

**The  
BLACK  
C o M M e n t a t o r**  
Commentary, analysis and investigations  
on issues affecting African Americans  
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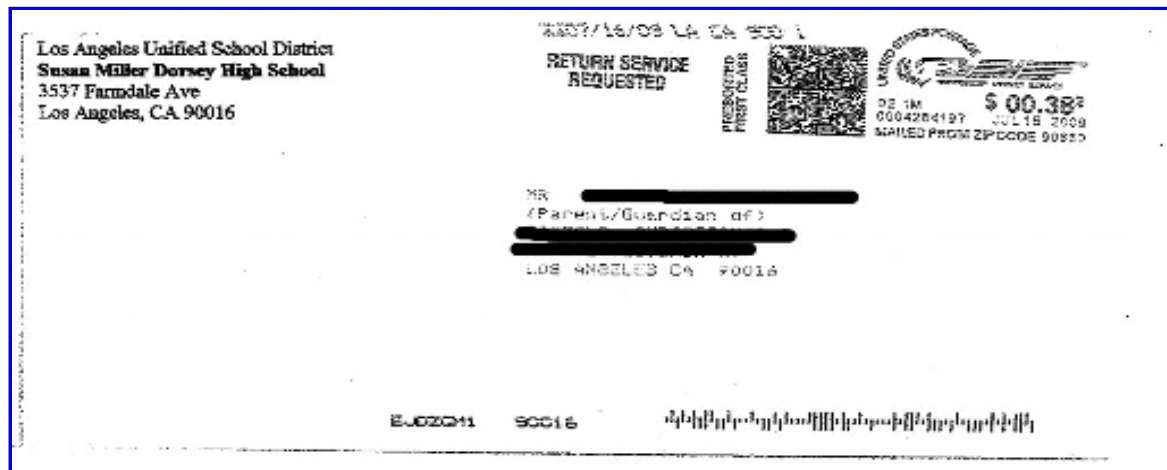
**Just When You Thought Your Child Graduated:  
One Parent's Never-Ending Nightmare with L.A.U.S.D.  
Unapologetically Young, Black and Female  
By Jasmyne A. Cannick  
BlackCommentator.com Columnist**

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Imagine that you've just completed getting your teenage African-American son through four of the most important years of his life, grades 9 through 12 in a public inner-city high school in the Los Angeles Unified School District, and you're still not a grandparent and your son didn't join a gang. But not only did you manage to get your son through high school, relatively unscathed, but you also pulled off what some consider the impossible the task of getting him an all expenses paid trip to an out of state ivy league university. From the PSAT, to the SAT, the California High School Exit Examination, homework, class trips, parent meetings and all, you were front and center and never took your eyes of the prize, a high school graduate headed off to college out of state and a spare bedroom to do as you please with. And no parent had a bigger smile than you did on that glorious day when your son walked across that stage and was handed his high school diploma, with honors.

Flash forward two weeks and after a long day at the office where in your spare time you finally managed to figure out how to rob Peter to pay Paul to make sure your son has everything that a freshman college student would need, you come home and open up your mailbox. Expecting the usual urgent colored coded assortment of bills, you see a letter addressed to you from your son's former high school.



You don't really think anything of it. It's probably a letter of thanks and congratulations for all of your hard work as an involved parent. I mean your son was one of the top three students of his graduating class and had the highest GPA among his African-American peers, both female and male. Just thinking about it makes you smile all over again inside and out, that is until you open the letter and read the following:

Susan Miller Dorsey High School  
3537 Farmdale Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90016  
(323) 298-8400

George E. Bartleson, Principal

July 10, 2009

Dear Student;

According to our records, you did not pass the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) when the exam was given on May 12, 2009. As a result, we are not able to release your high school diploma. We will forward your CAHSEE Score Report as soon as it is received from our district office.

**A special administration of the CAHSEE will be given on July 28<sup>th</sup> and July 29<sup>th</sup>. This administration of the exam is only for students in the graduating classes of 2009, 2008, 2007, and 2006. The exam will be administered here at Dorsey.**

Several opportunities are currently being offered to help students pass the CAHSEE. Classes are currently being offered at Dorsey, local community colleges, as well as other locations within the Dorsey Community. **I strongly urge you to please take advantage of one of these opportunities to improve your chances of passing the CAHSEE in July.**

Please contact me upon receipt of this letter. I want to support you in obtaining your diploma so that you may move forward with your future career plans. You may contact me at (323) 298-2879. I look forward to hearing from you.

