



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on November 18, 2020

Correct Diagnostics Needed

You present to a physician with severe abdominal pain. He examines you and concludes that your ingrown toenails are the cause of your abdominal distress. He prescribes that you soak your feet in warm water but that does not bring relief to your abdominal pain. Then he suggests that you apply antibiotics to your feet. Still no relief. Then the physician suggests that you wear sandals instead of shoes. Still no relief. The point of this story is that your toenails can be treated until the cows come home, but if there is improper diagnosis, then you are still going to have your abdominal pain.



The former superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools, Meria Carstarphen, last year said, “White students are nearly 4.5 grade levels ahead of their black peers within Atlanta Public Schools.” In San Francisco, 70% of white students are proficient in math; for black students, it is 12% — a gap of 58%. In Washington, D.C., 83% of white students scored proficient in reading, as did only 23% of black students — a gap of 60%. In Philadelphia, 47% of black students scored below basic in math and 42% scored below basic in reading. In Baltimore, 59% of black students scored below basic in math and 49% in reading. In Detroit, 73% of black students scored below basic in math and 56% in reading.

“Below basic” is the score a student receives when he is unable to demonstrate even partial mastery of knowledge and grade level skills. How much can racism explain this? To do well in school, someone must make a kid do his homework, get a good night’s rest, have breakfast and mind the teacher. If these basic family functions are not performed, it makes little difference how much money is put into education the result will be disappointing.

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In 2019, the racial breakdown of high school seniors who took the ACT college entrance exam and met its readiness benchmarks was 62% of Asians, 47% of whites, 23% of Hispanics and 11% of blacks. That helps explain a 2016 study by Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce “African Americans: College Majors and Earnings.” It found that black college students were highly concentrated in lower-paying and less academically demanding majors like administrative services and social work. They are much less likely than other students to major in science, technology, engineering and math, even though blacks in these fields earned as much as 50% more than blacks who earned a bachelor’s degree in art or psychology and social work.

James D. Agresti, the president and co-founder of Just Facts has just published an article titled “Social Ills That Plague African Americans Coincide with Leftism, Not Racism.” Agresti writes: “Among all of the afflictions that disproportionately impact people of color, violence may be the worst. In 2018, blacks comprised 13% of the U.S. population but roughly 53% of the 16,000 murder victims.” The clearance rate for murders, where a suspect was identified and charged, declined from 92% in 1960 to 62% in 2018. For example, in Chicago, the clearance rate fell from 96% in 1964 to 45% in 2018. In Baltimore,



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the 2019 clearance rate was 32%. In 2015, when Baltimore experienced the highest per-capita murder rate in its history, the average homicide suspect had been previously arrested more than nine times. When crimes remain unsolved, it gives criminals free range and black people are their primary victims. By the way, most law enforcement occurs at the local level. The governments at these local levels are typically dominated by Democrats.

According to statistics about fatherless homes, 90% of homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes; 71% of pregnant teenagers lack a father figure; 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes; 71% of high school dropouts come from fatherless homes; and 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions have no father. Furthermore, fatherless boys and girls are twice as likely to drop out of high school and twice as likely to end up in jail. Dr. Thomas Sowell has argued, "The black family, which had survived centuries of slavery and discrimination, began rapidly disintegrating in the liberal welfare state that subsidized unwed pregnancy and changed welfare from an emergency rescue to a way of life."

The bottom line is that while every vestige of racial discrimination has not been eliminated, today's discrimination cannot go very far in explaining the problems faced by a large segment of the black community.

Walter E. Williams is a professor of economics at George Mason University. To find out more about Walter E. Williams and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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