**Moliere Speech [No. 15983]**

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Remarks by Mr. Burnell Moliere in connection with the observance of Black History Month at the [name] Baptist Church of [city] on [date].

ladies and gentlemen . . . brothers and sisters . . . :

fifty years ago this past july, our government brought forth upon this continent a massive document WHICH they called: *“a report on equality of education oppor-tunity in america.”*  this publication soon came to be known AS *“The coleman report,”* named after the johns hopkins professor who led the research team whose findings the report summarized.

and what do you think professor coleman and his co-horts discovered about the equality of educational opportunity in america half a century ago?

WELL, they found that it didn’t exist. not for poor black folk, it didn’t, or for other minorities, either. more than a DOZEN YEARS after the Brown-VERSUS-BOARD-of-educa-tion decision declared that “separate-but-equal” was un-american and illegal, the researchers found that the pub-lic schools attended by poor minority kids HAD re-mained segregated by race almost as extensively as they’d been before the supreme court’s milestone decision.

the disparity in funding for schools in poor neighboor-hoods had remained pretty much as LOPSDED AS it was before.

black kids were still graduating high school at much lower rates than white kids were.

and even among those black KIDS who *did* manage to get through high school, the vast majority were less well educated and less well prepared for life as an adult than their white counterparts were.

THAT WAS half a century AGO.

surely things have changed since then . . . haven’t they?

unfortunately, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, I MUST TELL YOU that THE answer is *No, NOT MUCH*.

in 1965 the federal government launched the “head start” program, AND president bush’s “no child left be-hind” program kicked in 36 years later . both of these EFFORTS were aimed at least partially at CORRECTing the CONTINUING disparities in black/ white education, and they both certainly did some good. but both soon became infected, not surprinzgly, by bloat, inefficiency, and politics. and as a consequence, ACCORDiNG tO A report in *u.s. news & word report* a year ago, june:

*“the achievement gap between white and black students has barely narrowed over the last 50 years. the average 12th grade black MATCH student STILL PLACES only in the 19th percentile. In reading, the achievement gap has nar-rowed slightly, but the average black student still scores at just the 22nd percentile. BY EVERY TANGIBLE MEASURE — FROM QUALIFIED TEACHERS TO CURRICULUM OF-FERINGS TO INFRASTRUCTURAL INADEQUACIES — SCHOOLS WITH GREATER NUMBERS OF BLACK STUDENTS HAD SIGNIFICANTLY FEWER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THEM THAN SCHOOLS SERV-ING MOSTLY WHITE STUDENTS.”*

and so brothers and sisters, IT SHOULD BE CLEAR TO you THAT we’ve ACTUALLY had a crisis in black education in america ALMOST FOREVER. . . we’re facing a crisis in black education in america RIGHT NOW . . . and MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT: this SAME crisis IS gonna be with us tomorrow, and the next day, and the day after that, AND YEAR AFTER YEAR FOR***EVER*** after that — unless and until ***we-***all de-cide to do something about it.

[PAUSE.]

the federal government ain’t gonna do anything about it, i can guarantee you that. WHY . . . DO YOU REALIZE THAT IF PRESIDENT NIXON HAD DECLARED A “WAR ON IGNORANCE” ALONG WITH HIS “WAR ON CANCER” BACK IN 1971; AND IF THE GOVERNMENT HAD SPENT THE SAME $95 BILLION ON EDUCATION REFORM THAT IT HAS ON FIGHTING CANCER, I GUARANTEE YOU WE’D’VE LONG SINCE ERADICATED IGNORANCE, WHILE CANCER CONTINUES TO PLAGUE MANKIND the world OVER.

I’LL ALSO GUARANTEE YOU THAT THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION WILL NOT BE A FRIEND TO BLACK PEOPLE. HE IS A RACIST AT HEART AND HIS ADMINISTRATION IS RACIST TO THE CORE. I have an associate WHO lives just outside of detroit, and HE tells me that trump’s newly-appointed secretary of education — betty de vos, A MICHIGAN MILLIONAIRESS — is about as white and conservative and hypocritical as they come; and if anyone in the black community’s expecting any help from this lady . . . y’all’d better think again.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT’S NOT GONNA FIX IT, EITHER, MOSTLY BECAUSE THEY CAN’T. POOR KIDS LIVE IN POOR NEIGHBOR-HOODS. POOR NEIGHBORHOODS HAVE POOR SCHOOLS. AND THEY HAVE POOR SCHOOLS BECAUSE POOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS LACK THE MONEY TO PROVIDE EVEN SUB-PAR MAINTENANCE OF THEIR SCHOOL BUILDINGS OR TO HIRE THE BEST TEACHERS OR EVEN TO HAVE ENOUGH BOOKS FOR their STUDENTs.

