

A Practical and Inspirational Guide to Raising College Bound Kids by Sharon Chandler and Elizabeth Crane Back in the day, when we were fighting for our civil rights, we understood that we had to fight for everything we needed to get ahead in this world.

We understood that what was not given to us, we had to take. And we did take it. We worked hard for every inch of progress for African-American people in this country. But in the fifty years since those struggles, something has gotten lost. Our children are cursing and fighting each other, talking trash, dropping out, and ending up in jail. They think they're hip. They can't read; they can't write. They're laughing and giggling, and they're going nowhere. We have to do something to get our kids back on track to becoming capable, responsible, educated adults.

In lower economic areas, I'm looking at a 50 percent high school drop out rate for African-American males. I'm looking at the fact that 65 percent of incarcerated African-American males are illiterate. I'm looking at 70 percent of pregnant teen-agers are African-American. And I'm realizing there's still a great deal of racism in this country. We take that. We all know that.

But there comes a time when we have to turn look away from outside causes and look to ourselves to solve our own problems. This is the very essence of self-empowerment.

Self-empowerment has to do with education; it has to do with knowing English, sciences, math and history. Education is very, very important, and it begins in the home.

First, we have to raise our children to speak properly. We are not immigrants struggling to learn English as a second language. The African-American has been in this country some two hundred to three hundred years. Some families have been in places like Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, fifty years or more. They didn't come from Europe or South America. The language that is spoken is one that is of that neighborhood. It's all right to speak it in the neighborhood, but speaking properly outside of the neighborhood will guide you towards an education which broadens your horizons. Standard English is standard English, and speaking correctly is not Black American or White American, it is American.

Studying, learning in school about the history of people on this earth, this is not "acting White." This makes you smart enough to compete in a world that, despite all our progress, may still turn against you.

It is the parents who can either encourage their child to be a better student, to achieve, or not. When a child knows that the mother or father, the foster parent, grandparent, aunt, or uncle, when a child knows that person is there for them, they behave differently. Someone is keeping on them about their homework. Someone is checking to see that the child gets to school, on time and prepared. The child knows he isn't going to be able to get away with saying, "Oh, I did my homework, yeah, it's all done." Someone is going to check. When the child knows he has to do the work, he does it.

You parents, you've got to teach. That's your job. It's not a popular job, and it's not an easy one. But you have to do it. You have to be able to say to your kid, "Turn off the TV. I don't want you watching that." You have to be able to say, "Turn off that music. You don't need to hear that." You have to be able to say, "Get your homework done. I'll take you to the library so you can get the books you need." You have to be able to say, "Education is important in this house, and you are going to go to school and do your best."

I want you to take a pledge. Raise your right hand and swear: I am going to be the best parent I can be. I am responsible for my children. I will raise them to be responsible, educated adults.

If you love your kids — and I know you do — you can show them that there is a different way to go, different from the neighborhood talk and the neighborhood violence. Education is their ticket to a bigger, brighter world. As a people, we can do this, but we have to make a start.

This book is a great start. Sharon Chandler's work has helped hundreds of parents and kids to get on track for college. Her stories and methods have the power to make a real difference. She will give you the tools you need to get your children on the road to good citizenship and a good education. We just have to take the responsibility into our own hands and say yes to college.

For more information: Yes@Kollege

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