

This issue, The American Indian issue, The immigrant issue—all the same. Need to hold the hand of mom and child until child is ready to read count and understand positive direction before kindergarten so they are not behind --- There is no lower cost than this and time is money. Quality is FREE when we honor First Things First Right the First Time principles and guarantee the schools that 100% early literacy will be delivered. Call it a gift we give ourselves. Politely ask for a pass it forward? But God wants us to save his children. Tom Wolfgram 2-10-2011

Is this economic issue, a education issue, an emotions issue, an ethics issue?

Colbert King: Calamity -- As the black family disintegrates

By Colbert King

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Here we are, another Black History Month: time to lionize great black men and women of the past. Twenty-eight days to praise the first African-American to do this and the first African- American who did that. Another month of looking back with pride — as we ignore the calamity in our midst.

When Black History Month was celebrated in 1950, according to State University of New York research, 77.7 percent of black families had two parents. As of January 2010, according to the Census Bureau, the share of two-parent families among African-Americans had fallen to 38 percent.

We know that children, particularly young male African-Americans, benefit from parental marriage and from having a father in the home. Today, the majority of black children are born to single, unmarried mothers.

Celebrate? Let's celebrate.

Three years ago, I wrote about young girls in our city who are not learning what they are really worth, young men who aren't being taught to treat young women with respect, and boys and girls who are learning how to make babies but not how to raise them. Those conditions, the column suggested, find expression in youth violence, child abuse and neglect, school dropout rates, and the steady stream of young men flowing into the city's detention facilities.

Boys get guns, girls get babies. This pattern isn't new. We don't need maps to tell us what the problem of teen births means to a city.

We know that most teenage mothers don't graduate

from high school; that many of the youths in the juvenile justice system are born to unmarried teens; and that children of teenagers are twice as likely to be abused or neglected and more likely to wind up in foster care.

We know, too, that children of teenage parents are more likely to become teen parents themselves.

An intergenerational cycle of dysfunction is unfolding before our eyes, even as we spend time rhapsodizing about our past.

No less discouraging is the response that has become ingrained.

Sixteen, unmarried and having a baby? No problem. Here are your food stamps, cash assistance and medical coverage. Can't be bothered with the kid? No sweat, there's foster care.

Make the young father step up to his responsibilities?

Consider this statement I received from a sexual health coordinator and youth programs coordinator in the District of Columbia concerning a teen mother she is counseling: "She recently had a child by a man who is 24 years old and has five other children. He is homeless and does not work, but knows how to work young girls very well. . . . This young man is still trying to have more children."

He's a cause. Our community deals with his consequences.

A 16-year-old mother who reads at a sixth-grade level drops out of school? Blame the teacher. Knock the city for under-serving girls during their second and third pregnancies. Blast social workers for not doing enough to help children with developmental disabilities or kids in foster care. Carp at the counselors responsible for troubled youth in detention.

Sure, tackle the consequences. Construct a bigger, better, more humane safety net. I'm for that, especially where children are concerned. And the causes?

God forbid, don't mention causes.

Celebrate? Let's celebrate.

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