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OPINION

What Black Parents Must Do This Summer

Activities to make up for the education gap

BY JAWANZA KUNJUFU

There is a three year educational gap between black and white students. Many people love to believe it's due to income, fatherlessness, educational attainment of the parent, and lack of parental involvement. I believe a major reason for the gap is we continue to close schools for the summer as if we are an agrarian economy.

Very few black youth will be farming this summer. If you multiply three months by 12 years you will see the three year gap. There is no shortcoming with black youth if their schools remained open during the summer and/or their parents kept them academically engaged.

Many middle-income parents who value education enroll their children in some type of academic experience during the summer. They also visit libraries, museums, zoos and colleges. Other parents allow their children to sleep longer, play more video games,

watch more television and play basketball until they can't see the hoop. These students will have to review the same work they had mastered in May in September.



Black parents cannot allow their child to lose three months every year. Black parents cannot say they cannot afford the library.

many people were staring at him. His wife and children had to tell him he was the only black man in the building! I am appealing to every father to take his children this summer to the library, museum, and the zoo. I am appealing to every mother if he won't, you will.

We need every parent to make sure their child reads at least one book per week and to write a book report. I am reminded of the formula Sonya Carson used

turn off the television, read a book and write a report that her sister would grade!

I have a theory that I can go into your house and within five minutes tell you the type of student who lives there and predict their future. I believe that engineers, doctors, lawyers, accountants etc. need different items in their house than ballplayers, rappers and criminals. I am very concerned when I visit a house that has more cds and

reasons boys dislike reading is because of the content. The set is titled Best Books for Boys. We also have one for girls, parents and teachers.

Enjoy your summer. Let's close the gap. I look forward to your child's teacher asking your child what did you do for the summer? And your child answering we went to the library, museum, zoo, colleges and other great educational places.

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It's free! Most museums have discounted days. A friend of mine shared his experience with me when he took his family to the museum. He wondered why so

to develop Ben Carson to become the best pediatric neurosurgeon. This low-income single parent, with a third grade education, had enough sense to tell her sons to

downloads than books.

My company, African American Images has designed a special collection of books for boys. Research shows one of the major

Jawanza Kunjufu is a writer, educator, publisher from Chicago who has dedicated his career to addressing the ills afflicting black culture in the United States.

Juneteenth Still Resonates in Powerful Ways

It reminds us how far we have yet to go

BY JESSICAH PIERRE

On June 19, 1865, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas. They carried some historic news: Slavery had finally and completely ended, they declared.

All of America's enslaved people were now free, some two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

That day in June would soon become "Juneteenth," a holiday still celebrated in communities across the United States.

African Americans have now been free from slavery for over 150 years. Over the course of those years, the United States has made some appreciable and even impressive progress. In 1964, passage of the Civil Rights Act toppled Jim Crow. A year later, the Voting Rights Act challenged discriminatory voting laws.



We've even seen the election — and re-election — of the nation's first black president.

So why, amid all this progress, does the Juneteenth holiday still resonate so powerfully for so many Americans?

Because Juneteenth reminds us how far we have yet to go. Racial inequality remains one of the top issues of our time. Black households,

research shows, continue to lag economically behind their white counterparts, in both income and wealth.

Last summer, the Institute for Policy Studies and the Corporation for Enterprise Development explored that inequality in a report called the The Ever-Growing Gap, which focused on the essential role wealth plays in achieving financial security and opportunity.

Over the past 30 years, the report found, the average wealth of white families grew at three times the rate of growth for black families. If those trends continue, black families would have to work another 228 years to amass the

amount of wealth white families already hold today.

That's almost as long as the 245 years that legal slavery stained colonial America.

Over the course of those years, slave labor built the backbone of America's economy — and gave white families a 245-year head start on building household wealth and overcoming economic insecurity.

Juneteenth helps us remember this history — and we need to remember.

The conventional narrative around wealth building in America simply ignores slavery and its aftermath. Those with more than ample wealth, the narrative goes, fully merit what they have. And others merit less.

"Most people look at the story of inequality through the lens of deservedness: People get what they deserve," writes my colleague Chuck Collins in his book *Born on Third Base*.

The standard narrative, he says, implies "that people are poor because they don't try as hard, have made mistakes, or lack wit and wisdom." And the rich, the same

story goes, have worked "harder, smarter, or more creatively."

This "deservedness" narrative never acknowledges the discrimination and other barriers that have blocked black economic progress, or the public policies that have kept these barriers intact — things like housing and employment discrimination, mass incarceration, and tax policies that favor the wealthy over poor people of all

colors.

It's time to take a close look at federal policies and the role they play in keeping the growth of black wealth stagnant. In honor of Juneteenth, let's rededicate ourselves to closing the racial wealth divide.

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