

# OPINION

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## America's Ongoing Education Crisis

### Fixing our broken system

BY MARC H. MORIAL

It is graduation season in America - a bittersweet moment for thousands of young high school and college seniors who are leaving the relative comfort of classroom and campus life to pursue their dreams and find jobs in an economy that continues to struggle.

In communities of color the dilemma is even harsher. In many of our largest urban cities, for every one African American or Hispanic student who receives a high school diploma, one or more is left behind. College graduation rates are no better. Only 43 percent of African Americans who enter college, graduate - a 20 per-



cent gap compared to their white counterparts.

While it may have been true 30 years ago, that you could get a good job with less than a high school diploma, those days are long gone. In today's high-tech, knowledge economy, a college degree is the starting point for most good jobs. But, persistent achievement gaps and lagging graduation rates, especially in communities of color, are putting both the future of millions of young people and our nation at risk.

In the National Urban League's 2010 State of Black America, Education Secretary Arne Duncan puts it this way. "...The promise of a world-class education system is being deferred for African Americans all across the country... The achievement gap is unacceptably large. The

average black child is two or three grade levels behind the average white child. About half our African American students fail to graduate on time. Only one in five blacks over

League is more committed than ever to the mentoring, tutoring and scholarship programs that have always been a part of our mission. And it is why we have made ensuring that

and community college education and for proven programs like Head Start. But money and good intentions alone are not enough. True education reform calls for a change in beliefs, attitudes and behaviors on the part of all of us - from policy makers in government, to parents, teachers and students themselves.

Until we believe that every child regardless of race, background or income, can and deserves to learn. Until we create a classroom environment that says to our young people, you matter, your school matters... your future matters.

Until we take the time to mentor, tutor and volunteer in our schools, graduation season will continue to be less than all that it can be.

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

*President Obama and Arne Duncan have also placed fixing our broken education system at the top of the nation's domestic agenda.*

the age of 25 has a bachelor's degree... In short, too many in the black community are being denied the American dream. Solving the problem starts with education."

We agree. With more than a million young people dropping out of school each year and with fewer jobs demanding higher skills, America is facing a crisis in education. That's why the National Urban

every child in every community is ready for college, work and life by 2025 one of the four pillars of the National Urban League's centennial year I Am Empowered initiative.

President Obama and Arne Duncan have also placed fixing our broken education system at the top of the nation's domestic agenda. They have invested more dollars in elementary, secondary

## River of Denial in Arizona: A hot, dry bed of racism

BY BENTLEY DE BARDELABEN

Perhaps this qualifies for, "What on earth could they be thinking?"

Less than one month after signing the divisive senate bill addressing the treatment of persons suspected of being in the country without authorization, Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer signed into law a house bill that bans public schools from teaching ethnic courses to ethnic students. This bill had been pushed for

more than two years by Arizona State School Superintendent Tom Horne, who said that his goal is to prevent Latino American students from believing that they are an "oppressed minority" and thereby unable to succeed in America.

I've often heard the adage that "denial ("the Nile") isn't only a river in Egypt." It seems to me that denial has found itself coursing through the state of Arizona. In fact, I will

unashamedly call this river what it is: a hot, dry bed of racism.

In a recent interview on CNN's, Anderson 360, Tom Horne and African American scholar and professor, Rev. Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, hotly debated this controversial issue. Horne stated that teaching such classes promotes a "radical separatist agenda." Really! Mr. Horne, I believe you have confused this matter with the crazed ranting of the Tea Party.

Clearly Horne was out of his league when trying to share his pathetic points during his encounter with the dynamic Dr. Dyson. Superintendent Horne feebly attempted to base his argument on Martin Luther King Jr.'s prophetic statement that people should be "judged on the content of their character" and not on their race, a statement which he had taken out of context. King's declaration is true; yet denying students knowledge of their ethnic history is sheer madness.

Some of my greatest learning



about my ethnicity, as a young man, occurred in my Black Studies class in school. Sadly, much of this learning had been excluded from the text books in history or social studies

In fact, you are wrong when you say that we live in a land of opportunity and that all American people can achieve their dreams if they work hard. Superintendent Horne, for you to make such statements clearly reveals your white privilege.

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classes.

For me, as an African American, understanding where my people come from, what they endured, and how they've overcome has always been important. Superintendent Horne: I am no one's victim, despite that I have been the object of many racist laws and oppressive behaviors of people wielding such laws.

If you are unaware of your own privilege, then you are reckless and dangerous. Heaven forbid you are aware and are wielding your privilege intentionally to boast about it. This would qualify you as a racist. Either way, you are perpetuating an oppressive system that contrasts starkly with our nation's stated ideal of "liberty and justice for all."

So what's next for the residents and citizens of Arizona? Furthermore, what is this going to do to some of our states who are wrestling with similar issues? Time will tell, especially since this is merely phase one of a hot button political issue marching toward the next presidential election in 2012.

Bentley de Bardelaben is executive for Administration and Communications in Justice Ministries for the United Church of Christ.



A Sister of Sisters (S.O.S.)

African American Breast Cancer Survivor Support Group

Transition to Wellness ~ Mind & Body

Sponsored by: Portland Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

The Portland Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta is organizing a breast cancer survivor support group for African American Women. We would like to invite all African American Breast Cancer Survivors to join "A Sister of Sisters" (S.O.S.) - a breast cancer support group focusing on issues relating to African American women surviving breast cancer.

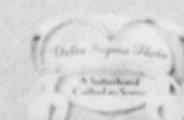
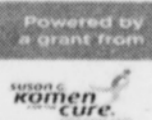
If you're an African American Breast Cancer Survivor - please join us:

Time: April 29<sup>th</sup>, 6:30PM - 8:30PM

Place: Providence Irvington Village (community room)

Address: 420 NE Mason St. / Portland, OR.

- Light refreshments will be served -



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