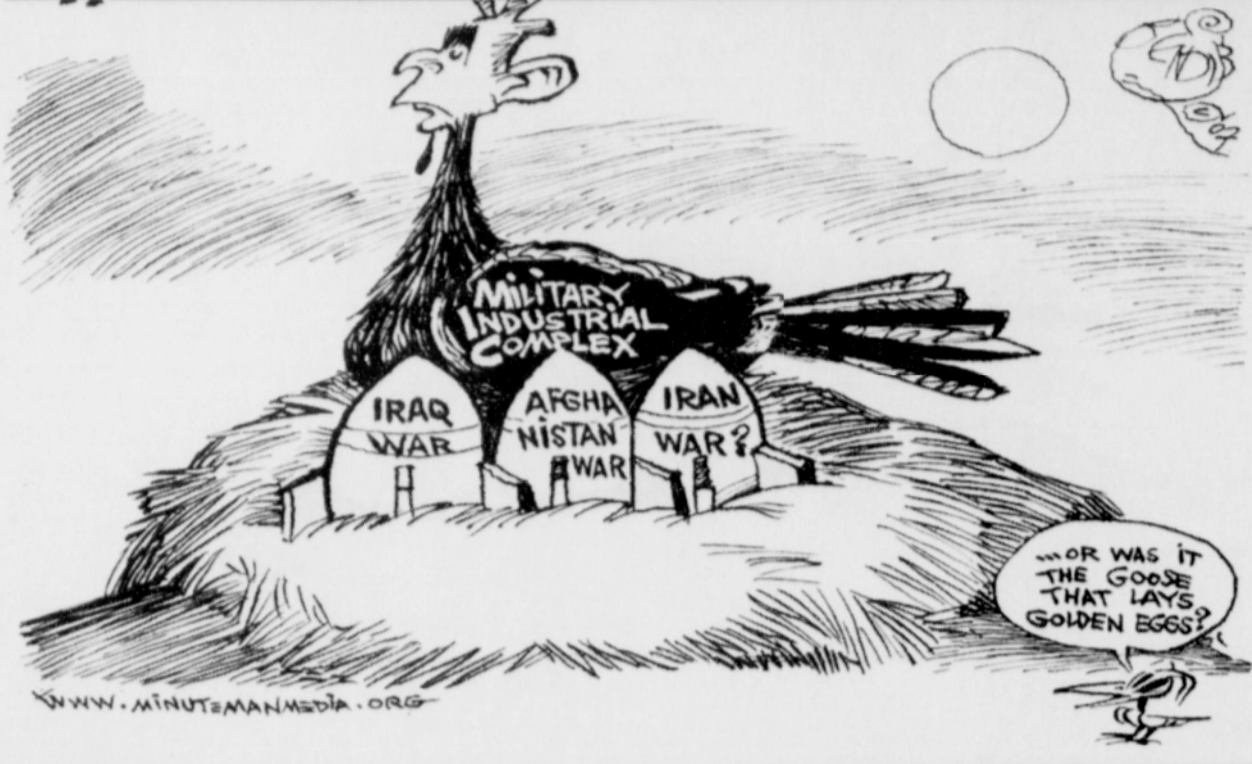


OPINION

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WHICH CAME FIRST, THE CHICKENHAWK OR THE EGG?



Alarm Bells on Campus:

The sudden decline in black male enrollment

BY MARC H. MORIAL

In a speech at the National Urban League's 2006 annual conference, Time-Warner Chairman Dick Parsons said the reason why he pursued higher education was that it was expected of him -- by his friends, parents and the community as a whole.



There was no question in the matter. He was just brought up that way.

Parsons' personal anecdote is something all African-American families should embrace and aspire to. If we demand that our children -- especially our boys -- make something of themselves and instill in them the value of education to achieve their goals, we'd have fewer behind bars or wandering the streets.

or more of students are women -- has set off alarm bells among educators and politicians alike.

Earlier this year, the Presidents' Round Table, a group of black community college presidents, joined forces with the Congressional Black Caucus to study the issue and make recommendations.

But much of that needs to start at an early age with the help of effective role models. The reason why fewer black men are going to college is that they think it's unattainable or that they're better off on the streets. With the odds so stacked against them, it's a miracle that any of these at-risk black men get into college -- let alone finish.

Where we need to focus our efforts is on these boys at an early age when they perform fairly well compared to white boys. Progress has been made in the early years in closing the achievement gap. However, a major disconnect occurs by high school: by age 17, black males are further behind their white counterparts than they are at age 9.

Somewhere down the line a growing population of black males began to deem a college education as unattainable or just not worth the investment

But it's so much easier said than done. With more black men behind bars than in college, it's difficult for young black males, especially those from one-parent households, to find adequate role models.

More than half the nation's 5.6 million black boys live in fatherless households, more than 40 percent of which are impoverished. They are educated in school districts where 21 percent of teachers have less than three years of experience -- more than twice the percentage of inexperienced teachers in majority-white districts. They live in a world where 18 percent less is spent for their education than for whites.

Since the mid-1960s, much progress has been made by blacks on the college education front. In the past decade or so -- 1993 to 2003, black enrollment climbed nearly 43 percent to more than 1.9 million students. Black men, however, made up 38 percent of this population in 2005, according to Census Bureau data. White men, on the other hand, made up slightly less than 50 percent of white college students.

