

DIALOGUE

Special Education Cannot Be Allowed To Continue As Is: Its A Matter Of Survival For Black Youth

By Bryant Mason, Senior Fellow Phelps-Stokes Fund (Part 2 of 3 Part Series)

"There are to many children of color in special education who have been taken off the express train and put on the local. The local never catches up with the express."

Critics say special education systems have built huge and self-perpetuating bureaucracies employing an army of psychologists and social workers to administer endless evaluations of marginal worth at tremendous cost. Other charges are that some teachers focus more on behavior control than on instruction, and that some principals bully parents who resist shunting their children into special education.

Certainly an alarming result since the Education for All Handicapped Act of 1975 was written to include 11 different classifications of handicapping conditions from mental retardation, hearing impairments, deafness, visual

City of Las Vegas Summer Food Service Program

The City of Las Vegas (SPONSOR) announces the sponsorship of the Summer Food Service Program. Meals and/or snacks will be served to all enrolled children at no charge. Listed are the site names, addresses, and whom to contact for additional information; which meals will be served, and the times and dates meals will be served.

City of Las Vegas Parks and Leisure enrolled summer participants only

Breakfast: Between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. Monday-Friday at all sites

Lunch: Between 12 noon and 1 p.m. Monday-Friday at all sites
June 12 - August 4, 1995

Dates and times may vary and are subject to change.

Contact Billie M. Bastain at 229-6728 if you require additional information.

Robert Lunt, 2701 Harris Street; John S. Park, 931 Franklin Avenue; Stupak Community center, 300 Boston Avenue; Doolittle Community Center, 1901 "J" Street; Sunrise Acres, 2501 Sunrise Avenue; Mat Kelly, 1900 N. "J" Street; Rex Bell, 2900 Wilmington; Walter Bracken, 1200 N. 27th Street; Twin Lakes, 3300 Riverside; Clark Community (See Food Program, Page 20)

impairments, speech or language impairments, serious emotional disturbances, orthopedic handicaps, other health impairments (e.g. autism, serious heart conditions) or learning disabilities.

Research shows that while innate differences are limiting for some students appropriately labeled as handicapped, they are not limiting for most students who are in special education today. Many students of color are committed to the program

because they are stigmatized as having "learning disabilities" or as being "emotionally disturbed." In effect, in many instances, differences in student achievement come not from innate differences in ability but from the level of effort, perseverance, and self-discipline, each of which the school can teach.

According to a report by Advocates for Children, Black children are more likely to be classified as emotionally

disturbed or mentally retarded in New York City Schools while children with limited English proficiency are more likely to be classified as learning disabled or speech impaired.

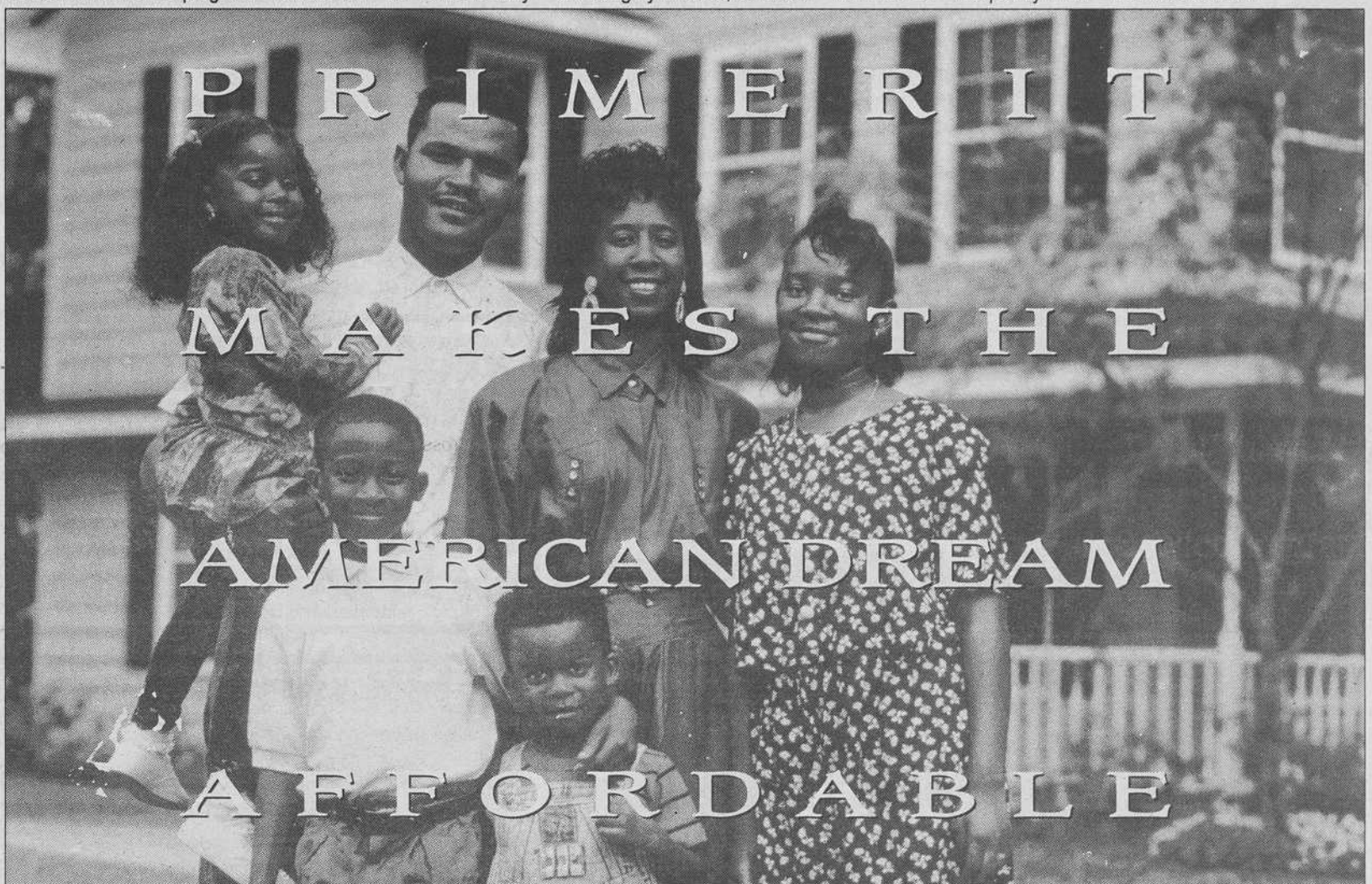
Summarizing national data on the subject, the authors of one study said, "At least half of the learning disabled population could be more accurately described as slow learners, as children with second-language backgrounds, as children who are naughty in class, as those

who are absent more often or move from school to school, or as average learners in above-average school systems."

Cultural bias and socioeconomic influence are among the reasons that the numbers are so skewed towards children of color. "Clearly part of the problem is a negative expectancy towards the prospect and possibility of children of color," says Galen Kirkland, executive director of Advocates for Children. "Frequently what

ends up happening is that people assume that once a problem becomes apparent, there's no hope. The person is doomed."

A student is assigned to special education by a teacher or a school. Of the 90 percent of students who are tested about 70 percent are assigned to special education. According to one professor, "studies show teachers refer kids who bother them and we've been able to demonstrate behavior that bothers teachers."



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