The cultural disconnect between the civil rights generation and the hip-hop generation is perhaps the single most important challenge in reaching black youth who are simply not motivated, interested, or inspired by school reform efforts in which their urban identities are not represented.

Dr. Shawn Ginwright, *Black in school*

Helping urban schools work for teachers and students

Hip-Hop Generation vs. Civil Rights Generation: Considering Black Youth Identity and the Promise of Hip-Hop Culture Expanding the Ideas of Shawn Ginwright

John Harris Loflin
The Black & Latino Policy Institute
john@bl-pi.org
Indianapolis, IN USA

While progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance for America's black youth, it also provides a blueprint for the possibilities of positive social change for the entire society—helping America live up to its promise of liberty and justice for all.

Dr. Shawn Ginwright, *Black in school*

Table of contents

A NEW VISION OF URBAN SCHOOL REFORM FOR THE HIP-HOP GENERATION……….p. **1**
Why are school graduation rates so low?……….p. **1**
THE EMERGENCE OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION……….p. **3**
Four questions regarding Afrocentric reform in poor and working-class communities……….p. **4**
WHAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT AFROCENTRIC REFORM……….p. **5**
HIP-HOP GENERATION vs. CIVIL RIGHTS GENERATION: THE CHALLENGE OF AFROCENTRIC REFORM……….p. **5**
AFROCENTRIC REFORM IN URBAN SCHOOLS……….p. **6**
Afrocentric educators share four fundamental beliefs……….p. **6**
THE CHALLENGE OF AFROCENTRIC EDUCATION……….p. **7**
CONSIDERING BLACK YOUTH IDENTITY AND THE PROMISE OF HIP-HOP CULTURE……….p. **8**
Negative perceptions of black youth and hip-hop culture……….p. **8**
Hip-hop culture can be described as an emerging worldview among adults and youth born after 1965……….p. **9**
BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP: THE CHALLENGE OF THE NEW BLACK MIDDLE- CLASS……….p. **10**
The paradox of black middle class success……….p. **11**
Hip-hip culture is central to conceptualizing black youth identity because it is an essential pathway to understanding their struggles, realities, and possibilities……….p. **11**
DESIGNING SMALL SCHOOLS THAT WORK FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS: A VISION FOR SCHOOL REFORM: THE PROGRESS OF AFROCENTRIC REFORM THROUGH THE HIP-HOP GENERATION……….p. **11**
How can small schools promote student involvement with students who are resistant to schools?……….p. **12**
The necessity and limitations of a black point of view in small school reform……….p. **12**
Does an Afrocentric multicultural approach work? Maybe not!……….p. **13**
Is it unfair to expect urban schools to confront these seemingly massive social problems?……….p. **14**
TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH YOUTH ENGAGEMENT……….p. **14**
Intergenerational coalitions: A challenge to the civil rights generation……….p. **14**
An example of a culture-based and hip-hop orientated program model……...p. **16**
Ginwright's 5 guiding principles for refocusing Afrocentric reform……….p. **16**
EXAMPLES OF YOUTH ORGANIZING TO TRANSFORM SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY, AND PUBLC POLICY……….p. **17**
One effective strategy to mobilize youth is hip-hop youth culture……...p. **19**
This begs the questions: Does IPS need this kind of student support?………p. **20**

Could Marion County youth organize?……….p. **20**
Could Marion County youth do this?………..p. **22**
THE POWER OF YOUTH IN PUBLIC POLICY……….p. **22**
HIP-HOP CULTURE AND POSSIBILITIES FOR AFROCENTRIC REFORM……….p. **23**
GINWRIGHT'S TWO STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH TODAY'S YOUTH……….p. **24**
1. Validate and Affirm Black Youth Identity……….p. **24**
Hip-hop culture must be self-critical……….p. **25**
2. Think of Urban Youth Culture as an Asset, Not a Liability……….p. **26**
THE FUTURE OF AFROCENTRIC REFORM: DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS……….p. **26**
Small school student advocates: The pro-democracy movement in IPS……p. **27**
Democratic schools……….p. **27**
CONCLUSIONS……….p. **29**
The irony of Afrocentric reform, urban youth, and the promise of hip-hop culture…...p. **29**
Let's start to create a legacy of youth activism in Indianapolis……….p. **30**
RECOMMENDATIONS……….p. **31**

APPENDICIES

Democratic Education…………………………………p. **33**
Teaching for Social Justice…………………………………..p. **40**
Pedagogy of Poverty…………………………p. **45**
Culturally Relevant Teaching…………………………p. **48**
Culturally Relevant Teaching Is Not Enough: Advancing Culturally Relevant Teaching as Politically Relevant Teaching……………………………………….p. **55**
Media Literacy: Art as the 4th R………………………………p. **62**
Rites of Passage……………………..p. **64**
The Sham of Parental Involvement……………………..p. **70**

This position paper is a compilation of ideas, concepts, and quotes from *Black in school: Afrocentric reform, urban youth, and the promise of hip-hop culture* by Dr. Shawn Ginwright, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Ethnic Studies Program, Santa Clara University, CA. Published by Teachers College Columbia University, New York City, 2004. ISBN 0-8077-4431-X

It is a fallacy of radical youth to demand all or nothing, and to view every partial activity as compromise. Either engage in something that will bring revolution and transformation all at one blow, or do nothing, it seems to say. But compromise is really only a desperate attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. It is not compromise to study to understand the world in which one lives, to seek expression for one's inner life, to work to harmonize it and make it an integer, nor is it compromise to work in some small sphere for the harmonization of social life and the relations between men who work together, a harmonization that will bring democracy into every sphere of life.

Randolph S. Bourne, *Youth and Life* , 1913

When Public Enemy first came out we used to say "Public Enemy, we're agents for the preservation of the Black mind. We're media hijackers." We worked to hijack the media and put it in our own form…Every time we checked for ourselves on the news they were locking us up anyway, so the interpretation coming from Rap was a lot clearer. That's why I call Rap the Black CNN. Rap is now a worldwide phenomenon. Rap is the CNN for young people all over the world.

Chuck D with Yusuf Jah, *Fight the Power: Rap, Race, and Reality*, 1997

When we ask, what is the state of Hiphop?, the quick answer is that Hiphop (the community) must mature to a level of self-government where it creates, regulates, and profits from its own elements, resources, and intellectual properties. The state of Hiphop is that Hiphop is being negatively exploited by the recording industries of America who manipulate its public image to sell the fantasy of pimpin', thuggin', hoein', flashin', flossin', and ballin' to predominantly young White Rap fans that are impressed by such behaviors. On the one hand it is Hiphop's rebellious image that attracts young people to it. However, on the other hand, the real lives of those that live around pimps, thugs, whores, drug dealers, etc., are far from being just fantasies of defiance that you can turn off and on when you want to feel sexy or macho! The real lives of those that are affected by injustice, lawlessness, and corruption created (and continue to create) Hiphop as a way out of oppression.

KRS-ONE, *Ruminations*, 2003

A NEW VISION OF URBAN SCHOOL REFORM FOR THE HIP-HOP GENERATION

What is hip-hop culture? What is its history? What are its characteristics? Why does it have such an influence on today's youth? What is it about hip-hop culture that influences black working-class urban youth to reject schooling? Can knowing the answers to these questions help Marion County school districts and the communities where students and their families live?

A February 17, 2005 *Indianapolis Star* editorial questioned Indiana graduation rate numbers. The 72 percent figure from the Manhattan Institute study disputed the 91 percent rate for 2002 claimed by the state. A February 27 *Star* commentary on the state dropout problem by State Senator Luke Messer mentioned that 3 major Indiana cities had a graduation rate of less than 50 percent. He noted one Indianapolis high school had a graduation rate of just over 10 percent. That school was Arlington High School. According to the Indiana State Commission on Higher Education the 2004 graduation rate was 12.5 percent. Arlington reported a 2004 graduation rate of 99 percent.

This point is iterated in, “Locating the Dropout Crisis.” Johns Hopkins researchers flagged 2,000 high schools as “dropout factories.” In the study, between 1990 and 2002, other than Stockton, CA with 3 high schools, IPS was the only district in the nation where students had, and continue to have, no choice but to go to a dropout factory—a place where they have an outlandish 70-75 percent chance of not graduating!

Indeed, Indiana's rate and those of the Indianapolis Public Schools are worrisome, but what about the rates for black students? The Manhattan Institute study stated the national graduation rate for African-Americans as 56 percent. The Indiana rate was 52 percent.

According to a 2004 Harvard/Urban Institute study, “Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth Are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis,” only 50 percent of all U.S. black students graduated from high school in 2001. The problem was even worse for black males at 43 percent. The 2001 Indiana graduation rate was 72.4 percent. The Indiana African-American rate was 53 percent. The total graduation rate for IPS was 30.6 percent. (IPS reported a 91.1 percent 2001 rate.)

The above study also concluded that inaccurate and misleading graduation data hide problems from public view. Nationally, half or more of Black, Latino and Native American youth are getting left behind in a “hidden crisis” obscured by U.S. Department of Education regulations that “allow schools, districts, and states to all but eliminate graduation rate accountability for minority subgroups.”

Recent Schott Foundation research, “Public Education and Black Male Students,” noted the 2002 national graduation rate for black males was 41 percent. In Indiana, the rate was 39 percent. The IPS rate was 33 percent, and an astounding 23 percent for white males.

Why are school graduation rates so low?

Let us look at what students face outside of school. Does it have an effect? Black youth encounter police brutality, cope with unimaginable family violence, struggle to support their families, contend with sexual abuse, and rape. Youth in urban communities face complex economic, political, and social challenges that have serious consequences for

academic performance. More and more working-class black youth have assumed tasks that were once the responsibilities of their parents. The struggles of finding decent work, paying rent, and juggling childcare have undoubtedly placed greater challenges on youth in urban communities. For these students, academic achievement is influenced by the economic conditions of the communities in which they live.

In *Black in school*, educator Dr. Shawn Ginwright attempts to evaluate the present circumstances surrounding black working-class urban youth navigate through the constraints of poverty and struggle in order to create equality and justice in their public high schools.

