



**“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”**

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The Skanner Newspaper, established in October 1975, is a weekly publication on, published each Wednesday by IMM Publications Inc.,

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The Skanner is a member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association

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## On Jalen Rose's Black America

**“I** hated Duke. I felt like they only recruited Black players that were Uncle Toms.” -Jalen Rose

“Jalen seems to change the usual meaning of those very vitriolic words into his own meaning, i.e., blacks from two-parent, middle-class families. He leaves us all guessing exactly what he believes today.” -Grant Hill

The story of Black America comes from many sources; it is a dilemma that has been analyzed and captured in politically correct language, gangsta rap, movies, and just about every other genre of communication and media. The Grant Hill/Jalen Rose debate is an extension of this story. It's about how the language of “we” from the 60s became “us and them” later. It's about those left behind to fend for themselves in the harsh world of inner-city poverty. The debate is necessary; and it could prove to be a teachable, healing moment if handled correctly.

Currently the state of Black America stands at a crossroads. The crossroads is not necessarily about what's possible—it's about the chasm between those who have remained behind in spite of the tremendous strides of many other Blacks. It's about:

1. Out of wedlock rates (72 percent)
2. Suicide as the third leading cause of death
3. Homicide as the leading cause of death for males aged 13-34
4. 1/3 of Black males being supervised in some form by the judicial system
5. A nearly double unemployment rate for Blacks 15 percent versus 8 percent for Whites

### L.E.A.D.E.R.S.H.I.P. 1ST

#### Executive Team Members

The axiom that lies before us is this: We can do better; we simply must.

Jalen Rose spoke from a deep personal wound and exposed the “Us vs. Them” mentality. What he alludes to in this sports documentary is a perfect microcosm and window into the underlying realities our communities face. Blacks have been handed the ultimate identity crisis via the Willie Lynch strategy. This still plagues us today because we have allowed dysfunction, distrust and our personal insecurities to become the developers of our social norms. Rose played at Detroit Southwestern, and those of us who knew him, and lived in that environment, understand where he is coming from. Chris Webber's

focus.

The struggle continues, and those ‘without,’ frequently place guilt upon those who ‘have.’ This mental STRONG HOLD divides Black America. The foundations of many inner city youth are shattered annually when they fail to realize their athletic dreams.

They trusted their athletic ability to deliver them out of the hands of

how less “Black”? To suggest this was Rose's intended viewpoint is a matter of opinion—but it is the implied perception. We shouldn't apologize for parents who attain careers and education better than previous generations. We shouldn't apologize for living in neighborhoods where barred windows, graffiti and gunshots are not the norm. This is a disservice to our

### Are Black parents who raise their children in less toxic environments for access to competitive, quality education ‘Uncle Toms’

their neighborhoods, devastating home environments, and a life of bitterness and resentment. These aspirations were mostly based on the previous and continued choices of their parents. The introduction of sports—for most inner city youth—serves as a hope for single struggling parents to find a way out as well. It's a tragedy and many of them will fall victim to the system based on their daily interactions with friends, family, and the perverse mindsets of the men who infiltrate these environments, where the epidemic of fatherlessness is the norm.

The remedy for this lies in changing our perceptions. The haves can look down on the have nots and the have nots can't Uncle Tom-“ize” those who do better. Are Black parents who raise their children in less toxic environments for access to competitive, quality education “Uncle Toms”? Are Black parents who work multiple jobs, pursue education for the betterment of themselves, children and generations afterward, some-

ancestors who fought and died for us to be valued as “equal,” “human” and not “property.” Why would we deny ourselves this destiny? Yet those of us who have done well should not abandon the sprawling masses of Blacks not so fortunate. The solution is “we.” Use the word frequently. The solution is a new dialogue where classism does not divide us. Join our MC2U challenge; let's continue the conversation on how to empower our communities.

*This article was written by the Executive Team Members of L.E.A.D.E.R.S.H.I.P. 1ST, all who are African-American. The L.E.A.D.E.R.S.H.I.P. 1ST Executive Team consists of: Derrick Boles (President & CEO), Chris Cannon (At-Risk Youth Prevention Specialist) of Detroit, MI and San Antonio, TX; Nicole Hayes (Media and Production Services Director) of Topeka, KS and Washington, D.C., and Hakim Hazim (Intervention Specialist) of Topeka, KS and Boise, ID.*

### Jalen seems to change the usual meaning of those very vitriolic words into his own meaning

story is different. He went to a private school, was raised by both parents, and grew up in an affluent household. Rose was speaking from the perspective of a young Black man without an identity. At times, young Black men struggle during their pre-teen and high school years. They have questions on what, who and how they should be as Black men. As a people we all have different stories, backgrounds, advantages and disadvantages ... but it's the “We” in this sentence that should be the

## The Federal Budget? Don't Cut Head Start

**A**fter being urged by President Obama to invest in our nation's students, you would think our federal lawmakers would do anything they could to preserve a program that sets the foundation for a lifetime of achievement, right? Wrong.

### MATHIS' MIND

#### Judge Greg Mathis

proven itself to be one of the United States' most successful social experiments and an efficient

### If the Republicans were serious about balancing the budget they'd take a look at programs with inflated and misappropriated budgets, starting with the military

Once again, Republicans are moving to cut a program that helps average Americans and, in this case, specifically the poor.

The Head Start program is yet another social program the Republican Party has targeted for major cuts. Head Start provides educational and health services to low income children and their families. Head Start has been one of the most studied early education programs since it began more than 40 years ago. The program has

use of taxpayer dollars. Research shows students who complete Head Start do better both socially and academically and are less likely to drop out of high school.

Yet, Republicans want to cut the program by more than 22-percent. They say Head Start isn't as effective as supporters claim. To be fair, some studies show that achievement levels of some Head Start attendees start to drop off after first grade.

However, this could speak to the

quality of the school they enroll in after the program. Additionally, the program's opponents say too much money is spent maintaining the program and not enough on enrolling new students.

It's not clear if the Republican Party is against poor people, working mothers, low income children or all three. All of the cuts it's leaders have moved to make have been to programs the support and empower the poor. If they are successful in taking away the building blocks that many have used to create a foundation for future success, America's middle class will continue to shrink and the number of families living below the poverty

take a look at programs with inflated and misappropriated budgets, starting with the military. Sure, it's critical that the U.S. has a strong military in place but studies have shown that program is rife with wasteful spending. It's not the only area where money is either being wasted or being misused. A good, honest budget scrub will show the Republicans – and Democrats – just which programs can handle significant cuts.

If you believe in the power of Head Start and can testify to how it helped a child – past or present – in your life, call your elected officials. Let them know that they absolutely cannot cut Head Start.

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line will increase.

If the Republicans were serious about balancing the budget they'd

Our children's – and our nation's – success depends on it.

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