

New York City's Wealth of Historically Black Independent Schools

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INTRODUCTION

New York City hosts a wealth of historically Black independent schools serving African American children. Foster (1991) lists 63 such schools throughout the state of New York, 55 in New York City alone. Over the past four years, the Toussaint Institute, a nonprofit research and consulting organization, has reached out to historically Black independent schools in New York City. Since 1988 its scholarship division, the Toussaint Institute Fund (TIF), has placed 12 students, all of them African American males, into 8 such schools, where these youngsters have experienced achievement and success as Toussaint Scholars. TIF's approach has been to (1) identify and collect descriptive data on the historically Black independent schools in New York City; (2) place into such schools children who have had histories of problems in public schools and monitor their progress; and (3) assist the schools in making themselves available as local and national resources. The present article offers a preliminary report on this ongoing work and describes our findings in each of these areas.

Over the past few years increasing discussion has focused on the role of private schools in efforts to reform the American educational system. This is a result of studies indicating that private schools, particularly inner-city Catholic high schools, are organized in ways that more effectively serve disadvantaged students than do traditional public high schools (Chubb & Moe, 1991; Coleman, 1985; Hill, Foster, & Gendler, 1990). The Institute for Independent Education (1991) estimated that there are 300 independent neighborhood schools serving children of color nationwide. The increased interest in inner-city private schools has taken many perspectives. In some cases, urban private schools are viewed as alternative placements for children who do not perform well in public schools. In the context of discussions about free-market or "choice" educational initiatives, these private schools are considered by some to be valuable catalysts for improving public schools. Lastly, these schools are viewed as laboratories in which nonbureaucratic models can be studied for possible replication in public schools.

In many ways New York City's independent inner-city schools are part of a continuous drive on the part of local communities to control

and direct their schools. Many of these schools have their roots in the efforts of African American public school teachers, parents, and community leaders to influence the quality of education in their community public schools. For instance, some schools are offshoots of the Uhuru Sasa School in Brooklyn, founded by the pan-Africanist educator Jitu Weusi and other African American activists involved in the Ocean Hill/Brownsville struggle for community control of public schools. Others, like St. Peter Claver School and St. Thomas Community School (in Queens and Manhattan, respectively), were taken over and run by parents after the large churches that founded them announced plans to close the schools down. Others were founded by churches and mosques to reflect their respective religious values. Whether the focus is on parental choice or community control of schools, independent schools, particularly those currently serving disadvantaged populations, have a potentially significant role to play in the reform and restructuring of the American educational system. Historically Black independent schools, because they are integral parts of the communities they serve, have a considerable amount to contribute to this discussion.

TIF's focus on Black male children is reflective of the widespread concern expressed within African American communities regarding the overrepresentation of Black males in Special Education and various other programs having a high dropout rate in the nation's public schools. The Toussaint Institute Fund's scholarship program takes an early intervention approach to helping African American male students who have experienced repeated failure in public elementary schools. TIF staff seek out historically Black independent schools willing to educate this population. They then approach public elementary school guidance or administrative staff for referrals of Black male students who have not been successful in public schools and for whom school staff feel a change to the kind of environment provided by historically Black independent schools would make a critical difference.

CASE STUDY OF A TOUSSAINT SCHOLAR

The first child enrolled in the Toussaint Institute Fund's Early Intervention Scholarship program in 1988. He was an eight-year-old Black male from a low-income family who had been placed in a third grade Special Education class in a public school in Harlem. He came to the Fund's attention through his attendance at a church attended by a member of the Toussaint Institute. He appeared hyperactive and had a history of behavior problems in school including, fighting, using profane language, and not doing school work or homework. He was far behind in all his basic skills including reading, yet he appeared to be very bright. He had been suspended several times. He had already repeated second grade, and school officials had transferred him from one public school to another in their efforts to find an appropriate placement for him. His school problems were overwhelming his elderly, single-parent guardian, who constantly was being called to the school concerning the child's disruptive behavior. He was about to be transferred to a third school

when the Toussaint Institute Fund approached his guardian and offered to intervene. She welcomed our assistance.

