

# WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUR SCHOOLS

By Reverend Albert B. Cleage Jr., Contributing Editor

Last week we underscored the very important fact that the securing of competent principals, trained in human relations and capable of interpreting and understanding sociocultural phenomena, is an essential first step in any process designed to increase the educational effectiveness of our public schools. For obvious reasons this "first step" is especially important in the case of schools serving transitional communities, or economically, socially, and culturally disadvantaged groups. It is not enough for educational administrators to throw up their hands and say; "The problem is too big, We have no solution. We don't know what to do!"

The problem of how to give an adequate education to underprivileged and disadvantaged children is difficult and complex. Certainly the social disorganization incidental to racial segregation and discrimination is reflected in the personalities and behavior patterns of Negro children. Certainly these "problem personalities" and "problem behavior patterns" are complicating factors which must be realistically faced and dealt with by our schools and our educators.

These problems which are but incidental overtones to the American race problem are not being realistically faced and dealt with by our schools and our educators! The hush-hush study of our Detroit Schools which should have been released months ago will make this fact patently clear to all (if it is finally released as it was first presented to the Detroit Board of Education!) The report will show that a Negro child in Detroit has only about 50% of the same chance that a white child has of securing an "education" in the Detroit public schools. Most Negro children attend school in old out-moded inadequate buildings. Most Negro children attend schools in which the Principal is less interested in securing available supplies than in building the reputation of "a money-saver." Most Negro children attend schools staffed with inferior teachers who despise the children they are forced to teach. The report will indicate that many teachers in our Detroit system are relics of the stone-age in their conception of human relationships. They are completely unequipped for service in a heterogeneous metropolitan urban area. White teachers who refer to Negro students as "you people" infest most of our schools. Children in widely separated schools, report statements like this, "It's the way you act, that's why people everywhere hate you." One teacher in Junior High School

sits before the class periodically and cries as she remembers "how nice the school use to be before you people came and ruined it!" Another teacher tells her class condescendingly, "We can't expect any more from you people, you just don't have sense enough to act right. If I had my way I'd send you all back to Africa!" And then there are the principals who advise their teachers, "There's nothing we can do for these kids. Don't knock yourself out, they just don't have it." The report will show that first grade Negro children show a normal intelligence curve, by the time they reach the fifth grade they are one year retarded in achievement. By the time they reach Junior High School they are two years retarded in achievement. By the time they reach high school they are three years retarded in achievement in Reading, English and Arithmetic - and this will be true of all center city schools! The report will show that the Negro child has an alarmingly high rate of failures, drop-outs and low achievement due to lack of motivation.

There are obviously many ways of interpreting these facts. Some difference of opinion as to the best interpretation has no doubt accounted for some of the delay in the publication of the report ..(that and a vain hope that it can be released to the press on the same day we send five astronauts to the moon or concurrent with the Second Coming of Christ. Many Detroit educators would like to interpret the report in terms of "inadequate inferiority." Quaint as the idea may sound, there are teachers and principals in the Detroit system who would accept this as a logical "explanation."

For all the people who will read the report and seek "explanations" in racial "inferiority," we would like to point out a few elementary facts. First, science has completely destroyed the rational foundation for all theories of racial inferiority and superiority. In our modern world, only a fool would attempt to explain anything in terms of racial inferiority. Our schools must deal realistically with the established American patterns of Race, Prejudice, Discrimination, and resulting social disorganization, without excusing failures upon grounds of racial difference. There is nothing being taught to any school anywhere in the world which cannot be taught to any Negro child, if the proper educational techniques are used. The failure of our schools to teach the Negro child, is not the failure of the Negro child, but the failure of our schools!

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Following the Civil War educators from the North went South to teach the Negro freedmen. They went from Yale and Harvard and the elegant schools of New England to teach the newly emancipated slaves. They taught these slaves because they believed in the equality of the black man. These boys and girls from the colleges of New England went South to "teach" ...They spent their lives in a great faith. They lived with their students. They talked and studied with them. They were ostracized by the White Community. They concerned themselves with every phase of their student's lives. Out of these little backwoods schools and colleges came the great Negro leaders of the twentieth century... giants among men...men fit to stand unashamed in the great halls of learning throughout the world.

Now less than 100 years later, trained "teachers" throw up their hands and admit failure in the second and third grades, saying, "these children are impossible... no one can teach them!" and on a Junior High level, principals and teachers hide at dismissal time pretending not to see fights and the petty mugging of pennies and nickles from elementary school children. On a Senior High level, fights, stabbings, murder, rape, cursing, the destruction of property, a complete disregard for both the school and the community seem typical and characteristic of high school gatherings.

Many parents and community leaders have written and phoned The Illustrated News concerning conditions at the Durfee Junior High School. Several mothers wanted to know why Durfee has a man counselor for girls. Mr. Robert Cochrane came to Durfee from Redford and Denby High this semester as a Girl's counselor. He is Counselor for 7A girls. Many parents ask why Mr. Frogner accepted a man counselor for Girls.... Were there no women counselors available? Were there no women counselors with special training in human relations available?

The fact that Mr. Frogner accepted a Man Counselor for Girls must be evaluated in light of the fact that Roosevelt, Durfee, and Central have a combined enrollment of approximately 7,000 students. To serve this enrollment there is one visiting teacher! No visiting teacher can adequately serve 700 students, to say nothing of 7,000! The only other individual available to serve students with behavior and personality problems are the counselors. It is OBVIOUS THAT NO SEVENTH GRADE GIRL IS GOING TO TAKE A PERSONAL PROBLEM TO A MAN COUNSELOR. This means that approximately one-half of the girls at Durfee have no one to help them with personal problems. THIS IS A SHAME AND A DISGRACE! We wonder why students fight and kill each other. Here is the answer! The schools do not provide for the child

with problems until he becomes a "police problem" "then the school co-operates with the police in every way possible!"

The basic problem in our schools is the need to get rid of incompetent principals who have neither the proper point of view nor attitude concerning human relations. The Detroit Board of Education must learn that parents will not tolerate principals who do not understand human relations! The most important single factor in any school is the basic attitude of the principal! Only a principal with the right basic attitudes concerning human relations can create good school experiences for the children. Only a principal with the right basic attitude will transmit confidence in the children of his school. Because he believes in the children, the teachers will come to believe, and eventually the children will believe. Parents must insist that in every school we have a principal who will not be satisfied with anything less than the best! Teachers who do not catch this spirit must be dismissed. The "Self-Image" of the Negro child is in large measure dependent upon the school environment created by the principal's over-all attitude on human relations.

The Detroit Board of Education has an easily defined task: Find Good Principals! Supervise All Principals Closely. Accept No Excuses For Poor Human Relations In Any School! If we were going to critically evaluate a potato farmer we would look at the potatoes he was growing. We'd push aside the covering and look at what he was producing. When we buy a car we want a car that can produce. We check gasoline mileage and general performance. Why, then, are we so confused when we try to judge educators? There is just one basis of judgement! If the school is producing "educated" children it's a good school. If the school is producing cut-throats, hoodlums and ill-mannered illiterates, it is a bad school! If it is a bad school the first change should be the principal. Durfee needs a new principal now !!

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