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The Race Gap: Education of Black Youth in Boston

Alix Cantave Ph.D.

University of Massachusetts Boston, alix.cantave@umb.edu

Cheryl Holmes Ph.D.

University of Massachusetts Boston, Cheryl.Holmes@umb.edu

Barbara Lewis Ph.D.

University of Massachusetts Boston, Barbara.Lewis@umb.edu

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THE WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER INSTITUTE
University of Massachusetts Boston

TROTTER REPORT

The Race Gap: Education of Black Youth in Boston

Findings of a Community Roundtable on Education of Black Youth
Sponsored by the Trotter Institute, Spring 2007

Report By
Alix Cantave, Ph.D.
Cheryl Holmes, Ph.D.
Barbara Lewis, Ph.D.

December 2007

The William Monroe Trotter Institute

The William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black History and Culture was founded in 1984 to address the needs and concerns of the Black community and communities of color in Boston and Massachusetts through research, technical assistance, and public service. Many forms of technical assistance are provided to community groups, organizations, and public agencies. The institute sponsors public forums as a means of disseminating research and involving the community in the discussion of public policy and other issues impacting Blacks locally and nationally.

The Institute publishes the Trotter Review, a journal of articles addressing current Black studies, race, and race relations in the United States and abroad. The Institute also publishes research reports and occasional papers on a broad range of topics in the areas of education, employment and training, public health, economic and community development, social policy, as well as race relations. Research and other institute activities are facilitated by research and faculty associates. The Trotter Institute has conducted research for foundations across the nation, and also works with international organizations.

William Monroe Trotter Institute
University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125-3393
(617) 287-5880
Fax: (617) 287-5865
www.trotter.umb.edu

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The Race Gap: Education of Black Youth in Boston
A Report of the Trotter Roundtable on Education

Authors:

Alix Cantave, Ph.D., Associate Director, William Monroe Trotter Institute
Cheryl Holmes, Ph.D., Consultant
Barbara Lewis, Ph.D., Director, William Monroe Trotter Institute

Editing:

Patricia Peterson

Roundtable Facilitator:

Charles Desmond, Ed.D., Executive Vice President of the Trefler Foundation

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PREFACE

Recently, in the pages of the *Boston Globe*, October 26, 2007, to be exact, the Boston school system was referred to as a public zoo. Unfortunately, such dehumanizing language reflects a general attitude: far too many people in this city, and around the country for that matter, think of the inner-city public schools as a place to keep the animals. Taking stock of the education of our children was the common agenda of the people who came together for a Trotter-sponsored Roundtable on April 23, 2007, which set an agenda for itself of changing that public perception and assuring that the urban schools function as places of learning, not as holding pens.

The William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black History and Culture is named after a publisher and editor who understood and wielded the power of print, its ability to build or taint reputation and shape how the world is seen. For him, the written word was a political tool that colored one's viewpoint, rallied supporters, and consolidated strength in the community. The newspaper was the strongest weapon he had against injustice and he used journalism like a sword to fight for the respect and rights to which he felt all Americans were entitled. Whenever and wherever there was discrepant treatment, he hurried to battle, in print or in person. He advocated, as needed, on many fronts: war, education, health, lynching, segregation, economics, and media.

Inequity was the enemy, and it was cropping up everywhere. Its most ardent abettor, Trotter believed, was Booker T. Washington, head of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and the darling of upper-echelon white philanthropists and politicians. Trotter was the first to publicly oppose Washington, who counseled that blacks should stay in their inherited place, accept the discriminatory southern status quo, and be content with an education in trade that would fit them ably for service. Cultivating a commitment to second-class status was not an aspiration that Trotter condoned. When an epic film, praised by President Woodrow Wilson, debuted and portrayed blacks as animals who should be immediately put down, Trotter mounted an educational campaign against *Birth of a Nation* and mobilized black Boston with an energy never again matched.

This Education Roundtable, sponsored by the William Monroe Trotter Institute, is consistent with the Trotter legacy. With some of his contemporaries, early in the twentieth century, Trotter was a pivotal figure, helping to establish and orient the Niagara Movement to fight Washington and his cronies and to achieve a self-propelled autonomy. Trotter belonged to an ambitious and activist generation born after Emancipation, still fired with abolitionist passion, focused on hewing out and widening the borders of citizenship, absent undue interference from external, self-interested custodianship. In the nineteenth century, Boston had been headquarters for fighting the inequities of slavery. Then, in the twentieth century, Boston became a byword for discrimination, especially in the area of education. Even today, in the twenty-first century, the antagonism and wounds remain.

In the 1970s, this city, where the American nation was born, was deeply divided. Some of those who lived through the angry, strident educational battles came to the Trotter Roundtable on Education. They came to remember and to strategize, to dialogue about and to define the major educational obstacles that are still operative, and to devise possible solutions. The Trotter

Institute facilitated this conversation in order to share this history and sustain an environment of synergy and healing and progress. Out of these conversations we intend to forge ideas that will contribute to policies that will bring about much-needed change and that will convince more and more of the people in this city and nation that children of color in our public schools do not belong behind bars.

Before I close, there is a point of semantics that I want to emphasize. I use the term “black” in its most expansive sense. I am not using the term to refer solely to African-Americans. In the Diaspora there are lots and lots and lots of faces. They come from Cape Verde, from Nigeria, from Somalia, from Jamaica, from Trinidad, from Haiti, and from many other locations. This morning I met a young woman, a graduate student at UMass Boston, whose mother is Vietnamese and her father black. She stands between two worlds that might have more in common than either suspects. I remember a trip to Holland, where I saw a stately black woman sitting alone, regal, in the town square. On her head was a vibrant African wrap. Perhaps she was from Surinam, perhaps from Curacao, which has a forward-looking educational policy. Students there who distinguish themselves in their schooling are sent, at the cost of the government, to any university in the world that they wish to attend. In return, they must go back to their island and work for a specified number of years and pay taxes to insure that the gift of educational endowment from the elders to the young can continue. In Cartagena, Columbia, I was surprised and delighted to see a troupe of young performers who had preserved the dances and costumes of their African ancestry. In Brazil, I learned that more slaves were brought to that country than to North America. Black is by no means limited by place or history. I rejoice in all these faces and all these histories, many of which have found their way to Boston. This conversation is about the breadth of the Diaspora, about all of us who are black in blood as well as those who are black in spirit.

Several experts in the field of education participated in the Education Roundtable and played a critical role in framing the discussion. They include the following: Hubie Jones, a longtime education activist in the community; John O. Harney, Executive Editor of *The New England Journal of Higher Education* (formerly *The Connection*); Professor Denise Patmon of the UMass Boston Graduate College of Education; Michael Contompassis, Acting Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools; and Charles Desmond, Executive Vice President of the Trefler Foundation.

The Roundtable series, which is designed to get a better fix on the voice and concerns of the community, was coordinated by Dr. Alix Cantave, Associate Director at the Trotter Institute, supported by Dr. Cheryl Holmes who served as consultant, convened the participants, and prepared the transcript. I also wish to thank the Trotter Institute staff: Yvonne Gomez-Santos, Laima O'Brien and Eva Hendricks for their assistance in ensuring that this event ran smoothly and was a success.

Barbara Lewis, Ph.D.

Director, William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black History and Culture

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

On April 23, 2007, The William Monroe Trotter Institute held a Roundtable convening more than fifty individuals at UMass Boston for a two-hour conversation on the education of black children in Boston. Roundtable attendees represented a balanced mix of professional and lay persons, including educators, advocates, academics, elected officials and policymakers, and donors. Attendees included the Suffolk County Sheriff, the Acting Superintendent of Boston Public Schools (BPS), and the president of the Boston Teacher's Union.

Participants gathered at the Healey Library Media Arts Center at the University of Massachusetts Boston Harbor campus, eager to review, debate, discuss, and outline historical and present factors affecting the education of black children in Boston Public Schools. The term "black" was used deliberately to refer to African-Americans as well as blacks from the larger African Diaspora. As stated by Dr. Barbara Lewis, Director of the William Monroe Trotter Institute, "We acknowledge all of those faces and all of those histories. This conversation is about the breadth of the Diaspora." The administrative team for the Trotter Education Roundtable included Barbara Lewis, Ph.D., Institute Director; Alix Cantave, Ph.D., Associate Director; and Cheryl D. Holmes, Ph.D., consulting coordinator and researcher for the event. The following selected group of highly respected, education policymakers facilitated the two-hour Roundtable.

