

The Blumenfeld Education Letter



"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce these risks.
"Without vision, the people perish."

Did Public Education Cause Los Angeles?

The recent events in Los Angeles are now seared permanently in the American psyche, and all sorts of analyses are being done to explain why it all happened. The liberal pundits blame the riots on poverty, unemployment and hopelessness aggravated by the heartless policies of Reagan and Bush. They blame the riots on the anger and frustration caused by the Rodney King verdict, which is translated purely and simply as an act of deep-seated racism. Little attempt is made to analyze why the jurors voted as they did. In other words, not much critical thinking went on in South Central Los Angeles or anywhere else for that matter.

The prosecution had accused the police officers of felonious assault. That is, they were accused of doing to Rodney King what the thugs in South Central Los Angeles did to the innocent motorists who were dragged from their cars and beaten to a pulp. Had the prosecution limited its indictment to excessive use of force, the jurors would have probably found the officers guilty, although the defense argued that the measures taken by the officers were in line with their approved procedures. Whatever the case may be, the jurors could not believe beyond a reasonable doubt that the intention of the

officers was to assault an innocent man rather than subdue a dangerous lawbreaker resisting arrest.

It should also be noted that the jurors were thoroughly informed of the events leading up to the beating of Rodney King, of his attempt to evade the police through a harrowing auto chase which endangered King, his two passengers, other motorists, and the police themselves. When King finally stopped his car, the two passengers quickly responded to police orders, emerged from the vehicle and "went prone" without incident. King, on the other hand, first refused to get out of the car, but when he did he behaved in a very bizarre manner, laughing, dancing, pointing to the helicopter overhead and making obscene gestures. Although he was surrounded by police pointing guns at him, he did not respond to their verbal commands.

The officers assumed that King — who is 6 feet 4 inches tall, powerfully built, and weighs about 250 pounds — was on PCP, a drug associated with unpredictable and dangerous behavior. By then, Sgt. Stacey Koon had arrived with his Taser, which can deliver 50,000 volts of electricity. Koon warned King that he would zap him with the

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Taser unless he got down on the ground. King finally got to the ground, but continued moving about. When four officers tried to handcuff him, King stiffened his arms and threw off two of the officers. Sgt. Koon then ordered the officers away from King and fired the Taser. King went down, yelled at Koon, then got up again. Koon then fired the Taser again, and King went down again into a prone position.

Now Comes the Video

This is where the video starts. King got up, turned and moved, and in less than two seconds went from a fully prone position to a full charge at officer Powell. Koon fired the Taser a third time, and King went down again. And that's when the famous beating began. It was the duty of the officers to bring King under total physical compliance so that he could be arrested. That's what they were being paid to do. That's what they had been trained to do. Did they use excessive force to accomplish this? That's what the jury had to decide in addition to deciding whether or not the officers were guilty of criminal assault. On the latter count they judged the officers not guilty. Only one officer, Powell, was not cleared of the lesser charge of using excessive force.

In any case, the only part of the video that was constantly shown on television was the beating King was given *after* he had refused to comply with the officers' commands, *after* he had been zapped three times by the Taser, *after* he had thrown off two officers trying to handcuff him, *after* he had attempted to attack officer Powell.

The constant showing of the beating every time the trial was mentioned on the evening news was enough to convince the public that the officers were guilty as charged. To the residents of South Central Los Angeles, the verdict of not guilty smacked of bla-

tant racism.

But there is more to this story. If the anger and rage were directed toward the Los Angeles Police Department, why did the young black thugs burn down over a thousand Korean-owned businesses? The answer is simple: jealousy, envy and hatred. The Koreans, through hard work and savings, had managed to achieve the American dream in only one generation, despite anti-Oriental prejudice, while the blacks in South Central Los Angeles, fourth, fifth and sixth generation Americans, were relegated to an underclass of poverty and hopelessness.

Miseducating Black Americans

The big advantage the Koreans had was in not having attended American public schools. The disadvantage of the blacks is that they had been grossly miseducated in the public schools and were, indeed, their most obvious victims. It is estimated that about fifty percent of the young black males in South Central Los Angeles belong to gangs, and judging from the speech patterns of gang members interviewed on television, most of them are functionally illiterate. The gang seems to function as an organizational home for the young male functional illiterates in South Central Los Angeles and gives them a power that ultimately terrorizes the entire community. That doesn't mean that these functional illiterates lack intelligence. What it means is that their schools have denied them a mastery of the basic academic skills that would have made it possible for them to make their way into the greater economy.

