



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on April 29, 2014

Politics Versus Education

Of all the cynical frauds of the Obama administration, few are so despicable as sacrificing the education of poor and minority children to the interests of the teachers' unions.

Attorney General Eric Holder's attempt to suppress the spread of charter schools in Louisiana was just one of the signs of that cynicism. His nationwide threats of legal action against schools that discipline more black students than he thinks they should are at least as damaging.



Charter schools are hated by teachers' unions and by much of the educational establishment in general. They seem to be especially hated when they succeed in educating minority children whom the educational establishment says cannot be educated.

Apparently it can be done when you don't have to hire unionized teachers with iron-clad tenure, and when you don't have to follow the dogmas in vogue in the educational establishment.

Last year, there was an attempt to shut down the American Indian Model Schools in Oakland, California — schools that had been ranked among the top schools in the nation, schools with the top test scores in their district and the fourth highest scores in the entire state of California.

The reason given was that the former — repeat, *former* — head of these schools was accused of financial irregularities. Since there are courts of law to determine the guilt or innocence of individuals, why should school children be punished by having their schools shut down, immediately and permanently, before any court even held a trial?

Fortunately, a court order prevented this planned vindictive closing of this highly successful charter school with minority students. But the attempt shows the animus and the cynical disregard of the education of children who have few other places to get a comparable education.

Attorney General Holder's threats of legal action against schools where minority students are disciplined more often than he wants are a much more sweeping and damaging blow to the education of poor and minority students across the country.

Among the biggest obstacles to educating children in many ghetto schools are disruptive students whose antics, threats, and violence can make education virtually impossible. If only 10 percent of the students are this way, that sacrifices the education of the other 90 percent.

The idea that Eric Holder, or anybody else, can sit in Washington and determine how many disciplinary actions against individual students are warranted or unwarranted in schools across the length and breadth of this country would be laughable if it were not so tragic.

Relying on racial statistics tells you nothing, unless you believe that black male students cannot possibly be more disruptive than Asian female students, or that students in crime-ridden neighborhoods cannot possibly require disciplinary actions more often than children in the most staid, middle-class



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neighborhoods.

Attorney General Holder is not fool enough to believe either of those things. Why then is he pursuing this numbers game?

The most obvious answer is politics. Anything that promotes a sense of grievance from charges of racial discrimination offers hope of energizing the black vote to turn out to vote for Democrats, which is especially needed when support from other voters is weakening in the wake of Obama administration scandals and fiascoes.

Eric Holder's other big racial crusade, against requiring identification for voting, is the same political game. And it is carried out with the same cynical promotion of fears, with orchestrated hysteria from other Democrats — as if having to show identification to vote is like a revival of the Ku Klux Klan.

Blacks, whites, and everybody else can be asked for identification these days, whether cashing a check or using a credit card at a local store or going to an airport — or even getting into some political meetings called to protest voter ID laws.

But to sacrifice the education of children, especially children for whom education may be their only ticket out of poverty, is truly a new low. As someone once said to Senator Joe McCarthy, "Have you no sense of decency, sir?"

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