- Dr. Charles Desmond, Executive Vice President of the Trefler Foundation, and formerly Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the University of Massachusetts Boston, moderated the Roundtable.
- Hubie Jones, Dean Emeritus, Boston University School of Social Work and veteran of the desegregation struggles of the 1970s, made the first presentation. Mr. Jones is Social Justice Entrepreneur-in-Residence at City Year. He chaired the 2006 Citizens Commission, the educational and civic engagement group that drafted *Transforming the Boston Public Schools: A Roadmap for the New Superintendent*. He was also Special Assistant to the Chancellor of UMass Boston on Urban Affairs. In his historical overview, Hubie Jones outlined the socio-political factors that have led to the contemporary disenfranchisement of black children and most specifically young black and Latino boys in the Boston Public School system.
- John O. Harney, Executive Editor of the *New England Journal of Higher Education* (formerly, *The Connection*), discussed the lack of racial and income diversity on college and university campuses in New England. He emphasized that urban education throughout the region is riddled with challenges that negatively affect black, Latino, and low-income youths' prospects for achieving in higher education.
- Associate Professor Denise Patmon, Ph.D., Chair, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Massachusetts Boston, Graduate School of Education, adapted the theoretical writings of Japanese author, Shusaku Endo, in her analysis of the roundtable discussion.

Endo's analytical framework consists of the four faces: the public face, the inside face, the ideal face, and the hidden face. Looking together at these faces deepens our understanding of the relationship between appearance and actuality, between self and the world. Such a four-part lens helps us see how to revitalize the group image both internally and externally. Dr. Patmon also emphasized the historical significance of Boston in terms of education for blacks. At the end of the eighteenth century, Prince Hall started a school here for black youth. At the Abiel Smith School, which evolved from Hall's efforts, black students were referred to as scholars. That nineteenth-century practice, which is about building a face of esteem, is worth continuing. Every morning Dr. Patmon wakes her son with the question, "How is my young scholar this morning?" The best the Boston Public Schools offer black students is proficiency. That is not nearly enough, Dr. Patmon argued.

The William Monroe Trotter Education Roundtable Facilitation Team was joined by the following:

- Michael Contompasis, Acting Superintendent for Boston Public Schools, who gave details on what the school system is doing to close the achievement gap.
- Mr. Richard Stutman, President of the Boston Teachers Union, who shared first-hand information that further clarified that it will take a total collaborative effort from all BPS education stakeholders to resolve the current crisis.

The Education Roundtable was part of series that the William Monroe Trotter Institute is convening between 2007 and 2008. The series of roundtables, forums, and research projects focuses on the five subjects that are of utmost concern to Boston's black community. These issues of concern were identified in a 2006 survey conducted by the McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies in collaboration with the Asian American Institute, the Gaston Institute, and the Trotter Institute. In order of priority, the subjects are:

- Crime
- Education
- Health
- Affordable housing
- Jobs and employment

The Education Roundtable follows a roundtable on crime held in March 2007. Holding these two events so close together highlights the relationship between crime, particularly youth violence, and education. Suffolk County Sheriff Andrea Cabral was especially insightful on this connection. Many youths who have difficulty in the public schools, she said, end up in the county's jails and are marked for life.

DISCUSSION

Some startling facts highlight the challenges that the Boston Public School (BPS) system faces:

- Approximately 1,500 to 1,900 children drop out of BPS annually.

- Black and Latino boys drop out of BPS at alarming rates.
- Juniors who have achieved proficiency on the MCAS are the second largest group of BPS dropouts.
- Children who drop out demonstrate early signs and symptoms that BPS officials, parents, parent advocates, and other educational stakeholders must begin to heed.
- Currently, BPS school personnel do not recognize their responsibility to intervene when red flags signal problems that could lead children to drop out. This is linked to inadequate training at the university level for individuals who work in urban school settings.
- Research supports the fact that highly qualified teachers, in place for three consecutive years within the classroom, are able to close the achievement gap by reinforcing efforts to bring children's performance up to grade level. If this can be done, much greater success in school is achievable.
- There are indeed some teachers in BPS who are doing exceptional work and leaders who are setting directions.
- BPS children are disenfranchised from the school system as early as the fifth grade.
- Overage children (two or more years older than the average age of children in the same grade) often drop out of school as early as fifth grade.
- If dropout signals and other signs were met with intervention in middle school, more students might be prevented from becoming dropouts.

Additionally, the Parthenon Group, a consultant firm retained by BPS to conduct a needs assessment and develop a list of retention recommendations for the system, confirms that:

- English language learners are the largest population of children dropping out.
- Many English language learners enter Boston Public Schools for the first time in ninth grade, from a range of diverse cultures. It is therefore very difficult for them to complete the standard high school program in four years.

Surprisingly, many juniors and seniors who have passed the MCAS exam are dropping out of the city's high schools. This is an atypical pattern for urban school districts. BPS officials acknowledge that failure to demonstrate proficiency in MCAS is not necessarily a dropout factor. Mr. Stutman, President of the Boston Teachers Union, stated that boredom is a factor that contributes to school dropout. The fact that some English language learners are undocumented and do not have access to financial aid and are required to pay out-of-state tuition in public colleges and universities deters pursuit of higher education. This may also contribute to the high

dropout rate among that group. Dr. Angela Paige Cook of Paige Academy emphasized that the BPS is not keeping pace with the educational needs of its students whose learning styles are impacted by information technology. Consequently, their minds are moving at accelerated rates, which teachers and school administrators often interpret as hyperactivity or attention disorder.

BPS is looking for ways to reverse the dropout trend as well as devising strategies to reenroll children who have dropped out of the system. Some of the re-enrollment strategies that BPS is considering include the following:

- Determining how best to accommodate the needs of students coming back into the system. After dropping out of BPS, it is difficult to impossible for re-entering students to effectively navigate the system due to the fact that they are older and often too mature to be in classes with younger children.
- Finding ways to reorganize the BPS alternative education structure. Most children in alternative programs are there because no one knows how to handle them and not because they are unable to do the required class work. Alternative strategies for these children must be identified.
- Reducing the number of children of color, specifically black boys, who are in alternative education programs.
- Developing a full-scale alternative education program that does more than simply warehouse children. Alternative education must have a high return on its human capital investment in terms of children entrusted to the system. Therefore, BPS is challenged to design and implement a full-fledged Department of Alternative Education.
- Addressing the low graduation rates among students of color. Children failing ninth-grade subjects typically have considerable difficulty graduating. Repeating the ninth grade is another dropout sign. Children in that subset are less likely to complete high school.

Graduating high school does not guarantee success in college. Many high school graduates are in tremendous need of support in college. They often lack the academic skill set and readiness needed to survive in the university setting. The challenge may be in moving from a small high school to a large college setting. In collaboration with colleges and universities, high schools need to establish safety nets to assist students who need help adjusting academically and socially. Dropouts are occurring at the college level as early as the first year. The reasons are twofold:

1. The degree of remediation needed at the college level. Research shows that college freshmen who require remedial courses are prime candidates for dropping out.
2. The limitations in financial aid. Award packages must consider some of the specific and special situations that children from low- and moderate-income households bring to the college setting.

KEY ISSUES AND RESPONSES

Participants and presenters of the roundtable identified the following critical issues affecting education of children of color in Boston, particularly black and disadvantaged children.

- Race, income, and other socio-economic characteristics continue to affect how children are being educated.
- Regionally and nationally, there are cross-cutting dialogues, discussions, and debates that must take place to share information, knowledge, and expertise on the education of black children. This coordinated approach will help experts and advocates construct a pattern for educational change nationally. The goal must be to ensure the country's black, Latino, and economically disenfranchised youth have every possible opportunity to obtain a world-class education in early life.
- It is important to think about how to approach and address the challenges for the generation of children coming into the Boston public school pipeline.
- The New England Board of High Education sees issues of educational success and preparation as a regional problem not exclusive to Boston. This point of view is supported by commentaries and data published in the *New England Journal of Higher Education*. In Hartford, less than 5 percent of the high school class of 2003 is expected to earn a four-year college degree by 2008. In rural New England, some cultural values discourage the young from going off to college. The idea is that once a child sees the bright lights of Burlington or Paris, he or she is less likely come back to the home community.

Problems within the BPS identified during the roundtable deliberation require that we act immediately in an equitable, just, and honest manner. Acting in that fashion requires the following:

- Highlight how diverse the system is currently;
- Identify patterns of demographic diversity across the city of Boston, particularly in the 0-5 population;
- Determine how to design a systemic, powerful community response for providing the essential tools and resources necessary to allow this generation to maximize the benefits of a reformed and high-quality public education system;
- Develop an understanding of the children of this diverse population and their parents;
- Respond to data that confirm that there is a high concentration of black, Asian, and Latino families that are raising children in the 0-5 population, in the Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and East Boston neighborhoods of the city;

- Acknowledge that many children in the 0-5 population are being raised by a single parent or grandparent, by a parent or parents who are not themselves educated, and for whom English is not a native language, and often in conditions of extreme poverty. Specifically, 10 percent of children in the 0-5 population are being raised by a grandparent and other family members. Forty-three percent of the 0-5 population are raised by foreign-born parents. One-quarter of the households have less than a high school diploma. Over 75 percent of families raising the 0-5 population are living at or below the level of poverty.
- Extend to families of the 0-5 population the benefit of the doubt rather than assume that they are not likely to encourage their children to strive for the best education possible. It is necessary to ascertain the types of cultural and economic awareness resources required for this group of families to ensure that the quality education they receive in schools is reinforced at home;
- Every student within the Boston Public School system should be encouraged to speak the five languages spoken by the five primary populations that make up the 0-5 population within the city of Boston;
- Foster collaboration and coordination among professionals in a wide range of fields to deal with the challenge of educating and otherwise supporting the development of this pipeline group. This underpins the concept of the Mayor's Task Force;
- Collaborate and coordinate to design and implement appropriate interventions so the next generation has the best public school education possible; and
- Struggle to transcend issues of racism and the class divide, and work to dissolve fractures of class, gender, age, social orientation, and faith life practice. Dare to open ourselves to the possibility of doing this.

