

Education

Education Is Power

By THOMAS E. WILSON, PH.D.



Lerone Bennett once said that "He who controls images controls minds, and he who controls minds has little or nothing to fear from bodies. This is the reason why Black people are not educated or are miseducated in America. The system could not exist if it did not multiply discrimination. It is no accident that there is a blackout on the Black man's contribution to American society."

The American educational system has a dual purpose for educating Black children. The first is socialization into accepting the value system, history, and culture of Anglo-Americans. The second is education for economic productivity. Black children are treated like commodities who are imbued with skills, bought and sold on the labor market for the profit of the capitalists.

The educator in the struggle for liberation also has dual purposes for educating the oppressed. The two purposes of education for the liberator are education for struggle and education for survival.

Education for struggle has a consciousness-raising function for Black people. This facet of education tells us: who we are, who the enemy is, what he is doing to us, when to fight, when to stop fighting, what to struggle for, and what form the struggle must take.

Education for struggle is long range, because Black people must become prepared to make a contribution to a struggle that began centuries before they were

born and which will extend for centuries after their deaths.

Education for survival is the tooling function of education. As we struggle for self-determination, we must be prepared to survive in this system in which we find ourselves. Therefore, it is important to address the fact that Black children are not being effectively educated or are miseducated in the schools of this nation. Black children must achieve competency in mastering the tools of this culture if they are to survive.

When the American society attempts to come to grips with the difficulty it is facing in educating Black children, two solutions are considered. One solution is busing Black children to White suburbs to create a racial mixture in the schools. The assumption is that Black children's educational achievement will improve by their being educated alongside White children. The other solution is to bring compensatory education to schools where there is a high concentration of lower-income Black children. This is called "putting larger doses of the same medicine in a new bottle."

Neither of these solutions has been effective. First of all, the Black community objects to the implicit assumption of the first solution — that something about sitting next to a White child improves the educational achievement of a Black child. The second solution is no more creative. Most compensatory education programs begin

Throughout the South, it was generally illegal to educate slaves. But despite stringent regulations, many Blacks defied these laws by founding private schools in which to teach the slaves.

Daniel Payne was one such man. He was born a free Black in Charleston, South Carolina in 1811. He was a bishop of the AME church and when he was elected president of Wilberforce University, he was the first Black to receive that distinction.

Among his many accomplishments, Payne, at the age of 18, started a school. The school remained open for six years until the authorities forced him to close it. In the following excerpt from his autobiography, Payne explains his motivation for his self-education and the education of others.

with the assumption that Black children are inferior. It makes no difference whether that inferiority is attributed to genetics or culture. All cultures that do not conform to the patterns of the dominant Anglo-American pattern are considered deficient.

It is hypothesized that black children grow up in a distinct culture. Black children need an educational system that recognizes their strengths, their abilities, and their culture, and incorporates them into the learning process.

OUR GIANTS SPEAK

Daniel A. Payne
1811-1893

Part I of Four Parts

My first school was opened in 1829 in a house on Tradd Street occupied by one Caesar Wright. It consisted of his three children, for each of whom he paid me fifty cents a month. I also taught three adult slaves at night, at the same price, thus making my monthly income from teaching only three dollars. This was not sufficient to feed me, but a slave-woman, Mrs. Eleanor Parker, supplied many of my wants. I was happy in my humble employment, but at the end of the year I was so discouraged at the financial result, and by the remarks expressed by envious persons, that I decided to seek some other employment which would yield better pay.

At this juncture a wealthy slave-holder arrived in Charleston, en route to the West Indies for his health. Knowing that British law emancipated every slave that put his foot on British soil, he desired to obtain the services of a free young man of color sufficiently intelligent to do his out-of-door business. I was commended to him, and called upon him at the Planters' Hotel. Among the

inducements he offered he said: "If you will go with me, the knowledge that you will acquire of men and things will be of far more value to you than the wages I will pay you. Do you know what makes the difference between the master and the slave? Nothing but superior knowledge."

This statement was fatal to his desire to obtain my services, for I instantly said to myself: "If it is true that there is nothing but superior knowledge between the master and the slave, I will not go with you, but will rather go and obtain that knowledge which constitutes the master." As I politely took my leave these words passed through my mind:

*He that flies his Saviour's cross
Shall meet his Maker's frown.*

Then these reflections followed. "In abandoning the schoolroom am I not fleeing from the cross which the Saviour has imposed upon me? Is not the abandonment of the teacher's work in my case a sin?" The answer was easily found, and I resolved to reopen my school and to inform my patrons to that effect.

(To be continued)

Black Colleges Defended On TV "Ethical Forum"

WASHINGTON, D.C.—NNPA—The continued existence and preservation of historically black colleges as an option for all students seeking higher education was defended by key black and white educators and graduates in an "ethical forum" on "Black Colleges and Universities ... Stepping-Stones or Stumbling Blocks?," televised here last week.

"Our society is still faced with a myriad of problems on the issue of race," said Dr. James E. Cheek, president of Howard University. Historically black colleges must be involved in research and serve as a voice for Blacks, he stressed, noting that telecommunications is an important area.

Howard University is more "integrated" with a higher percentage of non-black students than the percentage of Blacks enrolled in any predominantly white university, Dr. Cheek emphasized. Black colleges have never been legally segregated other panelists noted.

Participating in the discussion were Dr. Samuel L. Myers, president of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Edu-

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