
The Third Movement: Developing Black Children for the 21st Century

By Jeff Howard

This generation of black Americans and all who will follow us are beneficiaries of two of the most successful social movements in history, movements that gave many of us unprecedented access to education, jobs, and the best that America has to offer. The first movement, conceived and led by Charles Hamilton Houston (and brought to its conclusion by Thurgood Marshall after Houston's death), was the legal struggle to end segregation, which, after nearly a quarter century of battle, did just that. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 removed the protective cover of laws that had lent respectability to racist exclusion since 1896. The Civil Rights Movement finished the job with boycotts, marches and voter registration campaigns that rendered the remaining traditional practices of segregation too expensive to maintain. The "Two Movements" were brilliant in their planning and execution. Both had clear compelling objectives — clearly articulated missions with which people strongly identified. Each mobilized a broad base of support among black folk too, by defining clear operational approaches that generated belief in our capacity to achieve our objectives.

I. The Equal Opportunity Generation and Those Left Behind

Given this history, the present conditions endured by black children living in the core cities of America are tragic and more, they are a disgrace. It is disgraceful that the US and all of its citizens have allowed racism, discrimination and apathy to breed conditions where whole communities feel abandoned, and where children cannot so much as walk to and from school without fear. More importantly, lack of effective action in the face of the deteriorating circumstances endured by black children brings disgrace upon black adults, especially those of us who are educated and often well-positioned, but who have not, as a group, leveraged the privilege won for us toward creating better conditions for our younger brothers and sisters. No child deserves the kind of treatment many of our children receive: from schools that presume to judge their intelligence and classify many as too dumb to learn; from the streets where they are terrorized from an early age by renegade teenagers and young adults; or from the home itself, where many of our children are being raised by verbally and physically abusive adults, who were

themselves abused and mistreated in the same manner when they were children. This transgenerational abuse mirrors the historical mistreatment of African-Americans at the hands of whites. It is painfully clear that their disregard for us has poisoned the child rearing practices of many black families. Far too many black people may now be counted on to abuse one another, including children, in the same fashion that we have been historically abused. The situation has become powerfully self-perpetuating and its results are devastating to the affected children. Without effective intervention, those who are growing up in these conditions will live, at best, as marginal inhabitants of the domestic society and international economy of the 21st century—poor, angry, contemptuous of their own kind and generally despised. But they are unlikely to endure their desperation and poverty quietly. Many of these injured children will grow up to become lawless and violent young adults, or will bear children that they are neither financially nor emotionally equipped to rear to successful adulthood. The fate of these children, and *their* children, is bound to ours; the status and the regard in which all black people are held and our self-esteem as a people are tied to their conditions and behavior. Continuation of these conditions and continued expansion of the numbers of children who endure them will be utterly destructive to the remaining fabric of civility and decency in inner-city black communities around the country.

We are confronted daily with news stories of crisis: from police violence to gang violence to domestic violence, children are often the innocent victims guilty only of living in the wrong places at the wrong time. Many of us who have left these violent places cannot avoid being drawn into the news about them. We often feel as if we are drowning in the numbers that describe the depressing story of what has happened to black people in the last half of the 20th century. But just as the children cannot escape the very real conditions described by these numbers, there can be no escape for those of us who care, and those who ought to care, from the terrible statistics that chart what is happening, right now, to black children:

- In 1988, 63.7% of black children were born out of wedlock.
- 68% of black girls have had sexual intercourse by the age of fifteen, and 40.7% of black girls have become pregnant by the age of 18.
- 44% of black children live below the poverty line.
- In my experience, many urban school systems report official dropout rates approaching 50%; actual rates may be much higher, approaching two-thirds in some cities.

- Blacks account for 45.3% of the inmates in state and federal prisons while only 23.4% of our 18-24 year olds were enrolled in institutions of higher education in 1989.
- The mortality rate for black males between the ages of 15-25 is 3.25 times that for black women, with the main cause of death being gunned down by a member of their own race.
- 56% of all black households are headed by women, and 56% of these households had incomes below the poverty level.
- 39.8% of black families are receiving aid for dependent children .

The Problem of Those Left Behind. The circumstances of life for poor black children have become so overwhelmingly negative that the news can no longer be repressed. That was not always the case. Through the 1970s and for much of the 1980s, America, including much of black America, repressed the news very successfully, choosing not to fully know what was happening. Many human service workers and educators, and some of our national leaders did understand (John Jacob, for example, drew public attention to the rates at which black children were being born out of wedlock at the beginning of his tenure as Executive Director of the NUL a decade ago and pushed for a coordinated effort to address the issue). These people dared to look and were deeply unsettled by what they saw. They tried to tell us but they ran afoul of a strong human tendency to avoid the implications of a life-threatening illness until we are forced to confront the full-blown disease. In light of the optimism spawned by successes of the Movements and the real gains in income and status enjoyed by those of us who benefited most directly from these successes, this tendency toward repression of news that might spoil our good feelings about our accomplishments became very wide-spread.

The fact is that two very distinct groups of African-Americans were left in the wake of the Two Movements. One might be called the "Equal Opportunity Generation," the offspring of families who emerged from the Great Depression and World War II sufficiently developed and economically strong to take advantage of the unprecedented opportunities available after 1964. It is the other, much larger group whose situation we are discussing here. These folks, who might be called "Those Who Were Left Behind," were essentially unaffected by the Movements. Slavery and the era of Jim Crow undermined their family structures. Many were then brutally exploited as sharecroppers or fled to conditions that were little better in urban centers. In this weakened state, these families were essentially unprotected from the economic ravages of the Great Depression¹. Their children were in no position to take advantage of

the new opportunities, and the conditions of their lives have, in fact, been steadily deteriorating since the 1960's.

