

AND WHO WILL SAVE THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILD?

This is a great night in Chicago, my hometown. It is my honor to keynote this historic Summit. I am privileged to have been introduced by the distinguished scholar, mathematician Dr. Abdulalim Shabazz. Dr. Shabazz has produced more African American doctorates in mathematics than any other educator.

We have assembled here in Chicago at one of the most important moments in the history of emancipated Africans in America, at one of the most crucial periods in the educational history of our people. Our members of the National Black Education Agenda are here in Chicago to ask you to join us in the great crusade ahead: the educational emancipation of African American students.

African Americans must take charge of the education of our children, to ensure their futures, and in so doing to help solidify their families and our communities.

I'd like to recognize Dr. Sam Anderson. Sam founded the National Black Education Agenda and is one of the major standard bearers for Black educational liberation. Sam will you please stand and will the NBEA Summit planners please stand. Thank all of you for all you have done and have pledged to continue to do. You have brought to this Summit educational activists from across the country, united in determination to Save the African American Child and African American Families.

I also salute a few close friends, now departed, whose friendship, and brilliance, whose educational vision for Black people has helped to guide me and many others in the work we have done and the work we must do.

I honor Dr. Virginia F. Lewis, Principal of Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago who mentored me, Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III, Dr. Barbara A. Sizemore,

Dr. Alfred B. Pasteur and Lucille Herron Montgomery, my fifth grade teacher. They were my models, my friends, my guideposts.

In spite of the joy I feel in being home, the exhilaration of addressing you, and the passion of our mission, I also feel sorrow and express my deepest sympathy to the parents and communities who have lost their children in the gang wars and police killings on the streets of Chicago, the streets of Miami, Detroit and Oakland, most of the youths innocent victims. I feel sorrow and express deepest sympathy for our children all over America who are destroyed not only on the streets but also in the schools of America. I have deep anguish for the children and youth we are trying to save because they are me. But for the grace of God, I could have been one of those lost children growing up in the clutches of poverty.

My early life was “No Crystal Stair”.

As a child I was raised by my mother alone who gave birth to me

at 19 years old. We lived in tenements on the south side of Chicago, later fortunate to move to the new project named after the great Ida B. Wells. We were on welfare, then called relief, and survived on food stamps. Yes, my little mother and I were moochers that Mitt Romney dispises. There was no tv, no air conditioning, no refrigeration, only a single room and ice box, with shared bathroom. I knew who my father was, a college trained professor of music. The few times I saw him he never spoke to me, never kissed me, never touched me. Most of the time my father worked a thousand miles away. He died when I was twelve. Had it not been for my brilliant Black teachers at all-Black Wendell Phillips Elementary School who taught and nurtured me, especially little 4ft 8 Lucille Montgomery, and my social worker Louis Caldwell who told me I was a strong boy, I don't know how I would have survived and become the man I am.

When I attended a mostly white high school, with all-white teachers, I received no praise, no encouragement. The one bright moment was when my ninth grade English teacher took our honors class to my first legitimate stage play, Othello. Other than the champion Joe Louis whom I saw often up close when he stayed at the Vienna Bathhouse on my street because he was not welcome in Chicago's white hotels, I had never seen, never known of a great Black man. Seeing the magnificent Paul Robeson as Othello was for me life changing.

However it was years later, as a college undergraduate, before I learned that Paul Robeson was then, and remains the greatest achieving American in history. Phi Beta Kappa valedictorian at Rutgers, All-American football player, speaker of twelve languages, law graduate of Columbia, actor, concert singer, challenger of racism in America and internationally. I was then, still

**naïve about the history and depth of racism in America, though I
had been discriminated against many times. When I saw Paul Robeson
on television appear before the House Un-American Activities
Committee being accused of being a communist, which he never was,
and when I saw Jackie Robinson testify against the great Robeson,
not only did I begin to awaken to the depths of racial persecution, but I
learned another important lesson. There are Black people who have,
themselves, been racially discriminated against, but who will turn on
their brothers and sisters for rewards. It was like being struck by a
bolt of lightning for me to hear the great baseball player Robinson,
who had been
racially court-marshaled in the US Army, and who was treated brutally
by many white players when he was the first Black man in major**

league baseball, go before the US Congress and sell out his brother, with whom he had never even had a conversation.

It is alleged that the great Paul Robeson was poisoned by the US government.

I am looking forward to the dramatic presentation following later that will feature one of our greatest heroes.

But going back to my childhood, when I was 14, I was arrested for something I had not done, would never do, but the red-faced Irish judge sentenced me to 9 months in

the Juvenile Detention home where I had to sleep nightly with one eye open. I was allowed to attend high school daily but had to return

immediately after school. When the high school principal learned that I was an ex-convict I was dropped from school and never earned a high school diploma. Upon release I lived in three different foster

homes, never abused but no warmth, no affection.

My own mother loved me dearly, and I returned her love. She worked hard at many menial jobs to keep us above board, but my mother, a beautiful, highly intelligent, though unlettered, lady, had her demons and she abandoned me for awhile. I took care of my mother until she passed away at 95.

Yes, I do feel the anguish of our children.