CONTEXT

The Century Foundation reports that on selective college campuses it is 25 times more likely to run into a rich than a poor student. Ironically, American higher education has taken a turn and now perpetuates inequality instead of serving as America's primary equalizer. An American in the top quartile of family income is six times more likely than an American from the bottom quartile to earn a college degree in the normal time period. These issues are typically packaged as a matter of economic diversity about which there is a great deal of concern on college campuses. But the data confirm race and ethnicity as the primary components that effectively disenfranchise many of America's children.

Even though populations of color are the sole growth populations within New England, each state has several colleges that are 96 percent, 97 percent, or even 98 percent white. Students of color are earning a very small number of the degrees granted, especially at the graduate level. Foreign students in New England earn six times the number of graduate degrees earned by U.S.

students of color earn. Much of this is conveniently packaged as an American education pipeline issue. Nevertheless, the Federal Advisory Group as well as other strategic education advisory institutions document that there are millions of college-age American-born youth whose families cannot afford to send them to college.

The shift from need-based to merit-based financial aid is one cause of this disparity. Further, research shows that 43 percent of Latino young people do not know a single source for financial aid. Programs to address these information gaps are being developed. For example, at MIT there is the Seed Program that recruits bright kids from Lawrence, Boston, and Cambridge to come to MIT for the weekend and do hands-on work in MIT labs. The New England states have too much in common and are too small to try to resolve these problems individually. The College Ready New England Initiative is a way to share lessons about what's going on in New England and to share resources as well.

MCAS is not in and of itself a bad thing. It represents one of many reasonably accurate academic assessment tools. Yet, the question remains as to what gains are made by teaching to a test instead of rigorously educating. "Why do children who pass the MCAS drop out?" The answer is clear: Children leave the school system for the same reasons adults would. They are forced to tolerate the same inadequate curricula day after day and they are bored. To blame the children, to expect them to tolerate dead-end instruction in the unclean settings that characterize too many urban public schools is unrealistic and misguided. Adults have failed to make good on each child's right to a quality education.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary urban lifestyle and educational context involves the breadth of the Diaspora and must therefore respond to the needs of all black children, not just African Americans. For today's black middle class to flourish, the problems of the English-language learner and the immigrant must be addressed in a culturally respectful manner. There is a need for outrage! There is a desperate need for effective, reliable leadership. This is the foundation of the local black Diaspora.

Boston, where, in the nineteenth century, black parents first won the battle to pursue an equitable education for their children and where desegregation was a twentieth-century battleground, faces entrenched, continuing problems but is poised for change. In June 2007, Mayor Menino announced that Dr. Carol Johnson, an African-American woman who was able to put the public schools of Memphis on a positive course, is the new Superintendent of Schools in Boston. Now, there is an opportunity to counter Boston's historical mis-education of black and Latino children and other children living at or below the poverty level. Those of the Black Diaspora must take their rightful place at the public education decision-making table. It is the only way to prevent the re-segregation of America through public education.

THE RACE GAP: EDUCATION OF BLACK YOUTH IN BOSTON

BLACKS AND REFORMS IN BPS: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Presenter: Hubie Jones

The discussion about the education of black children in the Boston public schools is very important and timely. We all need to be about this work. This is a historical overview of school reform efforts in Boston as related to children and families of color.

On June 11, 1963, Paul Parks and Ruth Batson, Chair and Co-chair of the Education Committee of the NAACP, made a presentation to the Boston public school community and charged that the school system was de facto segregated with black students assigned to schools predominantly populated by black students. These students were in the worst school buildings within the system and had lower per-pupil expenditure allocations than schools serving white students. Schools serving black students received inadequate educational and financial resources. These charges by the NAACP set off one of the most incredible racial confrontations ever experienced in the city of Boston. The school committee led by Louise Day Hicks denied that de facto segregation existed and refused to voluntarily take action to remedy the inequitable conditions. In response, black leaders and their white allies mounted public demonstrations at 15 Beacon Street, the Boston School Committee headquarters, to pressure the Committee to respond positively to the demands for change put forth by the NAACP. There was a fierce four-month battle between black leaders and the school committee leaders. Mrs. Hicks and her colleagues rejected a NAACP proposal to redraw school district lines, a move that would have desegregated the school system without the need for busing. Mrs. Hicks claimed that the proposal constituted gerrymandering and was therefore unconstitutional. The School Committee's position was a political boon that resulted in the reelection of its members in November 1963 by wide margins. It was the worst of racial politics in Boston. Realizing that they were not making progress with the School Committee, black leaders in collaboration with white leaders, chose other paths to obtain a quality education for students of color.

In 1964, Ellen Jackson founded Operation Exodus, a program that privately transported black students from Boston to white suburban schools where there were open seats and where the students could benefit from better conditions and better schooling. In 1965, the state legislature, under intense political pressure, passed a bill requiring all schools in Massachusetts to be racially balanced. In 1966, a coalition of black leaders and white leaders from suburban towns used the new bill to create the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity better known as METCO. Through METCO, black students from Boston were bused to seven suburban school districts. A total of 250 students participated in METCO during its inception. Paul Parks was one of the founders of the METCO program. Today, over 3200 students of color are transported to 32 suburban schools districts under METCO.

In 1968, I founded the **Task Force on Children Out of School**, a citizen group that investigated the illegal exclusion of children from the Boston public schools. Very often, parents were sent a note stating the following: "don't bring your child back to school; he/she is too disturbed or troubled to function in school." In 1970, the task force published a report "*The Way We Go To School: the Exclusion of Children in Boston*," which documented that 10,000 students were

illegally out of school. An estimated 78 percent or 7,800 of the 10,000 students illegally out of school were Latino. In 1972, the report led to the passage of Chapter 766, the special education law passed by the state legislature under the leadership of House Speaker David Bartley. This was the most progressive educational reform law in the history of this state and became the model for the national law passed in 1974. Physically disabled and emotionally troubled children now had access to educational services designed to mainstream them in schools. For 17 years the Massachusetts Advocacy Center, the new name for the Task Force for Children Out of School, pressured Boston Public Schools through litigation to implement Chapter 766 as was intended by the legislature. Despite the law, BPS has a disproportionate number of black and Latino students placed in special education classes. That has been the pattern. In 1973 the state legislature passed the Bilingual Transitional Education Act to provide bilingual education for nonnative speakers. This action was a response to the task force report. Latino children in Boston now had a chance to receive an effective education in Spanish while they were learning and becoming proficient in English. The bilingual education program that was designed in the 1970s has been undermined by English immersion practices.

In 1972, NAACP filed a federal law suit against BPS on behalf of black parents, claiming that de jure segregation existed in the Boston school system. The court found clear patterns of de jure segregation, and on June 21, 1974, Federal Judge W. Arthur Garrity ruled that the Boston schools were in violation of the U.S. Constitution. Judge Garrity ordered a busing remedy to desegregate the school system. Racial tensions rose in the city when school buses filled with black children rolled into South Boston and Charlestown on September 12, 1974. White mobs hurled bottles and stones at buses and shouted racial epithets at black students. Resistance to the federal court order accelerated white flight from Boston public schools and resulted in a dramatic decline in the white student population. The number of white students in Boston public schools declined from 60 percent in 1974 to 14 percent today, producing a racially re-segregated school system.

In 1990, the Massachusetts Advocacy Center published a blockbuster report entitled “Locked in Lockout” that detailed placement and tracking within the BPS. It was reported that as early as third grade, students were divided according to abilities and then placed on a track leading to either the best or the worst educational options the system has to offer. White and Asian students dominated the high level tracks. A small percentage of black and Latino students were being admitted into the exam schools. The struggle for de-tracking goes on today.

In 1993, the state legislature passed a monumental educational reform act aimed to provide significant amounts of money to poor school districts with under-performing students and to establish standard-based reform. Standard-based reforms led to the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System or MCAS to determine how well students were learning at crucial grades. Failure to pass the MCAS test could result in grade retention and failure to graduate from high school. The state also established funding for charter schools to give parents options beyond the local school districts. To deal with the threat posed by the charter school movement, BPS established pilot schools that are exempt from school regulations as they relate to hiring and firing of teachers and the delivery of curriculum. In essence, we are well on the way to a permanent multiple delivery system in the field of public education. A voucher system is yet another possibility in our future.

