

# Jim Crow School Kids As Mentally Unfit

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*New York Amsterdam News (1943-1961); May 25, 1946; ProQuest*

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(Editor's Note: The following report is an account of the charges brought by a citizens committee. The position of the school authorities and their side of the question will be reported next week.)

By CONSTANCE CURTIS

Negro children in New York City are being railroaded into classes for mentally retarded and trained for nothing better than the most menial jobs, such as bootblack and brass polisher. Normal children are being viciously jim crowed and denied a chance to prepare for higher skilled occupations by a complicated system of "retarded classes" in the South Jamaica area, according to voluminously documented charges made by the Better Schools Coordinating Council of South Jamaica.

Under the directorship of Dr. Richard H. Hungerford, 50 new classes have been set up in the school system under the Bureau of Children of Retarded Mental Development (CRMD) with provision in the budget for 33 additional classes in the near future. The majority of these classes are centered in the Negro community, in PS 40 and 48, the report

states further, and are filled with many children who should never have been placed in the "retarded mentally" category in the first place.

Backed with documentation from Dr. L. Deutsch, psychiatrist; Dr. Mamie Phipps Clark, psychologist, and a large group of investigators, twenty cases are cited in evidence, all of them children of normal intelligence, or above, who have been assigned to CRMD classes.

The program of the CRMD does not, the report charges, consist of normal class work geared to the learning ability of the retarded child, but "the CRMD has instituted a program aimed at indoctrinate the child along the lines of training in the lowest level jobs".

A "Janitor" School

Following intelligence tests, which neither make allowance for the emotional make up of the child being tested or whether he has a reading difficulty, the children are assigned to the retarded classes. They

are taught, not general school subjects, but places emphasis upon learning to polish brass and serve in the lunchroom. (Training, in fact, for jobs as dishwashers, rug cleaners, shoe shine boys and elevator operators.)

Investigation by the Better Schools Coordinating Council, of which Eric Brown is the head, disclosed that not only were psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers notably absent from the program, but that many of the teachers had failed examinations for their regular licenses and had been given licenses to teach children in the CRMD program after a six month course of training.

The head of the program, Dr. Hungerford, stated at a public meeting that private industry, such as the Parke-Davis Co., had given substantial sums to back the program. The plan, it would appear, is much like one headed by Dr. Hungerford in Detroit.

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children in retarded classes, but the question has been raised as to whether or not this is not a plan to provide cheap labor in the future for some of the private companies who are giving their money to increase the number of these classes.

Preceding a list of recommenda-

tions made to the schools, the Coordinating Council report states: "...these children are being railroaded into a program whose motives thus necessarily become suspect. Either the CRMD Division pays no attention to environmental factors and, instead, blandly assumes that a large percentage of children in depressed areas are 'naturally' of a low intelligence capacity, or it has embarked upon a deliberate plan of mass-educating such children to accept menial tasks as their life's work."

#### Recommendations

Included among the recommendations for the elimination of the existing CRMD program are:

1. Formation of classes small enough to give children individual attention.
2. Discontinuance of the present plan of study of the CRMD and institution of a program built on the course of study for all students in

- the schools.
3. Intensive remedial work centered on children who are really mentally retarded.
4. Change the name of the classes, so that children will not feel shame at being placed under supervision that is designed to aid them.
5. Educate parents to aid in the program. (In the present set up parents are not even notified that their children have been transferred to these classes.)
6. Appointment of one full time sociological-psychiatric consultant in the schools.
7. Provide adequate textbooks for the children.
8. Provide sympathetic instructors. (In several instances instructors are known to strike and beat children and to cow them in other ways.)

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Question Motives  
Members of the Better Schools  
Coordinating Council have not only  
been forced to question the motives  
of a program which places normal