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## The Black Child is Expendable

By Arelya J. Mitchell

Only when Blacks realize that Black children are deemed expendable will the public school system change, and that should be a cold hard reality check in Black communities across the nation.

But gradually this realization is coming albeit through pin holes. And you can see that happening when the subject of Blacks and education is filtering through from Soledad O'Brien taking on the subject in segments of her CNN's groundbreaking "Black in America" series to the upcoming Essence Education Summit where Dr. Steve Perry, founder of a Black urban prep school will be featured along with such panelists as Dr. Bill Cosby—yes, the pioneer TV star of "I Spy" and the "Cosby Show" and educator—Judge Penny Brown Reynolds, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Marc Morial, Rev. Al Sharpton—among others. Also, participating will be Essence news editor, Wendy L. Wilson. (For the record, Dr. Perry was also featured in the CNN "Black in America" series.).

Saturday, July 3 will mark the first time education will be part of the magazine's annual and popular Music Festival. The entire Essence Music Festival events will run from July 2- 4 in New Orleans at the Louisiana Superdome—home of the New Orleans Super Bowl winning Saints and home of post Katrina victims. The latter description makes it apropos that Essence Magazine will present its first Education Summit in the Superdome because never has a city and place been more symbolic of just how expendable the Black child is.

(For more information on the [Essence Music Festival](#) travel on the Education Lane and Black Papers Lane on The Mid-South Tribune ONLINE and the Black Information Highway at [www.blackinformationhighway.com](http://www.blackinformationhighway.com), where you will find a link to Essence Music Festival)

During the aftermath of Katrina, Black children's faces were plastered all over TV screens, internet, newspapers, and magazines; yet, the established 'powers-that-be' took their time in dealing with mainly an African American population that was left stranded in New Orleans amid flood waters as all the world looked on in sheer consternation as too how long it took the federal government to get anything to them. If these had been white children, helicopters would have been flying over dropping food, water, first-aid kits, and other supplies. How many times have we witnessed this

happening even when it is in the country of our enemy after an attack? The faces of these Black children did not matter. After all, the world as a whole has become used to starving Black children. Dumb Black children. Ignorant Black children. Un-teachable Black children. Even most recently Fox talk show host Glenn Beck in a mockery of America's first African American president, Barack Obama, and the BP oil spill issue, made the following statement in reference to an 11-year-old Malia Obama "... See the level of education they're on...?" Would he have made such a reference to a white First Family child's education? Why the word 'education' in particular? How do you go from using the term "level of education" to parodying the President and his child on an oil spill? Simple, because no matter how 'educated' a Black child is, his or her education still will not equal that of a white child's—in the *mindset* of this country as a whole. There are many Black professionals who can attest to this after walking out of grade school then junior high then high school then college with this assessment of them resulting in what slot they will achieve in Corporate America. Even those with Ivy League degrees can tell you tales about how their degrees from an Ivy League school were viewed as less than a white graduate holding that same degree from an Ivy League school. In Corporate America, the Black child-now-adult will be pigeon-holed in positions created just for him/her and they usually will be in human resources or have the adjective 'diversity' added to their titles-- as in *Vice President of Diversity* or *Vice President of Human Resources*. Seldom will they be afforded a position that does not have a 'black tag' attached to it; whereas, the white child-now-adult will be afforded positions that are non-Black labeled. Why? Because--

The Black child is expendable.

However, when Obama was in diapers and Malia did not exist, the white 'best and the brightest' who were recruited to change America and make it a better place, *a.k.a.* the Great Society and other programs of that ilk, ended up transcending themselves into the 'best, brightest, and coldest' with an arrogance that drove them to experiment with Black families and their children with Pavlov-ian and self-righteous tenacity.