Open discussion of the magnitude of their problems or of any responsibility the rest of us might have to do something about them, came to be regarded in many circles of the Equal Opportunity Generation as bad manners, an indicator of bad taste. This sort of avoidance of bad news is very human, and should be understood as the defense mechanism it is: the truth of the growing desperation of the black poor offends on a number of levels. We are shamed by the fact that it is *our* children who behave this way—our children who live this way. We wonder how such neglect reflects on those of us who live better, often much better. And the way they live reminds us of something else that is deeply disturbing: the way that we, the privileged ones, are treated suggests that the places where *we* live are not that far from the places they do. Their feelings of alienation mirror our own when our comments are ignored or patronized at meetings, when we are hassled by police, experience humiliating difficulties during real estate transactions, when we are followed around in department stores, seated by the kitchen door in restaurants, or otherwise disregarded or treated as undesirable. All of this has been too depressing to contemplate and it made many of us in the Equal Opportunity Generation angry to be confronted by anyone who tried to force us to face it. We were successful enough at shutting out the news that, on a day-to-day basis, we could live as if what was happening wasn't actually happening.

But repressing the news did not alter the underlying dynamic—it probably only strengthened and accelerated it. As we moved into the 1980's, the reality insisted on getting worse and worse and intruded upon our peace with a voice that was louder and louder, until we were obliged to put forward some sort of explanation. For more than a decade the dominant interpretation of events and the attendant prescription for change was, "*they* created these conditions, so let them do something about it." The litany is familiar to anyone who has lived through these times. "Our young people are unemployed because of discrimination in employment. Our children are unemployable because the school systems fail to educate them. Our children are unmotivated in school because even if they do learn, no one will employ them. Our children are violent because they have no hope for getting a job, and because *they* are bringing drugs into our communities, and controlling drug turf is the only way many of these kids can 'make it'. Our children use drugs because they have been effectively closed out and they live without hope of 'making it' in American society. Many of our children, including pre-teens, loiter on the streets at all hours because there are no recreational facilities for them. Our

children become unwed mothers because they have no hope for 'making it' in American society. Many parents do not effectively raise their children because no one has ever taught them how, and even if they knew how, they have no hope that anyone will give their kids jobs. So many people were left behind by the Civil Rights Movement because *they* had a quota on how many of us they wanted integrated into American society."

Statements such as these have validity, in the sense that they represent a theory, or general explanation that can be used to understand the data about the behavior, attitudes and conditions of black children; but it is only one explanation, or perhaps only a partial explanation and it has become increasingly unsatisfying. It is an explanation that tends to focus blame for causing the problems and responsibility for resolving them on forces outside of our communities over which we have little or no direct control. As is usually the case, the theory about the cause of a problem dictates the search for a fix. Given the perceived external locus of the causes of our difficulties, it has appeared self-evident to many black people that only an attack on these external causes could redress the situation. These forces have also been perceived as powerful. For many, "powerful" is an understatement; they believe the entire weight of the most powerful forces of American society are arrayed against us. To confront such forces, we would need an equally powerful ally. The federal government, perhaps with the support of some players in big business, enlightened by their own self-interest, came to be regarded as our primary hope of influencing the forces that controlled us. "The problem," went this line of thought, "is a problem of power. White people have a monopoly of power, and much of that power is hostile to our interests and opposed to our advancement. Black people, confronting such formidable adversaries, are essentially powerless." Given such a profound imbalance of power, it stands to reason that influencing powerful, progressive white people to intercede on our behalf and attack the powerful, negative forces that stand against us, was the only feasible line of attack.

This perspective on how to solve the problems has itself been problematic. The idea that only white people have the power to change the conditions that afflict our children is very potent because belief in it profoundly limits our options for action. The theory of the problem that leads us to invest our belief in the power of others to change our circumstances has led to paralysis; it has been a formula for immobilization. It is a mind-set that has been widely shared at all levels of black society, captured nicely by the opening lament to a very popular recent song:

"I had some problems, and no one could seem to solve them..."

The young man who sang that song has not yet learned that you can get very old waiting for someone to solve your problems for you. Our situation is analogous to his. We cannot find solutions to our problems by suppressing open discussion of the statistics that shame us, or by conferring on someone else the power to make the transformation.

The dip in the national fortunes has provided that final, clarifying slap in the face, bringing new lucidity to our view of our situation. By the early 1990's, as community after community across the country became unlivable, the truth dawned clear enough for virtually everyone to see: successive local and national political regimes, regardless of whether they seemed for us or against us, were similarly ineffectual at slowing the course of decline in black communities. And when these national leaders (powerful icons of white male superiority and dominance) could be induced to discuss the issues at all, it became obvious that they had not a clue about "what is *wrong* with these people", or what to do about it, even if we presume that they cared enough to want to do anything at all. And then a broader truth began to emerge: it was not just black folk in trouble. The American economy was in decline. The government was spending far more than it was taking in, banks were failing at a rate not seen since the Great Depression, white kids were no longer learning much in school, the country seemed to be falling apart, literally, and the dominant white males who run things were gridlocked and immobilized. As the impotence of national leadership became undeniable, the strategy of "holding white folks' feet to the fire" until they came up with solutions for our problems, a strategy revealed to me approvingly by a member of the Black Congressional Caucus a decade ago, was itself revealed as a most unpromising approach to changing the conditions of black people in America. *They* could not solve what they understood to be their own problems, even as those problems reached crisis proportions. Clearly they could not be counted on to champion useful solutions for ours. The way thus opened for a search for a different theory of what was wrong, and a very different kind of strategy to bring about change.

There can be no real peace for this generation of black adults, nor pride in our status as beneficiaries of the Two Movements, unless we take control.

II. The Issues: Development and Mobilization

Our situation will only change when we assume the power to change it. No power flows from attributing problems to forces over which one has no control. Power comes from identifying causative factors which we have the power to impact—searching for sources of leverage and control that are in our hands, or within our reach. I will propose a way of understanding the present situation of black children, a theory of our problem, that puts power in the hands of black adults to control the conditions within which black children grow up. I will not suggest that we can control every facet of their futures; we do not, for example, presently control most of the decisions about hiring and firing that will determine whether and how they will be employed. But there are many crucial aspects of black children's existence that black adults can control, if we have a theory of the nature of their condition that disposes us to act in a focused, aggressive manner, and capitalizes on all of our potential for power.