TIF's first step was to enroll the child in a nearby Saturday tutorial program. This program, the Fanny Lou Hamer Institute, which had been founded by and was operated by members of the child's local community, maintained a studious and orderly learning climate. In addition to tutoring in the basics, it provided a curricular and instructional emphasis on nurturing student cultural awareness and self-esteem. Male and female adult role models with high expectations for student behavior served as tutors. The child presented no behavioral problems to the tutorial staff; and, like the other children in the program, spent his time there learning. Upon evaluation of the boy's intelligence and behavior, the program's staff actually questioned whether Special Education was an appropriate placement for him.

We at TIF began to question as well. To discover why this child behaved so differently in the public school setting, TIF staff visited his school. In sharp contrast to that of the tutorial program, the school's environment was not at all an orderly one. The school did not appear to have an established discipline code, and many of its students behaved as if no limits had been set. The boy's Special Education class was supervised by both a teacher and an aide, yet student conduct in the class was too disorderly for any learning to take place. The Special Education supervisor at the school noted that the child was in a class with seven children whose behavior was much worse than his. She expressed regret over the impact this was having on him. The boy's teacher seemed overwhelmed and frustrated by his behavior; and she noted that although his Special Education classification was "learning disabled," she believed he was also emotionally disturbed. Expressing exasperation because the boy was still very hyperactive even after having been placed on medication, she recommended that his dosage be increased and stated without reservation her belief that this child was not headed toward a high school diploma. (Review of Special Education dropout statistics in New York City confirm that her comments are statistical realities [Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment, New York City Board of Education, 1991].¹)

TIF staff concluded that a more complete change to the type of environment found in the tutorial program would vastly improve this child's behavior and, in turn, his academic performance. Thus, we approached an historically Black independent school based in the boy's own neighborhood that appeared to have the same kind of warm, disciplined environment of high expectations and emphasis on developing high self-

¹In 1991 the New York City Board of Education reported that, citywide, after four years of high school, only 3.5% of members of the class of 1988 who were enrolled in Special Education programs completed high school. One year later, after five years of high school, only 5.2% had completed high school. By their sixth year of high school, this figure rose to 18.9% (Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment, New York City Board of Education, 1991). Moreover, high school "completion" does not necessarily indicate a high school diploma. Special Education students who do not meet the requirements for a regular diploma may be awarded a certificate of completion.

esteem to which the child had so positively responded in the tutorial program. This school was a nonsecular one with a small operating budget, an enrollment of approximately 175 students, and an average class size of 25. Yearly tuition was under \$2,200. We asked the school's administrative personnel if they would consider enrolling a child with his kind of school history who, nonetheless, was bright and apparently responded well to a disciplined and supportive environment. The school was hesitant but agreed to enroll him on a trial basis. Due to his weak academic skills (he had not yet mastered the sounds of the alphabet and was not reading), the child was made to repeat the third grade in his new school. Because the school maintained no remedial reading tracks, he visited the first grade during reading period but remained with his third grade class for all other subjects.

The child's response to his new environment was very positive. He seemed to "fall in line" immediately with the school's discipline codes, just as he had done in the Saturday tutorial program. He spoke positively about the school and seemed to thrive on the support this orderly environment, with its high peer and teacher expectations, offered him in controlling his own behavior. His improved behavior allowed him to focus on learning. By the end of the school year he was not only reading for the first time, he also won the school's "Most Improved Student" award.

The school's response to its Toussaint Scholar was an embracing one. The child quickly became part of the school family, developing a warm and close relationship with his teacher that extended beyond the school day. School staff also sought ways to assist his senior-citizen guardian with home discipline.

As a result of this first Toussaint Scholar's success, TIF has placed 11 other children with similar backgrounds in eight secular and nonsecular coeducational historically Black independent schools reflecting a wide range of philosophical bases in neighborhoods around New York City between 1988 and 1991. These children's experiences have been similar to those of the first. TIF monitors the children's progress, and provides opportunities for cultural enrichment two or three times per year. These enrichment efforts have included Kwanzaa ceremonies, tennis picnics, theater, and, for two children, a trip to the Caribbean. Preliminary results indicate that Toussaint Scholars significantly improve their social skills, academic performance, and attitudes about school as a result of attendance in these schools.