As an advocate for African-centered approaches to educating African-American children, he realizes that many Afrocentric discussions and debates tend to be limited to scholars, students in the academy, educators, and some practitioners. Granted, he notes, there are groups of young self-educated members of black-nationalist organizations that subscribe to an Afocentric philosophy, but for the most part, Afrocentric ideas have been primary to the black, educated middle-class. In contrast, his years of work with poor and working-class parents and youth has taught him that the term Afrocentric has little or no meaning for blacks who remain at the bottom America's economic ladder. Equality for many poor and working-class communities means higher wages, better living conditions, and safe, clean schools. The need to reconstruct their racial identity (as Afrocentrism advocates) rarely enters the conversation.

Professor Ginwright is concerned that the black middle-class has defined the plight of blacks without adequately including the voices of the poor and working- class. In doing so, the issues that poor and working-class blacks define are often marginalized and given less priority in development of public and educational policy. The voices of poor and working-class blacks are being marginalized just at the time when they should be given greater priority--given the recent wave of conservative reform efforts such as welfare reform and Three Strikes, which has without doubt impacted poor and working class blacks more than any other community.

Black in school, in many respects, is meant to push urban reform efforts to seriously consider the limits of focusing entirely on multicultural strategies such as Afrocentrism. His work with poor communities and with youth who struggle to find meaning in their schools has made him examine how we might conceptualize urban reform in ways that affirm black youth identity while simultaneously challenge oppressive economic conditions in their communities.

He contends that Afrocentric reform must be closely tied to a critical understanding of racial and economic justice. From this perspective, black youth connect the cultural utility of Afrocentric education with the day-to-day reality of urban poverty. For those who live in communities where there are few livable-wage jobs and high crime, Afrocentric education has a deeper meaning for black youth when they act to improve quality of life issues such as school safety, child care opportunities, decent housing, health care, and after-school programs.

3

THE EMERGENCE OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Efforts to improve the quality of urban schools have yielded few successes. School reform initiatives, particularly in urban communities, have had little impact on the schools or the lives of the students who attend them. For African- American students, this effort has been particularly challenging. In the early 1970s, educators and community activists pushed for curricular strategies that better represented children of color. Multicultural education emerged as a response to the Eurocentric bias pervasive in America's urban schools. An outgrowth of the Civil Rights movement, multicultural education was viewed as a social resource that could forge greater educational opportunities and was closely tied to the struggle for jobs, economic power, and community vitality. Ginwrigjht notes that according to C. Sleeter’s 1996 book, *Multicultural education as social activism*, the goal was to gain power to define how education for children of oppressed racial groups should be conducted. In short, multiculturalism was tied to a larger struggle for economic and political equality, and public schools became one site where this struggle was carried out.

In the early 1980s, educators and community activists saw Afrocentric educational approaches as one possible solution to the disproportionate failure among African-American students in urban schools. Afrocentric education can be defined as a set of principles based on East and West African philosophy that connects cultural values with classroom practices. These principles form a common framework that views African culture as a transmitter of values, beliefs, and behaviors that can ultimately translate to educational success. The fundamental Afrocentric argument is that African-American students who perform poorly in school do so in part because the curricula they encounter has little relevance to their lives and culture. Afrocentric scholars argue that cultural omissions in schooling and curricula consequently erode students' cultural and self-esteem and contribute to poor academic performance. This perspective assumes that ethnic and cultural identity is inherently linked to school performance.

Nonetheless, Professor Ginwright argues that although past and present multicultural reform efforts that integrate race, ethnicity, and culture in urban school reform were and are indeed necessary, if the goal of this reform was keeping African-American in school, the reform has not worked.

And, obviously, he has a point: The current tragically low graduation rates for black students in the U.S. and the Indianapolis Public Schools illustrate that given the pervasive impact of poverty multicultural reform efforts don’t work.

Unlike some forms of multiculturalism that link educational struggles to larger issues of racial and economic justice (Ginwight suggests C. E. Sleeter and P.L. McLaren’s, 1995 book *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference*), Ginwright asserts that few Afrocentric approaches explore the relationship between racial marginalization and broader issues of economic oppression. The impact of urban problems such as poverty, safety, violence, and unemployment are rarely considered in the development and implementation of Afrocentric school reform, and as a result, many Afrocentric projects simply do not connect with students' everyday lives. In order to understand the potential impact of Afrocentric reform in urban schools, reformers must also consider the economic and political realities of the communities and cities in which schools are embedded.

The limited success of Afrocentric education has led Dr. Ginwright to a series of questions regarding Afrocentric reform in poor and working-class communities:

1. Given the bleak economic conditions in urban communities, what are the limits of multicultural reform efforts such as Afrocentrism?
2. How does social class function in educational reform efforts within the black community?
3. What factors contribute to the emergence of Afrocentric reform in poor urban communities?
4. To what extent do Afrocentric ideas affirm the identities of black youth in poor urban communities?

According to Ginwright, despite the fact that over the past decade there has been a proliferation of Afrocentric educational projects around the country, there is a little information about the outcomes, challenges, and opportunities of Afrocentric reform. These questions are particularly important because Afrocentric educational reform is most commonly practiced in low-income, low-performing, urban schools. Because these schools are invariably located in poor communities, it is also important to understand the relationship between Afrocentric initiatives and the social, political, and economic contexts from which they emerge.

The purpose of Ginwright's *Black in school* book is to understand the community forces that thwart or promote Afrocentric educational reform in urban schools located in low-income communities, and how black middle-class leaders in one urban community shaped Afrocentric education in a way that was disconnected from the experiences of working-class African American youth. As a result, the reform effort failed to transform the school because the project was not relevant to the student's day-to-day lives. Thus, his book provides important lessons about how to build multi-class coalitions in community change efforts, and key strategies about how to engage young people in school and community reform efforts. He seeks to expand current Afrocentric theory and strategies by considering the impact of social class on Afrocentric education. This is accomplished in three ways.

First, *Black in school* argues that while Afrocentric curricula can provide an important critique of education for African American students; yet, Afrocentric approaches in urban school reform, as they are currently implemented, are unable to address the challenges presented by urban poverty.

Next, he argues that members of the black middle-class, in wielding considerable influence in reform of urban schools, often overlook the concerns that working- class communities have about their schools.

Third, he explains how Afrocentric reform might be modified to better meet the needs of youth from low-income working-class communities.

Ginwright tries to provide a more comprehensive picture of the limits and possibilities for identity-based reform in poor urban schools. Strategies that both build ethnic identity and prepare African American youth to change relevant community problems are necessary steps for future Afrocentric reform efforts.

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT AFROCENTRIC REFORM

There are a number of things that are simply unknown about the impact of Afrocentric reform. First, how does Afrocentric reform prepare students to address issues in their lives outside the context of schools? Here Ginwright argues that Afrocentric strategies, in order to truly be effective, should address the ways that poor and working-class culture influences the identities of African- American students in low-income urban communities.

For example, earning money through braiding hair, selling T-shirts, baby- sitting, working two part-time jobs at local fast-food restaurants, or surviving via the underground economy all contribute to an identity of work among youth. Current Afrocentric reform efforts have focused primarily on a static view of African American youth identity by an overemphasis on West African and Egyptian philosophies that are difficult to translate, in a meaningful way, to the challenges many black youth must navigate.

Here Ginwright believes that Afrocentric educators must consider how black youth construct complex identities--identities that move beyond race and include issues of social class, gender, and sexuality. Youth in low-income urban communities define themselves not only by race and ethnic culture, but also by the neighborhoods in which they live, the schools they attend, gang affiliations, and certainly hip-hop culture. *Black in school* illustrates how Afrocentric reformers can develop a more complete model African-American youth identity.

HIP-HOP GENERATION vs. CIVIL RIGHTS GENERATION: THE CHALLENGE OF AFROCENTRIC REFORM

Race, class, and gender have always influenced access to public education in America. Questions regarding who should be educated and what type of education should be provided have presented serious challenges to public schools. For African-Americans, the legacy of Jim Crow and decades of racial exclusion from quality education have created two educational realities. On one hand, education is vehicle for social mobility and a higher quality of life. Yet, on the other hand, mis-education is a tool to reproduce social inequality. In the early 1970s, educators began to articulate the idea that access to quality education was necessary, but insufficient. For these educators, education also meant new forms of representation in curricula that highlighted the importance of ethnic diversity.

On one hand, public education is vehicle for social mobility and a higher quality of life. Yet on the other hand, it represents mis-education and is a tool to reproduce social inequality.

From this need for “new forms of representation,” arose multicultural education. This approach promoted the need to include the cultural histories, experiences, and learning styles of minority students. Since the early 1970s, there has been an effort on the part of textbook publishers, school districts, teachers, policy makers, and scholars to acknowledge and include an educational experience representative of all students and to promote the idea that Eurocentric biases in curricula put students of color at a learning disadvantage and damage their self- and cultural esteem. Although there is substantial evidence that suggests this assumption is in part correct, there is a tendency

for scholars and practitioners to develop policies, strategies, and programs that simply celebrate students' cultures while failing to challenge or even acknowledge the oppressive conditions in which young people live. This approach also ignores the multiple and often complex identities of urban young people and undermines the profound influence that urban poverty has on efforts to improve urban schools.

Afrocentric approaches ignore the multiple and often complex identities of urban youth and undermines the profound influence that urban poverty has on efforts to improve urban schools.

While multiculturalism strives to bring about racial equity in schools, its single-minded focus on ethnic and cultural identity fails to confront the complex economic challenges young people face. As a result, problems found in urban schools are often misdiagnosed. Although Ginwright agrees that ethnic identity is an important feature in considering curricular reform, he argues that social class, economic conditions, and politics all work to shape efforts to improve urban schools.

AFROCENTRIC REFORM IN URBAN SCHOOLS

Afrocentric reform is an educational strategy designed to strengthen and improve the academic performance of students using principles based in ancient Egyptian culture. Afrocentric educators share four fundamental beliefs:

1. Unlike many other ethnic groups in the United States, the legacy of slavery disrupted the cultural continuity and disconnected enslaved Africans from an African identity and important cultural practices. As a result, African-Americans in general and students in particular are disconnected from their African cultural roots that provide practices, beliefs, life lessons, and worldviews that are fundamental for cultural survival and success in school.

