

African American homeschooling on the rise, over 200,000 Black parents are homeschooling their children



By Taki S. Raton

Stephan Stafford in 2010 at the age of 13 had a triple major in pre-med, mathematics and computer science at Morehouse College. As reported in the March 12, 2012 Milwaukee Courier series, “Young, Gifted And Black,” scholar Stephan is the youngest student ever to be admitted to this renowned Atlanta all-boys campus.

And additionally at the age of 15, as again reported in the November 9, 2013 Courier series, Stafford was included among TheBestSchools.org listing of the “World’s 50 Smartest Teenagers.” He was homeschooled up until 11 years of age.

At the age of 11, according to the Courier account, his mother was challenged with teaching Algebra II. His parents then decided to send him to Morehouse College to audit mathematics. In his first class, College Algebra, he scored 105 and in Pre-Calculus his grade was 99. Given his exemplary academic performance level even in view of his still blossoming teen years, Morehouse admitted him as a full time student.

Being an area resident and because of his age, Stephan was driven to campus daily where he attends his classes and is picked up by his mom for his return ride home in the evenings.

Citing Garrett Tenney in his June 16, 2012 posting, “African Americans increasingly turn to home schooling,” nationwide, astounding numbers of American families are selecting to homeschool their children each year and the fastest growing segment of homeschooling numbers are African Americans. Tenney’s estimate that some 220,000 Black children are homeschooled.

According to the site, Successful Homeschooling, African Americans, “want to escape a failing school system that harms Black children at even higher rates than it does other children.” The writing continues with the point that public schooling tends to teach, “Ideals that contradict traditional Black values.”

“Since the landmark decision, *Brown v. Topeka* in 1954, there has been a 66 percent decline in African American teachers,” posits Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu in his September 27, 2013 Atlanta Voice writing on African American homeschooling.

“Many African American students,” he adds, “are in classrooms where they are not loved, liked, or respected. Their culture is not honored and bonding is not even a consideration. They are given low expectations which helps to explain how students can be promoted from one grade to another without mastery of content.”

Successful Homeschooling further shares that many Black homeschoolers additionally decide to home educate so that they can teach African American history and culture, an area, notes the posting, “often neglected by traditional schools until Black History Month.”

“At home, children can learn about the heroic Black soldiers, pilots and inventors who have contributed to America,” the site reveals. “They grow up with a strong sense of purpose and identity which is so often damaged by the racial bias, labeling, and negative peer pressure that can occur in public schools.”

In fact and indeed, our own African American researchers underscore the value of instilling culture and racial pride in our youth. In her September 21, 2004 study, Jocelyn Freeman Bonvillain’s, “Racial Identity Attitudes, Self-Esteem, and Academic Achievement among African American Adolescents,” her sample of 175 seventh grade African American students demonstrates that racial identity and self-esteem are predictors of academic performance.

Bonvillain concludes that students, “who exhibited high levels of self-esteem and racial identity performed better academically than students who showed low levels of self-esteem and racial identity.”

Entitled “Self-Esteem, Cultural Identity and Psychosocial Adjustment in African American Children,” Columbia University’s Arthur L. Whaley in a 1993 “*Journal of Black Psychology*” study informs similar findings that a strong cultural identity “seemed to be more influential in the positive psychosocial adjustment of African American children.”

Kisha Hayes of Baton Rouge, Louisiana says of her children that, “Each of them has excelled so much, and I can see it.” As reported in Tenney, Hayes adds, “I can see the difference in their learning.” The mother of three began homeschooling five years ago.

Alkinee Jackson, also of Baton Rouge who began homeschooling all five of her children after she and her husband witnessed that the attitude and behavior of their oldest son, Alante worsen while in the public school environment. And he was only in second grade.

“If we allowed him to continue to be there and be influenced, by the time he reached high school he’d already be gone; and we know where he’d end up,” Jackson said in the June 16 posting.