The current condition of black children is a function of two kinds of failures:

- **Failures of development** —Too many black children grow up without the skills, capabilities and values they will need to function in this society. Underdevelopment is the most basic reality; it is the very heart of the problem. As long as black children remain underdeveloped, no other solution to the problems black people face will change the basic conditions of our communities. Failures of development are a function of failures of education and training, and these are remediable.
- **Failures of mobilization**—The available resources within black communities, the assets available to us with which we could take charge of our situation, have not been mobilized to address the problems of development of the mass of black children. Failures of mobilization are functions of psychological and organizational problems, and these too, are remediable.

These are failures within our power to remedy. We will address them in turn.

The Problem: Underdevelopment. The Solution: Development.

There is a simple, unpleasant reality at the heart of the problems that most of our children face, and the problems that many of them cause: far too many black children are underdeveloped, many of them grossly so. They lack the skills, capabilities and values they will need to thrive as citizens of the 21st century. Many are not proficient in the particular brand of English usage that prevails in the marketplace where they must seek employment; they cannot

write a coherent paragraph; they have, at best, rudimentary mathematical skills and so are closed out of the science and technology that drive the modern economy. Too many have not been taught how to behave with ethics and humanity. A minority (but a dangerously organized one) is engaged in criminal behavior—physical and psychological violence most often directed at other black people, particularly other black children.

The failures of training in skills, values and proper behavior defines their underdevelopment and must be squarely faced; but it is not to be confused with "blaming the victim." I am most assuredly not blaming the children for their behavior or their lack of skills. Children are not underdeveloped because they want to be. They are underdeveloped because they have been allowed to be, and the responsibility for the breach lies exclusively with adults. It is not black children who have failed. They have been failed—by their society which, in its own sickness, behaves as if black children do not deserve humane conditions; by their community and its leadership, which have failed to mobilize the resources at our disposal to take the situation into our own hands; by their teachers, who allow schools to become places where black children are made to feel stupid, instead of places where they become smart²; and by their parents, who have been poorly served by their culture—who have never been taught an effective model of childrearing with which to raise 21st century citizens. Arguments about proper shares of the blame for this situation, when so many have already been lost, when the carnage proceeds unabated, and when there is so much blame to go around, are a waste of time. In a circumstance where so many young souls are being destroyed before our eyes, the only question for any serious person is, "who will take responsibility?"

The Objective: 21st Century Standards of Development.

Responsibility is facilitated by a clear, simple statement of what we are trying to do: *the objective must be to develop black children to 21st century standards of skills, capabilities and values.* We have translated this objective to three specific outcome targets, which we have dubbed the "Efficacy 21st Century Educational Objectives," to which I will add a fourth suggested by John Jacob. To attain the status of true citizenship in the world they will inherit, and full participation in the 21st Century economy, by the end of High School children must:

- Master calculus (or any substitute form of mathematics certified by mathematicians as equivalent) at the Advanced Placement level.
- Achieve fluency in at least one language in addition to English.

- Demonstrate a capacity to write a literate, well structured, well researched twenty-five page essay on any topic deemed important by teachers and interesting to the student.
- Demonstrate a capacity to "live by strict, high ethical standards."³

All educational approaches and programs must demonstrate that they can produce measurable changes in the direction of these ultimate educational outcomes. These objectives are based on respect for the actual intelligence and decency of our children—on an accurate understanding of the capacity of virtually all of them to develop to very high levels of intellectual proficiency and ethical standards. These four categories of learning will, of course, not be the exclusive focus of eighteen years of education and development. They are outcome objectives, representing demonstrations of mastery of a wide array of learning.

Development to the level of these standards is not based on some innate trait. It is a long term process of building capabilities, values and confidence. The following is a formal definition of development that we have found very useful:

Development is a process of building: a constructive personal identity (including a sense that "I am a decent person," and "I am a person committed to learning"); the ethics and character required to be a constructive factor in the lives of others; the analytic and operational capability required to function in the world of work; and the self-confidence that serves as the psychological underpinning for a life-long commitment to growth and learning.

What is most important and empowering about this definition is the notion that development is a process, rather than a fixed trait. Processes can be managed. If we can learn to effectively manage the process of development, we can build the skills and capabilities of all our children. But there are important obstacles to overcome.

The Innate Ability Paradigm. The idea of development as process is in direct contradiction to the prevailing ideas about intelligence and educability in American education and American society in general. The fact that many black people buy into the prevailing ideas (how could it be otherwise, since we, too, were raised under their shadow) represents a formidable psychological obstacle to taking charge of our children's development. As such, we will address the prevailing assumptions in some detail.

The way we treat children in American society is based on powerful assumptions we share about the distribution of intelligence and its relationship to learning capacity. These assumptions generate educational practices that enter the child's experience as critical events, introducing the conditions for failures of confidence and disrupting the motivation to work at learning. They may be summarized:

- There is a distribution of intelligence within what is considered the "normal" human population; some individuals are highly intelligent (kids would say "very smart"), some are moderately intelligent ("sorta smart") and some are not very bright ("kinda dumb").
- We can specify how much intelligence is needed to learn particular skills and concepts in school, and fulfill particular vocational or professional functions in adult life.
- We can employ standardized tests to measure the intelligence of children and then predict who will be able to master which skills and assume which functions. Ability placements matching curricula to the judged intelligence of individual children are made on the basis of these measurements.
- We can *infer* levels of intelligence in the absence of formal test data by assessing which material the child seems to be able to master, and which s/he cannot and by assessing the rate of mastery of new ideas, concepts and operations. Thus, assessments of ability need not be left exclusively to experts and standardized test scores, they may reasonably be made by classroom teachers, parents, and other adults as well, relying upon their own observations. Inferences drawn in this way operate with the same force as test data in subsequent judgments about a child's intelligence and ability placements in the schools.

