There will be poetry readings, songs, entertainment and award pre-

sentations. The public is cordially invited. Donation for the affair is \$5 which is tax deductible. Dinner is included in the donation. Proceeds will go to the (AMM's) Building Fund.

For more information contact Bro. Mujahid A.K. Ramadan at (701) 6485678 or Sis. Wajeehah Amin at (702) 647-6248.

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY TO BE DISCUSSED

On Saturday, Oct. 8, a film will be shown on who decides Social Security Disability. The film will be shown at the United Way Building, 1055 E. Tropicana, Ste. 300. This film is being sponsored by Multiple Sclerosis Patient Services.

Social Security Disability has been under fire and this film will help

the public understand more of the problem. Various organizations in town have been invited.

Congressman Barbara F. Vucanovich, Congressman Harry Reid, Senator Chic Hecht and Senator Paul Laxalt have also been requested to attend or either send their representatives to answer questions.

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