

Becoming Who You Choose to Be - A Time for Action

While many of our youth are striving and achieving, far too many are not. A majority of Black males grow up under conditions that lead them to believe social injustice and inequality has placed limits on what they can hope to accomplish in their lives. The information below illustrates how they arrive at these perceptions.

- Black children are 15% of the U.S. child population, but make up 30% of children in foster care.
- 75% of Black children grow up in disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- More Black males are now incarcerated than are enrolled in colleges and universities.
- Only 8% of 8th grade Black males attending large city schools are "proficient" in reading.
- Black females now outnumber Black males in college enrollment and graduation at all levels.
- Over 24% of Black men in their 20's who did not attend college were in jail or prison.
- More young Black men in the U.S. have done time in jail or prison than have served in the military or earned a college degree.

The HAWK Institute, which stands for Higher Attainment through Wisdom and Knowledge, recognizes that numerous factors have influenced the educational, personal, and economic achievement of students and no single entity, by itself, can effectively address the impediments and challenges facing our students, particularly Black males and students from low-income backgrounds. Teamwork and collaboration with families, public, private, and community-based groups is essential to fostering communities that promote and support improved achievement of our students. Our public schools, colleges and universities should view themselves as a coherent, collaborative system that shares the common goal of producing citizens with the capacity for leadership in a diverse and global society and self-confidence that they can apply knowledge in ways that enable them to acquire and maintain or create jobs.

Many community activists assert that "it takes a village" to raise a child. While it is hard to disagree with this statement, it is often too broadly interpreted. What we need is a **healthy** village that helps raise children who move beyond egocentricity and embrace civic involvement to help others, respect elders, engage in respectful communication with individuals from different cultural and geographic backgrounds, and embrace options beyond violence and unlawful behavior. Our elected officials promise high quality education in public schools, colleges and universities. Education is a teaching **and** learning process and reliance exclusively on credentials of teachers, faculty, and education administrators is insufficient to assure quality education if student interaction with these education professionals does not result in measures that document all student groups are progressing toward meeting or exceeding standards we publicly state are desired or expected. Schools working in partnership with families, community based organizations, and faith-based institutions will attract additional revenue and human

resources beyond what the General Fund can support and reduce achievement gaps between Black students and their non-Black peers.

As learners, students need to actively engage themselves in activities that reinforce their understanding of what they have been taught and the courage to ask questions of their teachers when they don't understand what they are being taught.

The time for action is NOW.

The HAWK Institute
A Campaign to Transform Young Black Male Achievement

Dr. Charles A. Ratliff
Vice President – Public Affairs
The HAWK Institute
www.Hawki5.org

