

# *Dissin' Blacks in the Name of Science*

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

## **Part 6**

There have been numerous schools that have made it their mission to educate Black and Latino children - those that many race scholars insist simply cannot learn. One of the best examples was the Westside Preparatory School in the poor inner-city Chicago neighborhood of Garfield Park. Educator Marva Collins established the inexpensive private school in 1975 and ran it until it closed in 2008 due to a lack of funding and students.

Collins had astounding success at teaching students that had previously been labeled learning disabled. Third grade students were reading at a ninth grade level and students were making other highly impressive accomplishments.

In March, 1995 C-Span reported on the Chad School in Newark and the Ivy League School in Philadelphia. At these schools, 70% of the students came from single-female headed households with incomes of \$8,000 or less. Yet students were winning "math contests all over the place," according to Black conservative Robert Woodson of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise.

The late educator and Afrocentrist Asa G. Hilliard III used to talk about Black inner-city elementary school students excelling in geometry and other complex subjects. Educator James Comer in New Haven, Connecticut and the Harlem Central Park East Elementary School also provide great examples of teachers that have been able to get Black students to excel academically.

In the 1990s there was a Mathematics Workshop Program in which African American students not only outperformed White students in calculus, but had the same graduation rate as their White counterparts. Similarly, Afrocentric educator Hakim Cosby of Erie County Community College in Buffalo has spoken of high-performing math students that regularly defeat White students in math contests.

In the area of higher education, there is a well-known Black/White graduation rate gap. However, some institutions of higher learning are working very hard and at many different levels to close that gap. For example, George Mason University and Florida State University have slightly higher graduation rates for Black students than for White students.

Then there is the case of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU.) According to a 1990s study from the Policy Information Center at Educational Testing Service (ETS), these institutions of higher learning have an overwhelmingly positive influence upon Black students. The study found that these schools succeed at directing Black students to the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and that Black students at these schools tend to remain in graduate school longer than Black students at predominantly White schools. Such is especially the case with Black women at these schools. (The study was conducted by Harold Wenglinsky, and titled *Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Their Aspirations and*

*Accomplishments.* He drew upon information from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, the American Association of Universities Association of Graduate Schools Project for Research on Doctoral Education, and the 1993 database of Graduate Record Examinations test registrants.)

Many have long contended that HBCU produce the bulk of Black scientists, physicians and other professionals because the schools' faculty relate more to the students' culture, background, socio-economic status, etc. These are the kinds of factors that race scholars believe are just not that important in determining IQ and success. These bio-determinists believe it all comes down to genes.

However, in an article on the Website of LA WEEKLY from January 9, 2008, we learn about the importance of a stable environment for children's brain development. D. Heimpel wrote:

Victoria Stevens, a Los Angeles psychologist who has studied the effects of the foster-care system on younger children, explains that if a child is in a stable environment, his or her brain development is affected accordingly. In a stable setting, connections between the neurons in the brain grow at a healthy pace, allowing for higher-level mental processes - like learning abstract mathematical or scientific concepts.

"In cases of disrupted and insecure attachment, the lower brain processes become impaired," Stevens says. Many foster-care kids have trouble reading, and struggle with other basic skills, because their "attention span is hijacked by emotions." ("Terminated at 18: Bureaucrats call it 'emancipation,' but for foster kids there's no worse birthday,")

<http://www.laweekly.com/news/news/terminated-at-18/18062/>

There are simply too many factors that contribute to intelligence for people to be so simplistic as to contribute all of it to genes. Perhaps the factors race scholars dismiss most are self-confidence and teachers' and parents' expectations. Indeed, in 2002, Leonard Pitts, award-winning syndicated columnist for *The Miami Herald*, made the following observation:

A few years ago, Claude Steele, professor of psychology at Stanford University, did an interesting study illustrating the effects of negative self-images on academic achievement. He found that when black test takers were told beforehand that blacks and whites tended to perform equally well on the test, their scores were equal to those of whites. But when they were told nothing, or were asked to check off their race on a form, the blacks turned in lower scores. The same thing happened with women. The expectation of poor performance quickly becomes the reality. Until someone is bold enough to expect something more. ("Self-confidence is crucial," *The Buffalo News*, May 14, 2002, p. B11.)

Finally, Ralph R. Reiland, associate professor of economics at Robert Morris College in Pittsburgh, wrote about poor students in New York City:

"You have to believe in them," says biology teacher Donna Light-Donovan of the Hostos-Lincoln Academy, a high school in a poor Bronx neighborhood. "Most kids don't have anyone at home who does." The 300 minority students who were assigned to Hostos-Lincoln were low performers, labeled as probable drop-outs. Now, with teachers who believe in their potential, their grades are double the city's average and 80 percent are headed for college. Studies by psychologist Craig

Ramey and others show that improved child development practices can raise IQ as much as 30 points. (“The Truth About IQ; Albert Einstein Vs. Charles Murray,” *The City Sun*, which is now defunct, Brooklyn, November 30-December 6, 1994, p. 29.)

Race scholars do not believe in the potential of Black students. Furthermore, one writer in the late 1980s/early 1990s estimated that one in four eighth grade biology teachers believed that Blacks were genetically inferior to Whites. Yet people are surprised when Black students do so poorly in school.