As an undergraduate at the University of Illinois I had planned to be a child psychologist to help heal hurt children as I had been. In my first course in child

psychology taught by a professor with a deep Southern drawl, I was

the only Black student in the class. It was a time in America when many people of color and women were washed out of psychology.

In my class it did not matter whether the professor called upon

students from her register or from waving hands she never called upon me. I was humiliated and stopped going to class, but oh I read the text and took the mid-term and hourly exams. Toward the end of the course, I went to Dr. Brown's office to ask for my exam scores.

When she saw me she shook her head. I was sure I had flunked. But on the contrary I had set the curve on the mid-term and also earned an "A" on the hourly. All Dr. Brown could say was "It just doesn't 'figga'". "Figga" soundly like another word commonly used to describe our people. I asked her if she were implying that I had copied? From whom could I have copied to earn the highest grades? "It just doesn't 'figga", Mr. Smith. Dr. Brown assured that I would not become a child psychologist. She changed the final from objective to essay. She gave me a "C" on the final and the same grade on my term paper. I received a "C" in the course. The message was clear. Dr. Brown taught most of

the child psychology courses, and I could not achieve my dream. I knew no one to turn to and, tragically, because I had not yet achieved cultural excellence, I blamed myself for being colored rather than the racist who was destroying my dream. How many of our children, youth and adults are discouraged and blown away because their schools and churches have not taught them and their families of our historic achievements, have not taught them to achieve cultural excellence, to gain the strength to survive inhumane treatment? In order to graduate from Illinois I changed my major to speech and English, and received my bachelor's degree. But the racism had not ended. To finish my degree requirements I had to take a course in medieval English in a class in which a white girl and I were the only undergraduates.

Occasionally the white girl and I would meet at the drugstore across the street from the classroom to compare notes and sometimes to have a

bite to eat. On the evening before the final exam, my last day before graduating, as my white female classmate and I were studying and eating at the drugstore, the police entered and the white cashier said “He’s the one”. The police told me I was arrested and would be taken to the station. Fortunately, I had a coin and remembered the phone number of my Kappa fraternity brother, a lawyer in Champaign. I brushed past the police, put my coin in the pay phone and called John Kemp.

Thankfully God had John was in his office and I said loudly, “Attorney Kemp, I’m being arrested. Will you meet me at the station house”?

He agreed to meet me at the station. The two red-faced policemen were astonished, taken out of their game. Who knows what kind of example they would have made of me, what might have happened to me had Brother John not answered his phone. The policemen did not arrest me but told me I’d better be out of town by midnight the next day, the final day for finishing my bachelor’s degree. I was.

The police treatment of me was nothing new and would occur many more times, even when I was in the uniform of the U.S. Army.

As a doctoral student when I was in Atlanta in 1963 interviewing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mrs. Coretta Scott King for my doctoral dissertation, not only was I refused lodging at downtown hotels but once again the police were called to remove me

from a downtown restaurant. It was the height of the Civil Rights Movement and Atlanta was a strange place. One day it would be segregated, the next day integrated and so on. Thankfully, another

Kappa brother had arranged for me to bed down at Clark College. I had arrived on a dinner-less Thanksgiving Day, taking my first jet ride, just a few days after President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas, and I was depressed. My spirits were lifted and I was deeply moved to discover that a faculty room at Clark College had been freshly painted for my arrival. Dr. and Mrs. King were very gracious. Dr King allowed a graduate student to interview him for three hours even though he was sick in bed with flu and had to prepare himself for the

trip to Washington D.C. for President Kennedy's funeral. Mrs. King brought us food to Dr. King's bedside and also fed me on another occasion while I was in Atlanta.

After I had received my bachelor's degree from Illinois I was soon drafted. When I returned from army duty in Germany, by then not knowing what else to do, I thought maybe I could become a school teacher. I had taught other GIs and Department of the Army civilians in Heidelberg as an Information and Education Specialist, but I had taken no education courses. So I enrolled at DePaul University.

I worked seven nights a week at the U.S. Post Office, 10 p.m. to 7a.m, had some breakfast, slept for about 5 hours, did the readings and my assignments, attended classes at DePaul and back to the Post Office.

Once I began student teaching from 8a.m. to 1 p.m. at Wendell Phillips High School, I have no idea how I maintained that schedule, but I managed. The body will perform miracles at 23 years old.

It was a staggering pace, but becoming a teacher had become the most important thing in my life. No more tenements, no more rats and roaches, a job. I could look forward to a decent life, one which would allow me to help poor young people as I had been, even if I could not be a child psychologist.

Once I completed student teaching and passed the English teacher's exam, I learned that I was scheduled to be assigned as the first Black teacher at a predominantly white high school. I literally begged the Phillips principal, the extraordinary Black genius Dr. Virginia F. Lewis, to have my assignment changed to Wendell Phillips where I could serve the mostly impoverished Black students as I had been.

