

EDUCATION

Class of 1999 must recognize great potential

Richard M. Cooper
Special to Sentinel-Voice
Throughout the month of June, American high schools are transformed into ceremonial places for graduation rites of passage.

Thousands of African-American seniors are transitioned from childhood student status to their rightful roles as newly graduated adults.

Graduation of our young people from high school warrants much attention and many "props."

Let the bands play their "tried and true" alma maters. Let Kente clothes be adorned bearing the embroidered

words, "Class of 1999." The joyful cries of family members will alert our community to the emotional significance of this wonderful achievement.

The speeches made by the valedictorians, the numerous accolades and award presentations will culminate into the main event, the awarding of the diplomas and the "turning of the tassels." Multiple camera flashes will illuminate the scene as videocameras capture the spontaneity and significance of the moment.

Our children's high school graduations should always be regally recognized because

these ceremonies mark significant accomplishments, despite the many trials and tribulations that they have had to overcome during their relatively short lives.

Despite multi-faceted efforts to "demonize, criminalize, and often pathologize" our youth, graduation day becomes a life marker and a demonstration of their collective abilities to achieve often against insurmountable odds.

Most graduating seniors will be unable to articulate the nationally-debated school policies which allegedly promoted universal public school reform.

Black students know too well the daily realities related to the lack of basic resources that they had to overcome in their schools. However, in the words of Dr. Maya Angelou, "Still they rise!"

Many Black students are graduating from urban schools that are more segregated today than they were in 1954, prior to the landmark "Brown vs. the Board of Education" U.S. Supreme Court decision.

However, segregation should no longer be viewed as the primary enemy facing public schools today. Inadequate funding and issues of safety loom large in

urban schools, and have now come to the forefront in suburban school communities. Let us pray that Black students graduate not only with a mastery of the three "R's" but, with a forthright understanding of their history, culture, and identities as role models for the children which they precede.

To the graduating seniors: Take the time to thank your mother, father, grandmothers, grandpops, aunts, uncles and other extended kinfolks who guided, pushed and challenged you to succeed. Your elders do indeed own a small piece of your diploma.

Even at this late date in our history, some of you will be the very first person in your family to receive a high school diploma. Give thanks to the religious institutions, and other members of your community who may have supported you financially, emotionally and spiritually. Make sure that on graduation day, you especially give thanks to the God that has served all of you so well.

When we truly begin to understand the history of the restrictive laws that were created in America to thwart the educational advancement of Black people, we will

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Harvard report cites increasing resegregation trend

WASHINGTON (AP)—Forty-five years after the Supreme Court effectively ended legal segregation of public schools, most students still attend schools dominated by those of their own race and income level, a Harvard University report says.

A study of school enrollment patterns since 1968, when most school districts began court-ordered desegregation remedies, shows the trend toward resegregation of the races is growing despite rising numbers of minority enrollments.

Resegregation is proceeding fastest in the South, though the races are now most separate in schools in other regions.

"We are clearly in a period

when many policy-makers, courts, and opinion makers assume that desegregation is no longer necessary," says an excerpt from "Resegregation in American Schools," a report by the Civil Rights Project, a research and advocacy organization run by the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Harvard Law School.

The report also said:

-Enrollment of Hispanic students has increased 218 percent, and nearly 75 percent of them attend predominantly minority schools.

-Enrollment of black students has risen 22 percent, and 69 percent of them attend schools where at least half the students are from minority groups.

-Enrollment of white

students has declined by 16 percent in the same 30 years, and most of those students attend schools that are 80 percent or more white.

That remains so even when white students live in generally nonwhite areas, said the report, which was based on a study of Education Department enrollment data from the late 1960s through the mid-1990s. At the same time, black and Hispanic students generally remain in black- and Hispanic-majority schools even when they live in the suburbs.

The study attributes much of the trend of minority- or white-dominated schools to economics and housing patterns. As for the trends in minority and white totals, it notes increases in Hispanic

immigration and births and a decrease in white births.

Schools with mostly black and Hispanic students also were 11 times more likely to be in areas with concentrated poverty than their peers in predominantly white schools. Researchers say, that too, can be damaging because poverty is linked to lower classroom performance.

In general, the researchers say, the schools with many poor children lack advanced courses and teachers with credentials for their subject areas. Such schools are more likely than others to have children who drop out, suffer from untreated health problems and forgo college.

Black students are most likely to go to majority black

schools in the following states, in order: Michigan, Illinois, New York, New Jersey and Maryland. The top states for Hispanic student concentration are, in order: New York, Texas, New Jersey, California and Illinois.

White children are also less likely to attend schools with minorities in these states.

Study reports herpes infection rising among black collegians

Ytasha Womack
Chicago Defender

New studies show that African-American collegiate women are at a higher risk for contracting genital herpes, according to a new report.

In the April edition of the Journal of the National Medical Association of the 96 Black college females in the study, 30 percent tested positive for herpes simplex virus-type 2 (HSV-2).

According to the study, a history of sexually transmitted disease was a predictor of the HSV-2 infection. Of those that tested positive, 53 percent of the women had a history of STDs, compared to the 21 that did not.

However, the number of lifetime partners, once deemed a prime indicator, was not a high-risk factor. One-third of those who tested positive only had one lifetime partner.

"Behavior strategies focused on decreasing the number of sexual partners are not likely to be sufficient in preventing the spread of HSV-2 infection among young African-American women," the report stated. "The

development and use of alternative approaches to prevent the spread of HSV-2 among young African Americans should be considered."

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 500,000 new cases of herpes are reported each year. Some figures on the percentage of African Americans with HSV-2 are as high as 45 percent.

According to health professionals, many genital herpes outbreaks show no visible symptoms, leading women to believe they are free of the illness.

"A lot of college women may not even know," said Lisa Young, certified nurse practitioner for Chicago State University's Wellness and Health Center. "Sometimes women have lesions inside the vagina and cervix and don't know it."


Moreover, genital herpes is contagious both during outbreaks and just days before, when no symptoms are evident.

"There are so many people that are walking around with it and don't know it," Young


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