To go back to the earlier assertion: If ever a picture (literally) in a thousand words or more told the world and Black America that the Black child was expendable it was post-Katrina. Glenn Beck's reference to a Black child's "level of education" is no surprise to African Americans, but what still remains surprising is how Black America as a whole has let the '*Mis-education*' of the Black child become a non-issue as the country went from the 1954 Brown vs. the Board of Education to busing to the present state of public education in Black America. After all, the whole purpose of integrating public schools was the get 'equal' education. Still, one wonders how Black America can sit back and embrace that Black children are so un-teachable that it is perfectly all right to let them learn 'Ebonics'. Even the blackest African who comes to America can speak Basic English. Even the whitest Frenchman who comes to America can speak Basic English. The first point is that English is the 'Latin' of its day. It is the universal language—like it or not. The second point is that in any language—be it French, German, Swahili, Spanish, Italian—there is a basic grammatical structure. Otherwise, we all will relive a Tower of Babel moment. In these other languages – just as with any language since time—you do

have jargon, slang, or broken grammar, but you do not use this to fill out a job application or in conducting business. Everyday, we all regardless of race, color, or creed use slang or break a verb or two—the problem comes when you don't know you're doing it. Under the harshest of Jim Crow public schools with less tools, the Black child was taught better because he/she was taught by committed Black teachers who genuinely believed a “mind is a terrible thing to waste.”

In an October 26, 2009 Witness for Justice column (written under the auspices of the United Church of Christ), Jan Resseger, minister for Public Education and Witness, wrote: “This past summer, four years after Hurricane Katrina, I heard two New Orleans parents make similar comments at two very different national events: ‘After the hurricane, they stole our public schools and they stole our democracy, all while we were out of town’.”

During a conference call on the Essence Education Summit in which I participated, Dr. Steve Perry stated, quoting founding father Benjamin Franklin: “An educated electorate is essential to a democracy’. I believe it was true in the 1770’s and I believe it is true in 2010.”

But as stated earlier, the best and brightest also became the coldest as it continued this country’s tradition of experimenting with Black families and their children.

Just as in slavery when the Black family unit was dismantled for the sake of control and profit, it was replicated in yet another century when a welfare system dictated that the father (the Black male) leave the home as a prerequisite for the family to get *money* to live or *barely* live. In order for the family to survive as a *quasi* –economic unit, he left and/or was forced out, resulting in one-parent female households, an event that is usually showcased in the media when now grown Black children stand up and say how proud they are of their moms and single-parent home status. I have to wonder with all due respect what is there to be proud of or even ashamed of, for that matter? As the saying goes: “*It is what it is*”: Survival on a low income. Yes, no one would doubt that these single Black moms for the most part didn’t do what had to be done to take care of their families. And without a doubt most love their children. But what has failed to come out of this new stepped-up Black fatherless media blitz is that these Black moms did NOT ask to be put in this situation. Most of them are the offspring of that generation where the father had to leave for economic (welfare requirements) reasons, and being in a fatherless household is all they know. This is all their children know. It is now at the point that this is all their grandchildren know. To overdo that modern phrase: *It is what it is*. Neither to be admired nor scorned. And yet it all came about because --

The Black child is expendable.

If every Black child was loaded up, put on a ship and shipped off to Antarctica, who would care? Why Antarctica? Africa, with enough problems of her own, would not want them. One has to only look at immigration policies in most countries and know that written or unwritten policies are especially aimed at keeping Blacks out. One has to only

look at the national Spelling Bee championship contests and wonder where are the Black kids? One has to only look at the areas of math, science and technology, and wonder where are the Black kids? One has to only look at the computer world, and see Chinese, Japanese, Indians (from India), Vietnamese, and whites populating the cyberspace universe. Where are the Black kids?

Ironically and justifiably, the Essence Education Summit has brought the issue home: The summit makes the ‘Black parent’ its focus point in solving this problem of the Black child. It is about time someone or some entity turned around and put the blame where it should now be in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and that is on the Black parent who must be *made* accountable in making the children they brought into the world into productive members of society. Old-fashioned home training is a prerequisite to school training. *Before it takes a village, it takes a parent.*

The present public school system is rolling full steam ahead in implementing an un-written policy that Black children are expendable, and Blacks have gone along with it for so long that they might as well be put out to pasture on *Animal Farm*.

There was a reason why it was the Rule of Law that slaves should not be taught to read or write or even exposed to the *value* of reading and writing. Everybody jokes in the *hood* that if you don’t want a Black person to know what’s going on, write it or put it in the newspaper. An uneducated Black was controllable and used as fertilizer for cheap field labor. Any idiot knows that the best way to control any group is to first weaken the male or get rid of him altogether and then go after the children.

When Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 and 10 years later when the Civil Rights Bill became Law, the white portion of the public school system became ‘infested’ with Black children and just as had happened in neighborhoods when white flight took off because a Black moved next door or up the street, White Student Flight became the norm.

But before WSF (White Student Flight) and upon the outset of integrating the public school system, lily white school boards and lily white superintendents (most of whom were still over the Black portion of the segregated public school system) made the very calculated decision to remove the ‘best and brightest’ Black teachers from Black public schools, re-assigning them to white public schools as a step to appease the new Civil Rights Law enforcers, and as an empty public relations maneuver to stave off full-fledged integration where white children (*their flesh and blood*) would interact, sit next to, and God forbid—Black boys would desire their white daughters, *ala* Emmett Till.

Very recently, a friend of mine told of an incident in a Walmart where a white mother was struggling with her maybe four-year-old daughter who was yelling, kicking, screaming and crying to have a Black doll that was in the Black Barbie/Beyonce mold. It was the white mother who was making sure – no matter how modern the world was—that her white daughter would not want or rather desire a Black doll. Why? Because ‘black’ to this white mother was a negative. In an odd way, it reminds me of the Black doll/white

doll psychiatric test which was performed and conducted by African American psychiatrists Kenneth and Mamie Clark back in the 1940's when young Black girls were given white dolls and Black dolls and were asked to choose the better doll. Most preferred the white dolls. The test was replicated in the 2006 century by Black filmmaker Kiri Davis and the same conclusions were made by the Black girls chosen for the 21st century test. But I have always had a problem with this test, because the economic factor never was used as an indicator in this test. *Only color*. Just as in society (today and yesterday), when a point wants to be proven about the alleged 'inferiority complex' of Black children, certain Black children will be selected to bear out a status quo belief system (in spite of being conducted by Blacks such as in both 'doll' test cases). These Black children are *always or mostly* from a lower socio-economic level. I maintain that if you are a child and have been economically deprived and see day in and day out that whatever is 'white' has economic privileges, why wouldn't you choose white? You are not choosing so much a 'color' as you are a positive *economic* condition. And in this country, that economic positive condition just so happens to be 'white'. The little white girl having the temper tantrum in Walmart, too, was looking at the Black doll (and, for the record, the doll was darker than Beyonce) because she more than likely had been watching Beyonce, Tyra Banks and her host of Black models in all hues, and other Black skin young female entertainers. This Black doll in her small colorless mind more than likely represented success, modern coolness, pretty clothes, etc. Just as it more than likely would (and had) with the little Black girls who chose the white dolls. If this test had been replicated correctly, the economic and education factors would have been taken into consideration to get to the truth of the matter. One could probably do this same test with white-on-white young girls. For example, if one were to do the test in England where the class system is a societal defining factor of who gets the most opportunities/privileges, and use all white dolls but with a set that looked like a low class Cockney and one that looked like an upper class princess, guess which one the little lower class English girls would choose. (And it goes without too much saying that Black dolls were on too many occasions made to look 'ugly' in the eyes of the Black beholder--- but I digress...)

Because of the aforementioned behavior, WSF has manifested itself into present-day NEO (New Education Order) which means that—

The Black child more than ever is expendable.

To reiterate, NEO first took out the 'best and brightest' Black teachers, then busing went down a one-way street where mainly Black children were bused while WSF continued, and governments found a way to put public funds into quasi-public school systems that became charter, semi-private, magnet—or anything that was non-Black or not-too-much Black. The connotation that these institutions were not 'infested' with Black students made them pretty and gave them the right "level of education" (as perhaps Glenn Beck and the like would testify).

The federal, state and local governments lent a helping hand in developing NEOism -- this un-written policy to keep Black children in check and to do so yet in another century. Black parents themselves have aided and abetted because over a course of



and ‘graduate’ some of the others through a process of ‘selected education’ for a ‘safe’ class of Blacks through which they can control Black programmed thinking.”

To reiterate: There was a reason why reading and writing were outlawed during slavery. There is a reason why Black history has become so sanitized that it has been rendered *noblesse oblige* by the white/mainstream media to coat over the truth, especially the economic truth that Black labor made cotton King and one has to remember that ‘cotton’ was the ‘oil’ of its day in that whatever happened to cotton affected the ‘world’ economy.