In June 2006, the Citizens Commission on Academic Success for Boston Children released a report: *Transforming the Boston Public Schools: A Road Map for the New Superintendent*. This report decries the achievement gaps between black and Latino students and white students; between English language learners and native speakers; and between disabled and nondisabled students. We recommended that the new superintendent devote at least the first six months of her tenure to developing an operational plan to close the educational gap within five years. There should be no higher priority for Boston Public Schools, its parents, and its students. Such a plan would require radical transformation related to the central administration office, parent and community engagement, recruitment of excellent principals and teachers, and a robust professional development program to retain effective teaching personnel.

So what has this history taught us?

1. The negative effects of racism and classism are unrelenting and have become infused in the policies and practices of the school system. Tracking is a good example of this phenomenon.
2. Cultural competence is essential to understanding the needs and perspectives of parents and students. Teachers need training in racism and classism in order to achieve cultural competency.
3. Recruitment and development of new teachers and principals is the most important work of the chief managers at Boston Public Schools. Forty-seven percent of all teachers leave within three years, an absolute waste of human resources.
4. Beneficiaries of public education, parents and students, must be thoroughly engaged in making the system work. You cannot have effective schooling without parents holding the schools accountable.
5. The school system is not monolithically bad. There are good educational programs working for some students. Good educational practices and programs must be brought to scale across the system. We have the inclusion model like the one in Dorchester where very physically disabled children and nonphysically disabled children are being educated together with educational outcomes so great the mayor has enrolled his grandchild in the school.
6. Special attention should be devoted to males of color. Research reveals that black and Latino male students receive the most negative messages from teachers resulting in diminished self-esteem, which contributes to poor academic performance.
7. School-based management should be the centerpiece of an urban school system. This means that principals, teachers, and parents should together determine and implement the school mission, objectives, and priorities.

8. Relative to school governance, the school committee in particular should be focused on policies and practices that achieve great academic outcomes absent the political machination that existed in the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s.

The coming of a new superintendent to the BPS may be the last chance to radically reform the school system in order to achieve excellent educational outcomes for all students. We should not pass up this opportunity. To this cause we should pledge our undying commitment.

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES TO ISSUES AFFECTING STUDENTS OF COLOR

Presenter: Michael Contompasis, Acting Superintendent, BPS

Hubie Jones mentioned the challenges facing the new superintendent and the superintendent position is indeed a challenging job. The previous superintendent and I, up to this point, have tried to bring the system to a place that is at least a foundation for the next person. We trust that the new superintendent will commit at least five to eight years to BPS and will come with an awareness of the difficulties facing the system. I think it is safe to say that the operation side of BPS is far better than it was eight or nine years ago. It no longer requires approval from 29 individuals in order to hire someone. Historically, one of the obstacles, at least on the operations side, was the inability for the left hand to know what the right hand was doing. Initially, the infrastructure issues around operations were breaking down silos that existed in the school district and trying to find a functional way to provide better services to teachers and kids in the schoolhouse. That was not an easy task. Many departments, particularly human resources, needed to be revamped. It was neither human nor resourceful. The department delayed anyone coming into the system. In 2007, the operation side of BPS has changed. There is no longer a silo mentality. There are good people in key positions and the hope is to keep them around for a while.

On the academic side, BPS was less successful. The goal of the previous superintendent was to transform what had become a dysfunctional system and try to bring a sense of coherence and alignment to the classroom. BPS was successful in establishing a foundation built on a standards-based system and a commitment to support classrooms by ensuring that good teachers would be recruited in a timely fashion. BPS administrators worked with the teachers union to identify ways to collaborate on processes or protocols. Academically, BPS needed more work, and this is not a criticism of the staff. Here are some basic facts about the state of BPS.

- The system is losing 1500 to 1900 kids per year, which is unacceptable.
- Kids that are dropping out of the system are demonstrating early signs or symptoms that need particular attention. We need to create an environment where teachers and administrators recognize that it is their responsibility to intervene when they see signs of problems.
- Kids are disenfranchised from the school system as early as the fifth grade.

- There are over-aged children (two years older than normally expected for a grade) as early as the fifth grade.
- Dropout signals and symptoms appear in middle schools.
- Dropout symptoms are: 1) Children who do not coming to school; 2) Children who come to school late; 3) Children who do not do their work; and 4) Children who are failing multiple core subjects as early as sixth and seventh grades.

During the interim period, BPS has explored different strategies to address some of the academic issues. Part of the strategy, is a major study by the Parthenon Group to identify the following:

- Who is most likely to drop out?
- What are the symptoms associated with dropping out?
- When do these symptoms start to show? and
- What type of action plan can be put in place with help from the Parthenon Group to prepare the next superintendent to at least begin the process of discussing the dropout challenges at BPS?

Preliminary findings from the Parthenon Group study reveal the following:

- English language learners (ELL) constitute the largest population of children dropping out;
- Many ELL enter Boston public schools in the ninth grade and do not attend elementary and middle schools in Boston. They are from culturally diverse backgrounds. It is difficult for children from other parts of the world who did not attend middle or elementary schools in the U.S. to complete the typical high school program in four years.
- Juniors and seniors are dropping out — this is unique to Boston and not typical for urban school districts.
- Students dropping out in eleventh and twelfth grade have passed the MCAS. Therefore, they are not dropping out because they cannot pass the MCAS.

Strategies have to be developed to bring children who have dropped out back into the system. Those children cannot be brought back to their former classroom environment. They are much older and often too mature to be in classes with younger children. Part of the strategy is to develop a full-scale alternative education program, one that is not merely about warehousing children. BPS cannot return to a continuation of an out-of-sight-out-of-mind policy. Alternative Education must have a high return on investment and must become a full-fledged department. Alternative Education can no longer be the place to send children to simply get them out of the classroom. Another issue that needs attention: Too many children of color, particularly African-

American boys, are in subset programs. These are expensive programs that do not work. Most children are in subset programs not because they are unable to do the work, but because schools do not know how to handle them. Alternative strategies that work for these children must be identified. There are two additional subsets that have difficulty graduating high school: (1) Children failing a ninth-grade subject; and (2) children repeating the ninth grade.

That is the challenging population! What does Boston need to do about it? BPS needs to devise a plan that will address and meet the specific needs of the most challenging student population. As Hubie Jones mentioned, teachers have to be provided with the supports and tools that will enable them to address the challenges many students are facing. Part of what is needed is cultural competencies and timely interventions when dropout or other symptoms are detected. As was mentioned, BPS has some successful alternative programs. Richard Stutman, President of the Boston Teachers Union, will rightfully say that there are not enough seats. It is not sufficient to generate seats without the program. Children who are three or more years below grade level are unlikely to complete the sophomore, junior, and senior years. We have to develop strategies to move those children along. The focus must be on mastering math, science, history, and English.

Many factors led BPS to implement full-day-kindergarten for four year olds. Four- and five-year old children were coming to school unprepared. Some children were not emotionally or socially prepared to enter even K2. Behavioral issues in K2 are manifestations of problems occurring at even younger ages. As a result, BPS is starting K1s, the hottest market in Boston. A total of 23 additional K1s are opening and more classrooms are needed. Additionally, there are a couple of sites in Boston (playgroups) that serve the two and three year olds. One is at the Hennigan School in Jamaica Plain and the other in Brighton. Two and three year olds come to school twice a week and take part in structured programs — learning how to play, learning how to behave, learning how to learn. Their mothers and/or fathers come with them and spend the day. Those programs need to expand. Importantly, the program provides access to health care. The program at the Hennigan is paired with Children's Hospital. Some of the professionals reported children as early as two and three years old are stressed due to their home and neighborhood circumstances. Supports are available for both the children and their parents.

Some students who graduate from high school continue to need support in college. High school graduates often lack the skills that are needed to be successful in the university setting. Support needed may be in the form of financial aid or assistance moving from a small community to a college setting where you are a single freshman in a class of 1,600 to 2,000. Schools should work with colleges and universities to establish support programs for students. Two primary factors are responsible for the increasing number of dropouts at the college level:

1. Some students require remedial work when they reach the college level. That is a high school problem. Students who need remediation during the first year of college are prime candidates for dropping out.
2. Financial aid has to go beyond the first year of college. It also has to consider some of the specific and special situations that these children bring to the college setting. This is more or less an awareness issue.

My final point is regarding charter schools. BPS started pilot schools to address the threat that state funding to school districts in desperate need might be significantly reduced by the presence of charter schools. BPS is losing \$42 million a year to charter schools. Some pilot schools performed better than some charter schools. What is needed is a level playing field. Collaboration with the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) is necessary in order to bring about reform and restructuring to Boston public schools. Without a collaborative relationship with Richard Stutman you are not going to get anywhere.