What is equally interesting in the black-Korean conflict is that Korean students came out on top in mathematics and science in the international testing sponsored by the Center for the Assessment of Educational Progress, while American students were near the

bottom. And so, the young blacks in South Central Los Angeles are more the victims of a crippling education than of racism, for we know that blacks who have a good command of the language, written and oral, are able to obtain good jobs and reach positions of great eminence, as in the case of Colin Powell.

The civil rights victories of the 60's and 70's provided blacks with unprecedented opportunities to move up the economic ladder, and many of them have indeed done just that. But you can only take advantage of these opportunities if you have achieved a high degree of literacy. However, this is no longer easy to do if you attend an American public school, whether you are black or white. The system is now so bad that recently the Nestle corporation launched a campaign in the coupon-clipping section of the Sunday newspaper which reads:

**700,000 graduating seniors can't read this
But you should.**

Today's students are tomorrow's leaders. The quality of their education will effect every aspect of our nation's future.

We want our children to be the best and brightest in the world; but, schools can't always afford the equipment and enhancements that are necessary for quality education.

Nestle thinks it's time to get involved. Here's where we're starting and how you can help.

Nestle is contributing \$1,500,000 to the betterment of public education. On the next eight pages you will find many of your favorites from the Nestle family. We'll donate a nickel for every coupon redeemed, up to \$500,000 to a number of schools across the country. . . .

Concerned parents and caring teachers are not enough. Quality education deserves everyone's support. Please join us. The future depends on it.

One has to wonder about the ignoramuses at the Nestle corporation who think that their piddling contribution to a system that devours over \$200-billion a year and *graduates* 700,000 seniors who can't read is a

system that can be helped by redeeming coupons.

What the ad is really telling us is that the Koreans are successful because they had a decent education before they got here, and that the black hoodlums who burned down Korean stores have been so miseducated, so intellectually destroyed that they can't even think of the consequences of their own actions.

Illiteracy and Delinquency

According to a soon-to-be-published study made by Michael S. Brunner, Visiting Research Fellow at the National Institute of Justice, the link between reading failure and delinquent, anti-social behavior has been well established by researchers in the field. One research paper entitled *Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency; Urban Delinquency and Substance Abuse*, issued in 1991 by the U.S. Dept. of Justice, states:

Low reading levels tend to predict the likelihood of the onset of serious delinquency. Longitudinally, poor reading achievement and delinquency appear to mutually influence each other. Prior reading level predicted later subsequent delinquency . . . [moreover] poor reading achievement increased the chances of serious delinquency persisting over time.

Another researcher writes in the *Journal of Correctional Education* (Sept. 1990):

There is a disproportionate involvement in delinquency by those youth failing in school. Schools are apparently contributing to the delinquency problem by continuing to provide traditional programming, though it has failed repeatedly.

E. E. Gagne writes in the *Journal of Special Education* (1977):

. . . [the] compulsory school attendance law . . . facilitates delinquency by forcing youth to remain

in what is sometimes a frustrating situation in which they are stigmatized as failures' The longer learning-disabled students stay in school, the more likely they are to become involved with the police.

In a Report to the Congress issued in 1977 by the Comptroller General of the United States we read:

In our society, school is the only major legitimate activity for children between the ages of 6 and 18. If a child fails in school, generally there is little else in which he can be successful. . . . Delinquency and misbehavior become a way for the failing child to express his frustration at those who disapprove of his academic underachievement. This disapproval comes not only from parents and teachers, but also from other children who are keenly aware of the school status based on performance.

Michael Brunner writes on page 8 of his study:

Significant research has been conducted that investigates reading failure as the major source of frustration that leads to delinquency, based upon three hypotheses:

1. Continued failure in the most significant educational task challenging the child (reading) is a deeply frustrating experience when permitted to continue for several years, [especially] when such failure begins prior to the child's developing ability to think rationally (approximately age seven and one-half).

2. Continued frustration over prolonged periods of time will result in aggressive behavior directed outward toward society (delinquency) or inward toward the self (neurosis).

3. Confined delinquent boys who have failed in reading will have behavioral histories showing more anti-social aggression than confined delinquent boys who were able to read.