These beliefs constitute a paradigm—a more or less universally accepted, taken-for-granted theory which organizes perception and behavior. The core idea of this paradigm is the belief that intelligence controls the capacity of an individual to develop intellectually and ethically. Intelligence is thought to be an innate endowment, fixed at birth, apportioned to different people in different quantities. The relationship between intelligence and learning capacity may be modeled:

Innate Ability  Development

Thus, the standard operating assumption in the great majority of American schools is that development is tied to a fixed trait, understood to be beyond our influence. *All the intelligence a child is ever to have is fixed at the moment of birth.* This is a radical notion and should be understood as such. It leads directly to the practice of assessing intelligence in very young children, then making life-shaping decisions about their educability based on those assessments. This strange notion and the destructive practices it spawns has become the central operating principle of American education. We have lived with it for so long that we accept it without reflection; much of its power, in fact, derives from its status as an unquestioned, taken-for-granted aspect of "the way things are."

As long as this fundamental idea remains unquestioned, it will continue to shape a set of destructive attitudes, policies and behavior toward children. American children in general, and black children in particular are rated, sorted and boxed like so many potatoes moving down a conveyor belt. In schools we presume to "test" their intelligence using paper and pencil tests developed by academics and assessment merchants. Children are then placed or "tracked" according to these assessments of their intelligence. There is the "gifted and talented" or Advanced Placement track for those few (exceedingly few when it comes to black children) considered highly intelligent. There are the regular programs for those of more modest endowment, and the vocational and special education classes for those considered "slow." Only children in the gifted programs can expect the kind of education that will give them access to the challenges and rewards of the 21st century. Placement in vocational or special education programs is tantamount to a sentence of economic marginality at best, and for many, a lifetime of unemployment, welfare, or involvement in the underground economy of crime and drugs.

School systems organized around the innate ability paradigm become, at best, places where only some children are expected to learn; at worst, they become mean, dispirited places. Educators who are convinced that the poor children they work with are incapable of higher learning have no incentive to learn effective instructional approaches to teaching them. When school administrators, teacher's union officials, and school board members in such systems debate school policy, "they talk," says Jerome Harris, former superintendent of the Atlanta Public Schools, "about everything *but* kids." The innate ability paradigm induces people to give up on our children. Once they do, they tend to fight over issues of concern only to grown-ups. Schools become places, in fact, where children get little consideration. In the

atmosphere of futility that pervades urban public education, school policies are often decided on the basis of what is most convenient for adults.

The idea of fixed traits shapes children's destinies outside of school too. In the home, the community agency and on the street, adults make assessments of children's behavior and decide which ones are smart, which are good, which are disruptive or "at risk," and label them, often publicly, accordingly. Children routinely referred to as "bad" or "dumb" tend to accept the designations we give them as if they were true. They internalize from an early age the idea that innate, fixed limitations of intelligence and character control their destinies. Kids who have learned that they are bad or dumb, or both, expect to be that way for life. The sense that these characteristics are immutable has profound negative consequences for their subsequent behavior and confidence about future prospects.

Rumors of Inferiority. There is another complicating factor—a factor that is deeply disturbing to black people. It is a small jump from the idea that intelligence and character are distributed unequally among individuals to the conclusion that they may be distributed unequally among different population groups, too. In the atmosphere generated by the innate ability paradigm on the one hand, and racism on the other, African-American children are routinely subjected to very negative expectations about their intellectual capabilities. There is a rumor of inferiority about black people—a major legacy of American racism—that follows black children to school, especially racially integrated schools⁴. Black children enter the school environment under a general expectation that they have less intelligence and are severely overrepresented in slow, or 'special education' classes. Black students make up 16% of public school students yet make up almost 40% of those placed in special education or classified as mentally retarded or disabled⁵. They are even more severely underrepresented in the upper end of the placement hierarchy, the "advanced placement" or "gifted and talented" classes. These children are also subject to a range of forces outside the school, including negative peer pressure, that oppose any commitment to intellectual development.

The academic difficulties displayed by many black people, children and adults, are rooted in the fears and self-doubts engendered by the constant projection of strong negative stereotypes about black intellectual capabilities. The most recent expression of this theme is the on-going race/IQ controversy, which amounts to a highly public discussion of genetic intellectual inferiority for black Americans. The embarrassment and self-doubt that are the inevitable by-products of exposure to this kind of public spectacle generate, in many people, a sequence of

avoidance, evasion, and general unwillingness to commit to intellectual engagement. Such behavior should be understood to be a less-than-conscious reaction to the psychological burden of the terrible rumor.

*"If you keep your mouth shut, people might think you're stupid.
If you speak up, they'll know for sure."*

To avoid being proven stupid, many young black people have devised preventive measures. They drop out or otherwise evade and disparage the academic situations where their worst fears might find confirmation. In too many cases, they are encouraged to do so by schools that are predisposed to view them as intellectually limited. Allowing children to avoid intellectual engagement is a set-up. They forfeit the possibility of the kind of development that could quiet their fears, create a meaningful possibility of employment, and set the stage for group progress. Avoidance is an understandable reaction to the rumor of inferiority, but it carries unacceptable consequences. It is time to mount a national movement to set new expectations for black children. We must expect nothing less than committed effort and superior performance in all arenas of endeavor.

The "Get Smart" Paradigm. The definition of development we are proposing here gives us back control of the development of our children. It is empowering; the capabilities of children, including high order intellectual capabilities, can be deliberately built up. *The most important single factor controlling the learning capacity of children is the ability to view development as a process that adults have the power to manage.* Taking responsibility for the development of children depends on willfully breaking the link in our minds, between a child's learning capacity and crude measures of intelligence. *All children can learn, if the process of learning is effectively organized and managed by adults.* A black community organized around this central idea will be moved by the examples of educators—inside and outside of schools—who have always known that it was true and will incorporate their techniques into an effective movement to reform our educational process.

A new framework for thinking about education will include three critical elements: we must replace the old, destructive ideas about intelligence with a new, constructive conception of development; we must build children's self-confidence through positive expectations and emotional support; and we must instruct them in a general technique for development, applicable across the range of academic and character-building domains.

