

The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

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Curriculum Surgery Worrill's World By Dr. Conrad W. Worrill, PhD BC Columnist

Part of our repair as an African people is the continued struggle to organize to challenge the teaching of African and Africans in America history in the public schools of America. This issue should continue to be a priority in our educational organizing agenda.

Throughout the development of education in the western world, the idea of transmitting knowledge has been done through what is called a curriculum. It is through this curriculum that people are taught the values, concepts, principles, and theories that undergird the basic philosophy of any agreed upon knowledge. This agreed upon knowledge is called a discipline.

In the late 1960s, the Black Liberation Movement charged American educational institutions as being racist and white supremacist. One of the movements that developed as a result of these charges was the call for a more accurate and thorough recognition of the contributions of Africans in America and African people worldwide to be included in the curriculums of elementary, secondary, and higher education.

This movement became known as the Black Studies Movement. Throughout America, particularly on college campuses and high schools, battles unfolded for the revision of curriculums that were racist in their interpretations of history and its impact on African people.

The demands of the Black Liberation Movement were so forceful (in some instances buildings were seized by students demanding Black

Studies be taught at their schools) that many universities began to develop Black Studies programs. On the secondary and elementary level in many school districts throughout the United States task forces were developed to study, evaluate, and recommend changes in public school curriculums regarding the contributions and history of African people in the world.

It has been well over thirty years since the call was made for Black Studies and since the first Black program was established at San Francisco State University, after months of intense battle by African in America students with university officials.

During this current climate of so-called educational reform very little discussion has taken place regarding the continued racism and white supremacy of American public school curriculums. The great movement of the 1960s and 70s put the issue of Black Studies on the American agenda, but like many issues of the 1960s, they have either fallen by the wayside or have been put on the back burner.

The concern has shifted from what is being taught to African in America children to the problems with skill development in reading and math. There must be a balance in our concerns, not just regarding skill development, but for what is taught. To have African in America children skilled and proficient at reading and math but having no idea of who they are or where they came from will repeat the historical errors of education that Carter G. Woodson so insightfully discusses in his 1933 publication of *The Mis-Education of the Negro*.

We must not abandon the struggle to demand that the public school curriculums in America be changed to reflect an accurate interpretation of the history, culture, and contributions of African people in math, science, language arts, art, and social studies. At the Ninth National Convention of the National Black United Front (NBUF) in 1988, in Kansas City, Missouri, the decision was made to place education as a major priority in our National Plan of Action in the work that NBUF carries out in all of its chapters.

NBUF drew on the success of the Portland Chapter members of NBUF who were able to organize the African in America community in Portland to demand significant changes be made in what is called the baseline areas of the curriculum as it relates to African people. Some of the best African minds in the world, such as our distinguished ancestors Dr. John Henrik Clarke and Dr. Asa G. Hilliard, III were brought in as consultants to help rewrite the curriculum of the Portland

Public Schools. This document has become known as "The Portland Model" and has been implemented selectively in other school districts around the country, particularly in cities where there are NBUF Chapters. However, we are still at the embryonic stages of its implementation.

NBUF maintains that, "The issue of education when properly approached is a mass issue that when won will have a mass impact on the minds of millions of Black youth and thousands of Black youth locally. Portland NBUF has demonstrated that a well organized Black community behind a core of dedicated NBUF members can force local school boards to adopt an African Centered Program of curriculum change along with other changes that will be called for in each locality."

For the sake of our children, we must continue take on this challenge to change to public school curriculum to more adequately reflect the contributions of African and African American people in all subject areas.

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