There is something gravely wrong when a Black parent of at least 30 years of age knows nil or nothing of Black history. Read the following sentence twice or more: That means that this Black parent was born in 1980—a mere 16 years after the Civil Rights Bill was passed and 12 years after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Yet, in this short flicker of time, a sense of Black history was lost! No Jewish child born in 1980 would have a problem knowing the history of the Holocaust. It is expected that he/she knows why there was a Holocaust and to pass down that history. If you lined up 20 Black children born in 2000 and asked them what was the Middle Passage, you’re lucky if one knows what it was. White children learn of the Mayflower. Never mind that those aboard who became known as America’s first bluebloods were in actuality America’s first wave of ‘Euro-trash’—if one wanted to go ‘equal opportunity’ in stereotyping.

As a matter of fact in 1999, Rev. Marvin A. McMickle, Ph.D. writes in his article, “What Shall We Teach Our Children About Slavery?” (Now on the Education lane and [Black Papers](#) lane on The Mid-South Tribune ONLINE and the Black Information Highway at [www.blackinformationhighway.com](http://www.blackinformationhighway.com)):

“For the longest time, Black people have not wanted to talk about the years we spent in slavery or under the restrictions of Jim Crow laws. It was as if we were too ashamed of that episode, and did not want to think about it, much less talk about it with our children... As we stand at the dawn of another century and a new millennium, it seems useful to visit this question again. What should we teach our children about the history and experiences of their ancestors in this country? The question is made all the more urgent, because this is literally the first generation that has no living memory of and no conscious experience with the kind of racism and blatant discrimination that was once the norm in this country. They were born after the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer and Medgar Evers. The Civil Rights Movement, which was the event through which my generation of Black Americans has lived, is little more to them than a chapter in a history book.”

As stated earlier, WSF became even more contagious until new cures in the form of charter schools, magnet schools and calls for freedom of choice in school selection became the panacea to keep white students in separate schools with public funds, giving the *status more quo*.

Jan Resseger continues in the October 26, 2009 article: “Hearing parents define the New Orleans school transformation, with sixty percent of children now attending charter schools, as a theft of democracy has made me reflect on the *public* role of public education. And this reflection seems particularly poignant because removing statutory caps on the authorization of new charter schools is one of the things states need to do to qualify for innovation funds under the federal stimulus ‘Race to the Top’ grants competition being managed by the U.S. Department of Education. Charter schools are publicly funded, but they are private in the sense that each one reports to its own appointed board instead of a public board of education. In many states, neither individual charter boards nor Charter Management Organizations are well regulated. Parents in New Orleans complain about the loss of democracy because forty-four different entities are currently providing education at public expense in the city...”

In the meantime while the mostly Black public school environment becomes a prison environment, Black students become more expendable. Again, instead of being sent to the proverbial principal office or having mommy *and* daddy to come down for enforced discipline, Black students, particularly Black boys, are being carted off to Juvenile Court then to jails or to what are now known as juvenile camps. One such camp is in Columbia, Mississippi (which was covered by our newspaper and web network, The Mid-South Tribune and the Black Information Highway, several years back), where Black boys and girls were shackled as disciplinary methods. We began covering the story when a frantic mother in Tunica, Mississippi called us because when she showed up in juvenile court the next day for her child, he was missing and almost 24 hours later did she learn that he had been shipped to the Columbia camp. This young man, a sixth or seventh grader at the time was a special child on meds. The Mississippi Youth Justice Project had (and still does document) documented these inhumane practices by the equivalent of white overseers. The U.S. Justice Department (USJD) was taking the long way around the bend to do anything and even when the USJD did declare that something was dreadfully wrong and immoral about these camps where mostly Black boy students were housed with a sprinkle of poor white students used to ‘integrate’ them, the USJD’s actions were nil. Why? Simple—

The Black child is expendable, especially Black boys.

Black parents remain unaccountable and are ninety-nine percent of the blame, even though it is politically incorrect to call this spade a spade—no pun intended. Under segregation and in Black neighborhoods, the Black parent and the Black teacher worked hand in hand. The Black parent and the village worked together. Those Black teachers who managed to get a degree and a higher degree served as role models of education. This is not to say that segregation was good as far as the education system is concerned, but rather to say that something went astray from what the Brown vs. Board of Education sought to achieve: To educate Black children so they could acquire economic freedom—not penal imprisonment.