BOSTON TEACHERS UNION AND THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Presenter: Richard Stutman, BTU President

BTU is part of the solution to closing the achievement gap, and if the schools fail to do a better job, BTU will put itself out of business. As a customer of the system whose daughter has attended four different Boston public schools, it is in my best interest and in the interest of BTU's membership to make these schools work. Making them work requires collaboration, and there has been a great deal of it. I want to thank Mr. Contompasis for doing more than pinch-hitting. The Mayor has been a strong supporter of public education. The Superintendent, Mr. Contompasis, has touched on some of the issues that are facing BPS with regard to the lack of a level playing field. We have the charter school issue and the fact that, unlike other cities, Boston is unable to raise its own revenue for education. Children might be dropping out in later grades because the curriculum is boring or too uniform.

Disaggregation of data is the only good thing about MCAS, and I think I speak for the BTU members when I say that. While MCAS is not a bad thing, teaching to the test is bad. Using my own daughter as an example, she went to a traditional Boston public middle school, the Irving, where she spent half the day in English and math and no other subjects. She had history for a quarter of the year, Spanish for a quarter of the year, and physical education for half of the year. That is no way to run a school, it is boring. Why do children who pass the MCAS drop out? They know that they will earn more money if they stay in school. Children drop out because they are bored and the school day is redundant. They are forced to do the same thing every day. Schools have to show progress or they risk being taken over. By adding more MCAS preparation to the school day, there is limited extra time to teach foreign languages, drafting or any other subjects that are not in the test. These factors contribute to a high dropout rate. MCAS helps to identify and understand where children are falling. That's a good thing. These are not isolated problems.

ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND IMPLICATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Presenter: John O. Harney, Executive Editor, *The New England Journal of Higher Education*

At the New England Board of Higher Education, we see issues of educational success and preparation as a regional problem — not exclusively a Boston problem. In Hartford, less than 5 percent of the high school class of 2003 is expected to earn a four-year college degree by 2008. In rural New England, where communities struggle with closed factories and a stagnant economy, there is the added problem of a cultural bias against going off to college. The fear in these communities is that once a young person sees the bright lights of Burlington or Paris he/she will not return.

There is also the ironic broader problem that even our success in higher education in effect perpetuates inequality as opposed to being the equalizer that it is thought to be. An American in the top quartile of family income is six times more likely than an American from the bottom quartile to earn a college degree in the normal time period. The Century Foundation has reported that on a selective college campus, you are 25 times more likely to meet a rich student than a poor student. These issues are presented in terms of “economic diversity.” And there is a great deal of alarm about lacking economic diversity on college campuses.

Economic diversity aside, the data also show that race and ethnicity are still major issues on many campuses. Although populations of color are the only groups that are growing in New England, there are many colleges and universities in every New England state that are still 96, 97 or even 98 percent white. Students of color represent a very small number of degree earners particularly at the graduate level. This shortfall reaches the point whereby foreign students — and we certainly want and need foreign students to keep coming to New England — are sometimes earning six times more graduate degrees than U.S. minority groups. This referred to as a “pipeline” issue. But it should be noted that a federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance and other groups have reported that there are millions of college-ready kids who cannot afford college. This is due in part to what we have documented to be a shift from need-based to merit-based financial aid. Furthermore, research shows that 43 percent of Latino students do not know a single source for financial aid. In addition to issues of academic readiness, economic and racial diversity, there is also the problem of access to information. Some colleges and universities are taking steps to try to close these gaps. For instance, MIT's Seed Program brings bright kids from Lawrence, Boston, and Cambridge to MIT for the weekend to participate in experiential learning at the school's labs. Some of these programs are really aimed at high-achieving students. Finally, Dr. Desmond mentioned the College Ready New England Program, which is an important new NEBHE initiative to share and develop policies and practices aimed at increasing college access and success in New England.

RACE, SOCIAL DIVERSITY, AND SCHOOL REFORM

Presenter: Charles Desmond, Tefler Foundation

This is a multidimensional conversation about the education of our children and several issues have been raised. For instance Hubie Jones, during his presentation, posed a critical question about how to make Boston public schools work for all children in a situation where race continues to influence the way we think about educating children. It is important that we come to some resolution regarding that question. John Harney asked us to look regionally and have dialogues with other communities across New England. What information, knowledge, and expertise can we share with other communities in order to create patterns for educational change throughout the region? What are the reasons for such an undertaking? What strategies can we pursue to achieve that objective?

In March 2007, the William Munroe Trotter Institute held a roundtable on crime in the community. There is a connection between crime and education and how we deal with young people who are struggling to get into the mainstream when social forces are pulling them in opposite directions. How do we incorporate youth violence and social pressures in the conversation regarding school reform? As Superintendent Contompasis mentioned, we have to consider the fact that there are new dynamics within the BPS. Teachers, parents, students, and administrators are working collaboratively to make schools work for all children. At the same time, the Mayor has introduced a new issue: the generation of children presently in the Boston public school pipeline.

The generation of children in the BPS pipeline poses challenges that will force us to think about how we reform K-12 so that it works for all children and simultaneously develop powerful strategies to support parents and children as well as providing students with a stronger foundation and better skills. It is important to understand the demographic characteristics of the generation of children in the school pipeline. Here are some facts about the next generation of students coming into Boston public schools, particularly the 0-5 population.

- A total of 65 percent of the city's 0-5 population is in black, Asian, and Latino family households.
- More than half (51 percent) of the 0-5 population is concentrated in four neighborhoods: Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and East Boston.
- Fifteen percent of the children ages 0-5 are being raised by grandparents and other relatives.
- With regard to educational attainment, 24 percent of the householders with children ages 0-5 have less than a high school diploma, 28 percent have finished high school, 22 percent have some college education, and 26 percent have bachelor's degrees or higher. In fact, 74 percent of householders with children have less than a college education.
- One in four (25 percent) householders with children 0-5 lives below or at the poverty line while 23 percent have a middle-class standard of living or above. A family

householder with income four times above the poverty line is considered middle class. Since poverty is a known determinant of educational outcome, we need to think seriously about the kind of educational resources that are necessary to counter the socioeconomic challenges of families with children 0-5. What type of cultural awareness and economic awareness resources will we make available to those parents?

- Almost half (43 percent) of householders with 0-5 children are foreign-born. Languages spoken by the foreign-born population include Spanish (24 percent), Haitian Creole (6 percent), Portuguese (3 percent), Vietnamese (3 percent), Chinese (2 percent), and all other languages (9 percent). My argument is that every student within BPS system should be able to speak the five primary languages spoken by the city's foreign-born population.

The Mayor has formed a task force to address the pipeline issues. The task force consists of professionals across the city agencies and communities including early childcare providers, faith-based organizations, researchers, foundations, community based organizations, educators, health and mental health professionals, teachers, and arts and recreation agencies. The task force is trying to answer the following questions:

- How do we collaborate and coordinate to address the pipeline issues?
- What interventions can be put in place to ensure that the next generation coming through the pipeline has the best public school education possible?
- How can we transcend the socioeconomic challenges posed by the upcoming pipeline generation?
- Is racism still an issue?
- Can we transcend class and social status issues?

EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Presenter: Andrea Cabral, Suffolk County Sheriff

There are 1,600 to 1,700 individuals in the Suffolk County House of Corrections depending upon the time of the year. About half of the people in the institution are high school dropouts. They are mostly men. At any given time of the year, there might be as many as 60 individuals who have successfully studied and passed the test for a GED. On the other hand, there will be 1,200 inmates enrolling in English as a second language classes. As a former prosecutor, I wonder if the consequences of a guilty plea are fully understood by individuals with limited English proficiency.

A culture of incarceration indoctrination is developing. There are long lines of visitors at the House of Corrections, mostly women with children. Children are becoming familiar with the

inside of the House of Corrections and accustomed to family members and friends being incarcerated. Children are becoming familiar and comfortable with strangers searching them, parting their hair to check for contraband, and requiring them to turn their pockets inside-out. This is not good for children; their sense of space and privacy is invaded and eroded. It is important to understand that this is an additional dimension that some children bring to the school setting.

Ninety-five percent of the inmates in the House of Corrections live within five miles of the facility. Once they are released, they will have an impact on the immediate community. The House of Correction provides inmates with educational and vocational training so that they can find jobs and have a positive impact upon reentry. Basically, they come out looking to earn, either by working or by illicit activities. Over 300 inmates are released into the community each month.