Sonya Barbee, a single mother who works for the U.S. government, made the decision of being a teacher for her 11 year-old son Copeland. BBC News' Brian Wheeler in his March 12, 2012 writing, "Homeschooling: Why more black US families are trying it," shares Barbee's fear with Copeland's experience in an area public school:

"There were lots of fights and people getting shot. It was just too much. To me, it's not a good environment for a kid and even though I work full time, so it's really hard for me, I still feel like it's the right decision."

The BBC account adds – and this is a critical observation that is and has been happening to numbers of African American children, over the past four decades since the full implementation of school desegregation in the 70's, – that Barbee's decision to homeschool was not the violence or even the fact that her son was being bullied that finally led to the decision to remove Copeland from his public school.

She says despite that fact that his school was in a, "really bad area" of Washington D.C., the final reason for homeschooling is that in the public school classroom, Copland was, "losing his love of learning."

And the fact that Dr. Mae Jemison became the first African American woman to travel in space when she went into orbit aboard the space shuttle Endeavor on September 12, 1992 may have been by default.

Helen Jackson of Houston made the decision to homeschool her son in 1985. Considered by Successful Schooling as a "Pioneer of the African American Home School Movement," Jackson at the time was a astronautic electronics engineer at NASA.

"I was promoted to be the first Black woman in space when I discovered that my oldest son was developing serious emotional symptoms and needed me more than NASA did. So I returned to teach him at home. And he is doing very well," she says.

Joyce Burgess, co-founder of the National Black Home Educators (HBHE) has homeschooled her own 5 children for over the last 23 years, all of which, as quoted in Edward Lee's June 26, 2012, BlackandMarriedWithKids.com, "are very successful in their chosen fields."

One benefit rarely mentioned, homeschooled children are in high demand by colleges. Says Burgess, "From your Harvard's to the local Junior College," homeschooled children are sought after by academia not only because of their preparedness to enter and excel at the college level but also for their refined mannerism and social skills that are taught and modeled in the home.

Queen Taese, one of the key organizers of the upcoming nationally acclaimed and highly anticipated Third Annual Liberated Minds Black Homeschool & Education Expo in Atlanta July 18 to the 24, 2014 at the Omega World Event Center says that, "There is a huge critical advantage when it comes to our African children being homeschooled particularly in the areas of socialization and academic success because we as an African people learn through socialization. We gain a strong identity of self through our social environment."

She adds that through homeschooling, “parents are able to choose ideal social settings that they deem fit to support the morals, values, and cultural identity of their family, thereby reinforcing and fortifying the cultivation of discipline, strong work ethics, academic skills and additional pertinent cornerstones of excellence fostered to guarantee the success of our children.”

The 3rd Annual Liberated Minds Black Homeschool and Education Expo, explains Taese, “will assist Black homeschoolers, parents, and educators in a multitude of ways with workshops, lectures, and training in developing ‘How-To’ skills in educating everything from mental math, and teaching strategies for African American children in science, reading and writing, choosing the best college, understanding the African Worldview, Holistic Living, natural childbirth, personal health, and so much more.”

She shares that Black national and international exhibitors will have available products and services, “for us by us” to include curriculum enhancement materials, extracurricular programs and a Black Book Fair.

“The Networking that goes on at the expo is magical. I am constantly receiving emails and calls on how the relationships formed at the expo have completely changed the lives of many Black parents for the good. There is nothing like great support. We are each other’s greatest resource!” says the expo organizer.

Several parents from Milwaukee will be attending and will be a guest on this writer’s Internet radio show, “MenThink” on Harambee Radio & TV, Thursday, July 24 from 8 to 9 p.m. (CST) to report on their experience at the Atlanta Liberated Minds Expo. Listeners can tune in at, www.harambeeradio.com.

For additional information on the Atlanta expo, please call (678) 368-8593 or connect with their website: www.liberatedmindsexpo.com. Email inquiries can be made at liberatedmindseducation@yahoo.com.

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