2. The persistent failure that black youth experience in schools is largely due to the cultural incongruence of the curricula they encounter. Afrocentric education is grounded on the notion that culture influences all dimensions of human behavior, including teaching and learning. Afrocentric reformers therefore believe that students who come from different ethnic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds than their teachers will experience cultural incongruence in the classroom, which in turn can lead to academic failure.

3. African culture (largely ancient Egyptian) provides a pathway to cultural practices that hold the promise for self-, social, and spiritual transformation. Many Afrocentric educators believe that through Ma 'at—an ancient Egyptian worldview based on truth, justice, propriety, harmony, reciprocity, balance, and order—black students, in the process of reconnecting with African culture, can become more empowered.

4. Empowerment through African culture will translate to greater academic performance. This is accomplished by teaching students about African and African-American contributions and culture, using teaching techniques that are consistent with Ma'at, and creating curricula, across subjects, that are based on Afrocentric principles. Afrocentric education thus mitigates inconsistencies between the cultural backgrounds of teachers and black students.

Afrocentric education has gained wide support as a promising strategy to remedy low academic performance in urban schools where black students continue to perform poorly. Afrocentric strategies contended to seriously improve academic performance by bringing multicultural perspectives into classrooms covering information about the history, culture, and contributions of diasporic Africans in the areas of art, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and music.

Efforts such as these received wide support; and although they varied somewhat in their approach, they all shared three common characteristics.

--First, they all focused on African and African-American contributions, history, and culture.
--Second, most of the Afrocentric reforms occurred in low-performing urban schools.
--Third, many of these schools were located in poor and working-class communities.

THE CHALLENGE OF AFROCENTRIC EDUCATION

Despite the fact that Afrocentric education is often used in poor and working-class communities, these strategies surprisingly have not adequately addressed the ways that poverty and class isolation impact young people's lives.

Multicultural educational strategies such as Afrocentrism have almost exclusively focused on students' racial and cultural identities while they have largely ignored the ways in which social class in general and poverty in particular have come to influence multicultural efforts in schools. The omission of such an analysis encourages simplistic models of black youth identity and avoids the complex intersection of class, gender, and sexuality and the rich variation within each group.

Most scholars tend to view racial groups, particularly urban youth, primarily by their racial composition, ignoring other potential elements of their identities. This type of analysis leads to an understanding of identity that is segmented, fragmented, and out of context with the everyday lives of black urban youth.

Urban school reform must be viewed in context of urban poverty. This is difficult due to the socio-cultural everyday distances between educators and urban students.

The politics of race and class are embedded in the economic milieus of the communities where the schools are located. Unlike their suburban counterparts, urban schools are forced to grapple with the day-to-day reality of poverty, joblessness, and the consequent crime that has become common for poor communities.

The difficulties that come with reforming urban schools often are a result of reformers not acknowledging the political, economic, and cultural realities within the communities where schools are located. Thus, school reform must take into account these factors if we are to improve urban schools.

Youth identities, however, are complex and are not simply defined by race or class alone. In fact, conceptualizing young people as having one dominant identity obscures the complex reality of their daily lives. An example of this is the term “biracial” many mixed-race students use. When the efforts by Afrocentrists began, this concept was not “available.” Perhaps due to the “one drop rule” in the 1970s one was either white or

black—or in most cases of mixed-race, black. Via the Tiger Woods phenomenon, multi-ethnic concepts question the narrowness of limiting identity to race alone.

CONSIDERING BLACK YOUTH IDENTITY AND THE PROMISE OF HIP-HOP CULTURE

Reform efforts designed to strengthen academic performance through multicultural or Afrocentric strategies must be built on a more complete picture of black youth identities. Within the context of community, black youth identity can be thought of as a complex puzzle with many pieces—some large, others quite small, but all necessary to construct a complete picture. While social class and ethnic identity comprise a sizable part of this puzzle, other aspects of identity are also important. Sexuality, physical ability, religion, style of dress, language, music, diet, gang affiliation, type of automobile, and of course with the current popularity of dreadlocks, one's hair style—each can play a role in how post-modern urban youth construct their identities in a globalized world.

Identity, however, is also the product of resistance and struggle. Black youth in urban communities find themselves perpetually challenging racist stereotypes while at the same time struggling to find meaning and freedom in the context of racist public policies.

Black in school asserts that most whites believe that black youth and their schools are deeply racialized, disorderly, and dangerous. This notion of urban schools is promoted in popular culture by films like Dangerous Minds and The Substitute where urban schools are referred to as "battle grounds," "war zones," or even "the jungle." Ginwright claims the image in these films of wild and untamed urban schools and communities justify having a white, civilized, ordered, disciplined, military-trained savior liberate racialized young people from their war-enthralled communities.

Negative perceptions of black youth and hip-hop culture

Many black youth are pushed out of school and into prisons, resulting in significant social, political, and economic forces that shape the experiences and identity of all black youth. For example, in the wake of the crack epidemic during the 1990s, the term black youth became synonymous with predator. Ideas such as the "war on drugs" ushered a public assault on black youth and their communities. Fear of crime helped shape public policy hostile to black youth. Legislators responded by drafting public policy that underscored the idea that to be black, young, and poor was also to be criminal. These negative perceptions were reinforced through public policies that increased repression through institutions such as schools, law enforcement, and juvenile justice systems. As a result, black youth were more likely to be incarcerated and received longer sentences than their white counterparts in when charged with the same crime.

Black youth identity is constructed in resistance to public school education.

Black youth in urban communities struggle to not get caught up in complex systems of control and containment, and their identities are often constructed in resistance to such racist stereotypes and unjust public policies. Their struggle for identity is played out through the expression of new and revived cultural forms such as hip-hop culture, rap music, and various forms of political or religious nationalism that redefine, reassert, and

constantly reestablish what it means to be urban and black. These forms of identity are organic expressions of racial meaning that emerge out of a context of struggle within urban environments.

There is a common theme between all these expressions of black identity and that theme is that they all define blackness as a form of resistance.

The common theme between all these expressions of black identity is that they all define blackness as a form of resistance. Black youth identity draws from the legacy of resisting white supremacist notions of blackness and reclaiming an identity that is rooted in everyday struggles. The construction of racial identity is a formative process and which social factors such as economic downturns, wars, and crime can alter racial meanings.

Today, urban reform efforts that focus entirely on ethnicity are insufficient. Reform efforts that attempt to improve the academic performance black youth must consider economic, social, and political realities because they intimately shape the experiences of many poor and working-class black youth. In a similar way, hip-hop culture provides today's black youth with an identity in opposition to racist public policy and oppressive urban conditions.

Ginwright notes that the hip-hop generation (black youth who have grown up in the post- civil rights era) has witnessed corporate corruption, immoral religious leadership, and gross neglect of the plight of the poor on the part of politicians. Many youth of the hip-hop generation have lost faith in a system that seems to only protect the wealthy at the expense of their communities. This political perspective is key to black youth identity because it provides insight into the experiences, motivations, and aspirations of today's black youth, which are all necessary to connect with them in meaningful ways. Hip-hop culture provides not simply a voice for disenfranchised youth, but an identity that challenges racist practices, speaks to economic struggles, and sometimes provides a blue-print for the possibilities of social change.

Today, urban reform efforts that focus entirely on ethnicity are insufficient.

Hip-hop culture can be described as an emerging worldview among adults and youth born after 1965

This worldview is comprised of shared beliefs, practices, and language all tied together by a common appreciation for the urban aesthetic. Hip-hop culture shares at least two important characteristics.

First is the urban youth aesthetic, which is perhaps the most easily recognizable aspect of hip-hop culture because it is expressed through music, clothing, language, and art. More than simply rap music and graffiti art, the urban youth aesthetic refers to visual and artistic expression of hip-hop culture. Rap music—expressive and innovative syncopated rhythms, laced with poetry, and story telling—was perhaps one of the first expressions of hip-hop culture during the early 1970s. The urban youth aesthetic is now a multibillion-dollar industry complete with clothing, art, language, and of course music.

Second is urban youth experience, which is often shaped by economic isolation, poverty, and a struggle to "make it out" of the trappings of urban ghettos. Hip-hop culture oftentimes validates, legitimizes, and celebrates experiences of violence, pain,

fear, love, and hope that for urban youth are overlooked in mainstream America. *To seriously discuss black youth identity, educators, policy makers, and researchers must consider the inseparable relationship between black youth identity and hip-hip culture. Failing to do so is a gross oversight.*

BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP: THE CHALLENGE OF THE NEW BLACK MIDDLE- CLASS

Many black educators today, however, do not identify with or understand hip-hop culture. Ginwright refers to, *The hip-hop generation: Young black and the crisis in African American culture*, a 2002 book B. Kitwana. *The hip-hop generation* argues that blacks from the civil rights generation cannot fully understand the complex modes of oppression confronting today's black youth. The removal of blue-collar work, the approval of legislation that has created an unprecedented number of incarcerated black males, and a growing workforce that requires more specialized education have created a hostile environment that further marginalizes today's black urban youth.

The civil rights generation's views of poverty, unemployment, and limited job options exacerbate tensions between black youth and black adults because older black adults view poverty as simply something many of them overcame.

Kitwana's observation points to how the civil rights generation experienced segregation and second-class citizenship first-hand, and the antagonisms between black liberation and white supremacy offered an unambiguous analysis of oppression. In contrast, oppression for the hip-hop generation is not simply a line in the sand with white supremacist blocking access—us over here and them over there. Kitwana highlights the fact that the older generation's views of poverty, unemployment, and limited job options exacerbate tensions between black youth and black adults because older black adults view poverty as simply something many of them overcame. Why can't your generation do the same? Or why does your generation use poverty as an excuse? Because of these divergent views of oppression, many young black youth often see their own parents and other black adults as the enemy within the race.

This argument is also played out along class lines. Despite the fact that most middle-class blacks might have been poor once themselves, they now tend to view poverty as an inherent behavioral trait that is passed from one generation to the next. This phenomenon is attributed to the fact that middle-class blacks have deeply held beliefs about race and rarely calls into question their own class privilege.

Because of these divergent views of oppression, many young black youth often see their own parents and other black adults as the enemy within the race.