Regarding the educational issues, Mr. Strutman is right to say that some kids drop out because of boredom. There are other behavior and psychological issues that contribute to the dropout rate including drug use and mental illness. The House of Correction is the catch basin for many things that have gone wrong in the rest of the system. There are individuals in the House of Correction with undiagnosed learning disabilities and people who have dropped out because they have been told that they are stupid. The House of Correction is not equipped to address those issues; it is not a school or substitute for schools. As a facility, Corrections is not prepared to deal with educational issues. I am trying to develop an assessment tool so that we can target education toward actual disabilities. I am looking at the link between truancy, dropping out, and criminal activities. There is a clear connection between the three.

The Sheriff's department would like to develop a good truancy program in Boston. A truancy program has been developed in the Berkshires by the Berkshire County Sheriff. A good truancy program mainstreams children back into the system by combining academics with social services and mentoring and support. I plan to show a video at a forum at Roxbury Community College where five male and five female inmates candidly speak about when they lost interest in school, what led to them leave school, and what was occurring in their homes. We can learn from the dropouts themselves and work collaboratively to build good truancy programs in Boston. Hubie Jones is correct to point out that working in silos is ineffective. It is as if we do not work in the same system. The criminal justice system is connected to the education system in that it is partly the effect and outcome of failures in the education system. This is an enormous problem!

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND PARTICIPANT REACTIONS

Paul Parks, Community Activist and Former Secretary of Education: I had the privilege of working in Nigeria, Liberia, and the Ivory Coast. I learned from that experience that Africans have a good sense of people. They know people. Africans quickly understand emotional patterns and what causes certain behavior or actions. There are children who feel that their teachers do not like them, that nobody likes them. I discovered this when I volunteered to teach a course in different Boston public schools over a seven-year period. Children often come to the classroom angry. Maybe they have been told whites do not like them, that they will not treat them fairly.

Very often the teachers are white and the students are black or children of color. Teachers interpret the actions of those children as antisocial.

Additionally, universities are not training teachers to work in urban settings. Universities tend to be elitist with regard to who should succeed. When I was the Secretary of Education, I had a degree in engineering, not in education. I was criticized for not having formal training in education. So I attended UMass and completed a doctorate in education. I learned that education was not the issue, but the way in which students were being trained in education was problematic. Higher education is not training teachers to be active in the classroom.

Charles Desmond: BPS established a number of initiatives to respond to the issues that Paul Parks has raised. One such initiative is the Boston Teacher Residency program. Boston College is also promoting cultural competency as an integral component of urban teacher preparation and a departure from working in racial silos. We need to also acknowledge the fact that BPS has master teachers in the system capable of addressing many of the issues that surfaced in the roundtable.

Paul Parks: Yes, there are good teachers in the system, and I have seen them. I went to Israel to help set up a program for disadvantaged Jews. Israel had a uniform curriculum, and the first thing they did was to eliminate that system. Next, they trained the teachers at the schools. Teachers were wedded to the public schools and it worked.

Charles Desmond: Research supports the fact that highly qualified teachers in a classroom for three consecutive years can close the achievement gap and help children to perform at grade level and be successful in school. Some teachers are doing exceptional work and are leaders in the Boston public school system, setting new directions. Richard Strutman, President of the Boston Teachers Union, is leading that charge at BPS.

Hubie Jones: Collaboration among key stakeholders is necessary in order to address any or all the issues discussed at this roundtable. Key stakeholders and policymakers have to be aligned. The mayor's strategies, policies, and practices have to be aligned with those of BPS. Strategies of the state, city, and the local school districts must be consistent. We cannot afford any more silos. We now have a governor who I believe gets it. The Mayor, the Governor, and the school system, and all others concerned must work together to develop a comprehensive education strategy. Educational reform initiatives are futile without such a comprehensive strategy.

Charles Desmond: There is broad-based agreement in the room that moving forward with education reform and closing the achievement gap require coherence and collaboration among key stakeholders. Barbara Lewis and I agreed that we need to reach agreement so that we can move forward and avoid having this conversation again ten years from now.

Mariama White Hammond: I work with young people and many of them have dropped out. Some of them are now in alternative programs. I notice a difference between previous and present alternative programs. Boredom is a major problem with alternative education programs. Their curricula are not engaging. Project HIP-HOP uses hip-hop to teach math and other subjects. We need to provide community support to teachers and students. Neither students nor

teachers feel supported. I started teaching three years ago with two African American colleagues. They both have since left the school system due to lack of support. Project HIP-HOP stands for Highways in the Past, History, Organizing and Power, and it provides community organizing, leadership development, and artistic skills to teenagers.

Ulric Johnson, Ph.D., Founder and Director of Teens against Gang Violence and the Assistant Dean of Springfield College: There is an issue of “adultism.” The discussion is about young people who do not typically have power. We write and we talk about them. This conversation is about them, and yet they are not present. The system needs to be revamped. Historically, the system has done what it wants to do. We have an educational system that does not treat young people as intelligent human beings. We do things to them, not with them. Gangs have a better history of recruiting and retaining young people than the educational system, churches, and families. As dean of an adult college, I have students who said that they suffer from post-traumatic Boston public schools syndrome. They lack the ability to write, think, and analyze critically. We are doing intervention instead of prevention. There is a direct correlation between the increased gang violence and how we fail to relate to young people. That is something we need to look at academically, mentally, and through the criminal justice system. We need to relate to young people not as kids but as human beings.

Adyia White-Hammond, Substitute Teacher: I currently work as a substitute teacher at Madison Park in the Boston Public School system, and will begin the Boston teacher residency program in July. I work primarily with special education students. I taught a class today that had one student with a form of cerebral palsy, several students that I would classify as having anger management issues, and other students with a variety of special needs. It is virtually impossible to teach a class with so great a variety of special needs students. Students, particularly black males, with anger management issues (unrelated to learning ability) are unable to relate to their teachers and are automatically placed in special education classrooms. They spend the entire school day doing crossword puzzles and word problems. This is a serious problem that has to be addressed within the system.

Charles Desmond: Teachers having problems with young people, unable to deal with them and referring them to special education is one of those sub-conversations that we need to have. The Special needs program has become the default for children that teachers are unable to handle.

Angela Paige, Paige Academy: My husband and I helped found Paige Academy, an independent elementary school that works with children from birth to age 12. About 99 percent of Paige Academy’s graduates finish high school and 85 percent graduate from college. We have a 99 percent parent-participation rate. Parents are required to attend school meetings. If parents fail to attend school meeting, their children are suspended for a week. Parents come to meetings and learn something to take home and use with their children. I wrote my dissertation on cultural resonance, a term I established that talks about how classrooms, teachers, and curricula must be culturally resonant. It's not magic. They love it. They want to be there. Many children are misdiagnosed with ADD. They are like fast computers. They are DSL. They don't want a dial-up teacher. Children are interested in subjects such as time traveling. It covers math, science, and history. Those are the things that young people are interested in. If we want to do something for

our children, we have to do something that is going to work for them, and we have to do it ourselves. There is a different way of doing things. It has to be more like DSL, and not dial-up.

Sabrina Gray, Doctoral Student at UMass Boston: I am a teacher at the Nathan Hale School in the BPS. We are working on a separate sex pilot program. As a female, I do not know how to teach black males although I have been taught. The challenge is not to entertain them but to engage them. Young men are eager to learn, yet bored. Just as I learn differently I have to teach differently to young black males. The question is how do we begin to train teachers to challenge young black males? They are available to learn. They are interested in learning and they are some of our geniuses. The research suggests that children of color that graduate from grade twelve really only have an eighth-grade education, so they are unprepared to function at college level.

Esther Seibold, Assistant Professor in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences: I have worked with children for over 20 years as a pediatric nurse. I have also worked with school nurses in the education system for about 10 years now, and I am new to the Boston area. This is a wonderful conversation and it resonates with me. Both mental health and physical health have to be addressed especially when dealing with children with special needs. So if we're going to reach out to create some bridges and collaborations, look to nursing. School nurses are the primary healthcare providers in public schools; they are a constituency that needs to be brought into this conversation. The College of Nursing can also contribute to teacher preparation. I would really like to see courses in teacher prep programs where someone like me comes into the classroom to discuss health issues. What does it mean to have a child that has cerebral palsy in a classroom and what are the educational implications? What is it like to have a child with learning disabilities from the health and intervention point of view?

Donna Stewartson, Associate Director of Women in Politics and Public Policy, UMass Boston: I am a former Boston public school employee and I had two children in BPS. As a social activist, it was really hard for me to take my children out of BPS. My son was in second grade last year and he was in detention, which I feel is setting him up for corrections. As a former BPS employee, I knew who to call and where to go to get things done, but the BPS bureaucracy prevented me from getting something like his bus stop changed. I received \$3000 last year for supplemental services. Why am I receiving supplemental services? My child went to a Superintendent school, which is just another name for an under-performing school. The \$3000 could have been used to pay for a paraprofessional instead of giving it to me for supplemental services. Then the teacher could give the necessary attention to the children who need the help instead of sending them to special education classes and labeling them. This is basic. Why don't people get it?