I needed to be with my own people. Many of the students were sharing my own childhood and youth experiences. And I was fortunate to be mentored by this great principal. Dr Lewis finished second among thousands who took the principal's exam. I suspect she was docked a few points for being female and Black. She finished first, among a group of administrators selected nationally for the initial Harvard doctoral program in school administration. Though many of her teachers were brilliant Black women and men that included a teacher of chemistry who had helped to develop the atomic bomb and a teacher of mathematics who was one of the Tuskegee airmen, there were also teachers who needed help to excel in teaching Phillips students. Dr. Lewis came early and stayed late helping her teachers to learn how to bring out the excellence she demanded for our students. Those teachers who could not profit from her mentorship, who could not or would not give their best, she transferred.

The years I was a teacher and counselor at Wendell Phillips High School were the most endearing, most inspirational experiences of my professional life.

I gave the students my best every day, a combination of high expectations and love. I never missed a day at Wendell Phillips in six years. Those years established the goals I would attempt to achieve for the rest of my professional life. On my last day at Phillips the most poignant experience of my professional life occurred. I had already been given a farewell party by my honors English class as I left early to begin on time in the doctoral program at the University of Wisconsin. After the first week at Madison I returned

to the high school to close out my counseling office for the final time.

As I sat at my desk I heard a rustling outside the door. One by one the students from my freshman honors English class came into the office,

said nothing, placed a piece of fruit on my desk turned without a word and left. The last boy placed his fruit, said nothing, and his tears began to flow. I was choked and overwhelmed by the love of my students.

That last boy created the first Black House on an Ivy League campus, was the first Black Rhodes Scholar from the city of

Chicago, earned his law degree from Harvard and is a judge on the west coast. One of my girls in another class became Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor under President Clinton. Another girl in that class became principal of the University of Chicago Laboratory School where the Obama children attended. Her husband, also my student, is an attorney.

Among my many high achieving students was a girl who achieved her doctorate, became a principal and a college professor. She once wrote me a handwritten eight page letter thanking me because I had faith and

believed “a fat dark skin Black girl could be excellent”. One of my boys became the chief of police in Chicago. When I accepted the invitation to address the 40th Anniversary of the class of 1961, one of the most prominent member of the class was absent. The last time I had seen him was at a lecture by Civil Rights hero Stokely Carmichael in 1963. He was tall, in dashiki, with a big afro. He was all-city in basketball and voted the most popular boy in the class. He came over to me and shook my hand. There was no warmth, he was angry as many Black youth were angry, some very angry. His teacher was also angry.

In fact, at the height of the Movement, the distinguished Black psychologist Dr. Kenneth B. Clark wrote an article in the New York Times in which he postulated that any Black person in America who

was not angry was not mentally healthy. Dr. Clark, with his wife, Dr. Mamie Clark, had earlier become famous for the seminal research which was later introduced as evidence in the Brown Decision outlawing segregation. Dr. Clark's research had found that Black girls most often preferred white dolls rather than Black dolls. Dr. Clark concluded that racial segregation resulted in Black girls not liking themselves or others Black people like themselves.

My angry high school student, most popular in his class, was driving in his own neighborhood, big afro and dashiki, when he was stopped for a second occasion by a Black policeman known for his reputation of intimidating other Black people. My student was ordered out of his car. He complied and with gun in his hand shot the cop dead. He has been in prison for 49 years, having escaped being put to death when the death penalty was outlawed by the State of Illinois.

We write often. In prison he has become a Muslim, following the path of Malcolm X. He reads voluminously and writes brilliantly, with a genius I did not recognize in my two courses with him. I have encouraged him to write an autobiography, which I mention in every letter. One of my letters described the pain I felt over the murder of seventeen year old Trayvon Martin, a Black boy who planned to go to college and make something of himself. A life snuffed out by a white racist, would be state protector of white supremacy. Tragically, too many of our youth are killed by the keepers of white privilege or kill each other because of devaluation of themselves and others like themselves.

An opportunity I learned about quite by accident and seized upon enabled me to found the Center for Inner City Studies in Chicago.

When we opened the Center in 1966 its purpose was to teach inner city teachers and other public servants, including a few policemen, how to inspire and

educate children and youth of African descent and other youth of impoverished environments, to help these youngsters value themselves and others like themselves. I received a number of competitive Federal grants and we trained local and national educators to work effectively with our students, though I can't say we were successful with all those we tried to help.

I was blessed to recruit an extraordinary faculty which included Chicago principal Dr. Barbara A. Sizemore, later Superintendent of Schools in Washington D.C, Dr. Nancy L. Arnez, later Dean of Education at Howard University, Dr. Sonja Stone, later director of Black Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, for whom the Black Studies Center at UNC is named, Dr. Donn Bailey whom I brought on as assistant director, psychologist Dr. Edward J. Barnes and Dr. Anderson Thompson, professor emeritus at the Center for Inner City Studies.

We were a team that worked well together, that respected each other.

Each week different faculty members conducted seminars to educate each other and to discuss the needs of our graduate students. We were voracious readers, consuming everything we could get our hands on about Black history and culture. Dr. Carter G. Woodson's "The Mis-education of the Negro" was out of print, but Barbara was able to get a mimeographed copy which we carefully protected and passed to each other. The Father of Negro History warned us:

" When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. He will find 'his proper place' and he will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact if there is no back door, he will protest until one is made for his use. His education demands it."

Dr. Woodson's words are as meaningful today.

