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From 1960 Sit-ins to Today:

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How can having a strong sense of racial identity serve as a buffer against racism?

Part of the invisibility syndrome is developed out of having a conflicted identity; one person has a perception of you, and others have another. If young kids think they're bad, but they're not, and they get treated that way they figure they might as well act like a bad kid. They get conflicted about how to be good. That can also happen in terms of racial identity. What is the appropriate way to be for someone of African American descent? A lot of afterschool programs foster character development in trying to anchor social identity in the cultural values of African and African American traditions believing that the person with a strong sense of history and cultural legacy will give them the necessary resilience and fortitude to deal with life challenges.

What do we have to be optimistic about? Where have we made progress?

We certainly have made progress in areas where I think that institutions are trying to be responsive to diversity issues. We're a long way from the goal, but there is some encouragement that there is some discussion of these issues both public and private, and there are actual things we can point to in terms of accomplishments. However, we seem to go from one generation to the next generation with a lot of problems around the youth, specifically challenges around education, and the whole issue of equity and education. I know we had Brown v. the Board of Education that was supposed to end segregation in the school system, but schools remain de facto segregated.

You have a pretty interesting background. Has that influenced your work?

Yes, because that has all been generated by a civil rights legacy. Throughout my life I've been very much interested in social justice equity, not only global, but specifically for people of African descent.

During the Jim Crow era, rac-

ism was very overt, but now it's much more subtle. What sort of challenges does this present to black parents?

Parents need to become more aware of the subtleties of racism and institutional racism, particularly in terms of policies with education, and if neighborhood schools are not achieving goals. So parenting is being part of school policy. More parent involvement really should be a central value of family. One of the things I've written about is the importance of family in conveying to children values and the necessity of having some sort of knowledge of the social and cultural history of people of African descent in this country.

You said we don't have the metrics to fully assess the achievement gap. What do you mean by that?

Well, we have the metrics in terms of tests for specific content areas, like measuring language achievement. We don't have sufficient tests to understand the social and emotional well being of a particular child relative to their capacity to learn.

DNA Solves Murder

A man who strangled a Portland woman 23 years ago has been sentenced to 20 years in prison after a police cold case unit matched his DNA to the crime scene.

James Samuel Owens, 67, pleaded no contest last month to manslaughter in the death of Nancy Eileen Converse, who was 42 at the time. Her body was found in bed at her Cascadian apartment complex in north Portland by a building superintendent in February 1987.

Portland police detectives questioned more than 300 neighbors, friends and others, including Owens, but were unable to link him to the crime. The Portland Police Bureau Cold Case Unit began investigating in 2006, getting a DNA match. But they also had to track down old witnesses.

Owens was sentenced Friday in Multnomah County Circuit Court

Irving Park Tennis Camp

On Monday, June 21, Kids N' Tennis, Inc. will celebrate its 24th year of sponsoring summer tennis camps at Irving Park.

This youth program is affiliated with the U.S. Tennis Association and National Junior Tennis League established by the late tennis great Arthur Ashe.

Mr. Ashe felt that tennis and education should go hand in hand. Portland's Kids N' Tennis program has offered tutorial assistance whenever possible.

The camp will run six-weeks from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., Monday through Thursday. You can register on site on June 21, 22, 23, and 24 or request registration forms via emails. Contact Don Johnson at Kids N' Tennis, 503-880-0582.

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