In investigating two groups of incarcerated delinquents, 48 in each group, in two different states, a significant correlation between reading underachievement and aggression for both groups was found. Though IQ scores correlated with reading success in both groups, it will be shown shortly that IQ scores are not reliable predictors for determining if one will be able to learn to read, rather the ability to read will to some extent determine IQ scores! But this study is remarkable in what it didn't find:

". . . the present study was unsuccessful in attempting to correlate aggression with age, family size, or number of parents present in the home, rural versus urban environment, socio-economic status, minority group membership, religious preference, etc. Only reading failure was found to correlate with aggression in both populations of delinquent boys.

"It is possible that reading failure is the single most significant factor in those forms of delinquency which can be described as anti-socially aggressive. I am speaking of assault, arson, sadistic acts directed against peers and siblings, major vandalism, etc."

If you want to read the entire study for yourself, it was written by Dennis Hoggson and was published in the *Bulletin of The Orton Society*, vol. 24, 1974, with the title, "Reading Failure and Juvenile Delinquency."

Functional Illiteracy and Gangs

It is quite conceivable that when functional illiterates in the form of gangs turn against society and burn down the community, they are directing their hatred at the very system that destroyed their minds. The government school represents the establishment as a whole, and these youths know that the school did a job on them, for they remember the intelligence they had before they went to school and they remember the humiliating and frustrating experience of failure after they were in school.

In reality, the reading instruction methods were devised to do just that: produce disability in the learner by way of a very subtle, non-surgical prefrontal lobotomy called the sight-word method. In the Rodney King beating, they saw physically what had been done to them mentally and psychologically in the schools. The oppressive dumbing down turned them into walking time-bombs waiting for the right moment to go off. And when several thousand walking time-bombs organize into gangs, they can cause a social explosion of incredibly destructive force.

We are only beginning to understand the enormously destructive power of reading failure when organized into a social force. When you dumb down a people you create a monster unlike any other in history. There is no instance in history that I know of where an education system perversely functioned as a brain-deforming instrument used to subjugate an entire people. Only the genius of American psychology could dream up something so evil, so efficient, and so effective.

The Underclass

The American underclass is the direct product of our public education system. Brunner writes: "While black children comprise 16 percent of the school population, 40 percent are in classes for so-called educable mentally retarded children."

Any system that turns out 700,000 illiterate seniors a year, not to mention the illiterate dropouts who never graduate, not only does not deserve the support of the American people, but should be put out of business as quickly and painlessly as possible.

If the Nestle company annually produced 700,000 bars of chocolate that poisoned consumers it would be closed down by the government and the corporation officers would probably be tried as criminals. There'd be lawsuits galore by the relatives of poisoned individuals. No one would suggest that the way to reform the company would be to contribute money to it.

But what is even more scandalous today, is that we *do* know the cause of reading disability. It is the replacement of the alphabetic-phonics method of reading instruction by the whole-word, look-say, sight method that teaches children to read English as if it were Chinese. And we have more than enough evidence to show that the professors of education who engineered this radical

change early in this century knew that their new methods produced impaired readers.

Geraldine Rodgers, an indefatigable researcher on this subject, came across two early studies which indicate that the educators knew exactly what the new teaching methods would do to young readers. One study done by Myrtle Sholty, published in the February 1912 issue of the *Elementary School Journal*, showed quite clearly that the two methods of teaching reading produced two different kinds of readers: objective and subjective. The phonetic method produced fluent, accurate, objective readers; the sight method produced impaired subjective readers who guessed at words, substituted words, and mutilated words.

A second significant study, published in the November 1914 issue of the *Elementary School Teacher*, was made by Clara Schmitt who worked in the Chicago schools. She analyzed the errors made in oral reading by mentally defective and normal children. The children with normal intelligence made simple phonetic errors easily correctable in context: for example, *bottle* for *battle*, or *feather* for *father*. The defective children made absurd errors such as reading *berries* for *grapes*, or *pony* for *horse*. Schmitt wrote:

The errors in pronunciation made by the normal children . . . were always in favor of a word which had considerable visual or phonetic resemblance to the correct word. The errors made by the defective children with the first selection which was perfectly familiar to them in content, at least, were absurd so far as visual or phonetic values were concerned, but were calculated to fill in the context. The defective child reads, for instance, that the fox saw a vine with *berries* [instead of grapes] on it. Because of the great prevalence of this type of variation the performance of the defective group cannot be compared with that of the normal.

