

## **The gap within the achievement gap: A generational-social-political disconnect among members of the African American community**

We are all aware of the Achievement Gap and its challenges. Thankfully, Chicago's Marva Collins led the way in showing African American students can achieve academically just like any other student. Chicago is providing leadership again as all 107 seniors at Chicago's Urban Prep Academy have been accepted to four-year colleges.



This recent success story, mentioned by the nationally acclaimed Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu at the 2010 Indianapolis Public Schools Infusion Conference, is very, very significant. The school's long hours, all-male student body, a strictly enforced school uniform of a black blazer, khaki pants and red tie, and the school voice mail opening with "I'm college bound" before it asks the caller to leave a message reflects a way to be affective with some urban African American males. This is great school and must receive recognition and be duplicated.



“Some” is used because the success of the families, students, or staff at Urban Prep is important not only because it proves again what’s possible, *but because it brings up the next challenge*: Now that we know how to reach some students we’ve been unable to reach before, how do we reach those students we have never been able to reach—those who are not attracted to an Urban Prep model, or to any public school model for that matter? Indeed, what about urban students who do not want to pull up their pants, wear a blazer, tie, and khaki trousers?

These “yet to be reached” students are intelligent, they enjoy learning, they want to go to university if that’s what it takes to empower themselves to be able to define their own reality. However, what alternative is there for black males who see the Urban Academy approach as requiring them to reject their identities as urban youth in order to become successful or acceptable to society? What is the alternative for those who do not share the middle-class social-political culture of those African American professionals, organizations, and schools (like Urban Prep) who want to help them? Is the fact that no alternatives exist for the most resistant show a generational and social-class disconnect with disaffected, disruptive, and oppositional students who perceive school success as not only “acting white” but “playing for the other team”?

The same situation applies to working class urban students of all colors. What about those students who do not see themselves, their global youth culture, their neighborhood, or proposed solutions to the everyday problems they face each reflected in a school’s curriculum? I don’t see a reflection of the lives of the alienated and oppositional students who may not want to pull up their pants, let alone wear a blazer and tie, and I see no alternative to the narrative offered by the mainstream African American community who support schools like the Urban Prep Academy. Don’t we want to reach ***all*** students?

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A paper, “Rethinking the position urban schools are failing” offers such an alternative: <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Rethinking-the-20th-Century-position-claiming-urban-schools-are-failing.pdf>