Many other great Black scholars have written of the treachery, the perfidy to keep Black people in bondage. Chancellor Williams' "The Destruction of Black Civilization", George G. M. James' "Stolen

Legacy”, Asa G. Hilliard III’s “the Awakening of the African Mind”, Chinua Achebe’s “Things Fall Apart” and the great books of Cheik Anta Diop, “The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality” and “The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State”, Dr. Diop’s effort to organize a united Africa. We read the classic “Black Rage” written by Black psychiatrists Price Cobbs and William Greer. Cobbs and Greer found that their Black patients’ mental health improved more rapidly when their treatment included information about Black history and achievements. Many more Black works have alerted us of the plans to keep us uneducated, ready for re-enslavement.

The great Brazilian activist scholar, Paulo Freire, in his classic “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, expressed clearly the three major strategies used by oppressors. The first is Physical Conquest such as European and Arabic invasion of African countries. The second is Manipulation, convincing oppressed groups that the intentions of oppressors are positive, humane and beneficial. Sometimes members

of oppressed groups, even those certified as trustworthy, are employed to engage in manipulating their own brothers and sisters.

The third strategy is Cultural Invasion. This strategy has major implications for the continuing educational oppression of African Americans. Under the strategy of Cultural Invasion students are required to read

materials, see images and use language that celebrate and ennoble oppressors and at the same time demeaning the oppressed.

Freire's thesis could not be more clearly understood than by what occurred during a doctoral class in school administration I taught at Atlanta University in 1976.

At the very moment my students, many of them school principals, were reading and discussing "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", students in South Africa revolted and refused to continue being taught in and

forced to read and speak Afrikaans, the language of the Afrikaner oppressors. The South African government sent in troops that killed more than 500 students and their teachers.

Most of the weapons of destruction of Black South Africans came from Israel. It was the beginning of the end of white oppression in South Africa, climaxed by Nelson Mandela's release from prison, the ascent of the African National Congress and the election of Mandela as president.

The 500 students and their teachers died to free their nation. They did not die in vain.

In America most of us were not paying much attention to what was happening to our brothers and sisters in South Africa and other parts of our parent continent, an exception being the US campaign waged by Randall Robinson, Director of TransAfrica. Dr. Adelaide Sanford, NABSE conference chair and I invited Randall to speak at the NABSE 1985 International Conference in New York City. When he was

introduced and received only a smattering of applause, I rose from my president's chair and reminded the membership that Randall Robinson was

leading the US campaign to free Mandela, that our entire conference would later march on the South African Consulate shouting "Free Mandela". Randall Robinson was then properly accorded the respect he was due. But these were exceptional acts. By and large the African American community were asleep, paying little attention to what was happening on the Mother continent. And in America, most of us thought that with the great Civil Rights Movement and with the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 we were well along the way to equality in America. Few of us seemed to notice that the Democrats in the South had quickly become Republicans. We paid little attention to the

message of Ronald Reagan's beginning his presidential campaign in Philadelphia, Mississippi, the site of the brutal murders of two white boys and one Black youth from New York who were helping to do voter

registration. That should have told us who Ronald Reagan was. Yet few of our Black politicians, professors, teachers and preachers were enlightening us. Neither was the now almost extinct Black Talk Radio informing us.

I hope this Chicago Summit

will be the beginning of The Great Awakening! We have to be informed and tell our people what is happening to us, some of it subtle some of it bold.

In the early 1980s a number of education reform documents were published in the United States, the most prominent of which was

“A Nation at Risk” issued by the Reagan government. None of the reform reports said anything significant about Black children and their needs. Therefore, on the night I was installed as the eighth president of the National Alliance of Black School Educators, November, 1983, here

in hometown Chicago, I announced the creation of a Task Force on Black Academic and Cultural Excellence. I appointed Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III as chair and Dr. Barbara A. Sizemore as co-chair. I also named psychologist Dr. Alfred B. Pasteur, and NABSE appointed seven other members to the Task Force. We thought it was critical for Black people to understand our educational neglect and oppression and to take control of the education of our children, youths and our communities.

These brilliant, dedicated NABSE scholars worked for a year and produced the monumental document that all participants of this Summit been asked to read: SAVING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILD.

Asa, Barbara and Alfred are ancestors now, and I miss them very much, but their work lives on and inspires our being here tonight and drives our destiny to save our children, to save our people.

Yet when Saving the African American Child was published in 1984, few Black educators took it seriously. Almost all of the Black superintendents belonged to NABSE which was founded by Black superintendents. Yet none adopted it to transform education in their districts. The Black superintendent of Memphis, who was later elected mayor, was asked by the city's most prominent newspaper what he thought of the Task Force report. His response: "I see no relationship between studying about Africa and learning mathematics", his own ignorance that mathematics was born in Africa. The Black superintendent of Detroit chaired a major corporate supported invitation only conference in Miami where he distributed every major education reform document of the 1980s except "Saving the African American Child". An invited guest I did not hesitate to call him out before the distinguished group.