Where is the outcry from today's Black parents? There are no outcries because there are no longer Black mommies *and* daddies who 'feel' the need to protect their young as even the most lowliest of animals would do, because what used to be the Black parent who would fight tooth and nail to protect their young is systemically being replaced by younger and younger Black 'parents' (whose only criterion for parenting was the ability to make a baby) who have no maturity, no sense of self, no sense of Black history, no self-discipline, and no education or mediocre education to deal with this growing level of educating Black student *prisoners*.

In "The Child and Society", by Frederick Elkin who states: "Psychiatrists suggest that lack of early primary relations is also responsible for many psychopathic personalities. The psychopath is someone who is almost completely self-centered. His relations with others are superficial; he is quite incapable of caring for others or of establishing emotional ties with them. He seems to have no internalized standards of right and wrong, no feelings of guilt, and often shows a general lack of concern in situations which ordinarily arouse some emotional response. When this type of person becomes delinquent, rehabilitation is extremely difficult. According to [C.H.] Cooley, such psychopaths have never developed a real human nature because they have never experienced adequate primary-group relationships."

Post 1964 Civil Rights Law passage, decades of Black parents who can be labeled psychopaths have been bred creating inner-genocide. The White/mainstream media outlets feed this notion of the psychopath Black parents to a point that it has become a normal sight to see a Black mother who is starving her children, leaving them home alone, or shacking up with a Black male who abuses them, or worse yet, who is killing them. These actions were essentially unheard of in the Black community pre-integration. To make clear again: This is not to say bring back segregation and Jim Crow, but it is to say that a *value system* existed under America's apartheid that made Black parents protect and fight for their young, that made most Black adults fight for the next generation. If you are Black and are of a certain generation, you remember that each time a Black child graduated from high school, the entire neighborhood rejoiced and the neighborhood turned out in droves for graduating Black students. They weighed down those students in gifts and encouragement.

Somewhere along the way, the road to education hell was paved with Ebonics, the annihilation of the best and brightest Black teachers, attempts to make Historical Black Colleges and Universities defunct, and most of all to de-humanize the Black parent.

The Black child is deemed so un-teachable in the Digital World that there is a national movement to privatize prisons which is aimed clandestinely to incarcerate Black boys and to eventually incarcerate Black girls. They will be so dumbed-down that even today's military will not want them. You cannot even conduct a war with dumb soldiers.

What labor force is needed and what labor force is left is being filled with Hispanics who will, like the Irish in America, eventually amalgamate into white America.

Already, un-written policies exist in which the Hispanic now serves as the ‘race’ to be *written* into the *minority* slot to further give businesses, governmental entities, Corporate America the *legitimacy* to discriminate while fulfilling their EEO/Token requirements. Because the new Hispanic minority can now be used as being politically correct to displace Blacks in the economic scheme of things, it further renders the Black child as useless, and especially useless as a human resource for the workplace.

Realistically what is happening is when given a choice of what minority you want (pick your color of brown), white employers/companies will now choose Hispanic.

This is NOT to say that Blacks should be go to war with Hispanics, because throughout history those in power have always used minorities to control minorities or to sit back while minorities fight minorities over economic crumbs. All this is to point out what most Blacks already know or should know and at least own up to: Blacks are still on the bottom of the totem pole. So why should education be wasted on them?

Presently, with the same fervor of that handful of Blacks crying in the wind for freedom that begat the modern day Civil Rights Movement, a new Black movement is afoot, and it is coming from Blacks who could be deemed scholastic/professional elitists with a sense of obligation to the Black grassroots and middle class Black. And on the other end you have those Blacks born in the grassroots/ghetto but with such a sense of self and Black history and education that they, too, have been crying in the wind. These two Black extremes are coming together to form a hybrid which could be called an EliteGrass.