Ginwright agrees with M. Castells. In the 1997 book, *The power of identity*, Castells asserts that in general, affluent African Americans do not feel welcome in mainstream society. Indeed, they are not. Not only racial hostility among whites continues to be pervasive, but gains by middle-class blacks still leave them way behind whites. Also, Ginwright notes W. J. Wilson's 1996 research, *When work disappears*, that suggests that many middle-class blacks escape the inner city by moving to the suburbs and leaving behind masses of urban poor. As a result, many middle-class blacks are caught

between being racially stigmatized by whites and viewed as removed and disconnected from their plight by poor blacks.

Middle-class blacks have deeply held beliefs about race and rarely call into question their own class privilege.

The paradox of black middle class success

Ginwright notes Castells' description of what motivates the actions of middle-class blacks: Most middle-class blacks strive to get ahead not only from the reality of the ghetto, but also from the stigma the ghetto projects on them through their skin. They do so, particularly, by insulating their children from the poor black communities (moving to suburbs like Lawrence or Pike or Ben Davis), integrating them into white-dominated private schools (like Cathedral), while at the same time, inventing an Afrocentric middle-class version of an African-American identity that revives the themes of the past, African or American, while keeping silent on the urban plight of the present black poor and working class citizens.

Black-middle classes experiences both racial exclusion from whites and class criticism from poor blacks--and this in addition to the generation gap between their civil rights era experiences and the hip-hop culture of the youth. ***As a result, black educators mistakenly develop classroom strategies that are out of sync with the most pressing issues of their black working class students*****.**

Identities are products of human interests, needs and desires, strategies and capacities" and points to the contradictions and discontinuities that emerge from these multiple interests. Ginwright's point here is that identity, particularly as it relates to urban youth and working-class communities and schools, cannot be isolated from the struggles from which it emerges. Thus *Black in school* argues that identity for poor black youth is largely tied to the everyday struggles found in their communities. It is the product of competing interests brought on by multiple forms of oppression; in the negotiation between these forms of oppression, black urban identity emerges.

Hip-hip culture is central to conceptualizing black youth identity because it is an essential pathway to understanding their struggles, realities, and possibilities

While Afrocentric reform provides us with the necessary critique of race, it rarely confronts class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and so on. It also sees identity as race only. The multidimensional approach to identity formation discussed above allows educators to understand the ways in which black youth and their communities respond to oppression through the often unacknowledged strength, resilience, and resistance that emerges from alienation.

DESIGNING SMALL SCHOOLS THAT WORK FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS: A VISION FOR SCHOOL REFORM: THE PROGRESS OF AFROCENTRIC REFORM THROUGH THE HIP-HOP GENERATION

Now that genuine graduation rates have been publicized in the May 2005 "Left Behind" series in the *Indianapolis* Star, it is clear that local public schools are not working and may be some of the worst in the nation. *The first lesson to be drawn is that those closest to the problem are often in the best position to solve it.* While local small school reformers have surveyed student needs and proposed changes to solve problems, and include one student on each school's School Based Decision-Making Team, in many

instances, students are not members of the adult groups. The question is will every small school student have an opportunity to be involved in significant decision-making?

How can small schools promote student involvement with students who are resistant to schools?
Black youth identities are often constructed on resistance to stereotypes and unjust public policies. The struggle is play out in unique cultural forms, an urban esthetic, manifested in such concepts as hip-hop culture, rap music, and various forms of religious or political nationalism that redefine, reassert, and constantly reestablish what it means to be urban and black. These forms of identity are organic expressions of racial meaning that emerge out of a context of struggle within the urban environment. Hip-hop culture defines blackness as a form of resistance.

It draws from a legacy of resistance to white supremacy notions of blackness and reclaiming and creating identity that is rooted in the everyday struggles in opposition to racist public policy and oppressive urban conditions.

Simply stated, the day-to-day struggles and authentic identities of post-modern urban youth must be central in the development of any school reform strategy.

The necessity and limitations of a black point of view in small school reform
Substantial barriers to designing effective classroom activities are created when Afrocentric multicultural curricula are used but not connected to the concrete experiences of students. Connections cannot be made unless input from students and working-class community members is sought. This is particularly relevant to how IPS small schools could end up constructing barriers that create a static view of young people's identities.

For example, African concepts of Ma'at are fundamental to an authentic Afrocentric approach and have to be a part of how and what urban black students are taught. Yet, these important principles can be difficult to translate into meaningful classroom practices. While racial identity is certainly central to students at school, many students could view an imposed Afrocentric curriculum as an arrogant attempt to teach them how to be better at being black. The school and classroom celebration of African culture and an the promotion of an Afrocentric curriculum must not be promoted at the expense of young people's unique economic struggles and their own hip-hop culture.

While racial identity is certainly important, many students could view an imposed Afrocentric curriculum as an arrogant attempt to teach them how to be better at being black.

Although, according to Ginwright, many multicultural training manuals indicate intent and promote conscious attempts to incorporate and utilize the cultural, orientations, and precepts of African-American people, how many Marion County educators actually infuse these concepts in their daily classroom activities? (Unfortunately, all this rhetoric presupposes there is a positive answer to this question!)

Regardless, with or without the Afrocentric principles, students can easily view a multicultural curriculum as irrelevant or meaningless to their daily lives in neighborhoods were coping with poverty takes more than wise words of advice. Knowing the kings and queens of Africa, per se, have little to do with school bullying, teen unemployment, or having no place to go after school. While the challenge to make curriculum relevant to

students' lives is not unique, lack of student input about multicultural curriculum design and implementation can exacerbated the further alienation of students.

Does an Afrocentric multicultural approach work? Maybe not!

Current local small school reform has the potential to be limited by Afrocentrists' static and rather flat model of black youth identity. Can a refusal to examine the complex social, economic and political forces that bear on the lives of black urban youth affect dropout rates? Yes!

Again, this can be inferred from graduation rates. Obviously, one of the main goals of Afrocentric and multicultural reforms is to keep students in school; yet, most urban districts graduation rates are below 50 percent. Remember, the Schott Foundation noted the 2002 national graduation rate for black males was 41 percent. In Indiana, the rate was 39 percent. The IPS rate was 33 percent.

Although one wonders if anything is working, if past and current Afrocentric multicultural approaches were effective, would not the graduation rate of African-American students, after 30 years, at least be above 50 percent?

Therefore, the second lesson to be drawn is that Afrocentric educational reform efforts need to be explicit about the connections between racial justice and economic justice. This discussion is particularly important because black youth bear the brunt of racist economic policy and juvenile justice practices.

For example, according to Ginwright who teaches in California, African-American youth are six times more likely to be incarcerated and receive longer sentences than their white counterparts. Similarly, in 1997 black youth had a larger incarceration rate in California than any other group. In 1999 black children were twice as likely to be poor than their white counterparts, and 1 in 3 black children in California lived in poverty. In 1995 black youth experienced more gun violence than any other group, and in 1998 they were 3 times more likely to experience homicide than all the groups combined. We are all familiar with these tragic statistics.

At the root of these serious social problems is racial and economic inequality. While there are forms of Afrocentric curricular and reform efforts that do confront racial and economic inequality, mainly most focus on African culture, worldviews, and philosophy that never seem to translate to improved quality of life in schools and communities. In Indianapolis, poverty, crime, unemployment, violence, etc.—there has been no improvement. If anything, these crucial quality of life indicators have worsened in the neighborhood.

Afrocentric-based multicultural curriculum can promote racial justice by trans-forming the school's curriculum to more accurately reflect aspects of African culture of the student population, but this will not be enough to reach the goals set in the 1970s by civil rights and social reformers.

This black middle-class initiated multicultural reform will fail if it does not go further and develop students' capacity to confront and transform the serious day-to-day economic challenges they face.

The emphasis on Afro-centric curriculum that promoted a positive black identity through pointing out African and African-American contributions to history, culture, in areas of

art, science, math social studies, and music was a middle-class concept instituted in urban working class schools and did little to improve academics. This was because they/the curriculum was unable to connect Black History/African culture to the everyday needs and problems of urban youth. Police brutality, child care, school safety, healthcare, family violence, substance abuse, AIDS, crime, gangs, finding affordable housing, employment, maintaining kinship support, well equipped schools, well trained/well paid teachers, etc., etc., are all the complex economic, political, and social challenges that affect school success.

Reform and curricular efforts that focus on racial and economic justice can help students connect classroom learning to relevant issues in their schools and communities. As well, there is growing evidence that greater learning occurs when young people can connect learning with meaningful and relevant neighborhood issues*.*

Studies of outcomes from classroom-based civic engagement and community service activities show increased academic success and the development of a political identity in adolescence.

Is it unfair to expect urban schools to confront these seemingly massive social problems?
After all, schools are about education and should not be overly concerned about managing a social crisis as presented by wide spread urban poverty. However, Ginwright suggests *failure to do so is, in fact, a more serious problem than the social crisis itself*. Such a position signals a retreat from democratic possibilities, fosters hopelessness, and sustains the suffering of thousands of black children. Engagement in the issues is much more powerful than retreating from them. Bold and innovative strategies are required to confront the challenges of urban educational and multicultural reform.

One place to start is by listening to black youth, embracing their dynamic culture, and shifting our paradigm from thinking about black youth as victims to understanding them as partners in social change. Concerned educators and multicultural advocates cannot do this if they are intent on a one-way conversation this is only about Black history and culture.

TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Intergenerational coalitions: A challenge to the civil rights generation
According to Ginwright, The Institute for Education and Social Policy documented a growing trend among low-income neighborhoods in 2000 to organize parents, youth, and community members to demand changes in schools and develop innovative strategies for community transformation. In that same year, nearly 200 community groups across the country became deeply involved with efforts to reform local schools through intergenerational partnerships with young people.

Black middle-class Indianapolis community members
must advocate and support the urban black working class-youth

One of the most significant challenges facing Afrocentric-based multicultural reform is its capacity to connect with, inspire, and move black urban youth toward social transformation. However, many Afrocentric reform efforts, particularly for middle and

high school students, are simply out of touch with urban black youth culture and, as a result, experience limited success.