Hardly anybody believed that we expected higher standards for our children and youth than any other reform document expected for all

American children. For example, we expected our children to complete algebra by the sixth grade and calculus by the 12th grade. We insisted that our students be able to use common English and to acquire a speaking, reading and writing knowledge of at least one foreign language. No other major American educational document past or present had such expectations. We expected teachers and administrators of our children to be trained to help our children accomplish these high expectations. But just as Black and white, later also Latino educators, failed to demand academic and cultural excellence for children of color, no Boards of Education and no schools of education took our recommendations seriously. Why would the ruling classes want any except their own children in private schools to accomplish such educational mastery? Why would superintendents and teachers of color defy the ruling classes? Where would most educators find the courage to give our children the education they deserve?

Well I will try to explain why that courage must found to assure an Education of Liberation for African Americans.

There are many factors that warn us that we are on the verge of academic and cultural captivity, that we don't have much time to sound the alarm and to act.

At the end of the 20th Century, in 1997, a group of powerful American Neocons met to found PNAC, Project for the New American Century.

The group included 23 very influential white men and one white woman. The Neocons issued a statement of principles intended for US world domination. People of African descent were then as now viewed expendable by the Neocon world philosophy. Though they were not among the signers of the PNAC principles, both presidents Bush, Vice President Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and the Koch brothers have been identified as strong supporters of PNAC. I have no doubt that Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan are strong PNAC supporters.

At the beginning of the 21st Century, demographers told us that by the middle of this century people of European descent would no longer be

the majority in America. Latinos, African Americans, Asians and Native Americans, in that order, would constitute the new American majority.

The census bureau reports that the increasing number of babies of color now far outnumber the births of white babies.

Let me try to make it plain. Most white politicians oppose a woman's right to chose to bear or not to bear a child. Planned Parenthood is condemned and under a Romney administration would receive no federal funding. The alarm for white politicians is that for every white baby aborted is the inevitability of a white minority looming ever closer.

Now in 2012 we have reached the tipping point. The City of New York and its public schools are already the new people of color majority. Throughout the United States people of color have become or are about to become the new majority in our largest cities and public school systems. The presence of a beautiful Black family of high intellect and strong self-esteem in the White House is repugnant and

threatening to many white people. Plans have been underway for some time for white people, the new minorities, to retain control of the politics and the

economics of the nation through devices that are now already in place.

The single most important control is the education of people of color.

Let me say at the outset that the purpose of public education throughout the world is to promote the economic and political interests of the ruling classes. Accordingly, in the United States education's role is to educate the masses sufficiently to propel the engines which keep the wealthy in luxurious comfort and in power.

The public schools were never intended to prepare the children of the poor and the lower middle classes to think critically, to make decisions which are contrary to the interests of the super rich. The training of teachers and administrators makes it so, curriculum makes it so and punishments and rewards make it so.

American people of all ethnicities, who are not wealthy and who do not send their children to private schools, are to have a common education that prepares them to be workers to keep the 1% in control and to fool lower end white people to believe they share that control. The overwhelming majority of our students of African ancestry are denied an education that will enable them to think critically. Above all, they are to be taught no truthful

curricular content that would help our students to enhance their self-esteem by learning that they are the heirs of great Africans who were the first people, who created the first universities and taught almost all the academic subjects studied throughout the world today. Our students are to be accorded little dignity and no high expectations for achievement by most of their teachers.

The plans for continued control of people of color are being supported by the billionaires Koch brothers, the Waltons, Bill and Linda Gates, Sheldon Adelson and many other magnates, including hedge fund entrepreneurs.

The tightening control has many facets, many dots to connect. The videos of the NBEA and of Glen Ford help to connect and understand the magnitude of the control mechanisms. I will discuss some of the most important controls.

First, the present and future curricula of many school systems has been designed by the conservative giant British conglomerate Pearson. Pearson also dominates the US school testing market. In addition Pearson is

beginning to control teacher certification and teacher performance assessment. Pearson, in conjunction with Stanford University, has moved rapidly into the teacher certification and assessment market.

More than 25 states and 90 teacher preparation programs have signed on to use the Pearson-Stanford teacher assessments. For example, a sub-division of Pearson, Pearson VUE, now prepares

teacher certification examinations for New York State. The tentacles of Pearson are all over American education. The critically needed

infusion of African-centered, truthful curriculum will be a David versus Goliath war. The Pearson Curriculum of Compliance is intended to teach students to master information which does not require critical thinking. The Federal and States governments have bought into the Pearson technologically delivered instruction.

In addition we are being blindsided by the Federal government. To be sure no state proposals

which even hint of a “Curriculum of Truth” are being funded by the Federal “Race to the Top” grants. Neither are state proposals being funded which fail to promise a heightened increase of charter schools.

The important issue of charter schools is another critical dot to connect. The Glen Ford video is excellent in providing understanding that charter schools were the outgrowth of vouchers.

Vouchers were first created to allow white children in the South to avoid integration by taking their vouchers paid for with public funds and attending all-white segregated schools, many newly created to flaunt the Brown Decision. Fast forward to “Waiting for Superman”, the

promise of an excellent education for children of poverty attending charter schools. Funded by white billionaires “Waiting for Superman” was a ruse to fool Black people that educational excellence was being given to Black students in Harlem. Yet Superman’s most publicly heralded flag ship school was one of the lowest achieving in New York City. The massive publicity heralding charter schools is delusion evoking.

