

“Education”

The information of what we have to be proud of is not getting out to our children. Consequently, they grow up not being proud of anything remotely connected to themselves.

David Lemieux

100 percent intelligent Black child

By Donna Jones

Thirteen years of dissatisfaction

Ignorance is a disease of the mind. Education is its only cure. As an individual who has gone through thirteen years of the Canadian school system I have seen the promotion of ignorance and misunderstanding among young Black students by the public school system. Black History programs as part of the educational curriculum simply do not exist. It was not until I reached the post-secondary level of my education that I got the opportunity to take any subjects that dealt strictly with Black studies. Both in elementary and secondary school history was, for me, Christopher Columbus, Confederation, European revolutions, and the like. Any knowledge that I possessed about my history and the major contributions Black people have made to our society was definitely not acquired in school. This alone is cause for concern.



photo • David Sutherland

we do, as a race, to help correct the present situation?

I spoke to several University students all of whom have gone through at least eight years of the Canadian public school system. All of these students informed me that they did not have any subjects in elementary or high school that dealt strictly with Black studies. Many of the students that I talked to felt that if we could employ properly qualified Black teachers to teach Black children about the importance of their history, in schools designed specifically for Black students, it would be beneficial. Many students also said it was the responsibility of parents to help their children in understanding their culture and historical importance in Canadian society.

By far the most popular solution suggestion made by the students was to have Black studies introduced into the schools as a part of the curriculum. This would help Black students to be part of the text rather than be on the outside looking in.

A professional conclusion

To end my research I spoke with Epidemiologist, Dr. Delroy Lowden who did a study on depression and parental bonding in West Indian adolescence, through the University of Toronto.

According to Lowden it is not in the interest of school administrations for all students to do well. Lowden said the system is set so that only a small number of students manage to squeeze through and go on to become successful. According to Lowden, it is “dangerous” for West Indian males to go to school. Lowden said Black males are not expected to do well and are therefore more likely to be diagnosed as having learning disabilities.

Lowden said his studies also showed a significant number of Black males who have achieved high IQ scores still end up in correctional institution. The teachers have low expectations of the Black males therefore, regardless of their academic abilities, they have a less likely chance of succeeding.

It is imperative for Canadian society to become aware that children, especially Black children, are faced with an on-going dilemma within the educational system. And it is up to us to find solutions for the future generations that are to come.

Kids Talk

I spoke to several Black students between the ages of seven and twenty to find out about the present conditions of the school system. As

times are changing and many are becoming politically aware, I assumed that by now Black history would be a part of schools agenda.

But after speaking to students I realized I was wrong. Of the ten students I spoke to, all informed me they have no classes whether at the elementary or secondary levels, that deal with Black history. The focus of these children’s education was on Canadians of European extraction.

Of these ten students only one could name a Black inventor while more than half could name at least two white ones. These children’s past is being kept from them. They know little of the struggle of their people, and they are oblivious to the fact that their forbearers were a part of Canadian history as much as any other Canadian individual. This is the pattern of education beginning with Kindergarten and continuing all the way up to the OAC level.

“Bored of education”

There has been a growing concern within the Black community about number of Black students who fail to graduate at the secondary level with other class members. Is there a correlation between the failure rate of Black students and the current education system?

Many teachers simply overlook the problem of poor achievers especially if they are Black. Teachers encourage Black students to participate in sports for the benefit of the school but do not help them academically.

The education system, as it exists, does not assist in providing the

proper tools for motivating Black students. If Black studies were incorporated in the public school system, students would develop a sense of pride and in turn would try harder to achieve academic success.

Young children know all about the great European artists, inventors, and philosophers, but very little about the Black ones.

According to Kevin Jacobs, a York University student in his second year, “The only thing I learned while in school was that Black people were cotton pickers and Slaves.” If this is all Black youth are learning in school we should be very proud of those of us who have managed to debrief the school system and have been able to make it to the top.

EUROPEAN HIST



graphic • Leo Campbell

Solutions

It is clear that there is definitely a problem. The question is what can

Curriculum

- I must speak bi/lingual
neither one of them mine
- I must study centuries of history
none of it mine
- I must read a thousand authors
none of them mine
- I hear a thousand voices
none of them speak to me
- not one of them speak of me

Wayne Salmon

I am not Entirely Obscure

- I see you talk-n’ Teach
but
I can’t hear a word you say.

Wayne Salmon