The cultural disconnect between the civil rights generation and the hip-hop generation is perhaps the single most important challenge in reaching black youth who are simply not motivated, interested, or inspired by reform efforts in which their urban identities are not represented. While Afrocentric reform attempts to balance culturally biased and often racist curricula by infusing West African principles, they are rarely connected to black youth culture.

Thus, at the same time that Afrocentric reformers address ethnic and racial bias in curricula, they themselves create another cultural bias by marginalizing black youth culture. Without an understanding of and appreciation for black youth culture, Afrocentric reformers address one form of culture mismatch while replacing it with another.

Encouraging the civil rights and hip-hop generations to work together is an innovative grassroots reform strategy that challenges traditional top-down approaches in which outside educational experts and policy makers come together to mandate what works best for a given community. **The civil rights generation must help co-create successful multiracial youth-centered organizing activities and leadership development strategies that can prepare youth to change conditions in their schools and communities.**

Organizing for educational reform has become an effective strategy largely because it engages students, parents, and community members in issues that matter the most to them--not black professionals who do not live in the neighborhood--and alters how decisions are made by involving key stakeholders. There is a long history of organizing for educational equality in the United States ranging from the Progressive movement in the 1870s to the Civil Rights movement during the 1960s. Today, our educational crisis, especially in IPS, requires more than ever that we unleash the capacities ***intergenerational coalitions*** to transform their communities.

Intergenerational organizing, however, requires a shift in how adults view young people, and this shift is particularly challenging for some adults from the civil rights generation who believe that youth should follow, rather than lead, social-change efforts.

One place to learn more deeply about how youth organize and engage in decision-making is, according to Dr. Ginwright, in the growing field of youth development. Three characteristics that are fundamental to positive youth development:

--Society must have a vision of what it wants for its young people.
--Youth grow up in communities not programs.
--Youth development must be focused on the overall context in which development occurs.

By promoting youth assets, youth development advocates reconceptualize policy and practice by placing an emphasis on emotional health, empowerment, and exploration. Youth development practitioners and researchers have also reframed their most basic assumptions about youth to view them as resources and acknowledge their self-worth, self-awareness, and value to their communities.

This shift in thinking can be extremely useful to multicultural Afrocentric reform in urban communities because it challenges both adults and youth to rethink how to create more effective programs and policies that provide greater support for youth and broader opportunities for educational development in their complex and challenging urban environments.

Indianapolis small school advocates must explore how to achieve greater civic engagement and youth development among black youth.

An example of a culture-based and hip-hop orientated program model

Professor Ginwright uses J. Ward's 1995 *Harvard Educational Review* article, "Cultivating a morality of care in African-American adolescents: A culture-based model of violence prevention" as an example of how African traditions, values, and norms translate to contemporary social justice issues among black youth. According to Ward, these African traditions are supported by a long history of struggle against systemic racial and economic oppression that surrounds black life. The struggle, however, also fosters a sense of hope and new possibilities for equality. Afrocentric educational approaches can more effectively reach urban black working-class youth if racial identity development is supported by lessons of struggle and resistance. IPS small schools can look at local Marion County/Indianapolis social justice issues, do research, evaluate data, and make recommendations for action; and, then act!

Given the necessary opportunities, support, and skills, Marion County black, as well as white and Latino youth, can have a powerful voice in educational policy and community transformation. *Shifting the focus of Afrocentric reform efforts toward a greater emphasis on racial and economic justice enables black youth to develop a sociopolitical awareness that can translate to both deeper civic participation and greater educational performance.* Ginwright suggests five guiding principles to consider as ways to refocus Afrocentric reform toward racial and economic justice:

Ginwright's 5 guiding principles for refocusing Afrocentric reform

1. *Students analyze power within social relationships.*

An analysis of power within social relationships encourages youth to examine the root causes of social problems. It also requires that they understand how the misuse of power in institutions creates systems that reproduce multiple forms of inequality. For example, such an analysis might require young people to ask who has the power to influence the quality of their education. Such analysis of power often reveals hidden systems of privilege, thus encouraging critical thinking about racism, sexism, adultism, classism, and other forms of oppression.

2. *Students connect ethnic identity development to broader issues of racial and economic justice.*

Often, inequality is linked to identity, and, as a result, identity is often the starting point for students to get involved with racial and economic justice issues. Biracial youth, for example, develop a deeper understanding of the complex ways that race impacts how they identify themselves as well as how they are seen by the larger society. *In some Indianapolis working class multiracial neighborhoods such as the near eastside, substandard housing, youth unemployment issues, lead paint problems, or police brutality are shared experiences—among poor white, black, and Latino youth.* When

students experience similar forms of social inequality through shared experiences, they can effectively work together to fight for social change.

3. *Students learn how to promote systemic change.*
The focus on systemic change develops the capacity of young people to transform institutional practices that do not meet their needs, and counters the practice of self-blame for their condition. Young people learn how to strategize, research, and act to change school policies, legislation, and police protocols that create and sustain inequality. Systemic change focuses on root causes of social problems and makes explicit the complex ways that various forms of oppression work together.

4. *Students act through collective organizing.*
Organizing is the process of collective action that attempts to alter or change existing social conditions through non-institutional means. Often collective action emerges from groups who are impacted by similar problems and share the same social justice vision. Collective action might include the range of strategies involved in organizing and activism including sit-ins, rallies and marches, and boycotts. The premise is that the capacity to change oppressive social conditions lies in collective efforts, not only individual ones.

5. *Adults embrace youth culture.*
Youth culture has been effective at communicating messages that promote social justice. Youth culture can be thought of as a set of shared ideas and a common worldview shared by most young people. Young people see the world as a place of possibilities and challenge the adult world to acknowledge its contradictions. Much of the dominant youth culture in America can also be described as hip-hop culture. Most hip-hip CDs are bought by white suburban teens. Eminem has popularized hip-hop with poor whites. And Reggaeton', a Spainish form of rap music, is now very popular among IPS Latinos.

Hip-hop culture is often defined by a style of music, dress, and language.
that calls attention to the problems urban youth face on a daily basis.

EXAMPLES OF YOUTH ORGANIZING TO TRANSFORM SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY, AND PUBLC POLICY

Developing Afrocentric strategies that confront issues of racial and economic justice in Marion County schools will not be an easy task. For example, reformers need clarity about age-appropriate strategies. Projects that are effective for elementary-school-age students are probably inappropriate for high school students. Clearly, such an effort requires first that young people be given the power, support, and opportunity to be heard concerning educational, community, and social issues that most impact their lives.

Fortunately, there are numerous examples of communities that are engaging youth in school and community transformation. While the following examples are not specifically Afrocentric reform efforts, *they demonstrate how students in similar communities around the country have incorporated racial and economic issues into improving their school and communities*.

The Algebra Project
The Algebra Project, created in Cambridge, MA, by mathematician and former civil rights activist Bob Moses uses relevant issues and concepts from students' physical environment to teach algebraic thinking. In urban and rural communities around the country the project uses familiar activities like walking home from school, riding a bus, paying for groceries, looking for a job, and stories about "making do" as the bases for building math literacy. In Indianapolis, Dr. Terry Ogle and his wife Marge, have been quietly running the Indianapolis Algebra Project for years.

Books Not Bars: Youth Force Coalition
Since 1990, youth of color in California have been the targets of legislation that has whittled away educational equity, economic opportunities, and political power. Undocumented immigrants were denied public benefits, affirmative action policies were banned in California's public schools, public universities, and city-county governmental offices, and bilingual education was banned in public schools. In March 2000, the juvenile justice crime bill (Proposition 21) allowed courts in California to sentence youth as young as 14 years old as adults and place them in adult prisons. The bill also gives broad powers to courts and police to detain suspected gang members. In response to the growing assault on young people in California, thousands of young people organized the "No on Prop 21" campaign to try to defeat the latest conservative attack on youth of color.

In April 1999, representatives from 20 youth organizations came together to form a coalition of youth to proactively fight for educational reform, environmental justice, after-school programs, and community centers. By forming the Youth Force Coalition, they worked together for a unified campaign that would be stronger by participation from diverse members and organizations. The "No on Prop 21" campaign signaled the first step in a burgeoning youth movement in California. Working with adult allies, the Youth Force Coalition planned direct actions, designed and distributed public education material, held meetings and hosted conferences about their strategy to reduce jails and increase funding to improve their schools. In February 2000, over 700 students walked out of 15 different schools in the San Francisco Bay Area in protest of Prop 21 and demanded that policy makers pay less attention to incarcerating youth and closer attention to better books, improved facilities, and more equitable educational opportunities for working-class youth of color. Similarly, in six different cities in California, hundreds of youth coordinated a strike where, rather than attending school, students held public education rallies on buses and in local parks.

Participating in these forms of collective action provided a rare opportunity for youth to put into practice their knowledge and skills toward issues that matter most to them. The students focused on educational reform issues that hold promise for improving their educational options. The students rallied for greater resources that support prevention rather than incarceration, higher pay for teachers, and increased spending on school infrastructure and materials. Their analysis required that they carefully study California's complex state budget and draw conclusions about how the budget might impact their lives.

Despite the fact that the proposition passed in March 2000, the "No on Prop 21" campaign demonstrated a new commitment and energy among urban youth of color for

demanding power in school and community reform efforts. For example, in 2001 the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in Oakland, California, formed Books Not Bars (BNB), a coalition of youth organizers, educators, and community members dedicated to reallocating public resources from juvenile incarceration to educational opportunities and school improvement initiatives. BNB organizes and educates youth in schools about the ways in which large corporations benefit from public dollars directed at incarcerating large numbers of youth of color. Their goal is to rehabilitate youth and community members who have made mistakes in their lives through education and restorative justice principles. Through partnerships with adult allies, BNB combines public education, grassroots organizing, direct action, and advocacy related to criminal justice policy to reform schools. BNB sees the plight of urban school reform intimately tied to issues of juvenile justice.

California's rapid expansion of prisons, jails, and other correctional facilities since the 1990s, coupled with the state's dramatic reduction in per pupil spending, has prompted BNB to seek alternative sentencing practices and *the redistribution of public dollars to go toward proactive educational issues, not reactive punishment*.