Granted there were developed a few high achieving charter schools, to which Black children and Latino children, chosen by lottery, have been able to attend. There are a few high achieving Black created and controlled charter schools. However the majority of charter schools have been researched and confirmed to having achieved no better than the public schools of their environments, while usurping public funds and encroaching on the space of the regular public schools. Charter schools will not accept special needs students, and the dropout/push out rate of charter

schools is high. Revelatory is that the charter school of the New York City Teachers Union was the lowest achieving charter in the city. I recently heard President Obama in an NBC interview state “I’m a big proponent of charter schools”.

Charter schools, many of which have become cash cows for corporate investors, are not the answer to the reform of education to serve the needs of all children of whatever racial, cultural origin. What is required to serve our children, all American children, is major reform of the total American education system, which presently fails not only to tell the historic truth about America but also whose students lag the rest of the industrialized world in mathematics, language acquisition and scientific knowledge. The philosophy and implementation of education in the United States provide the pipeline for our nation’s greatest imprisonment of its citizens in the entire world.

Another strategy for keeping the achievement level of our students low is the indoctrination of school administrators of color by means of

training by the Broad Foundation's Superintendents Academy. The Broad Foundation of billionaires Eli and Edythe Board recruits people of color who appear to be excellent candidates for imprisoning the minds of our students. Broad graduates are then often hired to be big city educational leaders. The CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, Jean-Claude Brizzard, who barely speaks standard English, and was a dismal failure in Rochester, New York, is the classic example of the

Broad graduates trained to provide a common education of compliance to our students. The person rumored to replace him in Chicago, who is presently serving as an advisor to the Chicago Public Schools, is African American Barbara Byrd-Bennett, failed superintendent in Cleveland and Detroit, who has served as a trainer at the Broad Superintendents Academy.

I will comment briefly on several other dots which must be factored in to the understanding of the even greater control projected for African American students and communities.

The first is ALEC, not a person but a conglomerate founded and controlled by American billionaires. ALEC is the American Legislative Exchange Council in which the billionaire Koch brothers are intimately involved. ALEC has partnerships with legislators and corporate and business leaders throughout the nation. In consultation with these partners, ALEC designs bills which legislators don't even have to think much about, only to introduce them to their state legislature and work to pass the bills. Close to nine hundred boilerplate bills have been created by ALEC, some two hundred already enacted. Among the ALEC clients have been such business giants as Coca Cola, Exxon Mobil, Koch Industries and Wal-Mart. Alec has produced bills which have changed state laws making it harder to vote. Alec has conducted meetings featuring guns and has produced, not surprisingly, on behalf of the National Rifle Association, legislation to protect extreme gun laws. STAND YOUR GROUND is the ALEC produced defense used by George Zimmerman, the killer of Trayvon Martin. Why during the tenure of the first Black American

president do we think these extreme gun laws have been created?

Why as America is changing to a majority of people of color are these extreme gun laws being enacted?

ALEC bills are also involved in helping to privatize public education and to assist private on-line schools.

The recently released movie “Won’t Back Down” is anti-teacher, anti-union and pro charter school propaganda financed by right wing

billionaire Phillip Anschutz and distributed by another right winger mogul Rupert Murdoch. “Won’t Back Down” is based

on “Parent Trigger” legislation created by ALEC, and features the brilliant Black actor Viola Davis. The purpose of “Won’t Back Down” is to fool parents into organizing to take over low performing schools and turn them into charter schools, controlled by corporations, where their children will go from hell into the furnace.

Parents and communities should be angry and have the will to organize and change what happens in the schools where their children

are disserved. They should organize and demand that their schools become institutions of learning based on Academic and Cultural Excellence and that teachers and administrators receive in-service training so that they are capable of inspiring our students academically and culturally. But again, charters are not the answer.

It is unfortunate that Viola Davis, my favorite actor, has allowed herself to be used in propaganda that seeks to turn over our schools to profit seeking corporations which will further imprison not free the minds of our children and youth.

Now that many of the public have become aware of ALEC's destructive legislation, a number of corporate sponsors have been forced to withdraw their support. But think of the damage already done.

“Waiting for Superman”, and “Won’t Back Down” are destructive propaganda and should be ignored by our parents and our communities. Fortunately, “Won’t Back Down” has had one of the lowest attendances of any movie in history. You can’t fool all of the people all of the time.

I used to be quite a moviegoer.

My favorite movie, the greatest I've ever seen is "Sugar Cane Alley". I recommend it be seen for educator in-service training and for parent inspiration. "Sugar Cane Alley" in French with English subtitles, is the story of Jose, a brilliant young boy of African heritage coming of age in the Caribbean. He is nurtured by his loving grandmother Amantine, a lady, though unlettered, but of great dignity and determination.

Amantine, who works very hard for white people to take care of her grandson's schooling, is determined that Jose will be educated and not work in the cane fields as most adults and children typically did.

Amantine takes on extra, sometimes backbreaking, work to subsidize the tuition of the school where Jose has a partial scholarship. In addition to his academic excellence, at first disbelieved by his middle class male Black teacher, Jose receives his cultural excellence under the wing of an elderly African man born on the continent of Africa and brought in chains to the Caribbean. The elderly man, Meduz, adds the

essential element of culture to Jose's academic training and his self-esteem.

