

Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.

The Robin is the One

by Emily Dickinson

The robin is the one
That interrupts the morn
With hurried, few, express reports
When March is scarcely on.

The robin is the one
That overflows the noon
With her cherubic(1) quantity,
An April but begun.

The robin is the one
That speechless from her nest
Submits that home and certainty
And sanctity(2) are best.

(1) **cherubic** heavenly (2) **sanctity** goodness

*The Agenda for Educating African
American Children in the Charlotte
Mecklenburg School System*

“We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far.”

Ron Edmonds
Effective Schools Research

A Sankofa Project

Endorsed by:

Educational Solutions

Kushite Institute for Wholistic Development, Inc.

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Caring Schools in Action

Steering Committee

- ▣ Dr. Gysai Foluke
- ▣ Maurice Jones
- ▣ Queen N. Thompson
- ▣ Kenneth A. Simmons

A segment of the African American community of Charlotte, N.C. is demanding that major improvements be made immediately by our local public school system to educate its children. Statistics have sufficiently showcased the overwhelming number of failures experienced by poor and inner-city children in our schools throughout the last several decades while the general public has turned a deaf ear. Superintendents have collected their bonuses and ridden off into the sunset after having made promises to "close the gap" decade after decade, and the public has mumbled not a word. Can a people afford for its children to suffer for another decade and expect them to thrive as a race capable of handling life's challenges? Our white citizens have almost completely removed their students from CMS for reasons far less debilitating. We, therefore, unapologetically present this document as our contribution to the development of a more effective learning program for all students.

In his book, “Truths My Teacher Never Told Me,” Dr. Gysai Foluke informs some readers and reminds others that there should be an official public-honest acknowledgement by local school board members and city-county elected leaders of “**The Polyglot Factor**,” defined as the uniqueness of “the Black Experience” in America--including major historic destruction-damages-physical, mental, economic, spiritual, political, emotional and cultural, inflicted collectively and cumulatively upon our African American population.

We insist on treating African Americans as if they were another piece of America's "polyglot mosaic," rather than as a people who have had the unique experience of slavery, Jim Crowism, dependence and exclusion. The unique nature of the Black experience here suggests that the physically disabling effects of this uprooting will require different remedies than those applied to assimilating America's immigrant groups.

Again, we should not underestimate the damage-destruction inflicted uniquely upon African Americans which causes us to underestimate the manner in which we are to correct this malady. The fact is, you can't brutalize a people massively and then just tell them to get over it. At the same time, we can no longer believe that our cookie-cutter approach to educating all children can be singularly effective for poor and minority children.

Kugichaculia, one of the seven principles of Nguso Saba, requires that African Americans define their common interests and make decisions that are in the best interest of their family and community. It is past time that we move forward aggressively and with full speed to apply this principle in its fullness to the miseducation of African American children in Mecklenburg County.

Therefore, we present the following two-fold agenda of the people and **Demand and Expect** that every component of it be implemented immediately in our schools where more than fifty percent of the students enrolled are African American. The first part of the agenda is directed to our public school system with a monitoring and audit component to be developed. The second part of the of the agenda focuses on the home and the community whereby parents and other stakeholders must be held responsible and accountable.

(1.)

*Key decision makers administering policies/
procedures and monitoring the daily
operations and routines of our inner-city
schools must better reflect the racial make-up
of the student body.*

(2.)

The African-American student/teacher ratio must better reflect the make-up of the teachers and students at individual schools.

(3.)

A more effective student services program must be in place to assure the wholistic development of every student whereby parents are well-informed of policies and their rights.

(4.)

- ▣ *The teaching of history must be inclusive of the truth especially as it reflects and is related to African-American children.*

(5.)

A more effective plan must be in place to better connect high school students to the world of work and careers upon graduation.

(6.)

A strong and effective Character Development program must be implemented and supported to promote and maintain good student behavior.

(7.)

Parents of poor and inner-city children must be provided a better understanding as to how they can more effectively support teaching and learning.

(8.)

Ongoing staff development and training focusing on each of the points outlined in this agenda must be provided for staff on a regular basis.