In May 2001, 70 young people from BNB marched into a meeting of the California Board of Corrections in order to convince the board to deny preapproved state funding for Alameda County to build the largest juvenile hall in the country. For about 2 years Alameda County officials had been pushing to build a massive 3 30-bed juvenile hall and just needed to have it "rubber-stamped" by the full Board of Corrections. Armed with statistics, reports, and financial forecasts, young people persuasively argued to the Board of Corrections a sound rationale that prompted the board to deny funding to Alameda County. In a 10 to 2 vote, the board rejected Alameda County's 2.3-million-dollar funding request to build the prison. While not explicitly focused on educational reform issues, *the BNB campaign signaled to educational experts the power and value of youth-led initiatives.*

Similarly, in October 2001 youth gathered and formed the "Schools Not Jails" campaign and set up a network of youth activists in California who organize around various educational reform issues. The campaign has three demands: (1) to create educational priority zones in low-income communities of color where schools would get significant funding and resources; (2) to have a statewide review that would assess the effectiveness of standardized testing; and (3) to support a statewide effort to have every school in California offer ethnic and women's studies. Students involved in the "Schools Not Jails" campaign made clear connections between youth incarceration and educational resources.

When youth organize for racial and economic justice, they make connections between the local concrete conditions in their schools and communities and how larger social systems can be transformed to better meet their needs. These strategies can strengthen efforts like Afrocentric reform by engaging youth and developing their capacities for greater civic engagement.

One effective strategy to mobilize youth is hip-hop youth culture.
Many involved with organizing for social and economic justice have used hip-hop culture as an organizing vehicle. Hip-hop can bring us new tools to organize people. For example, while youth organized to defeat Proposition 21 in California, youth

organizations, community activists, and local hip-hop artists joined forces and organized hip-hop concerts to conduct mass political education and distributed flyers with youthful graffiti art that encouraged disenfranchised youth to vote and participate in the political process. The strategy to design flyers, host hip-hop concerts that politically educate thousands of youth, and distribute hip-hop music with political messages proved to be a powerful organizing strategy.

Indianapolis youth initiatives have been and have stayed at the level of recreation (keeping kids off the streets and out of trouble) and education (sex, drugs, gangs), but not serious activism.

This begs the questions re: The Indianapolis Public Schools

Does IPS need this kind of student support? Yes. Do local youth need similar youth-led initiatives to look out for their educational needs and juvenile justice issues? Yes. Does our local community need to emphasize schools not jails? Yes. Do local youth have the potential for the sophistication necessary to challenge the status quo? Yes. Will youth organize to plan and carry out such ideas? No. Why? No local adult leadership. Local youth leaders, either because they do not know better or because they know better but have sold out, are not discussing this level of serious social and economic change with youth. Local youth initiatives have been and have stayed at the level of recreation (keeping kids off the streets and out of trouble) and education (sex, drugs, gangs), but not serious activism.

Could Marion County youth organize?

Could Marion County youth organize campaigns focused on both concrete measurable changes in the school such as better books, improved facilities, and quality of life issues within their communities, such as reduction of juvenile incarceration? *This is doubtful.* Presently schools are not teaching for social justice and local youth organizations such as the Girls & Boys Clubs or organizations associated with Community Centers of Indianapolis have never and continue not to be in the business of serious social and economic change.

Youth United for Change

In Philadelphia, youth between the ages of 14-19 comprise 8 percent of the population. Impacted by issues of overcrowding in their schools, safety, decent housing, and lack of after-school activities, high school students formed Youth United for Change (YUC), an organization of youth who fight for educational equity in their schools and communities and work together to hold schools and public officials accountable for services and policies that directly impact their lives.

Since 1994, Youth United for Change has been organizing high school students to improve the quality of their education. For the past 6 years, they have been working closely with school administrators, principals, and teachers to redirect resources toward academic preparation for college. *YUC believes that strong public schools build strong communities because when young people are deeply engaged in a democratic process, they are less likely to commit crime.* Five years of organizing youth at three local high schools resulted in a platform entitled "Education is a right, not a privilege," which is supported by adult allies from the Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project, a faith-based organization of 20 congregations, parent associations, and neighborhood institutions representing more than 30,000 families in East Philadelphia. The YUC platform addresses three primary issues related to economic and racial justice.

One issue that YUC addresses is availability of internships and after-school programs. The relocation of jobs from the urban communities has left many students in East Philadelphia without opportunities to work and gain valuable work experience. YUC believes that internships give high school students a better advantage in the working world by teaching responsibility and broadening their perspective on what careers are available. More after-school opportunities will also keep Philadelphia teens out of trouble. YUC's stance is, since their schools fail to provide them with these valuable opportunities, schools should begin addressing these issues by keeping the building open until 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. so that after-school programs can be more available. In addition to advocating for after-school programs, YUC also encourages directing resources to support schools in purchasing updated books, and computers.

A second YUC issue is safety to and from school and security while in school. After several incidents of violence inflicted upon students on their way to school, YUC members at one local high school demanded that the mayor, within the first few months of his term, conduct a survey of all the neighborhood high schools and make a public report on how safe and secure they are. YUC members at one of the local high schools worked with representatives from local police, businesses, and city government to improve the conditions near a bridge where most of the crime occurred. YUC was successful at reducing the number of attacks by having the city keep the bridge clean and installing new lighting and working with the police to have the bridge regularly patrolled.

Other issues that YUC addresses include reduction of class size. While the average class size of Philadelphia's urban public high schools is 30, the average class size in Philadelphia's suburban school districts is 24. YUC argues that the school district could reduce urban class sizes by moving teachers who work outside the classroom into classroom assignments and having the city assume the cost of non-educational services such as trash collection and use of recreation facilities. YUC also advocates for more college preparatory courses in urban Philadelphia high schools. After applying to 4-year colleges, students realized that their schools only provided a curriculum that prepared them for community college. They were not being accepted into college because they could not take the required college-preparatory courses.

As a result of YUC's efforts to transform Philadelphia urban schools and communities, the organization has an impressive list of accomplishments:

- The number of students prepared for college at Kensington High School has increased, and graduation rates have been raised.

- Under a partnership between YUC and the school, college preparation courses are now available in all Small Learning Communities, and the course offerings at the school have been upgraded to meet the requirements that students need to gain acceptance to college.

- Freshman attendance rates have increased and the average daily attendance for the entire school population has increased from 60.8 percent during the 1997-98 school year compared with 77.7 percent for the current school year.

- Bathrooms are cleaner and water fountains are working at all local high schools.

Could Marion County youth do this?
It is very doubtful. Local youth could, but will they? With the tradition of adults demanding passivity in schools and classrooms, of youth organizations being more concerned with keeping youth off the streets, the climate of apathy needed to perpetuate the status quo is prevalent. In fact, one might conclude that after 100 years of youth development in Indianapolis, youth organizations see youth as a limited resource with respect to challenging a status quo--a status quo that pays the wages of these same youth groups. Would they loose funding if they encouraged youth activism? This is one more bit of proof that poverty is political.

Kids First
In 1995 a group of youth, adults, and community organizations came together to discuss issues that impacted youth in Oakland. Their discussion revealed that young people did not feel safe, respected, or supported, and often get targeted as the "problem." Youth from several local schools in Oakland surveyed over 1,000 of their peers to learn what they thought about reducing issues like violence in their schools. They learned that young people would have a greater sense of safety if there were more places where they could work, learn, and have fun. In 1996 the Kids First coalition drafted an initiative that would require that 2.5 percent of all unrestricted general fund revenues be used to increase children and youth services of the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth.

From March through June 1996, youth and adults formed a citywide grassroots campaign to get the initiative on the November ballot. Two hundred volunteers blanketed local stores, malls, transit stops, and schools to encourage Oakland residents to support the initiative. The campaign wasn't simply "youth friendly," but rather it was driven by the power of youth culture. Using hip-hop and other forms of youth culture, young people in the campaign produced videos, visited neighborhood churches, and circulated thousands of flyers and petitions calling on City Council members to support the initiative. On November 5, 1996, the initiative now called "Measure K" was overwhelmingly approved by over 75 percent of Oakland's voters. Youth working with adult allies had successfully redirected millions of dollars toward educational opportunities and youth programs. The involvement of youth was critical in shaping the outcomes of the initiative because youth provided a perspective based on everyday quality of life issues.

THE POWER OF YOUTH IN PUBLIC POLICY

The above examples offer at least two important lessons for educational reformers. *First, engaging youth in addressing issues that most impact their everyday lives leads to more relevant and meaningful programming*. These efforts illustrate that improving every-day quality of life--issues such as transportation, childcare, juvenile justice, availability of AP level classes, after-school activities, and smaller class sizes are all central to how youth experience education. Paying closer attention to what students need, and including them in meaningful problem solving, paves the way for more effective school change.

Second, in several cases, youth culture was the vehicle for organizing, recruiting, and teaching youth about racial and economic justice issues. These groups used organizing strategies such as hip-hop concerts, flyers with youthful graffiti art, and images of youth

themselves, all of which resonated with youth experiences. While these multiracial organizations did not focus exclusively on African American youth issues, they often framed issues in ways that placed racial and ethnic representation issues at the forefront. Youth culture was reflected in the music that was played in youth centers and rallies, the hip-hop graffiti art displayed on external communications, and the language young people used to communicate their issues. Youth from the hip-hop generation are motivated by new organizing strategies that call attention to their struggles, validate their everyday experiences, and provide a sociopolitical vision of racial and economic justice.

Youth culture can expand the boundaries of current local Afrocentric/multicultural reform to become more explicit about issues of racial and economic justice while at the same time encouraging educators to consider a more dynamic view of black youth identity.

HIP-HOP CULTURE AND POSSIBILITIES FOR AFROCENTRIC REFORM

Black youth culture in most urban communities is often defined by hip-hop. Thus hip-hop culture is a highly effective vehicle for engaging black youth in learning. Music, language, style of dress, poetry, and art can all be effective cultural vehicles to educate youth who have not responded to traditional ethnicity-based multicultural curriculum.

Increasingly, scholars are learning more about how hip-hop culture can be used as a literacy tool for critical education in classroom settings.

