

**The  
BLACK  
C o M M e n t a t o r**  
Commentary, analysis and investigations  
on issues affecting African Americans  
www.blackcommentator.com

**Novmber 20, 2008 - Issue 300**

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

[Click Here](#)

[Home](#)

**Cover Story**  
**Jesse Jackson Jr for Senate**  
**The African World**  
**By Bill Fletcher, Jr.**  
**BlackCommentator.com Executive Editor**

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

With the election of Barack Obama to the U.S. Presidency, his former Senate seat is now open. A series of discussions are unfolding as to who Illinois Governor Blagojevich should appoint. One of the more interesting names is Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr.

There are three main reasons that I am interested in seeing his appointment:

- 1 - his consistent stand on the need for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing equal, quality education for all;
- 2 - an amendment guaranteeing the individual right to vote;
- 3 - an amendment guaranteeing equal, quality healthcare.

Congressman Jackson has correctly summed up that in the absence of a federal constitutional amendment and a continued reliance of the state system, we will be nearly guaranteed that certain basic human rights will be denied large segments of society. I was particularly intrigued when I participated in a discussion with him about the matter of education.

Education, as a system, is run by each state and largely funded through property taxes. Thus, from the outset the system is almost guaranteed to be unequal on the basis of both race and class. If the tax base of a particular region is low, for instance, it is more than likely that the quality of the education will also suffer. The exact opposite occurs, of course, when the tax base is high.

Racial segregation of education was correctly challenged in the 1950s and 1960s. It was understood, contrary to the sophistry of Justice Clarence Thomas, that racial segregation is more (and worse) than a simple matter of separating people based on

racial classifications. Racial segregation is a form of oppression and this played itself out in the school system with generally inferior education for students of color.

The response to school segregation tended to be school desegregation, and specifically the busing of students. Yet, as with many reforms in the capitalist USA, it was anemic. Since busing, narrowed as it was to racial classifications, could not truly address economic differentials, there tended to be a busing of students between bad schools. White suburbanites were, due to borders, largely immune to desegregation efforts. While even among poorer schools there was some value to desegregation, it never fully addressed the question of quality education and the impact of racial segregation.

Congressman Jackson's suggestion is worth far more attention than it has received. He is proposing that public education must be enshrined in the US Constitution as a basic right just as the freedom of speech is a right to which all citizens are entitled. Moving a constitutional amendment would alter the entire discussion regarding public education including but not limited to, funding, school resources, class size, and the overall quality of the experience for our youth.

If anything I am critical of Congressman Jackson for not gathering a core of supporters who are interested in moving this amendment as a national campaign. Perhaps, if he is selected to fill the seat vacated by President-elect Obama, he will have that chance and be better situated to bring national attention to the simmering crisis of public education.

We need someone in the Senate who is prepared to change the terms of the discussion about matter such as public education, healthcare and voting. Step #1 can start with the appointment of Jackson as the junior Senator from the great state of Illinois. Step #2, however, is his helping to build a movement. Even with great ideas, he is not a savior and we should not be waiting for one.

[Click here to comment on any article  
in this issue or see what others are saying in the](#)

### **The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog**


**BlackCommentator.com** Executive Editor, Bill Fletcher, Jr., is a Senior Scholar with the [Institute for Policy Studies](#), the immediate past president of [TransAfrica Forum](#) and co-author of, [Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path toward Social Justice](#) (University of California Press), which examines the crisis of organized labor in the USA. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Fletcher.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

**Click Here**

[Home](#)

Click Here To

CONTRIBUTE TO  NOW

Click Here To

CONTACT 

Your comments are always welcome.

### **e-Mail re-print notice**

If you send us an e-Mail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is

not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002 - 2008  
www.BlackCommentator.com  
All Rights Reserved