

Children need firm foundation to be successful

By Michael Maxwell
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We, Africans in America or African-Americans, are unique when compared to how the rest of the world values education. Our constant struggle to defeat the dehumanization that has been set against us, since our arrival in 1619, has created differing outlooks on the importance of education. I believe a majority of us have the faith that education creates opportunities to improve ourselves thus increasing our worth to our families and to society. It's been said by one group that, "We must" get an education. But a growing number of minorities see the daily struggle as so difficult they would rather focus on trying to enjoy the present. After all why spend so much energy on the promise of some future payoff from education instead of having fun now because you could die tomorrow? They say, "Why try" when there's a big chance they may not succeed. As you can see one sub-group values education and the other does not.

I've been a teacher now 10 years and a student of history for a little more. All of my teaching experience has been at so-called "at-risk" schools. Early Childhood has been the focus for much of my classroom experience. I've taught and studied at an international school in Ghana, Africa and taught students from a number of countries around the world. During the last 10 years I've been able to make some observations from meeting, teaching and interacting with students and parents. The rest of this article will focus on the shaky foundations children have when parents *don't* value education.

Some parents view their children as the greatest gift possible and they'll learn as

much as they can about raising children. If not, they'll put their trust in someone who has the experience or knowledge to teach and show them how. That's the "we must" group. Some other parents choose to start raising their children without a guide or seeking any advice from the experienced or knowledgeable. They are the "why try" group. We know so much about child development now that no one should have children and just try to learn as they go.

In the last couple of decades, scientists have been studying the brain development of children, seeking to prove that education isn't just philosophy anymore. People are surprised to find that most of the brain's wiring, growth and development takes place during the first few years of life. Millions of connections are made before a child turns eight years old. Videos, CD's and books designed to develop "smart" babies are no gimmick. It's proven science that the first few years are the most important. Right now, reading to a child from the time they are born has more positive effects than we know.

Reading from birth makes the parent the first and perhaps a child's most important teacher. This is when the foundation for all future learning is built. Kids can learn multiple languages when they're young. You or I would have to work hard to learn one at our ages. On top of that, brain connections die or shut off if they're not used. There's real meaning behind the saying, "use it or lose it." If kids' brains aren't stimulated from birth to five, learning is going to be much more difficult from first grade through high school. Their foundation is crucial because at the age of five most parents are required to ~~take~~ teachers with much of their child's edu-

In school, the early preparation or lack of preparation becomes magnified. Most of the "we must" parents have made sure their children are ready for the challenges of learning. The children of the "why try" parents are already behind. Frustration, on the child's part, has already begun to escalate. Intelligent, competent and passionate teachers may be able to influence the frustrated student to strive to achieve while the student battles the "why try" attitude of mom and dad. All teachers aren't the type as mentioned in the last sentence. The children of "why try" parents are stuck in a precarious situation. If the child doesn't develop self-motivation, get parental encouragement or eventually get a teacher that brings the best out of them, they become another negative statistic. By third and fourth grade, they have developed their own "why

try" attitude.

As educators and parents, our responsibility is to nurture and develop "we must" attitudes in our children. The "why try" attitude isn't a truly free person's way of thinking; instead, it's a defeated person's frame of mind. Perhaps that's why most of our ancestors weren't allowed to read or write for the first 240 years they were in America. We have achieved against the worst inhumanity. We can no longer allow any other people to determine our future. Education is the foundation for achievement. Its doors have been open to all of us for only the last few decades. I'm a firm believer in quick ascension. We must, as adults, take advantage of every opportunity to learn as much as possible, whenever possible then pass that value on to our children.

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to discover what we know by defining the parameters of the problem or problems, collecting and analyzing the existing research bears on the problem. Then, they might also want to research what approaches have worked and develop a set of best practices that schools and communities might use to influence the aspirations and achievement of young Blacks.

Third, the two groups should come together, the professionals and community leaders and researchers, and interact, exploring both the problems and the solutions. Either way, it will be difficult because it is not only, as I have previously said, a matter of mere class, but of culture. How do you successfully change culture? How much change is desirable? In any case, the solution should be put into place by pressuring governments at all levels, private organizations and community leaders to adopt them.

Fourth, I think that more vigorous attempts should be made to engage the young people on these issues, especially those who have been left in the ghetto to survive

without many resources. We also need a new generation of young Black organizers to address such thorny issues, just as we did during the civil rights movement. Back then, the community organizers were volunteers for low pay and worked under dangerous conditions.