Teach Children a Constructive Theory of Development. The destructive idea that we have put in the heads of our children, that development is the province of an innately gifted few, must be replaced with a new idea that will provide a psychological foundation for confidence and committed study. An empowering idea, explicitly taught as part of the formal school curriculum, will define intellectual development as an ongoing process of building analytic and operational capability through effort:

Think You Can → Work Hard → Get Smart

This model⁶ underlines the notion of intelligence as something constructed, something one can build. It is an idea easily taught to young children: "If you believe in yourself, if you 'think you can', then you will be able to 'work hard' at what you are trying to learn. And if you really work, if you don't give up, you will learn. You will 'get smart'." This is an alternative, *constructive* notion about the basis of development that can be summed up in a single line:

"Smart is not something that you just are,
smart is something that you can get."

If development is understood by the child to be built up through the expenditure of effort, then the child is in control—the decision about becoming smart is in his or her own hands. Children are empowered and energized by the notion that they can choose to get smart. Instilling confidence that "smart is something that you can get", and training students in the techniques associated with getting smart should be primary objectives of early education, at home and at school.

Build Up Children's Confidence Through Belief and Emotional Support.

Lack of confidence is the intangible at the core of the educational problems experienced by so many of our children. Building confidence in their learning capacities will be an essential part of the cure. Strong confidence generates positive attitudes toward development, positive feelings between teacher and student, energizes effort, and allows attention to focus on strategic approaches to the work of learning and teaching. With proper emotional support, all children can learn to believe in their own capabilities. A confident child can confront difficulties without giving up. A child who can stay with it, who can continue to work, will eventually blossom in his/her own time.

Positive expectations and emotional support are powerful tools that adults can use to shape the confidence of children. Jon Saphier⁷ suggests a three part communication combining the two:

- This schoolwork I am asking you to do is important.
- I know you can do it, and
- I won't give up on you.

The belief in the child expressed in this kind of communication is experienced emotionally. It is a gift, an embrace: "I believe in you, and I won't give up on you." Children need love and affirmation to grow confident and strong, and they respond to expressions of support and belief from authority figures. Building confidence must become a major objective of all instruction, especially in early education. Each child should finish every academic year not only with an increased knowledge base, but with a stronger faith that "I am the kind of person who can learn whatever is taught to me in school."

Teach Children the Efficacy of Effective Effort, Step-by-Step. Children who believe that they can learn are able to give their full commitment to learning the *process* of learning; they are, in fact, eager to do so. What we have characterized as the "step-by-step process of development" represents one simple, easily learned technique for 'getting smart'. It begins with teaching a child to choose an appropriate starting point, one that matches the difficulty of the material to be learned with the present capabilities of the individual. Initial objectives should be somewhat challenging (involving a stretch and some real possibility of failure), but very realistic (failure may be a possibility, but the goal is within the range of what is realistically attainable). Goals that are both challenging and realistic stimulate effective effort and greater satisfaction with the work. A starting point that is realistically geared to the present capabilities of the child stimulates a belief that "I can do this" and engenders stronger commitment of effort to the task. The perceived challenge or difficulty involved results in feelings of satisfaction with eventual success and increased confidence.

Confidence and satisfaction with the results of previous efforts drive the next stage of the process: incrementally increasing the level of challenge or difficulty of the objective and engaging again. Each success generates increased confidence and satisfaction and energizes a more challenging objective for the next attempt. As goals become more challenging, they evoke greater focus; the child becomes increasingly absorbed, immersed in the detail and the work. This heightened involvement alters the experience of the task.

The work becomes enjoyable, learning is accelerated, understanding is deepened. Increasing challenge stimulates changes in the approach to the work, too. As objectives become more difficult, but success still seems possible, the child is strongly motivated toward strategic thinking. Prioritizing action steps, working collaboratively with others, more innovative, more economical and more pragmatic approaches to the work will often result.

A failure in this system is not viewed as an indication of the limits of one's abilities (how many of us, raised in the innate ability theory of development, reacted to our first real difficulty in mathematics—often in algebra or geometry—by declaring ourselves unequal to the demands of math and carefully avoiding it thereafter?). Failure is simply feedback about one's readiness to accomplish this particular objective. It stimulates corrective action; an increase in intensity of effort, review of basic concepts, a search for help, or a re-examination of strategies, with no destructive loss of confidence or self-esteem.

These principles of managing development—teaching a constructive theory of intelligence, building confidence through emotional support, and encouraging use of a step-by-step process of development—can be applied wherever we make institutional contact with children. Parents may use them in the home, youth workers can employ them in their day-to-day contact with children using their agencies and they may become the new operating principles for our public schools. If we are to substitute the "Get Smart" paradigm for the destructive ideas about intelligence that presently control our institutions, a major mobilization will be necessary; an organized effort to bring together all of the skills, knowledge, money and commitment that are available to us.

Mobilization

A precipice in front, wolves behind.

Erasmus

This is an apt, and evocative metaphor for our position; we deliberately approach the precipice—the unknowns involved in taking responsibility and assuming accountability when there is no guarantee of success—only when the wolves draw very near. The consequences of doing nothing are now so frightening that they have effectively neutralized our anxieties about taking

the full weight of responsibility upon our shoulders. When we take responsibility, we expose ourselves to the psychological hazards of possible failure ("What does it mean if we try, but we can't do it?"). Most people will approach the precipice only when they have to, and, as a people, we have now reached a situation where the wolves are so close that there is a growing consensus that we have no choice but to take the leap.