IDENTIFYING HISTORICALLY BLACK INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

The traditional definition of an "independent school" is that of a nonpublic, precollegiate, self-governing institution that is not financially dependent upon a larger public or sectarian organization. Within the context of the African American community, this definition must be broadened to include schools supported and governed by individual church congregations. It should be noted, however, that the great majority of church-affiliated schools described in the present study are financially self-supporting and have their own governing boards. The Tous-

saint Institute Fund's definition of an historically Black independent school is of a school that meets the above criteria of an independent school, serves an African American community, and has a governing board that is majority-African American.

An earlier effort by the Institute for Independent Education (1988) identified 18 historically Black independent schools in New York City. Building on this data base, the Toussaint Institute conducted its own general inquiry throughout the city's Black neighborhoods, beginning in 1988 and extending over a three-year period, with the goal of identifying and collecting data on additional schools. Toussaint Institute staff toured Black neighborhoods in search of school facilities and made general inquiries of neighborhood residents. Additionally, the New York State Office of Non-Public Schools was contacted, and this office supplied us with a list of schools it believed were located in Black communities. Through telephone surveys, we collected information on these schools regarding the racial composition of their governing boards. Schools reporting majority Black board membership were included in our study.

Data collected and reported in our study fall into two categories:

- (1) basic descriptive data (enrollment information, grades served, tuition, average class size, and mission statements)—these data were collected by telephone surveys of school personnel at over 53 schools identified as a result of the general inquiry. Further data on 20 of the qualifying schools were obtained by in-depth site interviews conducted with school personnel at 20 schools that met our independent school criteria, and from review of their school literature. Additional information on 10 of these 20 schools was gleaned from the detailed data base developed by the Institute for Independent Education (1991).
- (2) scholarship program data—data describing the adjustment of the Toussaint Scholars to the target schools and the schools' accommodation of the students were collected as part of TIF's process of monitoring the performance of its students. This information was obtained via site visits; classroom observations; interviews with school administrators, parents, and students; and review of student report cards.

Descriptive Data

By the present study's definition, there are currently at least 53 historically Black independent schools in New York City. The following is a breakdown of their characteristics:

- The great majority of the schools are sectarian: 31 are Christian schools, 6 are Muslim schools, 1 is a Khamit (East African religion) school, and 1 is affiliated with a community practicing the Akan faith of West Africa. The remaining 14 schools are secular.
- All except one of the 20 schools are elementary schools, although 38 include secondary grades. Eleven schools extend through grade 12, yet most of them enroll fewer than 40 high school students. Only one school has a majority of its students in grades 9 through 12.
- All of the schools are coeducational, but one school is building, grade by grade, a high school for males.

- Among the 20 schools studied in greater depth:
- Enrollments range from as low as 45 students to as high as 640 students, with most enrollments ranging between 150 and 300 students.
 - Average class size ranges from 14 to 28 students per class.
 - Tuition levels for the 1991-92 school year ranged from an exceptional low of \$1,250 per year at a nonsecular school that occupied space within its affiliate religious facility, to a high of \$4,250 at a secular school that had a mortgage to pay. Most annual tuition fell into the \$2,500 range. ~~The schools—even those affiliated with churches—are truly independent institutions,~~ with tuition representing their primary source of income. None of the 20 schools whose staff were interviewed has an endowment fund, although one or two schools are presently moving in that direction.
 - Virtually all of the schools offer after-school and summer tutorial programs open to their communities. Some offer special enrichment programs including adult computer education courses as well as music and dance classes.