The combination of a loving grandmother and a cultural tutor produces a boy destined for greatness. Though the movie ends when Jose is still a teen-ager, it is the true story of Dr. Frantz Fanon, psychiatrist in the Battle of Algiers. Fanon's classic "Black Skins, White Masks" was read by almost all of my close colleagues during the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s.

I remember a Black youth who said during the Civil Rights Movement, "I've got to get my reading together, so I can read Malcolm X". Give our students something to read that has meaning for their lives, that tells them they how important they are, that their families are important and that they come from greatness, their reading will improve exponentially. Teach them that mathematics and economics will open many doors out of poverty for themselves and their families and they will learn mathematics and economics. In 2010 Sam Anderson and I did a thorough analysis of and wrote a report on

the then recently released Common Core State Standards issued by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. We disseminated our report "Still a Nation at Risk" widely on a number of educational websites. We warned that the CCSS barely acknowledged the children and youth of the soon-to-be new majority. I don't recall a single response.

Our children are boxed in, deliberately taught a curriculum which does not recognize their humanity, often treated disrespectfully by teachers and aides. Our students are bored, sometimes humiliated. I once visited a classroom of Black, impoverished second graders in Jackson, Mississippi. Their teacher, also Black, told me in front of the class that the children on the left side of the room were smart, the others not so. How thoughtlessly brutal. I said I'm sure they're all smart. When I was a consultant to early childhood Project Follow Through in Puerto Rico I noticed that very often Black Puerto Rican children were acting out. It didn't take long for me to detect that

frequently their teachers were disrespecting and ignoring them, failing to give the African looking children the love and affection white looking children received, even when the teachers were also some shade of Black.

Disrespect and humiliation are frequently the precipitating factors of student dropouts. Schools become the gateways to prison.

I hope I'm helping to connect some of the important dots.

I've had enough experience in the United States and in many parts of the world, to know that the Educational Revolution ahead will

not be easy. It will require great perseverance and personal sacrifice.

Though I believe we will be able to recruit some educators, some families and some community activists who have the courage to put their own careers, their own welfare, on the line, the road ahead to liberating our children will be very difficult. Often it will be threatening.

I once asked Dr. King if he wasn't afraid of being killed. He had been beaten on an airplane, and a deranged Black woman in Harlem had plunged a knife into his chest very near his aorta, saved only by a brilliant Black surgeon at Harlem Hospital. Dr. King told me if he were afraid he couldn't get up in the morning. Dr. King was not afraid, Harriet Tubman was not afraid, Sojourner Truth was not afraid, Paul Robeson was not afraid, Fannie Lou Hamer was not afraid, Malcolm X was not afraid and Dr. Adelaide Sanford is not afraid. I don't have their courage or their greatness, but I have put my career on the line many times to help our people with no regrets. And I have been punished.

The critical question we must all ask ourselves is "What am I prepared to forfeit and what punishment am I prepared to endure for the welfare of African American children, for African American people? We will not be remembered for how many presidencies, how many superintendencies, how many principalships, how many best teacher awards we obtained, how many activist groups we belonged to. We

will only be remembered for how well we served our people, how much we did to Save our Children.

Teacher and administrator training and retraining will be enormously important. How can our students achieve Academic and Cultural Excellence when so many of today's classroom teachers and administrators know little about our history and achievements and those who do are often

too intimidated to teach the truth? And understandably those educators who do know our people's history and pain, as well as our people's glorious achievements, risk poor ratings, risk their livelihood, risk being denied advancement if they dare to teach a curriculum of truth. They are understandably fearful of retribution in this era of so-called post-racial America and dare not teach about the enslaved Africans who built the economy of this country with no compensation. Everyone is not prepared to risk job and advancement for the liberation of our students. Another nagging problem is that

teacher and administrator training do not prepare our educators to provide Academic and Cultural Excellence. Those departments of education that changed their curriculum during and just after the Civil Rights Movement, for the most part no longer offer any culturally inclusive curriculum. And Departments of African American Studies are more focused on research than on preparing teachers. It is for this reason, for this lack of educational institutions to train our educators for the job they must do, that we must develop strong regional and local NBEA affiliate groups, first to train and retrain educators and, secondly, to protect educators of any national origin who indicate they are providing or want to provide an education of Academic and Cultural Excellence for our students. The Regional and Local affiliates of NBEA should offer Liberation seminars for our teachers, our families and our communities. NBEA affiliates must be the guide posts for helping our communities to take over the schools and demand truthful, liberating

education for our students. We at this Summit are the nucleus of developing strong support groups of well trained courageous educators and parents and community and activists.

We are at the Dawn of a New Awakening. The liberation and survival of our people depends upon us and others we can recruit to our noble cause. We must develop strong affiliations with other groups, particularly those of color, as well as liberated white people who will join this march for educational liberation.

Yet our white supporters must understand that the days of white people making decisions for the new majority are over.

Few of today's Black adults and fewer youth have heard the words of the Liberator Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on August 28th, 1963. I was among the 100 thousand marchers who heard Dr. King proclaim at the Washington Monument:

"America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds". But we refuse to believe that the

bank of justice is bankrupt . . . so we have come to cash this check”.

