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The Skanner Newspaper, es-
tablished in October 1975, is a
weekly publication, published
every Wednesday by IMM Publi-
cations Inc.

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National Newspaper Publishers
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Publishers Association.

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Opinion

Making Beautiful Music with Warren Shadd

Warren Shadd is making history while making beautiful music! He’s a third generation musician; a second-generation piano technician; and now the first African American piano manufacturer! The “Shadd Pianos” are not only being played at the Vatican, but are the pianos currently used on the set of the massively successful Fox television show, *Empire*!

The Shadd Pianos are called the “Stradivarius of pianos.” They are made by a master musician for those who love “masterful piano music.”

Warren Shadd’s generational talent can be traced back to his father, one of the top piano technicians/tuners in America. Shadd senior taught his son everything he knew about tuning and preparing a piano for beautiful music.

Initially, Warren was more interested in the performance side of music. Then one day, while visiting an older musician, Warren was asked to make the piano “sound better.” After he worked on the piano for a few minutes, the old man said, “You make this piano sound better than it has ever sounded! You need to have your name on that piano rather than Steinway’s!”

That day, Warren Shadd decided to create his own high end piano, with his name on it! Over the past ten years, War-



Willie Jolley
NNPA
Columnist

ren has struggled to “bootstrap” his piano company; battling setback after setback and disappointment after disappointment. Yet, he refused to give up on his dream to create the best sounding piano ever made!

He had thrown three proto-

“He refused to give up on his dream to create the best sounding piano ever made!

types in the trash, because he didn’t like the quality, even though many musicians said they were fantastic! Warren continued to say, “Not good enough! It’s not right yet! It has to be better!”

Today, Warren Shadd is the CEO of Shadd Pianos. In addition to the Vatican and being used on the hit show, *Empire*, his pianos are being played on American Idol. Richwood Smallwood (the great Gospel maestro and pianist) used a Shadd Piano for his new live album recording. Smallwood

even talked about his magnificent piano during the concert!

In addition, Shadd has created another instrument that is both acoustic and digital. It’s an acoustic hybrid with modern electronic tools to help musicians compose, edit or teach. In conjunction with Dr. Phillip Pearl, Chief of Neurology at Children’s National Medical Center (who is also a jazz & classical pianist), Shadd has even authored a manuscript detailing the technical changes that augment the use of the his new instruments

which assists individuals with neuro-developmental disabilities.

This includes special features to help persons with vision loss, which can read music by Braille. For people with hearing loss there’s special vibratory seating so they can feel the vibrations of the music’s frequencies! And Alzheimer’s patients, who’ve lost their verbal skills, can still express their musical language with Shadd’s technology.

Warren Shadd is an entrepreneur and maestro who has weathered many storms and

beat the odds. He willingly shares his secrets with others on how they can do the same.

Here are powerful lessons Warren Shadd learned while refusing to give up on his dreams!

- Be willing to go through the ring of fire to get to the prize – your dreams!
- Just because it has not been done, does not mean it cannot be done! So Go Do It!
- Think Big. Think Innovation!
- Fear will come to visit, but you need not let fear stay. Kick fear out!
- Some will stop when they hear the word “No.” But winners continue to get to the “Yes!”
- Excellence costs. The question is, “Are you willing to pay the price!”
- Learn to differentiate between constructive criticism and destructive criticism – the haters.
- Focus on your dreams, not on the haters!
- After each disappointment, pick yourself up off the canvas. Get yourself together. Get back in the fight. Keep fighting!
- Affirm daily – “Failure is not an option!”

Charters and Heavy Testing Hurt Our Schools

Across the country, parents have been in revolt against high-stakes standardized testing, with kids tested over and over again while creativity is cut out of classroom curricula. Parents – particularly in targeted urban schools from Chicago to Boston – are also marching against the forced closing of neighborhood schools, displacing kids and shutting down needed neighborhood centers.

Now there is more and more evidence that the parents have it right – and the deep-pocket “reformers” are simply wrong.

First, the Obama Administration – which has pushed high-stakes testing as central to its education agenda – announced that kids were being tested too often, with too much school time devoted to preparing for and taking required tests. In what a writer for the *New Yorker* described as a major “*mea culpa*,” the administration now recommends that standardized testing be limited to 2 percent of class time. Maybe music, art and creativity will have a chance once more.



Jesse Jackson
NNPA
Columnist

Second, a report by the Center for Media and Democracy on charter schools – the centerpiece of the so-called reformers’ agenda – reports that some \$3.7 billion in federal money has been larded onto charter schools in the past

“The result is often a simple rip-off: schools that never open or open for a few months and shut down

two decades with virtually no accountability. The result is often a simple rip-off: schools that never open or open for a few months and shut down. Some highly touted cyber charters – schools featuring online courses – are, as Education Week reported, essentially useless, like not going to school at all. Others, like the highly touted New York Suc-

cess Academy Schools, apparently boost their test scores by identifying low-performing students who have “got to go” and finding ways to get rid of them.

And now the National Assessment of Education Progress, the gold standard for measuring progress, reports that American kids have lost ground in math, and either were stagnant (4th graders) or worse (8th graders) in reading.

Charters are spreading like kudzu; wall-to-wall standard-

teachers; they train, respect and pay them. They don’t set up private charters and drain money from public education; they devote more resources to the poorest students, not less. They don’t do repeated high-stakes standardized testing; they evaluate teachers and students carefully, mentor them and improve them.

The school “reformers” are hurting, not helping. Closing neighborhood schools too often divorces parents from their students’ schools. De-meaning teachers is leading to higher turnover, when experience is central to becoming a good teacher. Repeated standardized testing takes the joy out of learning, making kids less likely to find their strength.

As Jeff Bryant of the Education Opportunity Network writes, parents are driving an “education spring,” revolting against an elite reform agenda that is driving away good teachers, undermining public schools, and draining funds and fun from our public schools. Parents are right to keep the pressure on.

ized testing is nearly universal – and the parents are right: It isn’t working.

The reality, as National Education Association President Lily Eskelsen Garcia has pointed out, is that the nations that have outperformed the U.S. in recent years don’t do the things that the deep-pockets reformers have been touting. They don’t terrorize