Dr. Ginwright notes the writings of H. Baker's 1993 book, *Black studies and rap in the academy*, and E. Morrell's 2002 study, "Promoting academic literacy with urban youth through engaging hip-hop culture," to illustrate this. Grounded in the idea that students are literate in other ways that are simply not connected to classroom learning in public schools, these theorists explore "new literacy," or non-school literacy practices that can provide greater connections with classroom learning in our post-modern diversity—multi-literacies that expand what it means to be smart and how to communicate. See B&LPI's "Art as the 4th R."

Hip-hop culture can encourage black youth to change their thinking about community problems and act toward creating a more equitable world. While progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance for America's black youth, it also provides a blueprint for the possibilities of social change and has been utilized as a politicizing tool to inform youth about significant social problems.

Since the mid-1980s, groups such as Public Enemy seized the attention of many urban youth of color because of their ability to boldly criticize and reveal serious contradictions in American democracy. Rap artist such as Chuck D, KRS1, and Arrested Development called for youth to raise their consciousness about American society and become more critical about the conditions of poverty. Hip-hop groups such as Dead Prez, The Coup, The Roots, and Common today provide them with analyses of racism, poverty, sexism, and other forms of oppression. For black youth, hip-hop culture is a vehicle for expressing pain, anger, and the frustration of oppression, which is expressed through rap music, style of dress, language, and poetry. Additionally, hip-hop culture is used to organize, inform, and politicize youth about local and national issues.

While progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance for America's black youth, it also provides a blueprint for the possibilities of positive social change for the entire society—helping America live up to its promise of liberty and just for all.

For example, Ginwright writes about a social studies unit he taught to high school students about democracy. He used hip-hop music as a pedagogical tool to teach black youth about how the U.S. government ensures democratic participation.

He would begin with a series of questions such as. What do you think about our government? What is the purpose of our government? What would our society be without a government? What is a democracy and do we live in one? These questions would elicit a number of responses that he would use to lead a critical discussion about equity and democratic participation. Next he would play a video or CD from either Dead Prez or Talib Kwali, both of whom provide a critical analysis and commentary about social, economic, and political issues.

Because the students are often familiar with such artists and have also memorized the lyrics, he used these artists' political commentary as a springboard into a larger discussion about democracy. The lyrics, for example, of Dead Prez, who are often critical of police violence, the expansion of prisons, and repressive foreign policies, provided an opportunity for black youth to think about issues that impact their communities and shape their lives.

By having them compare and contrast political lyrics with excerpts from their textbooks about democracy, his students were better able to use their everyday experiences to critique and understand concepts such as democracy, equality, participation, and aristocracy in a way that both validates their experiences and highlights youth culture.

Rather than focusing on how to change black youth and their culture, these strategies use the innovative and creative energy of black youth as a platform to build a strong sociopolitical awareness.

Hip-hop culture provides a number of innovative strategies that can expand and strengthen Afrocentric reform efforts. For those who work extensively with African American youth in urban communities, these strategies might be familiar. These strategies develop black youth ethnic identity through explicit connections with racial and economic justice and through affirming black youth culture. Rather than focusing on how to change black youth and their culture, these strategies use the innovative and creative energy of black youth as a platform to build a strong sociopolitical awareness.

GINWRIGHT'S TWO STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH TODAY'S YOUTH

To conclude his arguments Ginwright's *Black in school* suggests two promising strategies for adults working with today's urban youth that would contribute to a more relevant and effective form of Afrocentric curriculum.

1. Validate and Affirm Black Youth Identity
Start where youth are, not where you want them to be. This is one of the biggest challenges adults face when working with black youth in schools and in after-school programs. Imagine an African-centered teacher who places a high value on African culture as evidenced by the way she dresses and how her classroom is decorated. Now

picture a 15-year-old black male student coming into this class with his baggy clothing and his hat turned backwards. The teacher's first impulse might be to correct his "inappropriate" clothing by asking him to wear a belt to class to avoid showing his underwear or to remove his hat when entering a room. While this request might not be entirely inappropriate, it clearly sends a signal to that young person that his cultural orientation is not suitable for a classroom setting and ultimately results in another form of cultural discontinuity between hip-hop culture and black adult middle-class Afrocentric sensibilities.

Placing a greater emphasis on existing hip-hop culture can strengthen youth's openness to Afrocentric reform efforts because such an emphasis affirms youth culture rather than criticizing or trying to change it. Hip-hop culture emerged from the tremendous economic, social, and cultural pressures black urban youth must learn to navigate.

By validating hip-hop culture, their struggle for racial and economic justice is also affirmed. This affirmation is a key starting point for building and strengthening other aspects of black youth identity.

Hip-hop culture must be self-critical

As hip hop is critical of the status quo, so it must practice what it preaches and constantly look in the mirror. Thus, to validate and affirm should not be confused with uncritical acceptance of hip-hop culture. Just as in any cultural environment, hip-hop culture has aspe--cts of both promising and retrograde cultural tendencies. Materialism, misogyny, and violence are often woven throughout various strands of hip-hop culture. However, having youth critique these very tensions in hip-hop culture holds a rich, substantive, and relevant framework for transforming classroom discussions, after-school programming, and the purchase of textbooks and classroom materials. (For a history and understanding of hip-hop culture, see the Black & Latino Policy Institute’s “What is hip-hop anyway?”)

There is objectionable material within hip-hop culture to teach black youth a variety of issues ranging from violence to sexism. For example, to explore the concept of sexism, Ginwright has shown youth videos by Luke Skywalker, Nelly, Ludacris, and Trick Daddy—all which contain sexually explicit (though not pornographic) images of women. These videos, frequently shown on MTV or Black Entertainment Television (BET), show women barely clothed while the men, who are fully clothed, sit back and watch the women dance or perform for them. After the students watch the video, they are then guided by a series of carefully thought-out questions that encourage them to reflect on the images in the video: "As a male, would you want your sister, mother, or aunt to perform in this video?

Why or why not?" "As a female, how are genders portrayed differently in this video?" This activity builds critical thinking skills because the material is relevant and familiar to their experiences.

Similarly, Ginwright has had students bring in a song that they believe is violent. As the class collectively defines violence, individual students are given the opportunity to play their pre-selected song for the class and explain why they selected it and how it might add or alter the class's existing definition of violence. The point here is that the tensions

in hip-hop culture should not be avoided, but rather highlighted, because they make lessons more relevant and interesting.

Some educators are critical of students who see being black as speaking slang, braided hair, sagging pants and skewed hats. They say that blackness is knowing black history and appreciating African values, not dressing like a gangster. Right or wrong, this disconnects hip-hop from older generations.

Afrocentric curriculum requires that lessons be relevant and meaningful to students' everyday lived experiences. The use of hip-hop and Afrocentric ideas can be effective in developing positive ethnic identity, building cultural awareness, and strengthening critical thinking about ways to improve the quality of everyday life.

2. Think of Urban Youth Culture as an Asset, Not a Liability

Expanding and strengthening multicultural reform, and in particular Afrocentric-based multicultural reform, through hip-hop culture, however, requires more than simple step-by-step practices and curriculum strategies. More important, it requires a bold and courageous paradigm shift on the part of educators and reformers to conceptualize black youth culture as an asset rather than a liability in educational change efforts.

It comes as no surprise that many companies have already figured out the power of hip-hop culture in marketing products and transforming consumption patterns among youth around the world. Ginwright believes that though private industry and capitalist greed should not be a model for reforming urban schools, we cannot ignore the ways in which companies like Coca Cola o Nike have embraced the ingenuity and creative force of hip-hop culture.

Unlike private companies, however, multicultural educators must develop a clear and explicit sociopolitical vision for reforming schools in urban communities. *This means that while multicultural reform develops ethnic identity among black youth, it should also strive to strengthen the social and political capital among black youth by building strong intergenerational networks that are transforming schools and communities.*

Effective Afrocentric reform efforts will require new networks that strengthen relationships between multicultural educators, community members, and black youth. These networks, while focused on educational strategies that build ethnic identity and provide culturally consistent learning opportunities, should support youth in community problem solving. This problem solving must begin with developing leadership skills and fostering critical thinking about social and economic patterns that support deeply rooted racist, sexist, and classist, practices in schools and communities. Afrocentric reform efforts hold great promise for transforming youth, their schools, and their communities once these efforts articulate a clear sociopolitical vision by making explicit connections with racial and economic justice issues.

THE FUTURE OF AFROCENTRIC REFORM: DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

Youth in urban areas deserve democratic schools.

Starting with the assumption that black urban youth should be understood in the context of communities and neighborhoods rather than the confines of schools, multicultural efforts must be strengthened by the potential of youth to transform their school and

communities. *Armed with the deep understanding of inequality and a passion to achieve social justice, black youth around the country are demanding that they have a voice in decisions that impact their lives.* These voices hold great promise for effective educational and socio-economic reform strategies for the hip-hop generation.

Despite the fact that nationally, black urban working-class youth find themselves navigating formidable economic, educational, and social problems, they seem remarkably resilient and often respond to challenges in their schools and communities in surprisingly innovative and unique ways. Starting with the assumption that black youth should be understood in the context of communities rather than the confines of institutions such as schools, Afrocentric education can evolve by exploring the ways that some black youth are transforming their schools and communities.

One of the best ways to promote the evolution of Afrocentric reform is democratic education.

Advocates of democratic education believe that students, if they are to acquire the skills, knowledge, and values they need to perform their roles as citizens in a democracy, should receive a type of education that actively engages them as citizens in their own schools and communities. For example, they believe that students should participate in the governance of the school and engage in service-learning activities in their local communities.

Democratic education fits perfectly in with Ginwright's suggestions for Afrocentric reform initiatives and the characteristics of the hip-hop generation to critique the mainstream.

Historically, one of the primary missions of the public schools in the United States has been to prepare children to perpetuate American democracy. Schools are expected to ensure that all children, regardless of family economic status or future occupation, acquire the skills, knowledge, and civic values they need to perform their roles as citizens in a democracy.