Mission Statements

School missions reflect the shared values that exist between school and family, and, as Coleman (1985) noted, they reveal the heart of what is distinctive and effective about private schools. Hill, Foster, and Gendler (1990) found that the presence of a distinctive school focus was essential to the effectiveness of inner-city private schools. Indeed, three aspects held true of the 20 schools surveyed in greater depth:

- (1) all have clear academic missions that focus on teaching traditional academic subjects;
- (2) all seek to go beyond traditional public schools in their efforts to teach the moral, ethical, and cultural values and heritages of their communities; and
- (3) all emphasize the raising of self-esteem among their students.

Beyond this, however, most of these schools, like most private schools in general, espouse a philosophical mission as the foundation for all the education that takes place within their walls. The philosophical missions of the schools in our study are either religious or culturally based and often both. The majority of the schools (31) have nonsecular Protestant missions, and many of these are also strongly committed to transmitting African American culture. The second largest group is comprised of the 8 nonsecular schools whose missions are grounded in African religions. Two secular schools have philosophical missions grounded in transmitting African American culture; however, their mission statements acknowledge the spiritual context of life. Twelve of the secular schools express no specific religious or cultural philosophical missions.

The following are some typical philosophical mission statements found in the school literature of New York City's historically Black independent schools:

At Christ Crusader Academy the staff believes that education must begin with the student's relationship with God, revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ, and extending through every aspect of his/her life.

At BLCC [Bethel Christian Learning Center] the overall curriculum emphasis is on the achievement of the 3R's—reading, writing, and arithmetic—on a high academic level. The school takes great pride in the teaching of Black heritage. It also endeavors to develop in its students Christian beliefs and attitudes which will help motivate each student to achieve at a level equal to his/her personal capabilities. We promote academic excellence through Christ!

The Bosum-Dzemawodzi Day School proposes to instill in our children knowledge of the customs and lifestyle of the Akan tradition and various areas of Africa. . . . The Akan people value responsibility, respect, discipline, unity and collective work. . . . Our purpose is to prepare our children to attain academic skills while encouraging their development as a benefit to the community.

The Johnson Preparatory School is a private school that offers strong academics along with an exceptional performing arts program. The Black Studies Program sets the tone for both academics and performing arts. The spirit of the civil rights movement of the 1960s has guided the development of the Johnson Prep School. . . . We believe that the potential of the whole person, spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional, must go hand in hand with the nurturance of self-esteem and a sense of identity.

Many of the schools view and promote themselves as alternatives for children who are not being adequately served in public schools, as noted in the following statements from school literature:

[New Covenant Christian School's] aim is to provide an alternative educational institution absent the avoidable problems found in the public school system.

The Cambria Center for the Gifted takes special pride in the fact that it can take average students and turn them into gifted ones.

St. Peter Claver takes particular pride in this success with students who have been labeled in public school. These students often turn out to be winners.

Sister Clara Muhammad is proud of its effectiveness with children labeled "uneducable." Children and parents have an opportunity to discover that they can be very successful.

THE TOUSSAINT INSTITUTE FUND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM DATA

Student Selection

The criteria for selection as a Toussaint Scholar are that the child must be:

- (1) a male of African descent;
- (2) entering second or third grade;
- (3) "in crisis" in public school, as indicated by enrollment or impending placement in Special Education or grade-retention programs, or having a recurring history of school suspension; and
- (4) from a low-income family.

Of the 12 children placed in historically Black independent schools through the TIF program since 1988, virtually all were from one to three years behind-grade academically. All had histories of behavior problems in the public schools. Seven students were enrolled in Special Education programs; 2 had been referred to Special Education, and the possibility of future Special Education placement had been raised with the parents of 2 other boys by school staff. One student had been placed in an ESL (English-as-a-Second-Language) class, even though he was fully fluent in English and English was his first language, because the school wanted to avoid placing him in Special Education but felt that it was unable to accommodate his disruptive behavior in a regular class.

At least 4 of the parents of the 12 Toussaint Scholars have been or are serious substance abusers, and some of the children were prenatally exposed to drugs. However, several of the children come from stable homes and have parents who are very supportive of the educational process. Most of the children's parents are employed and fall into the category of the working poor. Several others are unemployed and receive public assistance. All of the children come from single-parent, father-absent homes.