The pieces of a tremendously successful third movement, quite possibly the final movement, lie all about us. We have much more to work with now than previous generations did—more money, more know-how, more position power. We know more about how this society works and there are many more of us who are well positioned to use that knowledge. This is, of course, no accident. Putting us in this position must be precisely what Charlie Houston had in mind, what he and so many others expended their lives working for. It helps to approach our challenges with some sense of the resources at our disposal for dealing with them. Black America has:

- Educated people. 12.7% of our population is college educated. These people are engaged in every sector of American institutional and economic life. As of 1989, 23.4% of 18-24 year olds are enrolled in institutions of higher education. 26% are majoring in business, 17.8% are majoring in sciences and engineering and 18.2% are majoring in social sciences and psychology. In 1989, blacks earned 5.7% of all bachelors degrees awarded; 5.1% of all medicine degrees; and 4.9% of all law degrees.
- An institutional base, including 67,000 churches, human service agencies in every city focused on health-care, youth services, and community action. The people who operate these institutions understand the community and its people.
- School systems run with significant black participation, and in many cases, outright control. Many urban systems have black superintendents, majority black school boards, and predominantly black faculty. As of 1985, there were 15,036 black faculty in higher education in America⁸.
- Black Colleges, with a long history of service that includes training key leadership in the previous movements for change. There are 99 "historically black" colleges in the United States.
- National organizations, including the National Urban League, the NAACP, fraternities, sororities, and various professional organizations.
- Political leadership at the local, state and federal levels in a position to fight for strategic policies and legislation favorable to the interests of black children. As of January 1988, there were over 6,829 black elected officials in the United States. Recent elections bring the total in the US Congress to 40, including the first black woman elected to the Senate.

- Corporate professionals in banks and other financial institutions, local companies and multinational corporations. These people operate in the functional heart of the economic structure of the society. They are in product development and design, manufacturing, marketing, finance. They are in a position to learn how things work, and how to get things done.
- Black women near or at parity with whites in earnings given comparable educational backgrounds. For every \$1000 a white person with four years of college earns, a black women with four years of college earns \$1002.
- Professional women. Among employed black women, 63.8% are in professional positions and 55% of those are in managerial positions.
- Professional people positioned in government, foundations, and other local and national not-for-profit institutions. Over a third of all black lawyers work for government departments, as do 30% of black scientists.
- Individuals who are well-positioned in the huge, world-wide sports and entertainment industries. There has been important recent progress in black ownership and control in this arena.
- Small businesses whose annual receipts average \$50,000. 425,000 of this nation's small businesses are owned by African-Americans.
- Disposable income, money that must be regarded as a critical source of potential contributions to a cause the people embrace. 29.5% of black families earn over \$35,000 with 14.5% earning over \$50,000. Blacks make up 7.8% of the total personal income earned in this country. There are three blacks on Forbes list of the 400 richest men and women in the US⁹.

How a group fares in this society is less a function of how many assets it has and more a function of "how well used?" Our community has the resources it needs to take the initiative. Others may have more, but the fact is that we have far more now than we did during the times when we mounted the two previous, highly successful social movements. It is the capacity to effectively organize and mobilize available resources that separates successful generations from less successful ones. In these terms, the two previous generations were successful because they effectively mobilized the limited resources available to them and achieved major change—in the face of powerful opposition. Despite our considerable endowments, the Equal Opportunity Generation, who benefited most directly from the Two Movements and who should be expected to lead us to the other side, has not yet mobilized to do so. The ideas and displays of commitment that could galvanize us are not yet in evidence. But the problem is remediable; the failure to galvanize and organize is not a problem of inability or powerlessness. It is not that our

generation lacks the resources, it is simply that we have not yet assembled, organized and focused those resources.

The great challenge for this privileged generation is to set the foundation for a new mobilization. We must take the methods of the first two movements as our model. As their successes have demonstrated, mobilization requires: articulation of a clear, compelling mission; unshakable belief in our own capacity to take control of the situation; and a plan, an operational approach, that people believe can work.

The Mission: Take Control of the Development of Black Children

The Equal Opportunity Generation will be galvanized by the declaration of a mission they regard as correct—they will be moved when we put forward a feasible approach to solving fundamental problems. The mission must be clear, simply stated and very compelling; once stated, it will seem obvious to people that it is something we must do. *I propose that the mission for this generation must be to take control of the development of black children—all black children, not just the biological children of the privileged. We must systematically mobilize all the resources we have been given and then efficiently deploy them toward the task of preparing our children to meet the challenges of the 21st century—as constructive citizens in their own communities and full participants in the international economy.*

The twenty-first century educational objectives cited earlier in this paper, calculus, fluency in at least one additional language, capacity to write an excellent twenty-five page essay, and demonstration of high ethical standards represent targeted outcomes our children must reach. Given our positions and resources on the one hand, the requirements for safe, healthy communities and the imperatives of the competitive international job market on the other, nothing less is acceptable. This is a mission that will move black people. A focus on empowering their children is the most compelling mission any people can have. Almost all healthy adults are subject to powerful protective impulses toward children and nothing could be more motivating than a mission to correct the inexcusable conditions faced by black children in America.

Belief

Belief in the goodness, wisdom and intelligence of black people, and faith in the power of our own leadership to mobilize and organize us, will drive this mission. We must believe so devoutly in a vision of what black people could

become that we can dare to be openly dissatisfied with what we presently are. There can be no ambivalence on this point. Underdevelopment and immobilization are unacceptable conditions. They lead nowhere and reduce our stature in our own eyes, and the eyes of the world. Excuses and rationalizations only aggravate the problem by communicating to our people that we expect nothing better. We must believe in ourselves enough to demand the highest standards of development for black children, and to expect full mobilization of black adults to ensure it. We can accept nothing less. It bears repeating: underdevelopment and immobilization are unacceptable for a people with the resources and the potential we possess.

The capacity of any group to take control of its destiny is a function of the quality and commitment of its leadership. The belief of our leadership in their own capabilities and their belief in the qualities of black people will be reflected by their willingness to accept responsibility and accountability for a mission to change our conditions. In light of our failure to do so thus far, those of us in leadership positions must face two basic questions: do we believe it can be done? Do we believe that we can do it? If we believe it can be done, then it is our responsibility to build a movement to do it. There can be no excuses. The only shield from accountability is to take the position that it cannot be done, that we are powerless to do it. We should ask ourselves this question: "Should people who do not believe that a mission can be accomplished be given authority to lead it?" Questions about our capacity to take power can no longer be allowed to stand in the way of mobilization. The most formidable enemy is no longer *them*, it is doubts and fears that we harbor within ourselves, often expressed within our own councils by those who argue that *their* overwhelming power is the source and solution to all our problems. There can be no mobilization based on the sense of inadequacy that such a position implies. The New Movement must be declared and organized by leaders who are inspired by belief—in ourselves, our people and our mission.