Historically, these two Black groups—the professional and grassroots-oriented—have at times formally or informally formed a hybrid when they sense a racial backlash. They are the Black realists, such as a Dr. Steve Perry or a Barack Obama who, of course, went on to become America’s first Black president. What these two men share are: (1) that they are highly educated, (2) highly motivated, (3) highly knowledgeable of Black history, (4) highly organized, (5) highly self-assured. They represent the “young, gifted, and Black” who went into the grassroots and organized what became the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X later epitomized that ‘hybrid’ that subconsciously threatened the *status quo*. It is no secret that President Obama was a grassroots/community organizer on his path to the presidency. In spite of an Ivy League degree, he did not take the traditional route. Dr. Steve Perry was born in a third generation of Black poverty. Yet, he worked his way out and up to become the first one to get a degree in his family. In 1998, he founded and established ConnCap (Connecticut Collegiate Awareness Program), and this program sent 100 percent of its low-income first generation graduates to four-year colleges.

As stated earlier, Dr. Perry will participate in the Essence Education Summit on July 3, 2010 in New Orleans. This summit echoes a professional/grassroots hybrid movement which is slowly moving in the underbelly of today’s society. This EliteGrass movement with its army of Black professionals *and* Black intellectuals *and* Black grassroots intellectuals is a continuation or rather re-start up of groups or group-minded

Blacks that started the Black Panthers or organizations of the like. Do not let the negative image of Black Panthers get you off base. The Panthers were not so much anti-white as they were pro-Black economic power. Black Power was about enlightening Black people to be in control of their own destiny, especially financial destiny. Only when white/mainstream media turned the Panthers into an anti-white group did the organization get a bad rap. In fact, in many instances the Panthers were feeding people and showing them how to organize to gain economic freedom in ownership of their homes and businesses. In examining closely, they were doing in pre-integration what had earlier been the foundation of the Black Wall Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Rosewood in Florida. The Greenwood community (which became known as the Black Wall Street) and Rosewood represented what Blacks could do if left alone even in a segregated Jim Crow environment. It also represented white fear of Black non-dependency on them. To my mind, there has only been one white writer who through his novel, “Ragtime” depicted that white fear of an economically successful Black man. E. L. Doctorow depicts how all turns to hell when a turn-of-the century dressed-up Black man drives into town in a brand new shiny automobile (horseless carriage). The very *fact* that he is a successful Black male scares the s—t out of the white community. In fact, they put manure on his car (Read the novel for more.). In real life, the Black Wall Street and Rosewood had all-Black populations that mostly consisted of teachers, preachers, businessmen, entrepreneurs, inventors, doctors, nurses, lawyers—in other words, a growing Black professional business class moving into upper middle class and eventually toward millionaire status. Bottom line, the Black Wall Street and Rosewood were destroyed by whites who simply came in and massacred the population with nary a word from any form of government—federal, state, local or otherwise. These Blacks were among the first of a hybrid—the EliteGrass.

To reiterate, they are extremely educated and inextricably tied to the notion that they have every right to be economically independent. The EliteGrass also acknowledges that education is the floorboard to acquiring and maintaining wealth. Along with that acknowledgement they realize that only Blacks have not been left alone when it comes to acquiring wealth. For the most part, every immigrant group that has come into America has been left alone when acquiring wealth for their community and even more so these immigrants have been allowed to come into Black communities to set up businesses, make money off the Blacks, then take that wealth back to build their community and educate their children without negative consequence or retaliation. Every white immigrant-- whether he/she comes from the moon or Mars or Russia, Cuba, China, Europe-- was not subjected to laws specifically written in the books to discriminate against them solely based on color. As the saying goes: *If you are Black, get back*

In the aforementioned conference call with Dr. Perry and Essence’s news editor, Wendy L. Wilson, Wilson says that the deteriorating state of education for Black children is “alarming”.

Wilson, who holds an English/creative writing graduate of Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York and a Master’s Degree in Journalism from New York University, bluntly stated the reason for the summit was because of a grave disparity between Black students and white student. “We really wanted to do something what was more hands-on and to

give our readers the tools that were needed to help our children succeed...[We're] looking at this as a call to action... to help parents... We started out with our education series—a three part series with an interview with President Obama.” Wilson said they wanted to talk to the President about reforming education and asked him about helping African American students how to feel comfortable about educating themselves. “We started to look at the achievement gap [between Black and white students] and to pull in what’s keeping Black kids back in the classroom.”