School Placement

TIF seeks to place its Toussaint Scholars in schools that appear to have calm and orderly climates, a caring staff, and high expectations for student behavior as well as an emphasis on self-esteem and a willingness to accept and work with TIF students given their troubled school histories. Placement is confirmed after a site visit and interview with the school principal. Thus far, Toussaint Scholars have been placed in 4 secular and 4 nonsecular (all Protestant) coeducational schools. Among the secular target schools, two have African American cultural missions and two do not espouse any specific cultural mission.

School Responses

Essentially, the 8 target schools have responded to their new TIF pupils by (1) mainstreaming them; (2) supplementing the students' instruction by placing them in after-school tutorial or summer school programs; (3) holding TIF students and their parents to established school expectations; and (4) particularly in the case of the nonsecular schools, extending their support role into the TIF students' home lives.

Seven of the 8 target schools do not have remedial programs and none of the schools chose to create or employ that option for their new TIF students. The one school that does maintain a special mixed-grade, mixed-skill level class for students with histories of behavior problems placed its TIF student in that class, which emphasizes self-esteem and self-discipline in a spiritual context (i.e., children are taught to affirm "I can do all things through Christ"). Seven Toussaint Scholars, deemed academically so far behind that mainstreaming them into their scheduled grade would be inappropriate, were retained and mainstreamed into their previous grade. In two cases, TIF students' reading skills were so weak that even retention in grade would not suffice, and these students were assigned to first-grade mainstream classes during reading period. Most of the students in the TIF program have either been required or strongly encouraged to enroll in after-school or summer school courses for additional academic assistance or homework help.

Most school personnel were aware that students from public schools require a brief period to adjust to the more orderly atmosphere of their new schools, and they extended that same latitude to their TIF students and parents. However, throughout their participation in the TIF project, all of the target schools have maintained the integrity of their high expectations for student self-discipline, personal appearance, and completion of assignments. Additionally, the schools expected the same high

level of parental support for the school from the parents of the Toussaint Scholars that they expected from other parents including parental involvement in fundraising activities, attendance at special functions, and so forth. In one case a Toussaint Scholar received a two-day suspension from his new school as a result of misbehavior at home that carried over into the school. (School staff investigated, exposed, and helped resolve problems of a more serious nature that the child was having at home. The child discovered a willingness on the part of the school to work closely with his guardian and TIF, even to the extent of supporting and supplementing home disciplinary efforts.) The parents of a few Toussaint Scholars were less than supportive of their children's needs for homework assistance, compliance with the school dress code, or other areas of import to the schools. In these cases the school principals counseled parents on how to be more supportive and went to great lengths to communicate the importance of compliance.

Indeed, the counseling and social work services offered to TIF students during times of family crisis were usually warm and humanistic, extending far beyond that which would be considered "professionally appropriate" in bureaucratic public school settings. When one Toussaint Scholar was in danger of losing his foster care placement, one of his teachers attempted to become his foster parent. Another TIF student's home was destabilized by the parent's substance abuse, and the school facilitated the child being connected with a senior-citizen couple in the sponsoring church who provided him with a home away from home on weekends. Another child's family became homeless, and school-affiliated church members provided them a Thanksgiving dinner and clothing.

In response to TIF inquiries, teachers typically offered the following comments about their Toussaint Scholar pupils' behavior:

He is one of the best behaved boys in our class. For the first few days he attempted to demonstrate a negative attitude. We used positive reinforcement and taught affirmations. By the second week he loved the school.

I think he's progressing satisfactorily. His behavior has improved since he arrived. He's more conscientious about his school work and gets along better with his peers. He participates very well now.

When he first came in he had some difficulty settling in and conforming to class procedures. He has very good social skills. . . . Every now and then, he's the last one to calm down. A little overactive. I see it in him to be rebellious or not to follow, but the school is structured and the environment is such that kids would look at him if he got too wild. . . . He and I have become very close.