When people believe that something is possible, they can learn how to do it, even if they don't know how to do it right now. This was clearly demonstrated by those who strategized the first Two Movements. It is not a matter of magic, or of waiting for some savior of superhuman endowment to come and tell us what to do. People can "get smart". When ordinary people have the courage to confront a great challenge—a difficult set of problems within their capacities to master—they can always work out solutions if they believe in their own power to do so.

An Operational Approach

No movement can come alive without an operational approach that gives it substance. An effective approach gives momentum; the forward motion it generates spawns learning, greater confidence and belief. The operational approach of the first movement deployed trained constitutional lawyers in a well-planned assault on the legal underpinnings of segregation¹⁰. The Civil Rights Movement used a two-pronged operational approach. Marches and demonstrations were employed to shine a harsh light on the traditional practices of segregation and to influence national and international public opinion for basic change¹¹. Voter registration campaigns were simultaneously mounted to break the political stranglehold of our adversaries¹². In both cases, the approaches used were simple in concept and terribly effective in practice. They were created by people who took it upon themselves to make change, who would not take "no" for an answer and who figured out what to do.

I propose a three phased operational approach for the Third Movement. In phase one, we will mount demonstration projects in selected cities to prove that it is possible, under initiatives planned and organized by local black leadership, to change specific outcomes of black children in targeted communities. Demonstration projects can begin only when a group of local leaders have embraced the mission to develop black children and are prepared to publicly declare their own accountability for achieving it. The Efficacy Institute and the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts have begun such a project to demonstrate the mobilization process in a real community—Boston. We are using Efficacy training programs for community leadership as a primary organizing tool. To date, we have succeeded in getting over 70 leaders in Boston human service agencies to buy into the mission, and are planning a public announcement of objectives and accountability in the Spring of 1993. In addition to the Boston demonstration, Urban League affiliates in Springfield, Massachusetts and Miami, Florida have introduced the Efficacy approach into their local public school systems and are planning to introduce the approach into the human services network as well. By early 1994, we expect to have reportable results on these and other interventions.

Every demonstration project should operate in two venues: public school systems and human services agencies. Schools are an obvious choice. Children spend their best waking hours, five days a week, 180 days a year, in institutions that are mandated to educate them. A training process designed to get their teachers to reject the innate ability paradigm, and adopt a constructive, 'get smart' approach to instruction, has been demonstrated to have dramatic effects on the academic performance of children¹³. There have

been, in fact, a number of programs that have demonstrated positive effects on academic performance of children in urban schools, including the work of Superintendent Jerome Harris in both New York City District 13 and the Atlanta Public Schools, Jaime Escalante's successes in teaching calculus to poor Hispanic students in Los Angeles, the work of Dr. John C. Chen, who uses summer crash courses to teach higher mathematics to Philadelphia high school students, and anonymous classroom teachers in cities across the country who consistently teach their poor urban children to the highest standards. These successes prove that our children can learn, if public education is organized to make sure that they do.

Human services agencies will be an equally important venue. They have the dual advantage of being places where children go to receive services and recreation, thus facilitating our access to them, and they are institutions that attract as workers many of the most socially committed people in the society. Human service workers have skills in working with people, knowledge of the day-to-day realities our children face, and commitment to making things better. The heads of these agencies, along with top school officials, are generally among the most respected and influential people in the community; as such, their declaration of the mission is likely to draw attention to what we are doing. Successful outcomes for these demonstration projects will, under these circumstances, be duly noted by a cross-section of the community—increasing hope, generating belief in the mission and credibility for its leadership.

Success must be clearly defined; it will be measured in terms of changes in outcomes on key variables that affect the life chances of children, including academic development in school, and what might be called quality of life indicators, such as statistics on crime, teen pregnancy and drug use. The focus on measurable changes in outcomes dictates that we start by defining which statistics we will use to describe the conditions of black children. I propose that, over the next year, we establish a 'Black Community Children's Index' of key variables we will use to chart our progress. Once the index has been agreed upon, each community will establish baseline data (where are we now on these critical variables?), set concrete objectives for change ("we will get ___% improvement on x, y, and z variables by December 31, 19__"), and report on a regular basis (perhaps annually) on the results of the intervention.

Phase two begins once we can show clear successes in the demonstration projects. In this phase we will leverage our successes to greatly expand the numbers of black people who believe in the mission and who are prepared to

support it. Success in phase two will be the basis of a transition from demonstration projects to the real work of building the basis for a national movement. It will be vital that we integrate a broad base of the Equal Opportunity Generation into the planning and execution of the movement at this stage. The combination of demonstrated successes and their own participation will allay the cynicism and disbelief that are the legacy of the deterioration of the last quarter century. Once these folk learn to believe that we can do it, and get excited about the mission, they will commit their time, their money and their know-how to the building of a movement. It is also vital that we work to integrate the parents of the children we serve. Black parents are frightened by the violent conditions their children face and frustrated by their poor educations and limited prospects. Most are deeply committed to their kids' well-being, even when they don't know how to ensure it. A movement to develop children will find many ready to contribute in any way that they can, and some prepared to assume leadership roles. To build a broad base of consensus, belief and commitment, all elements of the community must be part of the planning and execution of the mission.

Once we have demonstrated what is possible and have a critical mass of believers and solid experience at making these interventions work, we will move into phase three: the public launch of a national movement with bold objectives and timetables. A movement launched by black leaders and educators at the local and national levels, willing to accept responsibility for the outcomes of black children, will be taken very seriously by everyone. The world, literally, will be watching, and we will have crossed a point of no return. But that is appropriate, because if we do nothing, there will be no meaningful future for black children.

