

National Black Church Initiative

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NBCI APPALLED - THE NEW YORK PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM HAS GIVEN UP ON BLACK CHILDREN DESPITE SPENDING 62.479 BILLION DOLLARS

*These Neglected Students Drop Out of School and Fill Our **Prisons***

UPDATE: The New York School System's Prior Claims of 'Success' Based on Inflated Test Scores

Washington, DC – The National Black Church Initiative, a coalition of 34,000 churches, regards the New York School System less like an educational institution and more like a holding cell for 45% of African American students on their way to prison based upon unbiased criminology data and statistical evidence of dropout rates. The link between educational attainment and criminal behavior is clear, especially for African Americans. The following data outlines some of the appalling racial disparities present in New York:

- In the state of New York, 45% of African American students do not graduate high school, according to the Summer 2010 EdFacts for New York.
- According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics 68% of state prison inmates did not receive a high school diploma.
- African American students are 5 times more likely to fail than white students, according the article *Framing African American Students' Success and Failure in Urban Settings: A Typology for Change*.
- According to the US Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation the following statistics are true for African Americans:
 - African Americans were arrested more than any other race for murder in 2008, making up 36% of all arrests. African Americans, constituting approximately 12% of the general population, were significantly overrepresented in the total arrests made.

- African Americans were also significantly overrepresented in victimization, representing 47% of all murder victims.
- 90% of all Black victims are murdered by individuals of the same race.

From our perspective and evidence highlighting continuing racial disparities - the New York School system has made no significant, long-term efforts over the past twenty years to reduce the dropout rates of its students and address the learning deficiencies plaguing African American students. The New York School System has spent \$62.479 billion over the past decade – a sum of money which, as far as we can tell, has not produced a single innovative program to dramatically increase graduation rates and academic achievement among African American, minority, and poor children.

Despite the obvious pervasive racial disparities New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein have publically lauded their ‘successes’ – citing reading and math scores from tests that do not meet current standards for educational assessment. According to an article in the New York Times entitled *Triumph Fades on Racial Gap in City Schools* by Sharon Otterman and Robert Gebeloff, “When results from the 2010 tests, which state officials said presented a more accurate portrayal of students’ abilities, were released last month, they came as a blow to the legacy of the mayor and the chancellor, as passing rates dropped by more than 25 percentage points on most tests. But the most painful part might well have been the evaporation of one of their signature accomplishments: the closing of the racial achievement gap. Among the students in the city’s third through eighth grades, *40 percent of black students and 46 percent of Hispanic students* met state standards in math, compared with 75 percent of white students and 82 percent of Asian students. In English, *33 percent of black students and 34 percent of Hispanic students* are now proficient, compared with 64 percent among whites and Asians.” This article, along with its accompanying statistical evidence, points out the obvious – minority children in New York are not receiving equal educational opportunities. Any evidence to the contrary is simply inflated and inaccurate. “The claims [of success] were based on some bad information,” said Michael J. Petrilli, a vice president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a research group that studies education policy.

The current New York School Administration does not demonstrate sense of urgency to repair the graduation rates, especially concerning minority students. Of the \$62 billion spent on education over the past 10 years in the state of New York the school system refuses to reveal how much money they have spent on dropout prevention programs. NBCI strongly believes that had the school system adequately funded student retention programs they would not hesitate to disclose this investment in their students. As this is not the case, we can only assume that sufficient funding is not utilized for improving graduation rates – a conscious choice on the part of administrators to allocate funds elsewhere and totally ignore minority students.

The New York School System claims that the graduation rate has been rising over the past 5 years by 1.2%. There has been no independent verification of these numbers. The New York school system cannot illustrate what has caused the graduation rate to drop below 60%. The system continues to fail African American children - American taxpayers, who fund public schools, are simply throwing money into a bottomless pit.

Both the dropout rate which has held steady for 20 years below 50% (just recently showing some improvement) and the academic gap between African Americans and Whites in the New York School System, there are clear indicators that racial disparities are present in the New York School System. The data below outlines that even in elementary school students are not succeeding at equal levels.