Teacher and parent reports also indicate real improvement in the students' reading, writing, and mathematics:

We're focusing on his weaker areas, writing, and reading. He did a composition on his own. The first week he came in he could barely write a complete sentence. (Teacher)

His spelling has improved. He's reading more. Knows how to add and subtract. His teacher says she doesn't have any problems with him, except in dance and music. (Parent)

What the reason is he's doing better, I don't know. I couldn't understand his handwriting when he arrived. I gave him some extra practice and I was really shocked myself how much it improved. (Teacher)

As soon as [student] walks in that door, those books are out. I even say, "[Student], can you wait a few minutes?" He says, "Can you help me?" (Parent)

Initially, not all of the historically Black independent schools that were approached responded enthusiastically to the Toussaint Scholars program. A few school administrators claimed that they did not have the "facilities" for "Special Education children." Two schools agreed to accept one TIF student on a "trial basis" only. With the success of the program, however, some schools have reconsidered their initial position, and the Fund has received several requests from other historically Black independent schools to participate in the program. All of the participating schools have expressed their willingness to serve children from the program in the future, and three schools have even made financial contributions to the scholarship fund.

Student Reactions to the Schools

Follow-up site visits and interviews conducted after placing the TIF students confirm that the target schools in which Toussaint Scholars have been placed are warm, secure, family-like places where high expectations for student conduct support orderly learning environments. Feedback from parents and students alike support these observations. For example, while virtually all TIF students expressed an eagerness about attending their new schools even before they enrolled, each has continued to indicate a preference for the new schools after they began attending them. The two most widely stated reasons students gave for this preference had to do with the less-negative social behavior of their fellow students and the greater discipline teachers use to enforce academic expectations. Typical student statements included the following: "I like this school because the students don't 'start' [hostilities] with you. And the teachers make you do your homework"; "The children here don't fight"; and "You get in trouble if you don't do your homework."

Indicators of Student Success

Interviews with school administrators, teachers, participating students, and parents as well as review of student report cards reveal the following about the target schools' effectiveness with this population of young African American male students:

- School administrators unanimously reported being pleased with the progress of the Toussaint Scholars. In all but one school, administrators indicated that TIF students did not exhibit any behaviors that disrupted the school's or class's regular program.
- In 11 of 12 cases, administrators, parents, teachers and students reported that the Toussaint Scholars made immediate significant progress in their behavior; by the second term, progress was indicated in academic performance as well. In one case, a third-grade TIF student who previously could not sound out the alphabet was sounding out complete words by the end of the second semester. Students going into their second year have been fully integrated into the schools and have continued to improve academically.

- Several Toussaint Scholars have received honor awards for their performance and progress.
- No TIF student has been suspended for school-related behavior, and for only one has behavior been mentioned as an issue.
- Self-reports by Toussaint Scholars indicate that they prefer their new schools to their old public ones, and they believe the independent schools provide an environment that is more supportive of their positive academic and social behavior.
- Parents reported being pleased that they no longer were being called to the school in response to their child's behavior problems.
- The schools provided humanistic and nonbureaucratic responses to family crises that affected 5 Toussaint Scholars. They were flexible in their approaches and worked to connect the children and their families to other supportive resources within their community network.
- Parents, public school staff, and other outside observers have provided unsolicited reports noting improvements in the students' bearing. At least five such reports received on behalf of five different students indicated that the students "walked taller" and "held their heads higher" as a result of their independent school experience.

Problem Areas

While most of the findings of TIF's school placement experiment have been very favorable, some recurring and as yet unresolved problems remain. Like their counterparts in the public schools, several administrators and teachers in the target schools have expressed a need for additional support to help them work with the parents of TIF students. Some independent school personnel have expressed regret that despite their efforts they have not been successful in getting the kind of parental support they would like from these parents, especially with regard to setting higher standards for student grooming and presentation of homework. On the other hand, some of the parents, overwhelmed as they are with family crises, have requested that less be expected of them. One parent returned her child to public school because she objected to the school's complaints about the level of support she provided for her son in areas such as preparation for school and homework help, and she disliked the ethnic Caribbean attire of one of the teachers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The independent schools based in African American communities in New York City are fundamentally similar to private schools described in other studies. Their strengths in providing an advantage for "inner-city" and "disadvantaged" youth lie in the very areas that have been attributed to private schools: shared home and community values and a strong commitment on the part of the schools to surrogate parenting, as well as the schools' ability to respond to students' problems in a humanistic rather than bureaucratic way (Coleman, 1985). Ratteray and Shujaa (1987), who studied independent neighborhood schools serving children of color nationwide, found that most of the schools have a strong sense of mission and social commitment to their communities; moreover, they

noted that parents chose these schools first because of their missions and second because of their academic programs.