The decline in numbers of black men on campus -- even at Black Colleges, where at least 60 percent

In Maryland, an education task force characterized school as "an at-risk environment for African-American male youth" and recommended that the state take steps to fix the situation "whatever the cost."

The solution could come in the form of more all-male schools such as New York City's Eagle Academy that features mentoring as well as longer school days to remove some of the distractions and obstacles standing in the way of the education of black boys.

Even in college, black males at times require special "intrusive counseling" by very committed mentors to stay on course. They tend to "come to the academic environment with incredible degrees of distraction and more often than not, not with the tools" that they need to succeed, says Malcolm B. Williams of Morehouse College.

Somewhere down the line a growing population of black males began to deem a college education as unattainable or just not worth the investment. This is exactly the attitude we must reverse in light of an increasingly high-tech economy.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

Rebuilding America's Infrastructure

Institute a public works project with job training

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

American cities are getting old. And the infrastructure that sustain those cities -- the bridges, the roads, the underground pipe systems -- are starting to break down, no longer to able efficiently operate.

The break downs of these systems are costing the American taxpayers millions in repair costs and in some cases, costing some unfortunate residents their lives.

The deadly collapse of a 40-year old bridge in Minnesota is the most recent example. The span that

stretched across the Mississippi River was declared "structurally deficient" years earlier.

Another example was last month, when a steam explosion from an 83-year old underground pipe in Man-

hattan killed one and injured nearly 40. Clean up costs were estimated to reach the millions.

The American Society of Civil Engineers says that it will take over \$1 trillion to repair the country's roads, airports and water systems over the next five years. The number is staggering, but the repairs are needed.

Also needed are jobs for those Americans who are increasingly becoming isolated from the mainstream, particularly black men. It's time we learned a lesson from history and instituted a public works project that would train black men and connect them with public improvement jobs. Such a program would save the country billions, while simultaneously saving a population that is slipping away.

The story of black men in America has always been one that breaks the heart. There are success stories. But, forever LeBron James

or Sean Combs there are dozens more who never reach their full potential.

In 2006, a study revealed that more than half of the black men in the inner city do not finish high school. By the time they reach their mid-30s, 60 percent of the black men who had dropped out of school will have spent time in prison. A high school education doesn't guarantee success: half of black men in their 20s, including those with a diploma are unemployed. It doesn't have to be this way.

Black men can help rebuild American cities. During the Great Depression, the U.S. government established the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to provide jobs and income to the unemployed.

Over the course of eight years, more than eight million Americans were hired through the WPA. The program built highways, sewers and parks, providing work to both blue and white collar workers alike. Unemployed blacks were given a portion of these jobs as well.

A similar program, one that focuses on repairing existing infrastructure and the need to empower black men could have the same positive effect on this country.

Black men deserve a similar opportunity, one that is implemented on a national scale.

Judge Greg Mathis is a national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



A program similar to the WPA that uplifts black men and addresses the needs of aging cities would be both creative and resourceful.

Wellness Within REACH Walk



A Healthy Community Starts With You!

Join Roy Jay
President and CEO of the
African American Chamber of Commerce

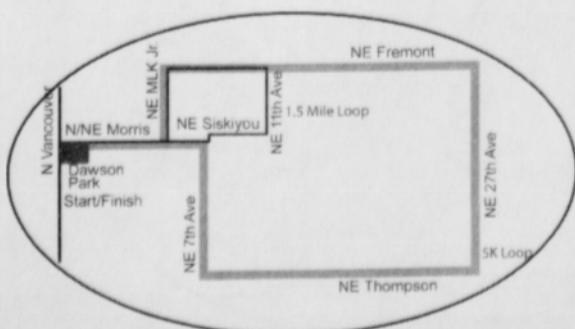
Saturday, Aug. 18th at 9:00 AM
in Dawson Park
(at N. Vancouver & Stanton)

5K Walk and 1.5 mile loop!
Music, food, & fun!

\$20 registration, children under 6 free

Discounts available for teams of 10 or more!

Contact the AAHC to register
at 503.413.1850 or
www.aahc-portland.org



Letter to the Editor Shocking Hatred

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee is shocked and appalled by recent comments made by Republican presidential candidate Congressman Tom Tancredo of Colorado.

While speaking to a group of voters in Iowa, Tancredo said "If it is up to me, we are going to explain that an attack on this homeland... would be followed by an attack on the holy sites in Mecca and Medina; that is the only thing I can think of that might deter some-

body from doing what they would otherwise do. If I am wrong, fine, tell me, and I would be happy to do something else. But you had better find a deterrent, or you will find an attack."

Unfortunately, this is not the first time that Congressman Tancredo has made such ignorant and hate-filled remarks. On a radio show in 2005, Tancredo suggested dropping nuclear bombs on the holy city of Mecca in retaliation for any terrorist attack directed against

the homeland of the United States.

Tancredo's comments serve only to encourage hatred towards Muslims of all ethnic backgrounds. His views are not shared by the US government; Deputy Spokesman Tom Casey of the State Department called Tancredo's recent comments "reprehensible" and "absolutely crazy".

ADC asks our members to contact Congressman Tancredo concerning his remarks.

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

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