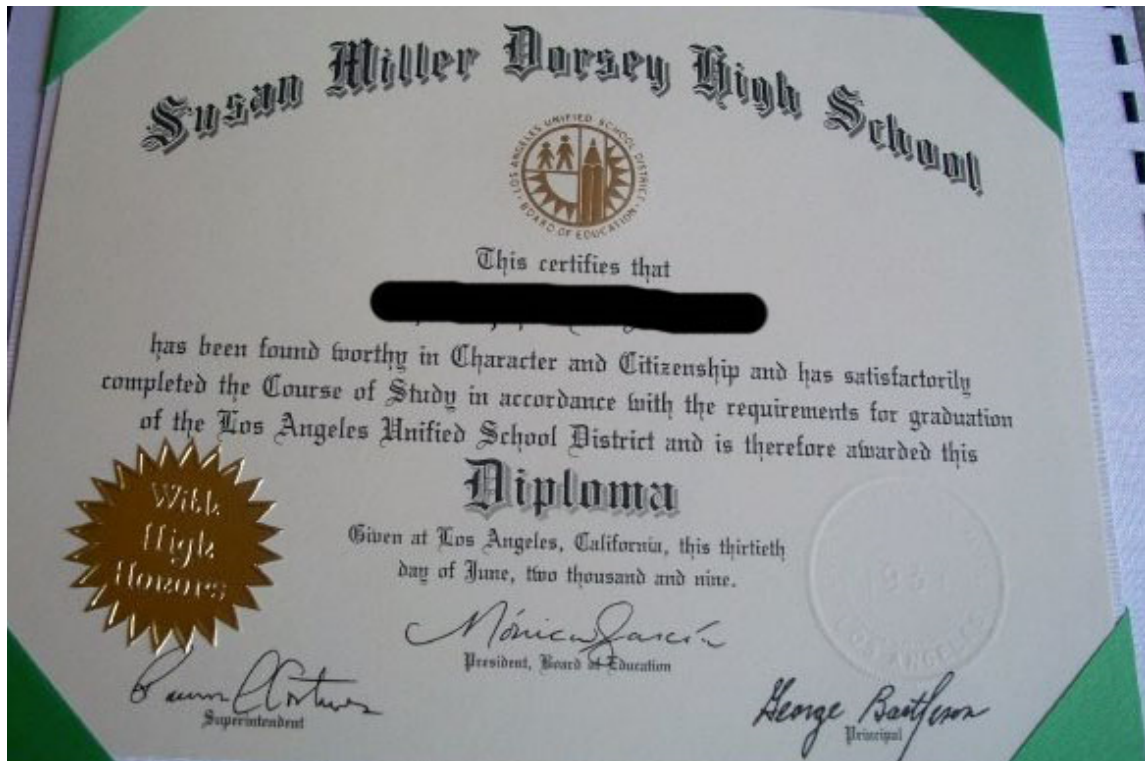
Sincerely,

*L Machado*

Lorraine Machado  
Assistant Principal for Intervention

WTF?

You go in the house and look on the mantle at the high school diploma that you saw your son receive with your own two eyes. You look at the sticker on the diploma that reads with "With High Honors" and the signature of the same principal whose letterhead is on the letter in your hands.



You go to your desk and pull out your son's final report card that reads straights A's and with a grade point average of 4.0. You re-read the notes from his teachers.

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT		REPORT CARD		GRADE EXPLANATIONS		
DORSEY HIGH 3537 FARMDALE AVE LOS ANGELES CA 90016		SCHOOL PHONE NO. 258-8400	DATE 6/09	GRADE EXPLANATIONS		
STUDENT NAME [REDACTED]		STUDENT ID [REDACTED]	GRADE 12	GRADE EXPLANATIONS		
STUDENT HOME [REDACTED]		STUDENT HOME [REDACTED]	STUDENT HOME [REDACTED]	GRADE EXPLANATIONS		
NO.	SUBJECT	TEACHER	GRADE	EXPLANATIONS	TEACHER'S COMMENTS	
1	FILMMAKING IB	[REDACTED]	A	E	02 00	Exceptional work. Demonstrates mastery of standards.
2	PHYSICS B	[REDACTED]	A	E	00 01	A pleasure to have in class.
3	AP MICRO ECON	[REDACTED]	A	E	04 00	
4	AP ENG LIT B	[REDACTED]	A	E	02 00	A pleasure to have in class.
5	AP ENG	[REDACTED]	A	E	04 00	
6	GEN. ED. LIT	[REDACTED]	A	E	01 00	
7	GEN. ED. LIT	[REDACTED]	A	E	01 00	
8	GEN. ED. LIT	[REDACTED]	A	E	01 00	
<p>How to use this report card: School year at Dorsey High School will end on the first day of the Fall 2009 school year is September 8, 2009. How to use this report card: Number of Dorsey High School is 4,000.</p>						

You look at the 8x10 photos recently hung up of your son in his cap and gown. Photos that you paid for out of your pocket at the local Sears and couldn't wait to send out to family members and friends.

You look down at the letter you just read. So what do you do?

You thank God that your son made it out of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Pray that his younger brother can do the same. Feel pity for the students still enrolled and swear that you aren't having anymore children because you can't afford to put them in a private school and you have no interest in doing battle for another 12 years with an inept school administration that can't even figure out who's graduated and who hasn't. And after all of that, you call your good girlfriend, the one who writes for the newspaper and you tell her what happened. Why? Because now that your son graduated, you won't be at the next budget meeting for your son's former high school to point out to the administration how wasted money on useless mailings such as the one you received and undoubtedly other parents of graduates received directly relates to why the school doesn't have money for this and that. Add to that, you want the principal and administration to feel the same sinking feeling in the pit of their stomach's that you just experienced by reading that letter and what better way than in the local community newspaper. It's just your little going away present for an administration that fought you every step of the way, was seemingly hell-bent on making sure your son wasn't prepared for graduation, and after he *did* graduate, still couldn't seem to get it right.

When it's all said and done, you take the letter and put in your desk drawer alongside the numerous invitations mailed to your son every couple of months for over three years now to join his former high school's 9th Grade Academy.

Now onto more important issues - what to do with that spare room come August 1 when your son is 3000 miles away at college?

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**BlackCommentator.com** Columnist, Jasmyne Cannick, is a critic and commentator based in Los Angeles who writes about the worlds of pop culture, race, class, and politics as it relates to the African-American community. Her work has been featured in the Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Daily News, and Ebony Magazine. A regular contributor to NPR, she was chosen as one Essence Magazine's 25 Women Shaping the World. Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Cannick.

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