

# High school diploma not ticket to future

By Nisa Islam Muhammad  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The high school class of 2006 will soon be history. Sons and daughters everywhere will either be going to college, trade school, the workforce or hitting the streets.

"The most common direction is college and trade school," said Sharien Muhammad, counselor at Morrow High School in Morrow, Ga. "A lot of seniors are choosing trade school to learn things like computers, automotive repairs, air conditioning and carpentry."

She explained that most graduating students are interested in college. "This has a lot to do with their parents pushing college as the answer. However, I know the most powerful man, the Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, is not lettered," she insisted. "There are more students making a living with a trade than with college."

She added, "I know a student who does nails and made \$48,000 last year who is still in high school. That doesn't require a college education."

Is she Black?

"No, she's Asian."

For Black students that use their high school diploma as a passport to college, "most major in the social sciences like psychology and sociology. The real money is in mathematics and the sciences where we're the least represented," Muhammad said. According to a survey released last year by Achieve Inc., as many as 40 percent of the nation's high school graduates say they are inadequately prepared to deal with the demands of employment and postsecondary education. This puts their individual success and the nation's economic growth in peril, according to a national survey of 2,200 Americans, including nearly 1,500 recent high school graduates, 400 employers and 300 college instructors.

"While American public high schools are doing a reasonably good job with a majority of their students, they are seriously failing a substantial minority of young people across the nation," said Mike Cohen, president of Achieve Inc.

The survey explained that the preparation gaps cut across a range of core skills

and knowledge areas, most notably work habits, ability to read and understand complicated materials, and math, science and writing skills.

For high school senior Tracey Calixte, being prepared for college was her only option. She told *The Final Call*, "No one in my family has had the opportunity to go to college. I wanted that for my family and myself. I plan to study account-

ing and business at North Carolina A&T."

Donnel Richardson is also headed to college, but for many of his friends the high school diploma was just a piece of paper.

"It's hard out here. School is boring, and many of my friends just don't see what college has to offer other than more boring classes. They'd rather just try to find a job or hustle," he said. "A lot of

them are not even going to make it to graduation. They get frustrated and drop out before senior year."

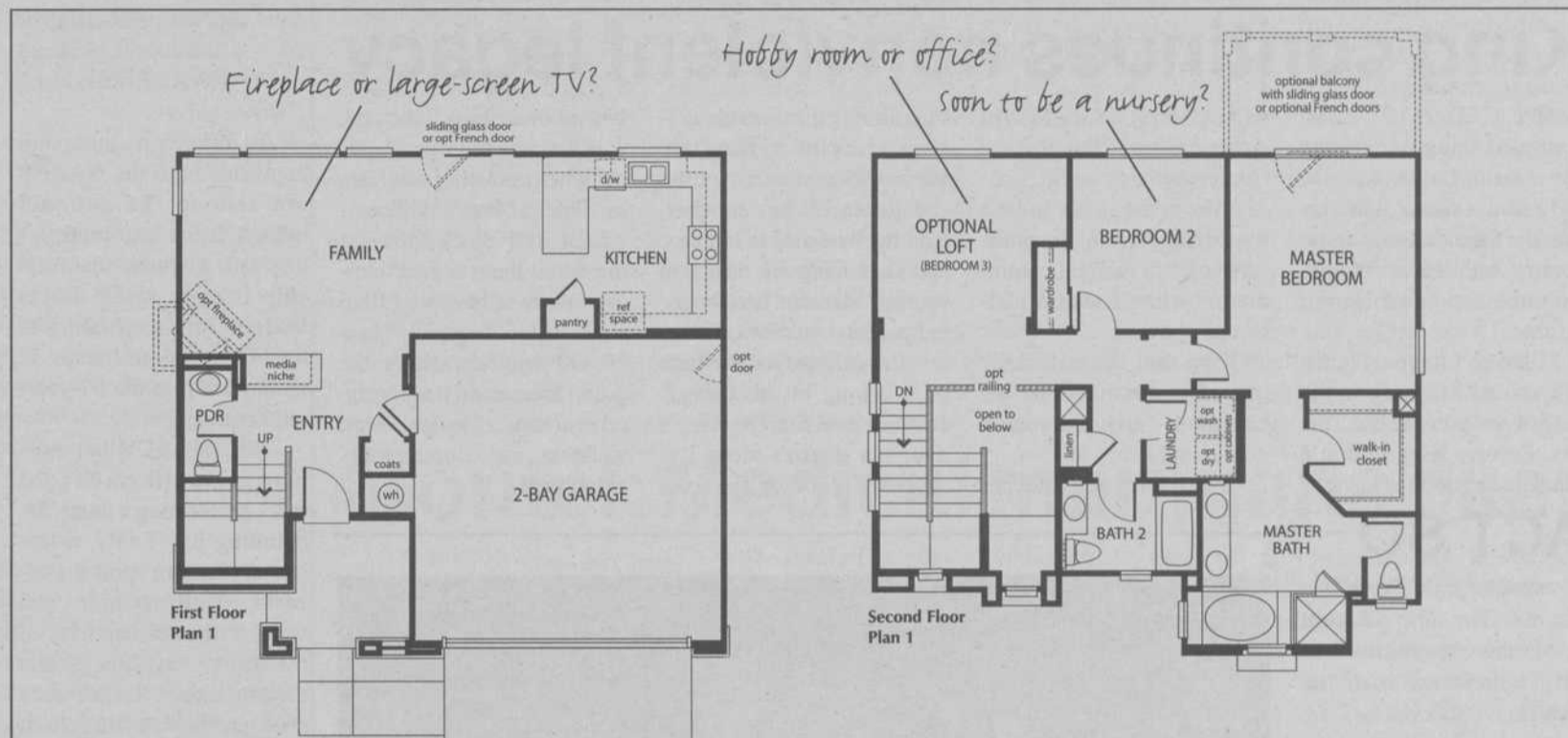
In 2004, the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University and the Urban Institute released a report titled, "Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth Are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis." The report explained that at least half of Black, Latino and Native American

youth in the United States were getting left behind before high school graduation in a "hidden crisis" that is obscured by U.S. Department of Education regulations issued under the No Child Left Behind Act that "allow schools, districts, and states to all but eliminate graduation rate accountability for minority subgroups."

The new report, issued by the Civil Society Institute's

Results for America Project and Advocates for Children of New York, also notes that the minority high school graduation rate crisis is masked by the widespread circulation of "misleading and inaccurate reporting of dropout and graduation rates."

According to the report, while 75 percent of White students graduated from high school, only 50 percent of Black students did. (See *Diploma*, Page 6)



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