

# MICROSCOPE

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already been developing the suburbs since World War II, accelerated their flight to the perimeter of the urban centers. White policemen, firemen, teachers and other providers of public service developed a pattern of working in the cities and living in the suburbs. In public education, especially, students and teachers met like individuals from foreign lands with little if any basis for rapport. Keeping order gradually took precedence over teaching.

The experience of the national Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP) has been that Black illiteracy, which is nearing an unconscionable 50 percent, is the result of a lack of motivation to learn rather than an inability to learn.

In this regard, it is helpful to know that learning has two aspects. One is what is known among educators as the "cognitive" or intellectual aspect. The other is the "affective" aspect which involves emotional and environmental considerations.

Educators know that students who do not feel good about themselves, or about their families or their communities, often will have no desire or will to learn.

## Summary

The average social worker will tell you that nothing does more for individual and family self esteem than an employed head of household. Children learn about responsibility, getting to work on time, budgeting money and a host of other things as they watch and listen to the employed head of household.

When Timothy, the unemployed high school dropout, was asked by Bill Moyers why he didn't support his six children, many AOIP leaders wondered if he was even able to read and comprehend a job application form.

At no time in the history of this country has the semi-skilled and the unskilled Black worker been more superfluous. Education, which has been the traditional means of moving up the economic ladder, has been as good as denied to our inner city young people. Many teenagers with high school diplomas are functionally illiterate, *i.e.*, for the most part, unable to read and comprehend at the fourth grade level.

A number of thoughtful Black Americans are more inclined to look in the direction of deliberately fostered welfare dependence, an unconscionable rate of illiteracy and unemployment as key stresses in the current teen pregnancy predicament. They see the danger of embracing the *Moynihan Report* in 1986 as becoming partners in the perpetuation of a Black underclass for which nothing can be done.

We need to revise our thinking about

dependency-inducing welfare and concentrate on programs that produce economic independence and are truly helpful to our community. Those Blacks who have been able to make a little "progress" need to reach back and share. We need to invest

in our communities by keeping our dollars in Black America as much as possible. We need to provide our young people with positive role models and inculcate them with pride in their Blackness. We need to provide early sex education and religious

education that include the special needs that a Black child has which must be met if he or she is to successfully adapt in the White-oriented world...and these are only some of the needs that will be addressed fully in our Year 2000 Campaign!



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