As stated earlier, Dr. Steve Perry, Ed.D., M.S.W., represents that EliteGrass. Perry directed a grassroots organization in Chester, Pennsylvania before going to the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work. After graduation, he ran a homeless shelter and later published four books by the time he was 26.

His biography describes him as “ in a hurry to transform the community...He believes that the success of a life is determined by where you end, not where you start. It is this philosophy that inspired him to transform the lives of poor and minority children by providing them with access to a college education.”

During the conference call, Dr. Perry stated: “...We let schools off the hook...I know why we’re failing is because our schools suck... because they are designed to fail, and not designed to be successful...some 20 years ago if you said that children in the hood could out perform children in the suburb, no one would blink, except for now.” He pointed out that schools that took on the “responsibility of educating children at their highest level,” did not “change the income bracket” or “did not change the ethnicity of their children...all they did was change the way in which the children were being taught...” and that, he says, was why these Black students were successful.

“They taught them with an inspired spirit,” he continued. ”They taught with a deep knowledge base, and they taught them with extremely high expectation.” He gave the example of if a student needed to stay longer after school, that was done.

Resseger brings up the question of Charter schools, saying: “And when alternatives like charters are proposed to help us Race to the Top, we need to ask ourselves as citizens whether we have a better chance of reaching the most vulnerable children through privatized management, or whether we are responsible for improving traditional public schools. [Political philosopher Benjamin] Barber makes the public choice: ‘Inequality is built into the market system...Inequality is not incidental to privatization, it is its very premise’.”

But Dr. Perry might beg to differ. He advocates that Black parents should *demand* the same Charter school privileges for their children by *demanding* freedom of choice in schools. Just as it has been pointed out that tax dollars (which include Black tax dollars) go towards Charter schools, then it is only justifiable that Black students begin to integrate these *nouveau* public schools to get the best in education.

If Black parents do not protect their young, no one else will. Dr. Bill Cosby, educator-actor, is one of the old guard – and EliteGrass, if you will-- who is speaking out about the dumbing down of Black students, and he has caught a lot of heat for it, but that won't stop him from showing up at the Essence Education Summit (or anywhere else for that matter). Dr. Cosby's critics believe he is too harsh on the 'poor, ungifted and Black' and should be more understanding and more accepting that it is all right for Black students to use 'you is' instead of 'you are' or add so many *S's* to verbs that 'Amos 'n Andy' stars of yore would blush 'white'-- why? Because these gifted actors of their day were not allowed to depict the 'educated' Black in film and television. If Hollywood had mirrored real Black life, it would have let Black actors depict characters across the board. They had no problem in depicting white educated characters to white 'poor trash or peckerwoods'-- that is *Marcus Welby, M.D.* to *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Dr. Cosby, like some of us, would argue good grammar should not denote 'white' grammar or 'white' English-- but I digress.

Wilson, who herself could be described as an EliteGrass, offered one last word about having the summit: “We see this as a no brainer. Parents want the best for their kids. We have invited just the most incredible minds and voices to share information that is invaluable and it’s free... We have no doubt that parents will be there in droves, that educators will be there in droves, we have the most incredible number of people coming in...I don’t think there will be any lack in seats—there will be standing room only.”

Whether there will be standing room or not becomes a mute point. This new—or rather renewed movement—in the EliteGrass coming to the forefront is representative of the last phase of the Civil Rights Movement which represents a Black Economic Movement (BEM). Why? Because some Blacks have begun *specifically* to look at the education of Black children. There is a reason why the theme of the Essence Education Summit is “Empowering Parents, “Motivating Students, Closing the Gap of Fulfilling the Dream”.

Because the way the education system stands now, the Black child is expendable. And whether one wants to hear it again or not, *it takes the parent before the village to raise a child*, and it is simply time to make Black parents accountable to ‘close the gap’. It is time to empower Black parents or perhaps more fittingly, for Black parents to *take* the power.

“Say it loud, I’m Black and proud” should be more than a hit tune. And echoing another hit tune, the “Young, Gifted and Black” should now take the reins when it comes to educating the Black child.

If you cannot make the Essence Education Summit, then organize your own as an EliteGrass activist.

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