Hill, Foster, and Gendler (1990) surveyed a group of New York City Catholic high schools as well as inner-city, zoned, and special-purpose public high schools. Some of the Catholic schools surveyed enrolled disadvantaged, low-achieving students through a scholarship program similar to TIF's. They found that the Catholic and special-purpose public schools shared several characteristics that made them effective with inner-city disadvantaged populations. These traits included the presence of clear, uncomplicated missions centered on both the experiences the school seeks to provide its students and on the ways it intends to influence student performance, attitudes, and behavior. Hill, Foster, and Gendler concluded that whereas the public schools were caught up in the bureaucratic delivery and monitoring of programs and procedures, the Catholic schools focussed solely on student performance and outcomes. Their study also found that the latter schools aggressively mold student attitudes and values. In several of the schools, staff members indicated that their first priority was to develop in students the proper attitudes toward themselves and learning. As one Catholic school administrator stated: "We first try to change their attitudes toward learning and school at large and self-esteem before we concentrate on school work." The literature on Catholic schools serving disadvantaged children clearly indicates that the mission-oriented, outcome-focused, and shared home/school values found in private schools works for these children. The Toussaint Institute's research on historically Black independent schools indicates that these features exist in these schools as well.

Beyond this, however, historically Black independent schools appear unique in their provision to African American schoolchildren of (1) African American institution builders as role models, (2) surrogate parenting by members of their communities, and (3) the linking of children in crisis to community individuals who can help. There are likely some long-term, positive effects that result from students' attending historically Black independent schools that are not readily identifiable. Students' sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and choice of career may be influenced by having attended a school where they are able to observe African American adults, the teachers and administrators at independent schools, role modeling the process and practice of institution building. Outside of the church, African American youth are rarely exposed to these kinds of activities. For many children in crisis, whose families are also in crisis, Special Education class in the context of a bureaucratic public school, even with a class size of seven children and two adults, is no match for the kind of surrogate parenting these historically Black independent schools are willing and able to offer in their mainstream classrooms, even with 20 or 25 students and one teacher. Many of the schools participating in the Toussaint Scholars program (and those affiliated with the schools or their mother institutions) were willing to go well beyond traditional home-school boundaries in setting limits and establishing expectations. When, as in the case of one Toussaint Scholar, a child discovers that he can be suspended for seriously misbehaving at home, he learns that the school-home relationship is a surrogate parent-

ing one that extends beyond bureaucratic ties and standard operating procedures. The same is true when a teacher offers to become his foster parent, or members of the affiliated church bring the child and his parents into their homes. The ability of many of these schools to link students in need to individuals and resources within the community with whom the schools themselves have a relationship is important. Some schools in the Toussaint Scholars sample have the support of community service-oriented church congregations in their efforts to serve their students. One has a strong and active fathers' organization within the school to provide support services for students from father-absent homes. The schools are also comfortable in making demands concerning parenting that are consistent with the schools' values. For example, a parent gets a strong message when a teacher, who has been urging her for some time to improve the child's grooming, calls her, not to berate her for the child's behavior, but to ask her to bring a clean shirt for the child to the school because the children are going on a school trip. This ability to role model institution-building behavior, engage in surrogate parenting, and link children in crisis to individual resources in their communities seems to be distinctive features of historically Black independent schools. Further research is needed to determine the long-term impact of these aspects of the historically Black independent school experience.

