

Reflections: Becoming a community again

Written by Josie R. Johnson
Wednesday, 04 September 2013 12:52



Civil rights pioneer Dr. Josie Johnson Saturday, August 24 addressed a Twin Cities audience at Sabathani Community Center commemorating the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.

Today we look back at the historic 1963 March on Washington, for Jobs, Education, Housing, Equal Employment and Freedom.

This day offers us an opportunity to review what we, as a people, have done and what, we as a people must do to accomplish *the Dream*.

We have gathered here, at the old Bryant Junior High School, renamed Sabathani Community Center, to focus and address the challenge to close the gap of educational opportunities for our children in the Minneapolis Public Schools.

We have come this day to understand the urgency of saving our children. That expression is repeated with some regularity however, what do we mean and how do we save our children?

Many theories are written and tested in the schools across the nation. May I suggest what we say and pledge *this day* will have an impact on our living children and those unborn.

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Today we must remember and *honor* the struggle, hopes and dreams of our ancestors. We cannot close the education gap without the act of following in the footsteps of our ancestors.

Let me remind us and put into context our historical struggle. It would continue to be to our detriment if we overlooked our history and struggle for education.

We must take the time and *teach* our children the historical importance Blacks have placed on the education of their children. Ignorance of this history affects how they are viewed, treated, taught, encouraged, or discouraged in the process of acquiring an education in this society.

"To supply their children with once-forbidden education became a sweeping movement. The movement started with the Negroes themselves," wrote Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois.

Because the history of Black people is often ignored or presented in an inadequate manner, the extent of the role Black parents and the Black community played in providing schooling for their children, during the slavery years and beyond, has not been available to many.

It would be fatal for us to miss this opportunity, as we review 50 years after the March on Washington.

We have the statistics of the gap. We know, today, the impact on our children, alive and unborn, the meaning of the gap.

But until we become committed, this day, to changing those statistics we will continue to be victims to those who don't know our history.

What is our charge *this Day*?

Let's not leave this place with out a plan. We too often gather together, talk about our important issues, leave the gathering place, and return to business and behaviors as usual.

We, the adults in our communities, must study, know and teach our children their glorious history. We *must* do that *now*.

We can close the gap by supplementing what our children get in the classroom. We must not rely on others to teach our children. All they need to know to be successful and achieve.

We must stop turning our backs on our children. We have become afraid of our own children. We must teach them what is right and what is wrong. They are capable of doing anything they are interested in doing. It is up to us to give them the reason and belief that learning is important to them.

We must become a community again. We must love our children.

We must help our young mothers with parenting skills. Teach them their history. Tell them the historical stories of the role of mothering.

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We must not rest, as a people, or be relaxed about the gap. We must not accept those statistics as a given. We are a strong people, we come from strong people and we have avoided the destruction of us. We must, *this* day, renew our strength and history in order to close the gap.

We adults must make a plan, this day.

We must teach our children their history.

We must overcome the fear of our own children.

We must remember our children learn what they want to learn and we must help them choose what is in their future.

We must become a community again. We must love each other again – lookout for each other again.

We must save our children and our future.