Karen Young, Co-Director of Youth on Board: Youth Board is a community organization that works with school districts and individual schools to create environments where young people feel respected and cared for. I also help run the Boston Student Advisory Council that represents all the district high schools to the Boston School Committee and Superintendent. We have found again and again, when their opinions and ideas are sought, that young people have answers. There are no formal ways for young people to get involved in school governance. We are challenging all of you to include young people in conversations with or about parents, teachers,

administrators, and school-based management. Students are dying to be part of something. They need a structure in which they can have a voice. Teachers need training and support in the classroom.

Paul Parks: I'm working with two individuals to establish a public boarding school for poor children. This is something I have wanted to do for a long time. Some 35 years ago, we started the Massachusetts experimental school programs. It did just what the Paige Academy is doing. Superintendents across the state got angry because we didn't have to comply with certification issues and a whole lot of things and they killed that program. We were turning out children that went to college. We took them from all types of backgrounds. That bill, which was passed under Reagan, is still on the books. If you want to start an experimental program you can do it tomorrow. So if you want to start a school you can.

Joe Cooke: I want to thank you Mr. Parks for your comments. We know what works and some of things that do not work. I am the principal for Paige Academy. There are things that we know we have to do without state or federal funding. We also need to understand that it is hard to do the things that we are talking about while we are in the midst of a war. Regardless of the size of our houses, how we dress, and in what fine restaurants we eat, each of us knows that we are in a war. We put our guns back on when we walk outside. There are many types of wars. This country is at war internally and externally. One war is a race war. That is a big war. And that is just one war.

Gary Hicks: When I was in the Boston Public Schools they put everyone with a behavioral problem in one school. Both boys and girls fit in one building, which is today the Center for Afro-American Artists. Today, in 2007, in each school you have at least one classroom with these children. I had the dubious distinction to skip the Artists Building and go straight to reform school. Somehow I got out of that. Now I make trouble for the rich. I just wanted to make a pitch for putting Sheriff Cabral out of a job, no offense to the Sheriff. I was a substitute teacher for 10 years in the BPS. What kinds of systems have been established for parents so they can talk about the issues regarding their children?

Lynson Moore Beaulieu, Director of Programs and Strategic Leadership, the Schott Foundation: Public education was not set up to educate children equally. Therefore, it is doing, as someone said, what it was created to do. When just a little over half of the black children and 40 percent of Latino children are graduating high school, it begs the following question: what would it really cost if all the children stayed in school and were really being educated the way they need to be educated? Think about how much money it costs to keep that war going — money that is not invested in our children. It is very important for us to decide: (1) in what kind of country and democracy do we want to live; (2) what will it take economically to educate all children; (3) how will they pay for college in an environment where poor children are getting less and less financial aid; and (4) where are the jobs going to be?

Charles Desmond: Each time a person drops out of school it costs \$260,000 in lost wages, lost productivity, and lost assets to the community. In 2004, the net loss in the U.S. economy due to dropout was \$309 billion.

Unidentified young male speaker: I would like to hear more about: (1) the privatized criminal justice system and how much revenue it generates in relation to the cost of education; (2) cultural capital issues, the impact of white exodus or white flight in the 1970s; (3) the dispersion of the black middle class that has left a gaping hole in black neighborhoods; (4) where is the black middle class? Does it exist; and (5) the purpose of the BPS system — is it to graduate students with proficiency or to prepare students for higher education?

Cheryl Holmes: Like Sabrina, I too found myself in a BPS classroom saying I do not know how to teach a kinesthetic child, a child who learns through hands-on activities, because I learn by listening and talking to people. The system did not support me when I got honest. The more honest I became, the more problematic I became for the system. Maturity has taught me to help and encourage those who are younger and those in career transition. But let's face it; America is about deficit orientation as it relates to low-income individuals. So the question for me is how do I deal with the reality that one is going against the grain. You should not expect the battle to be easy. You have to be ready for the long haul.

Hubie Jones: Let me make a backseat comment. In January 2009, there will be a Democratic president of the United States. Attention will be directed at the cities and urban education. Now is the time to get ready to make sure that the right policies, the right funding, and the right focus are in place. All of the think tanks in Washington are working overtime now to try to determine all of this. And if we allow it, they will determine it. Now is the time to get ready for the funding and the attention that is going to come. Are we ready? Are we clear and together? We have to get ready. One last thing from a historical perspective, there is a big irony here. In the 1960s black and Latino leaders in this town were basically on the outside dealing with BPS. They told us to take a hike. We were not able to get anywhere and were not listened to. That has all changed. We are on the inside in many ways now. We have access. These folks will listen to us. But we have never had the next generation of Paul Parks and Ruth Batson who spent their time dealing with education. Our black leaders are not in the schools. They are talking about walking the streets. Our black leaders need to be in the schools. They should be dealing with the schools and going to school committee meetings.

CONCLUSION

Presenter: Denise Patmon, Graduate College of Education, UMass Boston

I applaud all of you for coming here on this beautiful day with its first hint of spring. I came here from Washington, D.C. where I have been talking with people about these issues from around the nation. Let me tell you something that is hopeful. We in Boston are at the forefront whether we like it or not. Washington, D.C. is adopting our Massachusetts standards in their schools. We are standing on shoulders and we have the responsibility of moving the agenda forward. Our children were called scholars in the 18th and 19th centuries. When my little boy wakes up every morning I ask him, “How is my scholar today?” He walks outside with his shoulders held high, with his head to the sky, and he is ready to engage in the discourse of the day. But education is a giant migraine for every single black child not only in the city of Boston and in the

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but in the nation. That is why I made sure that I made that flight so that I could be here today.

We talk about the achievement gap. Well that gap is systemic, as we've heard. The achievement gap cannot be closed in this city until we talk about the housing gap, until we talk about health issues as a gap. Only after we talk about school funding and wealth in this city can we begin to talk about the achievement gap effectively. We cannot look only at the educational gap without seeing the systemic issues affecting this city.

Lastly, we have taken the public out of public schools. I am the product of the New York City public school system. I had a fine education. I must tell you, most people who look like me were talking about private institutions. The brother in the back asked where is the middle class? We have given up on some of the public schools in suburban towns. What is wrong with the situation? And why don't we want to go to a public doctor? We want our **own** private doctors. We have taken the value of public out of the equation. So we sit here wondering about these things. It is imperative that we do our own self-examination and see where we stand on this. I challenge you to prepare policy position papers that will come from these proceedings. I challenge everyone who spent time on this beautiful spring day in the catacombs of UMass Boston, which demonstrates your commitment, to sit and think about calling a black child a scholar. I dare you to read some of the curricula and materials that all children in the city of Boston had to contend with in the 18th and 19th century black Boston. Yes, I am very proud to sit here with Mr. Parks. I am very proud to continue the spirit of those men, women, and children who were students at that time.

I once studied with a Japanese author at the University of Tokyo. His name was Indo, and he talks about the multiple faces that we wear. I use that paradigm to give back to you some of the things that I have heard today. The first face that Indo speaks of is the outside face. What is the outside perspective around BPS? I heard things like there is an academic achievement gap with black and Latino children in a standard-based system. The academics need help. I heard proficiency. Well, proficiency is not good enough everybody. That's exactly what our young people know. The expectation, particularly if you are a black boy, is that you will just become proficient. My scholar will never be just proficient.

We talked about how the professional preparation of teachers must be ratcheted up. That is the public face that parents know, the business community knows, and we in schools of education know. Boston is looked at as a standard. I am telling you very sincerely that when we talk about these issues people around the country are looking to Boston to lead the way. That is a heavy burden to bear. But we can do it. That is our public face.

Finally, the importance of early childhood, the culture of incarceration, and the over representation of our children in special education are all issues of which the public is aware.

Now we move to the inside face. What do those of us who are here know? We know that as early as fifth grade children feel disenfranchised from school. The curriculum is not engaging. Children are bored. We know that collaboration and alignment are needed. As our superintendent

mentioned, we are working in silos. We need to make sure that the structural side of the house meets the academic part of the house.

We know what works. We do not include children in the discourse. That's what I heard. That's the side of the face that we need to work on. Barbara Lewis set the context when she talked about directing education at the breadth of the Diaspora for all black children, not just for African Americans but all black children. English language learner issues are very important. Immigration issues are very important as is the need for the black middle class to rise. Where is the outrage? Where is the leadership? That is our inside face that I heard.

The third face is the pure face. This is the face that only we look into, that we see. We know that MCAS provides us with disaggregated data. The pure face example is the criminal justice system and how it intersects with the system – how it aligns. Where is the alignment? The pure face is that children know that they are not ADD, they are DSL. The children know this. We know that there is overcrowding in schools. Parents are frustrated. We know what works spiritually. But the children do not hear that. They are not feeling it.