Perhaps one of the single greatest influences on the behavior of participating students was the impact of positive peer pressure. Our students repeatedly referred to the absence of student provocation as one of the main reasons they preferred their new schools and adjusted so well to them. Only the presence of teachers who would not let students "get away" with not doing their homework was cited nearly as frequently by Toussaint Scholars as a strong factor favoring independent schools over public ones. One environment obviously supports these students' positive behavior and the other is less supportive—and the students themselves clearly recognized and appreciated the difference.

The general absence of Special Education programs in historically Black independent schools is worth noting. Our Toussaint Scholars and other students were thus able to avoid the stigma and expectations of being labeled "handicapped" learners and being grouped with similarly labeled students. Many in the African American community question the accuracy and legitimacy of these classifications. Given the high drop-out rates among Special Education students, these programs apparently are doing a large majority of students an educational disservice. Like other children, African American children are special. They are individuals with individual needs. Some children adjust to some bureaucratic school settings without difficulty. For many, particularly African American male students, the public school setting fails to meet their needs, as evidenced in their behavior or academic progress. In some cases their adjustment difficulties may be the result of clinical problems caused by prenatal exposure to drugs or unstable families. In other cases, however, their difficulties may be an expression of their special need to learn in the same quality environment that most middle-class children apparently need, as indicated by their parents' decision to pull them out of inner-city public schools and place them in private schools or select public

schools. Early results of the Toussaint Scholars program suggest that the needs of African American children whom the public schools have difficulty serving are best met by the kinds of learning environments that historically Black independent schools are able to offer.

Perhaps this is why the response of public school administrators and guidance staff to TIF's scholarship program has been so positive. Most see real potential in the students they refer, despite the great difficulty they have had with them, and express relief that the student has an alternative to Special Education. Many of those who refer students to the Toussaint Institute Fund's program also refer youth to programs such as A Better Chance (ABC) or Prep for Prep, which send high-achieving children of color to historically White private schools. In each case these school administrators see themselves as joint participants in an effort to offer students opportunities they would not otherwise receive.

What do these schools, which have been supported, in many cases for decades, by the African American community know about the education of African American children and all children that could serve our nation's reform and restructuring efforts? The findings of the Toussaint Institute as a result of its Toussaint Scholars program reveal that these historically Black independent schools are distinguished by their availability as alternatives to students currently being underserved, inappropriately served, or in crisis in the public school system, as well as they are distinguished by their knowledge base. To the extent that these schools make the most of their available resources, there may be much of value that can be replicated by public schools at tremendous cost savings. The work of the Toussaint Institute highlights not only the capabilities of historically Black independent schools and their students but also the potential of schools and students in public school systems as well. Increased interest in and support for research on historically Black independent schools is necessary. The Institute for Independent Education (1991) has established the first national data base on the academic achievement of children in these schools; however, the need remains to build on this work with data in areas such as student socialization, school culture, school organization and structure, school climate, curriculum, and instruction.

Support is also needed to help historically Black independent schools establish endowment funds and identify the additional resources they will need to survive and compete in the new structure of American education. Deriving over 90% of their financing from tuition alone (Ratleray, 1987), independent schools are among the few financially self-sufficient institutions in African American communities. Unlike so many other initiatives in these communities, they have not been subject to the rises and falls of the foundation and corporate giving market; however, this has also meant that these schools historically have operated on very small budgets. As a result, they have been unable to engage in the kind of long-term planning, facilities development, and marketing necessary for them to compete effectively in what is likely to be an increasingly competitive public/private school market. The financial stabilizing factor of endowment funds would go far to assist these schools in establishing

recognition for themselves as significant players in the nation's educational marketplace.

Perhaps the most urgent recommendation emerging from the Toussaint Institute Fund's research is that historically Black independent schools must be included in the current discussions on the restructuring of the American school system. Given current moves toward expanding the role played by private schools in the education of our children, how can historically Black independent schools best participate? What are they capable of contributing in a radically changing and increasingly competitive educational arena? These questions are critical to the development of both a balanced discussion of the restructuring of the American educational system and a balanced realization of this restructuring movement.

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