



Reasons to go back to school

If you had a choice between welfare and a career, which would you choose?

If you had a choice between being given a fish to eat one day or being taught to fish so that you could feed yourself any day, which would you choose?

Donette, Leonard, Lisa, Renee, Marlisa, Pat, Jamette, Ida, Clifford, Lorraine, Teresa, Monique, Craig, Cheri, Dionne, Toni, Cicley, D'Errica, Monica, all students at the Whitney Young Center in San Bernardino, CA. and NAACP head Kweisi Mfume helped me decide. Mfume, as you might know, was the father of six children by the time he was in his early 20s, but turned his life around and later became a U.S. congressman.

At the invitation of the Community Advisory Committee of the Center, I spoke to a group of adults trying to pull their lives together.

This meeting, on the surface, could be labeled as categorically opposite from my meetings with traditional college students at, let's say, Howard University.

In the case of Howard or Hampton or Harvard students, meetings are often a matter of talking with students who have been screened and tracked for success. Their undergraduate studies are, therefore, akin to going to finishing school before they get down to the more detailed business of graduate or professional school.

But many of these "traditional" students have also been sheltered from some of the realities of life that help provide that edge that black folks needed "back in the day" to deal with non-black folks.

In my opinion our future leaders are going to have to come from the ranks of both

groups, the traditional college student and those taking that important step at centers like the Whitney Young Center.

Without question many adults who are unemployed, under employed and/or on assistance are now faced with the fact that they need to get very serious about their lives and their children's lives.

This is especially true because there are several workforce and welfare reform measures in place now on state and national levels.

What do you say to a mother of six on assistance who now wants pre-employment training and GED preparation? First you remind her about African parenting according to Dr. Frances Cress-Welsing. Then you immediately direct her to important local organizations there to assist her. You also offer to follow-up if and when she may need advice or moral support.

What do you say to a young mother or father who isn't sure if he or she can afford college? First, you let them know that you know firsthand about the advantages of going to a community college.

Then you tell them that they can get a fresh start at a community college the way this writer did many years ago.

The cost of enrolling is minimal and there are financial aid and career counselors available to assist. If they are not helpful, let us know. If they are helpful, let them know.

I have heard some people say that if they could change their lives, they would still do things the same. Not me! I can think of several things that I wished I could do over.

Likewise, this is not the time to point fingers at those who are now trying to refocus their
(See Hilton, Page 16)

EDUCATION

National campaign for education rolls out

Special to Sentinel-Voice
With conservative efforts to divert public education funds to private schools heating up across the nation, leaders of the NAACP and People For the American Way last week successfully launched Partners for Public Education, a national initiative aimed at protecting and improving the nation's public schools.

Last Thursday in Baltimore, an energetic rally capped a day-long series of workshops and discussions addressing how to improve public education without giving in to

conservative demands that the nation divert tax dollars to sectarian and other private schools.

Appearing at the rally, which drew hundreds of participants to the New Shiloh Baptist Church Baltimore, were Kweisi Mfume, president and CEO of the NAACP and Carole Shields, president of People For the American Way. Dr. Betty Shabazz, widow of Malcolm X, moderated the evening event.

Mfume called proposed voucher schemes an attempt to "disrupt, disband and do away

with public education as we know it under the guise of blue smoke and mirror tricks."

"If you assume as I do that substandard schools, inadequate resources and second-class schools are wrong, then that is your enemy," he said.

Voucher proposals currently are pending in more than two dozen states as well as both chambers of Congress.

Shabazz said the real issue is about free and open to quality education for every child. "It is extremely important to understand that equity in

educational opportunity must be available for all students," Shabazz said. "Further, that resources be available for all of our students. Otherwise, we create a drain. We allow a greater risk factor to be part of the environment. We must continue to try to modify to reduce that risk.

Future events of the National Campaign for Educating Every Child are being planned for Cleveland, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, New York City and Philadelphia. Details will be released at a later date.



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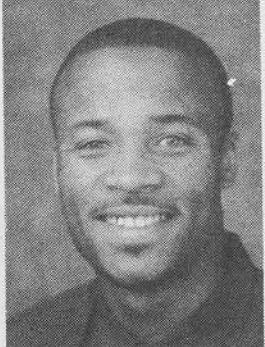


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