Well the check has not been cashed. It has never been issued.

Though Dr. King declined to say that day for political reasons what dollar amounts were due, Malcolm X said many times: the heirs of African Americans, brought to these shores in chains are due billions, trillions in reparations for building the wealth of America without any payment.

Our young people do not know but should be taught that we are due billions, trillions in reparations. We must teach them that our ancestors built, through their sweat and tears, the wealthiest nation in the world. A nation where our share is a pittance, a nation where many of our people are jobless and hungry.

That check will never be cashed until we organize and build an educational, political, economic movement that demands it. The undergirding of that movement will be truthful education taught by courageous educators and community activists.

The education of African American people has been programmed so that we don't even know what we are due.

I was a delegate to the UN Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, August-September 2001. In fact I returned to New York just two days before 9/11. At Durban, delegates from throughout the world were unanimous in declaring that Slavery is a Crime Against Humanity and that Reparations are due to people who were enslaved.

It's our time to demand justice and Reparations.

This is not an advocacy that we encourage or instigate any violent actions to demand reparations. It is an advocacy that our people be informed of our just due, and that we use non-violent actions to secure our entitlements: selective voting for politicians who support our claim, Internet information and petitions, socially conscious hip-hop, ads by socially conscious celebrities, community study groups.

I cannot close without some words about our president.

In 2004 a virtually unknown Illinois State Senator, Barack Obama, soon to be US Senator, was chosen the keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention. When I heard him announce the following, I shuddered:

“There is no Black America, no white America, only the United States of America,” - - Wrong! There is a Black America that would in 2008 give Senator Obama 97% of our votes to elect him president.

In July, 2012, President Obama, speaking at an immigrant naturalization citizenship ceremony, announced “We have to remain a nation of immigrants”. Wrong again. My ancestors and most of yours were not immigrants. We came in chains. The Native Americans were not immigrants. Apparently for political reasons the president has decided he has to be dishonest about us.

One of the worst things our president has done to us is the appointment of Arne Duncan, failed CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, as his Education Secretary.

You will recall that Duncan said Katrina was the best thing that could have happened to the New Orleans Public Schools. It was that disaster that resulted in the reorganization of public schools in New Orleans into charter schools. A Harvard degree and basketball shorts hardly qualify a man who never taught a day to preside over the disastrous American Public Education system.

One might think the President knows nothing about educating African Americans and other students of color. On the other hand maybe he knows exactly what he is doing. Maybe he understands very clearly that he was supported by Wall Street and corporate America to produce compliant workers, not critical thinkers, not liberated men and women. Perhaps he was discovered and selected to be the face of the new majority, though indebted to the old majority. But giving

President Obama the benefit of the doubt, where would he have learned about the Souls of Black Folks?

Not from his white mother, although she married a Black Kenyan, his father. Not from his white grandfather or his white grandmother who President Obama publicly acknowledged as a racist during his first presidential campaign. It must be quite a struggle for First Lady Michele to educate him.

But even at his worst motives Barack Obama is still better for us and all Americans than the heartless, offshore millionaire, Mitt Romney who thinks we are all moochers.

Until the first debate I was feeling confident that Romney would not have the opportunity to appoint two, possibly three hostile judges to the Supreme Court. But my first indication that maybe we were in for a bumpy ride came before the debate when I learned that President Obama was flying into the debilitating high altitude of Denver on the very day of his debate.

How could the president and his advisors have made such a disastrous decision? How could they not know that flying to Denver on the day of his debate could render the president an exhausted tired body and mind?. Well things began to fall apart early in the debate. The more I listened, the more the president avoided the critical issues of 47%, of tax returns, Bain Capital, off shore fortune, cruelty to the “have nots” and Romney’s lies, the more tired he looked and acted, the more the alarm bells went off in my head. I had made a sizeable contribution to Obama/Biden, so concerned I am about Romney/Ryan.

Now we don’t know what is ahead. We don’t know if President Obama can recover from his missteps in the first debate. I certainly hope he can, but no matter who is elected, I hope we here tonight and other members of the NBEA will be fully prepared to make our educational demands of the president in earliest 2013, whatever party stripes he wears.

We cannot allow the next president to ignore us as President Obama has done throughout his stewardship. I strongly urge that a statement of our education demands be authored and signed by all of us during this Summit. Our education manifesto should be delivered immediately after the election.

Our Summit Declaration would be a good guide. And the letter authored by Sam Anderson and some others of us sent to President Obama and Secretary Duncan in 2009, unanswered, would provide a strong insertion along with the Declaration. I hope members of this Summit will endorse our statement of educational demands for our children and affix your signature and organization.

President Obama's Commission on African American Education is not likely to include any members who know how to provide Academic and Cultural Excellence for our students. One of his closest Black political advisors, elitist Valerie Jarrett, will advise against it. And if Mitt Romney wins there will be no such Commission.

This is our crisis, our time of destiny, this is our movement to Save African American children and families. Who but us with the wisdom, with the experience, with the love and with the courage. We must not fail.

Heal the children, Heal the children, Save the children.

Donald H. Smith, Ph.D.