What this early study demonstrates is that today our schools teach perfectly normal children to read in a manner that is only normal for defective children! It was

Julia Palmer, president of the American Reading Council, who, in discussing Whole Language with a reporter from the *Washington Post* (11/29/86), said that it was acceptable if a young child reads the word house for home, or substitutes the word pony for horse. "It's not very serious because she understands the meaning," said Palmer. "Accuracy is not the name of the game."

In a book entitled *Evaluation: Whole Language, Whole Child*, the authors write:

"The way you interpret what the child does will reflect what you understand reading to be. For instance, if she reads the word *feather* for *father*, a phonics-oriented teacher might be pleased because she's come close to sounding the word out. However, if you believe reading is a meaning-seeking process, you may be concerned that she's overly dependent on phonics at the expense of meaning. You'd be happier with a miscue such as *daddy*, even though it doesn't look or sound anything like the word in the text. At least the meaning would be intact." (p. 19)

Learning to Be Defective

In other words a teacher ought to be happier if a child reads more like a defective child than a normal one. In other words, the teacher is actually encouraging the normal child to read as if he or she had a defective brain! Doesn't this have an effect on the child's intellectual development, on his or her ability to think? No wonder 700,000 graduating seniors can't read.

But we live in a lunatic society where it is easier to accept the absurd than accept the truth. After all, the public schools have spent 40 years turning normal brains into defective brains. But when the nation's corporate leaders prefer lies to truth, you can be sure that more tragedy will result.

Frankly, I doubt that the people at Nestle actually believe what the ad says, for if they

truly believed that the public schools were graduating 700,000 functionally illiterate seniors a year, they'd be mad as hell. The last thing they'd do is launch a coupon-redemption campaign. That's like asking the passengers on the Titanic to bail out the ship with tea cups.

The simple truth is that public education has destroyed the American dream for countless numbers of young people, and the way the system has done it is by preventing its students from acquiring those academic skills needed to achieve success. Literacy is the key to upward mobility in our meritocracy. Without it you can't get very far.

The true killers of the American dream are those progressive educators who at the turn of the century embarked on their messianic mission to change America from a capitalist, individualistic, religious nation into a socialist, collectivist, atheistic society.

And like the communist experiment in the Soviet Union, their experiment has produced similar disastrous results. But in the former Soviet Union, they are, at least, trying to undo the damage inflicted on them by the socialists. Here in the U.S., the progressives in education are gaining power, not losing it. And they're doing it by blaming the children's reading failure on defective brains, parental indifference, and/or lack of federal funding.

It is no secret that the socialists hate the free-enterprise system which makes the American dream possible — the dream of upward mobility through hard work, economic opportunity, inventiveness and education (NOT miseducation). Our progressive educators rarely use the word socialism anymore. They have replaced the rhetoric and vocabulary of socialism with the rhetoric and vocabulary of environmentalism. But the goal is the same: a world pagan, socialist government. Meanwhile, the American people are wallowing in confusion, self-pity,

and self-accusation without a clue as to where this nation is headed.

NOTE: The study by Michael S. Bruner is entitled *Reduced Recidivism and Increased Employment Opportunity Through Research-Based Reading Instruction*, National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 633 Indiana Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20531, March 1992.

The studies researched by Geraldine E. Rodgers are in an unpublished manuscript on the history of reading instruction.

Dropout Kills 4 in Calif. School

Eric Houston's revenge for flunking history three years ago is four dead, 11 wounded and about 80 terrorized hostages at his former high school, authorities said.

"He was a student here in 1988 and '89. He failed a class," Sheriff Gary Tindel said. "He came back today to vent his frustration and retaliate and shoot people."

Tindel made his remarks shortly before midnight on Friday, 5/1/92, at the end of an eight-and-a-half-hour standoff at Lindhurst High School in this community of about 10,000 people, Olivehurst, 40 miles north of Sacramento.

Cory Dawson, 16, who was among 80 students held hostage, said Houston, 20, told his captives at one point: "The reason why I am doing all of this is because I didn't graduate from high school. Mr. Brens flunked me, and I just want revenge."

Robert Brens, a history teacher, was among the first to die as Houston, wearing camouflage gear and an ammunition belt, strode into the rural high school and fired a shotgun into three crowded classrooms, then took about 80 students hostage.