SO I ASK YOU, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: IF WE CAN’T COUNT ON the GOVERNMENT, THEN WHO’S GONNA FIX THIS MESS?

WHO’S GONNA STEP up AND SAY, *“ENOUGH!”?*

WHO’S GONNA FINALLY SAY, *“WE’RE SICK OF SEEING OUR SCHOOLS PRODUCING IGNORANT GRADUATES AND EVEN DUMBER DROP-OUTS.”*

who’s gonna finally realize that our children ***are*** the only future we’ve got, and yet that future just looks like it’s gonna be a bleak repetition of the past?

the answer to all these questions is the same answer, and that answere is. . . ***you!***

it’s you and it’s me.

it’s all of us working together to make sure our kids get an education that prepares them to be mature adults and productive members of society.

it’s every neighborhood banding together to explore ways in which we can pool even our meagre resources to augment or supplement the education our kids are getting at school.

if the circle of poverty and ignorance is to be broken, it’s not going to be broken in washington or in baton rouge. it’ll be broken right ***here*** — here in our own neighborhoods. It’ll be broken child by child, house by house, block by block, highrise by highrise, school by school.

we’ve got to stop thinking “big picture,” because the big picture is drawn and controlled by politicians, corpor-ate nabobs, other mugwumps who mostly don’t care about poor folk, and especially not about black poor folk! we’ve got to focus on the “little picture,” things that can have an impact on the very smallest scale, like the scale of a single young black kid, in a poor neighbor-hood, with just his momma at home, and [damned/darned] little money to spare.

what kinds of grass-roots kinds of things could a family or a neghborhood or a school district could do to en-hance this kid’s educational attainment?

here’re just a few things that i could think of:

**• Number one:** if you’re truly committed to taking the education of your children seriously, then you’ve really ***got*** to get your hands on a computer, or at least arrange access to one. and you’ve gotta learn how to use it. it’s not difficult. if ***i*** can do it, you can do it. but surely you must realize the kids are learning more and more of their lessons on the internet these days; and if we’re gonna give ‘em any sort of intelligent guidance to’em then we’d better learn the basics of computers, the internet, and all that other technological stuff that kids in even our poorest neighborhoods seem to have mastered these days.

**• number two.** organize a neighborhood “tutor’s corps” made up of volunteers of the group who’d establish a calendar of regular tutorial sessions, in all the core subjects; and then the kids of any members of the group could sche-dule appointments and receive free tutoring whenever they needed to.

**•** **number three**: either as individuals or banded together in citizen’s support committees, explore the plethora of free, certified, online learning programs that are now avail-able on the internet; they provide complete, easy-to-use, self-paced learning curriculums at all levels from kindergarden thru 12th grade. many of these courses provide both solo and group learning formats, and many also include live-chat and classroom-instruction options. You should really check a few of these web-sites out. the vast majority of ‘em are totally free; and if your child takes advantage of all the re-sources available within any of these online “school,” it’s really like giving your kid a top-shelf private-school education without ever leaving home — or spending the money!

what else can you do? well . . .

**• NUMBER FOUR.** you could organize an annual fundraising event to help the school or district you support defray some of the operating costs or extracurricular activities not adequately covered by the school’s millage budget.

**• NUMBER five.** put a collection jar — a piggy bank — in every home into which family members would deposit their loose change during the school year, then we’d turn the cash in dur-ing a year-ending ceremony.

**• NUMBER SIX.** volunteer as a classroom helper or teaching assis-tant at your children’s schools. this is both a great way to see first hand what’s going on in our kids’ class-rooms, but it also shows the school’s faculty that we’re taking a serious interest in the quality of our kids’ education.

there is in the old hebrew bible a saying that by saving a single life, one saves all mankind. i truly believe that if we could by our communal effort break just one gener-ation of black youth out of the chains of ignorance and poverty by which they seem forever to be ensnared, we can at least lay the groundwork for a new flowering of black pride, black accomplishment, and black leader-ship throughout this great nation!

thank you, and amen!

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