**Achievement Level for African American Students
Math (NAEP) Assessments for New York City, 2005**

	Grade 4				Grade 8			
	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Black	37%	49%	13%	1%	56%	33%	9%	2%
White	13%	41%	41%	6%	23%	39%	31%	7%

According to Michelle Alexander, a professor of law at Ohio State University, America is comfortable with arresting and warehousing tens of millions of African American males for the explicit purpose of creating a new second-class citizen: the incarcerated. The New York school system, given the statistics above, is accommodating this new American public policy position – in short giving up on preventive and rehabilitative strategies for addressing African American crime. By not adequately preventing African Americans from dropping out of school the New York School System is turning their back on these children, denying them the possibility them to transform their lives and overcome the social, cultural and financial obstacles in place for African Americans.

Michelle Alexander, a Professor of Law at Ohio State University, makes her very persuasive case in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, a scathing indictment of the widespread practice of selective enforcement for drug related cases. In this article Alexander illustrates that upon release, a person convicted of a petty narcotics violation “may be ineligible for many federally-funded health and welfare benefits, food stamps, public housing, and federal assistance.” Furthermore, “His driver’s license may be automatically suspended, and... he will not be permitted to enlist in the military... or obtain a federal security clearance. If a citizen, he may lose the right to vote; if not, he becomes immediately deportable.” Ostensibly, the aim of the U.S. government has been not only to warehouse masses of African-Americans behind bars, but to relegate them permanently to a subordinate stratum of society even after they’re paroled.

The National Black Church Initiative recently offered the New York school system a science-based plan to increase graduation rates and enhance the academic achievement of African Americans in an effort to reduce the achievement gap as pointed out by Chance W. Lewis, Marlon James of Texas A&M University, Stephen Hancock of University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and Valerie Hill-Jackson of Texas A&M University. Our plan would have brought together over 800 churches in New York to create a safety net for at risk students and students who have already dropped out of school. This proposal outlined the benefit of a faith-based program - NBCI, through the support of member churches and collaboration with state social service providers, would personalize its response to each student to address the unique needs facing that child. NBCI seeks to accomplish two tasks - improving academic achievement and creating a safe environment for children to learn.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of NBCI says, “I am morally outraged and sick to my stomach. NBCI is working to raise 250,000 mentors nationwide from our 34,000 church network to assist education systems like the New York Public School System to prevent our children from becoming criminals. Their refusal to work with us indicates that they are comfortable allowing our children become fodder for the prison system. Our membership is millions of African Americans committed to creating change for our children, I am certain that if even a fraction of white faith-based organizations demanded change that the New York School System would respond. I hope that the New York School System is getting a cut of the money from the Prison System for all the children they are throwing away.”

Mr. Eric Nadelstern, Deputy Chancellor for School Support and Instruction for the New York Public School system has rejected this partnership and NBCI strongly feels that this decision goes against the best interests of students. Can the New York School System afford to bypass this opportunity? If our Dropout Prevention Program has been rejected we can only assume that substantive programs are in the pipeline that will address these crises – what is your plan New York? How can you turn down 800 Black Churches? It is clear from the statistics that you cannot afford to wait.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI’s mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. The National Black Church Initiative’s methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science. The National Black Church Initiative’s purpose is to partner with major organizations and officials whose main mission is to reduce racial disparities in the variety of areas cited above. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI’s programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work.

The following sources were utilized in the preparation of this press release:

Summer 2010 Ed Facts for New York:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/state-profiles/index.html>

The US Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Statistics:

<http://dsusa02.degreeearchusa.com/t.pl/000000A/http/bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm>

Department of Justice and FBI: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2008/index.html>

New York State Department of Budget

Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*

Chance W. Lewis, Marlon James, Stephen Hancock, Valerie Hill-Jackson *Framing African American Students' Success and Failure in Urban Settings – A Typology for Change:*

http://web2.uconn.edu/asp/Accelerated_Schools_Plus/files/Urban%20Ed%20%20%20Framing%20Student%20Success%20.pdf

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