The final face is the unknown face. What if in this room, as was just suggested, we start working now on quality new teacher, principal, and administrator policy and recruitment? What if there is special programming for black and Latino students? What if we include Asian students in the paradigm? What if we work together, and what if we learn together what works across and among groups? What if there is a teacher toolbox? What if we actually start tapping successful models like Paige Academy?

I understand that there will be a public document, not one that merely sits at the Trotter. It will be made readable, digestible, and accessible. The *Boston Globe* is right across the street. Why are we calling Harvard and Wheelock for professional expert opinion when UMass is right here? We have to make sure that cross college linkages exist. We have to continue dialogue and discourse. It cannot stop here.

Finally, we have to be honest. We have to talk about what we are doing individually. We have to each put down what we will do to make a difference with regard to these issues and then come back.

EPILOGUE

Barbara Lewis

Director, William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black History and Culture

In the spring of 2007, the Trotter Institute convened two Roundtables, one on Crime and the other on Education. As the year comes to a close, we want to share with you what was discussed by participants from many different sectors of the community — educators, politicians, youth workers, nurses, policemen, parents, civil servants, teachers, administrators, community activists, and philanthropists during those two Roundtables. The agenda for follow-up is to review those discussions, to look at the record, the picture that we created together, and to move forward, with an emphasis on the future and on strategies that can make a positive difference.

Where are we positioned now and what does our future look like? Can we really step forward from the patterns of the past and make something new, something that will reflect the democratic promise in its fullness? What are our particular challenges and how do they differ, if at all, from the challenges of yesterday? What crack in the status quo can we exploit? What do the reports on crime and education tell us? What matters is that we come together and talk and discuss what we see and what we think and what we hope to achieve.

Here we are not yet a decade into the twenty-first century, and we are confronting reverberating problems in the city of Boston. The urban youth are killing each other as they walk home from school, as they sit outside in the summer heat. College is a distant dream for most urban youth. They have a much better chance of going to jail. Their children can come to visit them in prison and learn the culture of incarceration. And so the saga continues. These are not new problems. But we want to do something new about them. We want to turn a corner. We want to learn how to talk to each other in ways that will allow us to be heard and understood so that what we say may be acted upon. The future does not have to repeat the past.

What keeps us stuck in our patterns? Do we really want to hurt and hobble ourselves? Why do we create warring zones in our neighborhoods? Do we think that we are not worth protection? Are we internalizing the lack of value that others place on us? How do we construct a value system that puts our bodies at the center rather than on the margins, or, figuratively, in the gutters? Are we sacrificing ourselves because we perceive that our futures are limited? How far have we come from the days of segregation when we were forced to live in separate enclaves where a lack of privilege was an everyday reality? How distant are we really from the centuries of slavery when it was against the law for folks without social power to read and negotiate their way to greater inclusion through the mechanism of the word, which the Bible tells us is the beginning point for all things?

For me, the education and crime reports are linked in that both express the need for collaboration. Both point out the tendency to discount and even dismiss the young, which someone called adultism, and the recurring histories that repeat and repeat and leave deep wounds, some of which have not yet healed. In Boston and in Massachusetts, there are lots of groups concerned about the problems of violent neighborhoods and failing schools. Many of them are doing good work. Just yesterday, I was speaking with Charles Desmond, who is on the

Trotter Advisory Board. He was talking about meeting with the mayor to discuss a new initiative directed at supporting the educational future of the 37,000 children in Boston who are in the 0-5 demographic, our collective tomorrow. He has also been working with a regional group to talk about strategizing to solve problems that are impacting New England and the country. On Monday, December 3, 2007, Paul Grogan wrote in the *Globe* about his resolve to fund seven new pilot schools. However one feels about the potential of the pilot schools to correct the problems of public education in Boston, folks are on the move. They are coming up with plans and projects. Rodney Dailey, also on the Trotter Board, wants to establish a Peace Alliance that would focus on urban violence. But how do we work together to achieve our ends? In the Crime Roundtable, one of the participants said that there are over 3,000 nonprofits in Boston concerned about the problems of folks of color. Picture, if you will, 3,000 folks in the same bed, all trying to get a bit of sheet. Everyone pulling in a different direction means that some bodies are going to be left out in the cold. We need to find a way to agree, to work for a common purpose, and to make sure that everyone is covered. Maybe someone will have to get out of the bed. Who will that be? The Trotter Institute sees its job as facilitator – convening discussions and participating in the effort to face problems and generate solutions that address folks where they are.

At the Trotter, we don't yet have answers. We are finding our way, and we are committed to the search. In that process of looking for the way out or the way in, however you define the problem, we sometimes ignore the voices of the young. We are so busy being upset at their behavior that we may not dig deep enough to discover their motivations, to hear what is bothering them, what is causing them to act out. Let me go out on a limb here and say that the folks with authority in this society tend not to want to hear from youngsters and children of color who are perceived as threats. They have to be controlled. They are disruptive. But these are our offspring. The problems that they have, they sometimes learned from us. You have all seen that television ad from a few years ago: An adolescent male is smoking an illegal substance, and the father busts in outraged at his behavior. Where did you learn that, he demands? "I learned it from you," the son answers.

There are some things that I know I need to learn from the younger folks, some things that they can teach me. I'm a tourist in their world. They speak a different language. They have a different culture, but if I stay outside that world and that culture, I am at a disadvantage. They have things to tell me, and I have to listen for my own good. Some of us think that the young didn't create the problems, they inherited them. So it's the job of the older folks to solve the problems and hand the solutions to the younger folks. It's my thinking that we are all in this together, the younger ones and the older ones. Each of us has a perspective that deserves to be heard. If we are going to craft solutions, every voice matters. Asserting that adults are the only ones with the answers is not going to get the problems solved, not the problems of today. Nor is it going to guarantee buy-in from the young.

In the Education Roundtable, we talked a lot about history. This problem of diversity and the schools is not a new one. It was a problem in the nineteenth century. It was a problem in the twentieth century, and it is still a problem in the twenty-first century. That is another reason why I think the voices of the young are so important. They bring another perspective to the mix, one that has been missing for a long time. In this twenty-first century, changes are occurring at a rapid rate, and the world, as Thomas Friedman tells us, is now flat. No one group has the

advantage. In one sense, that is true. In another, it is not. It is true that new faces and new entities are coming to the table of power. Some of those faces are young and entrepreneurial, some of those faces are darker, some have features that do not bear the stamp of Europe. It is not true in the sense that many of the folks who have been disenfranchised in the past are going to continue to be disenfranchised and will not have a seat in the halls of privilege and decision-making unless we do something to change the equation that is entrenched.

Why should we do that? Why should we open the doors to opportunity and do things differently than we have done in the past? Simply because it's a new day, a younger day, a harder day, a faster changing day. And to keep the position that America has earned and to go beyond that, if possible, we have to come up with the goods to stay on top in a flat and changing terrain. To do that job, we need all hands. Last week, I was in line at one of the coffee bars on campus, and ahead of me was a student who had come here from Columbia, South America. The person with him asked what it was like to come into a new educational system. He said that most folks who come here from another country are sent back a year so that they can learn the language and get in tune with the education here. He came here, he said in the seventh grade. But the schooling he had in Columbia that taught him languages, that taught him about the history of North America and South America and Europe and Asia and Africa, that taught him about the indigenous peoples of his country, that taught him about economics and literature, and which was based in a parochial school that did not close its doors until 6 o'clock at night and was so good, so focused on preparing him to enter the world, that he had not been sent back to the sixth grade. Instead, he was pushed ahead to the eighth grade.

The schooling in this country, so long a mechanism to track folks into the doers and the done-in, cannot boast a record like that. Too few of us know any language other than English. Too few of us know our own history, let alone the history of other countries and continents. In the new-world environment, where knowledge is key to global participation, we cannot afford the luxury of keeping sharp, eager, vibrant, innovative minds out of the competition, locked into a dead-end nowhere. In the race to maintain and gain new power economically and politically, we do not know where the new energy, where the new insight, where the new competitive edge is going to come from. Difference and genius are spontaneous; they can erupt anywhere, even in the isolated, set-aside enclaves of the disempowered who just might see the world in a new light, who might understand what it means to network across cities and across cultures, linking up new paradigms.

Here we are at a public land-grant university in one of the richest cities in the nation, a university that does not make a practice of exclusion. It maintains high standards and has a committed faculty who do more than teach and take the principles of civic engagement seriously. In its composition, this university reflects the full diversity and richness of this city to which new immigrants and new populations are flocking, and it is our mandate and our challenge to find ways to teach and fire with enthusiasm those youngsters that the nation might prefer to forget, that the state has labeled unteachable, that the world sees as expendable. Dr. Denise Patmon, who cares about public education and has spent a long time studying it, is going to continue the conversation with us about how to chart a better educational future. Senator Diane Wilkerson, who keeps her finger on the pulse of power and need in this state, who goes beyond duty in her

concern for her constituency, waking up early and staying up late to get the job done, will be sharing her insights with us.