Small schools student advocates: The pro-democracy movement in IPS

Currently, IPS students, armed with a deep understanding of inequality and a passion to achieve social justice, are demanding that they have a voice in school decisions that impact their lives. Through the small school initiative student advocates in each of the 5 high schools have surveyed teacher and student attitudes, researched enrollment and graduation numbers, and made a video concerning the status quo. They have taken part in their own school student congress meetings and district-wide student meetings. In cooperation with the Black & Latino Policy Institute some have participated in the May 2005 *Star* "Left Behind" newspaper series and panel. As participants in the Democratic Education Consortium here in Indianapolis, some have found broader support for their concerns. The voices of urban youth hold great promise for effective educational reform strategies for the hip-hop generation.

Democratic schools

Democratic schools will create a climate where urban black working-class youth, as well as adults, are totally involved in the problem solving process. Since by definition students will share in decision-making, democratic classrooms and schools will guarantee the focus will be on the tangible day-to-day problems students' face in their

schools and neighborhoods, thus developing strategies that are more connected to students' experiences.

When youth organize for racial and economic justice, they are practicing democracy.

Hip-hop culture can encourage black youth to change their thinking about community problems. Democratic schools can provide the model toward creating a more equitable world. In that progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance, along with democratic education, it can be utilized as a politicizing tool to inform youth about social problems and how to solve them, while democratic practices provide the structure or blueprint for the possibilities of social change.

Democratic schools are viable options for traditional school climate because of hip-hop's natural ability to boldly criticize and reveal the serious contradictions in American democracy itself. Rap lyrics about police violence, expansion of prisons, repressive foreign policies provide the place for black youth to think about issues that impact them and shape their lives.

Youth input into solving classroom, school, and community problems is necessary: those closest to the problem are often in the best position to solve it.

By including black urban youth in education policy decisions, democratic schools can be the "connector" Ginwright claims Afrocentric reform needs to evolve—to connect to, to recognize the everyday problems youth face. Thus, both the Afrocentric reform movement and students will be transformed because they are empowered through democratic school decision-making to challenge and affect the problems of poverty that impact their schools and communities. Also, this makes public institutions, like our public schools, more accountable for meeting the needs of a community.

In a democratic school, where the educational process should encourage consistent, informed, and active engagement in school and community affairs, a strong educational cultural development is important, but is simply not enough.

Therefore, our challenge to school educators is to tap into the oppositional culture of hip-hop so that it might revive new and more inclusive forms of schooling and democratic possibilities.

When youth organize for racial and economic justice, they are practicing democracy. They make connections between local concrete conditions in their schools and communities and how larger social systems can be transformed to better meet their needs. These strategies can strengthen multi-cultural reform by engaging youth and developing their capacities for greater civic engagement.

Rethinking Afrocentric educational strategies through democratic education opens new and exciting possibilities for reaching black students. Ginwright's experiences in working with black youth tells him that the conditions they face on a daily basis need much greater attention on the part of educational reformers. Black youth in urban schools want and deserve a better education, and if scholars, educators, and policy makers would simply listen to what they have to say, they would learn that they have analytical capacity, creative energy, and the desire to make good things happen in their schools and neighborhoods. *This is democratic potential.*

Again, the greatest challenge facing Afrocentric reformers is to connect to black youth in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their everyday lives. Indianapolis youth have the incredible power, creative energy, and desire to challenge the status quo and struggle for school and community change. The challenge to Indianapolis and Marion County educators and policy makers is to tap into this energy so that it might revive new and more inclusive forms of democratic possibilities.

Conclusions

Indeed the initial efforts of political activists and educators to challenge narrow racists educational policies were courageous and needed if America was to live up to its promise of equal educational opportunity. It would be good if these educational-political reform efforts had worked, keeping African-American children in school and graduated. But, let's be honest, graduation rate numbers tell a different story.

Dr. Shawn Ginwright's respect for the civil rights generation and the school reform they demanded is clear. Now it is necessary to go to the next level, to keep what is useful from the past and reinvented Afrocentric-based multicultural school and classroom reform for the 21st century. Ginwright has the road map.

The civil rights generation must see the limitations of the original movement while at the same time reaching out to today's youth through validating and affirming black youth identity and seeing hip-hop culture as an asset.

The Black and Latino Policy Institute intends to compliment and supplement Ginwright's ideas. The B&LPI believes that with the world-wide interest in democracy, democratic schools have the most potential and provide the best opportunity for inter-generational collaboration. The civil rights generation must support democratic education by supporting the pro-democracy movement in IPS and promoting school shared decision-making in other Marion County school districts—then work closely with youth for better schools and social justice.

The irony of Afrocentric reform, urban youth, the promise of hip-hop

Afrocentric reform's challenge to cultural hegemony was an important first step in urban school improvement, but without an explicit discussion of how socio-political realities shape young people's lives, it remains undeveloped because it cannot evolve.

Add to this the fact that through Ginwright's insights exposing the gaps between the civil rights and hip-hop generations, we now see the older generation's criticisms of the more in your face, sexually explicit, and over materialistic aspects of rap music are valid, yet, when these same aspects are not also seen as a product of the day-to-day lives and struggles of black urban working-class youth, nothing will change for either generation—they must work together, inter-generationally to bring about the social and economic justice each group seeks.

Thus, ironically, it may be that now traditional Afrocentric influences, educational approaches, and a political philosophy born in the early 1970s to influence generations will not affect the hip-hop generation as much as the reverse—the hip-hop generation will enable Afrocentric reform to evolve and be reborn for a new generation. Afrocentric reform will continue to influence textbooks, curriculum, school climate, national and local

politics, and black identity. We will have Black History Month, but it may be the hip-hop generation who keep it hip.

Let's start to create a legacy of youth activism in Indianapolis

Indianapolis will not create opportunities for youth to transform their schools and communities through advocacy, leadership training, and alliance building because we have no such vision. Indianapolis with not create serious initiatives that addressed economic and racial justice issues by focusing on concrete problems within the school as well as quality of life issues within the community. We will not create youth organizations that support low-income children and youth by engaging them in policies that directly impact their lives. Indianapolis cannot continue a legacy of youth activism that is a part of the history of cities like New York, San Francisco-Oakland, or Philly because we have no such legacy. This is a part of the way the status quo has and continues to maintain itself—and unfortunately this status has poor and minority youth at the bottom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Democratic schools

More than any one idea, democratic schools can be of great benefit to our public schools. Hip-hop youth want a say in the decisions that concern them. A democratic climate where student voices can be heard will provide the feeling of belonging and the opportunity for responsibility youth need. Democratic schools have been show to be safer and more academic, with less suspensions, and less dropping out

America is a diverse society. Diversity needs democracy. Democracy by definition is the opposite of the one-size-fits-all concept, and thus resistant, like the hip-hop generation, to stereotype and conformity to the majority. This will provide the respect for the diversity of learning/teaching styles, intelligences, abilities, assessment options, school size, and types of schools. Finally, democratic education will provide youth the opportunity to make the kind of school they want now and the world they dream of.

2. Teaching for social justice

Ginwright has reiterated the powerful idea that opposition defines the hip-hop generation. These black urban youth are resistant to public policies that have historically limited certain groups economically, educationally, and politically--be they the police, schools and teachers, or rules and laws. If by nature hip-hop seeks social and economic justice, the schools they attend must teach for social justice or take the chance of alienating students.

We must remember, while progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance for America's black youth, it also provides a blueprint for the possibilities of positive social change for the entire society—helping America live up to its promise of liberty and just for all.

3. Eliminate the Pedagogy of Poverty

To some, it is obvious. To others it is not. If educators have the children of poverty in school, then eliminate the pedagogy of poverty. The pedagogy of poverty manifests in the normalization of failure, which is accompanied by low expectations and the acceptance of inadequate effort; and, the false idea that low academic skills mean students lack intelligence. This deficit model assumes the problem for school failure is located in and limited to a lack in the culture, in abilities, in motivation, or in coping skills of the children and their families.

And urban schools may respond to these false lessons by adopting what Martin Haberman calls the *pedagogy of poverty*: a set of acts and behaviors—handing out information and directions and tests, monitoring work, punishing noncompliance—that, taken together and performed to the systematic exclusions of other acts, disable students. This pedagogy of poverty insures failure.

Good teaching is the opposite of pedagogy of poverty: involving students in issues of vital concern to them, allowing choice and active engagement, and helping students see major concepts, big ideas, and general principles in their work.

4. Use culturally relevant teaching

Educator Gloria Ladson-Billings believes culturally relevant teaching offers a solution to problems in the education of African-Americans and offers an opportunity to make those problems central to the debate about education in general, especially teacher preparation. This teaching practice is by definition resistant and critical. It helps both teachers and students construct knowledge not simply assimilate the dominant culture. Here they move beyond the state- and district-required curricula to achieve academic and cultural excellence.

5. Art as the 4th R

How will small schools reach all students? Most schools discuss what foreign language the school will teach. Spanish, French, Japanese…are mentioned. Curiously, "the arts" are not. Yet, that's what "the arts" are, another language. Dance, sculpting, weaving, pottery, drama and screen/play writing, poetry, singing, playing and composing music, drawing/painting/animation, movie and video making are now ways of self expression, expressing ideas, understanding and expressing understanding—making them invaluable classroom tools.

Media literacy is expanding and redefining literacy. Multimedia communications is spreading throughout the internationally connected world of the Internet—citizens of the world are moving away from only "text-centric" communications and towards pictures, diagrams, sound, movement, and other more universal forms of communication.

Ginwright pointed out (see p. 26) the idea that students are literate in other ways that are simply not connected to classroom learning in public schools, these theorists explore "new literacy," or non-school literacy practices that can provide greater connections with classroom learning in our post-modern diversity—multi-literacies that expand what it means to be smart and how to communicate. *Expanding the ways to know/learn and assess learning through a variety of media can increase the possibilities of reaching all students.*

The above suggestions support Dr. Ginwright's two recommended strategies since they are by nature resistant and challenge conformity to the status quo. Because they all grew out of the struggle for a respect for diversity, challenging America to be responsible and live up to its promises they fit it well with the characteristics of the hip-hop generation and can make school work for these youth.

6. Follow Dr. Ginswright's two strategies for working with today's youth

a. Validate and Affirm Black Youth Identity
b. Think of Urban Youth Culture as an Asset, Not a Liability

See the Black & Latino Policy Institute's papers: Teaching for Social Justice, The Pedagogy of Poverty, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Art as the 4th R.