Students Judy Davis, Beamon Hill and Jason White also were killed in the assault; 11 more were wounded. After hours of tele-

phone negotiations, Houston released his captives and surrendered. He walked silently, shirtless and handcuffed to a waiting patrol car.

"He just kept saying that 'the school failed me,'" said Jason Beissel, 16, another hostage. "He kept repeating it. 'The school failed me. They left me with a crappy job.' He had nothing to live for."

A lifetime resident of this region of peach and plum orchards and rice paddies, Houston, who dropped out of high school, was laid off a month ago from an assembly line job at the Hewlett-Packard electronics plant in nearby Roseville.

Houston showed up at his old high school with a shotgun and .22-caliber rifle, authorities said. He found Brens leading students in a discussion of the riots in Los Angeles. Brens and Davis died in the first round of gunfire. (*Boston Globe*, 5/3/92)

San Diego Reading Scores Down

"Why can't they read?" is the title of an editorial that appeared in *The San Diego Union* on January 25, 1992. The editorialist wrote:

A steep drop in the reading test scores of first-graders in the San Diego Unified School District should prompt a re-evaluation of a new reading program that is stirring concern among parents and teachers alike.

At issue is the city schools' switch from a traditional skills-based approach in teaching elementary students to the current "whole language" strategy.

The traditional method relies heavily on phonics — sounding out letters and groups of letters. Designed to get kindergarten students reading right away, it emphasizes spelling, grammar and vocabulary. The new method, which was introduced last year, tries to get kids interested in good literature and then have them pick up the technical skills of reading by the time they reach the third grade.

What if they don't get it by then?

That question is being asked by anxious parents

and teachers, who have good reason to be alarmed by the sharp decline in the reading test scores of first-graders last year. In 1990, 51 percent of the students scored above the national median. Last year, only 25.7 percent did so.

Even allowing for a new test, such a dramatic drop in scores should give the district pause. Instead, administrators at the education center are generally enthusiastic about the program. They believe it will pay dividends in a few years. . . .

That's not surprising. Administrators have a vested interest in playing down the reading program's problems in hopes they will go away. But what about the youngsters who are being short-changed by this experiment? The time to deal with the program's deficiencies is right now, before any more students are on shaky ground simply because they have not been taught adequately how to read.

Comment: Who knows how many Eric Houstons are being created in the elementary classrooms of San Diego and elsewhere? The educators don't want to know. They live in a dream world financed by the American taxpayer, with no more understanding of the consequences of their actions and decisions than the gangs in Los Angeles. The entrenched system lives by its own laws, its own beliefs, regardless of what parents or editorialists want.

There are exceptions, of course. The Bennett-Kew Elementary School run by Principal Nancy Ichinaga and the William Kelso Elementary School run by Principal Marjorie Thompson, both in Inglewood, California, teach children to read very well indeed. According to the *Los Angeles Times* (2/3/92), they use a strong phonics program and emphasize the development of academic skills. They rejected the state's new "whole language" approach. Also, there is no bilingual program at either school because the parents do not want it. They want their children to master English.

But these two schools, led by two courageous and knowledgeable principals, are the rare exceptions. That is why the only advice we can give parents these days is: get

your children out of the public schools. Rearrange your lives if necessary, but get them out.

Dumbing Down in England

Children in England are worse at maths and science at the ages of nine and 13 than those in Canada, Italy, Korea, Switzerland and Taiwan, and trail significantly behind those in Hungary, Israel and the former Soviet Union, an international study showed yesterday, 3/12/92.

Identical tests were sent to pupils in 20 countries under the guidance of the US-based Center for the Assessment of Educational Progress. Korea came out on top, closely followed by Taiwan. In both maths and science, the most able English pupils performed almost as well as the cleverest in Korea. However, the least able did noticeably worse than their Korean peers.

The study found that by comparison with English children, Koreans start school a year later, are taught in classrooms with more than twice as many pupils, are less likely to be grouped by ability, spend less time learning maths and science, are less likely to use or own calculators or computers, spend less time doing experiments, do much more homework. In maths, English children were weakest at algebra, decimals and the basic arithmetical operations.

Asked to multiply 7 by 9, only 52 percent of English 9-year-olds wrote down the right answer, compared to 96 percent of Korean children, 79 percent of Irish and 71 percent of Scottish. The children of every other country did better at this question than the English.

The tests in England were carried out in 100 schools by the National Foundation for Educational Research. (English newspaper clipping, dated 3/13/92)