This phased approach will work. The specifics of each phase await discovery; the point is that experienced, committed and confident people have the wherewithal to work out the details. Building a movement is fundamentally a creative process. We will fill in the details as we go along, as we confront the problems. Effective people are those who believe intensely in what they are doing and their own capacity to figure out how to do it. They do not demand prefabricated, highly detailed blueprints as a prerequisite to beginning. They immerse themselves in the work, and as issues and problems arise they are able to find creative solutions and discover new resources, motivation and sources of power with which to manage a continuous stream of unforeseen challenges and opportunities.

A movement focused on the development of children in no way diminishes the importance or the need for the whole range of human service support activities that dedicated people are presently engaged in. Rather, we are proposing that these initiatives be placed in the context of an organized thrust to take control of the development of our children. This is in keeping with a general *outcomes orientation* that we advocate: the ultimate indicator of a healthy community is its capacity to see the development of its children as its most important outcome. Successful achievement of this outcome requires a mobilized community that is crime-free, has a strong economic infrastructure, is politically active (especially in the arena of education), is characterized by strong families and effective parenting, has a strong tradition of civic-minded volunteerism, etc. These elements of a mobilized community demand activist approaches to changing the present, negative realities. The overall thrust is to build the kind of community that can take care of its children; and that community-building encompasses the whole range of activities that socially committed people presently engage in. In effect, articulating *as our ultimate mission* the imperative to develop children to 21st Century standards of education and ethics contextualizes these other critical activities and gives them sharper focus.

There are inherent risks in such an approach. Taking responsibility for changing specific outcomes, and accepting accountability for doing so, is a bold move. It represents putting our reputations on the line. But taking such a risk is essential for generating credibility for those who have accepted the challenge and stimulating belief in the feasibility of the mission. It will be clear to people that those of us who have accepted accountability would never have done so unless we believed in what we were doing. Once we achieve results, the fact that we are people who have decided to take control of our own situation will be self-evident to all. Building a movement is exciting, challenging work. It is a privilege, not a burden; and it is given only to those who believe.

III. Stand and Deliver

*We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach
all children whose schooling is of interest to us.
We already know more than we need to do that.*

Whether we do it or not must finally depend

on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.

Ron Edmonds

The tremendous psychic injuries of slavery are still with us. We are a people violently dislocated from home, brutalized in bondage and despised and isolated in emancipation. The effects of centuries of physical and psychological violence on the institutional structure of the group, and the self-concepts of individual people, should not be underestimated. Such injuries do not heal by themselves, nor will they ever be healed by the descendants of those who caused them. The first Two Movements broke the isolation and opened opportunities for inclusion into this society. The Third Movement must use the powers we have gained as a result to heal the damage done to the people, to enable all to take advantage of the opportunities won for us. A new Movement focused on development—and the mobilization it requires—represents a concerted, organized effort at self-healing. The process will be therapeutic for all involved. To make sure the children of this generation are not left behind, we must teach them to meet appropriate standards of character and skills, creating a basis for a healthy community and inclusion into the 21st Century economy. For the Equal Opportunity Generation, whose injuries are often less visible, success in mobilizing our people and our resources to give our children what they deserve is the minimum requirement for self-respect. We will never be able to hold our heads high until we create the conditions they need to move into the light.

We have all been affected by what our people have endured. Becoming the most developed people in this society should be understood as the proper response to what has been done to us, and the defining task of this generation. The commitment to develop our children will give meaning to the dark past, give purpose to our present accomplishments, and give this generation great stature in the eyes of those who will follow us. History will remember us well when we finish what is before us.

All statistics taken from Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, (NY.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992) and the *1991 Digest of Educational Statistics*, (Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1992).

¹Harold Cruse, *Plural But Equal*. (NY: William Morrow and Company, 1987).

²Jeff Howard, *Getting Smart*. (Lexington, MA: The Efficacy Institute, Inc., 1990).

³John E. Jacob, *Keynote Address*, National Urban League Conference, San Diego, CA, July 26, 1992.

⁴ Jeff Howard and Ray Hammond, *Rumors of Inferiority*, *The New Republic*, September 9,

1985.

⁵Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, (NY.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992) 164.

⁶ This model was devised for elementary aged children by a colleague, Verna Ford, as a variant of a more general model previously developed for older children and adults:

Confidence —>Effective Effort —>Development

⁷John Saphier and Robert Gower, *The Skillful Teacher*, 4th Ed. (Carlisle, MA: Research for Better Teaching, Inc. 1987).

⁸*Statistical Record of Black America*, Carrell, Peterson, Horton, Jeffie, Carney, Smith, eds., (NY: Jale Research Inc, 1990) 115.

⁹Statistics taken from Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, (NY.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992).

¹⁰Richard Kluger. *Simple Justice*, (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1976).

¹¹Taylor Branch. *Parting the Waters*, (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

¹²From conversations with Bob Moses who led the voter registration campaigns in Mississippi.

¹³ In Peoria, Illinois, 21 Efficacy classrooms were established in 14 primary buildings of the public school system during the 90-91 school year. The intent of the program was to increase reading achievement to a degree greater than would be expected in a typical classroom. Comparisons of the percentile scores obtained in the Spring indicated that 16 classrooms had exceeded the projected outcome.

In Detroit public schools, during the 89-90 school year, 900 3rd grade students were in Efficacy classrooms. A study by the Detroit public schools to evaluate the performance of Efficacy students in comparison to a control group of non-Efficacy students indicated that Efficacy students showed a 2.4% increase in mean grade equivalent units (GEU) in comparison with non-Efficacy students who showed only a 0.4% increase in mean GEU's on the reading portion of the California Achievement Tests. On the mathematics portion of the California Achievement Tests, Efficacy students showed a 1.8% increase compared with a 0.7% increase for non-Efficacy students.

Detroit also conducted this study at the middle school level during the 90-91 school year, where 1400 6th graders have been in Efficacy classrooms. The study found significant differences in the Efficacy students compared with the non-Efficacy students in reading and mathematics on the California Achievement Tests, grade point averages and citizenship.