Today, almost the entire framework of support for youth is either devoted to work or college. Many of these youth who live in these communities could become the solution to the problem. If Israeli youth can gain a respect and connection with their culture by going to the Kibbutz, why can't we fund young Black middle class kids to work in the inner city, helping to organize depressed communities also?

I am convinced that a Bill Cosby, with his own resources and those of his friends and others, could fund such an effort. It would not be easy, but it would be more worthy of a Cosby than his recent publicity stunt.

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appointee's credentials and quickly assigned the utterly unqualified lad the task of coordinating the N.J. Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force comprised of the N.J. State Police, the FBI, the N.J. National Guard, the U.S. Armed Forces and local law enforcement. However, the only identifiable project which Cipel actually appears to have planned while on the state payroll was a trip to Israel with McGreevey, at taxpayer's expense, of course.

The plot thickens with Cipel's claim that he isn't even gay. Well, then exactly what is he, an Israeli spy and member of Mossad? Why else would he lead McGreevey on long enough to have the Governor get him five different paid positions over the past two years?

As for the disgraceful McGreevey, his conduct is unjustifiable and indefensible, and I shudder to think how many other inane official decisions he made due to lust

or blackmail, thereby compromising the state's security. This fiasco might be the best argument yet for legalizing gay marriage.

I was unimpressed when he arrogantly summoned the press to his coming out party, using his wife as a prop to make himself somehow look like a victim. Anal sex aside, will somebody please explain to me what being gay has to do with whether or not a politician is guilty of impeachable offenses and a dereliction of duty?

Trust me, I could care less if he wears high heels and a sundress in the Gay Pride Parade. Nonetheless, it needs to be said that McGreevey cannot be allowed to mince off into the sunset without explaining exactly why he had a queer eye for this straight guy and how many others with unknown agendas he placed in positions of power.

Attorney Lloyd Williams is a member of the NJ, NY, CT, PA, MA & US Supreme Court bars.

Overstreet

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Now here's the kicker, the Trustees, except for one or two notable exceptions, in apparent violation of the state's open meeting laws, attempted to nominate the superintendent for a national award for excellent performance in an urban school environment.

When the Trustees were caught with their hands in the cookie jar, several staff members picked up the ball dropped by the Trustees and took it upon themselves to submit the paperwork. If this dude wins a national award

for excellence, then the only possible explanation would be that the only other person nominated was "Bozo the Clown."

Given the foregoing, is it reasonable of me to ask the question, what's becoming of America?

If you believe that in far too many instances truthfulness is falling prey to falsehoods uttered by public figures in furtherance of personal agendas, then could one conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that we are on the road to becoming a nation of liars?

Jackson

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uncover verifiable information that Mr. Jackson was injured at the hands of Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department personnel, and no criminal misconduct on the part of sheriff's personnel was identified," Ryan said in the Aug. 2 letter.

Jackson's lawyer, Thomas Mesereau Jr., declined Sunday to discuss the attorney general's investigation, citing a court-imposed gag order. But he told The Associated Press he might ask the judge for permission to comment on the letter, since it had been made public.

Anderson requested an independent investigation after Jackson made the allegations last year.

He also asked that state Attorney General Bill Lockyer issue a legal opinion on whether Jackson's allegations would amount to filing a false police report if they were found to be untrue.

Ryan said that opinion would be forwarded to the sheriff's office by his agency's legal division.

According to the letter, Ryan's office assigned a dozen people to investigate Jackson's complaint, and they spent more than 2,500 hours looking into it, conducting interviews with sheriff's deputies, jail inmates, airport

employees and Jackson's own chiropractor and security detail.

"Despite several attempts to obtain a statement from Mr. Jackson and/or names of potential witnesses through Mr. Jackson's attorneys, these efforts were not successful," he said.

Some inmates said the speed with which Jackson was booked indicated he had actually received preferential treatment, Ryan said.

His chiropractor said his shoulder was not dislocated and the pain he suffered, which likely was caused by being handcuffed, was treated successfully by physical therapy.

"Witnesses reported that Mr. Jackson had normal use of his arms immediately after booking, as demonstrated by waving and later in the day by lifting his children and shaking hands through his vehicle window with numerous fans," Ryan said.

Jackson, 45, is scheduled to attend a pre-trial hearing on his case Monday in Santa Maria.

He is charged with committing a lewd act upon a child, administering an intoxicating agent and conspiring to commit child abduction, false imprisonment and extortion. He has pleaded not guilty and is free on \$3 million bail.