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Promoting Academic Excellence in key urban zip codes

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Subject: Offering AP African American Studies To Students Sometime In The 21st Century

One decade of the 21st century is already behind us. The College Board offers a range of Advanced Placement classes to high school students.

Course Name

1. Advanced Placement Art-Drawing	2. Advanced Placement Art-History of
3. Advanced Placement Biology	4. Advanced Placement Calculus AB
5. Advanced Placement Calculus BC	6. Advanced Placement Chemistry
7. Advanced Placement Comparative Government	8. Advanced Placement English Language
9. Advanced Placement English Literature	10. Advanced Placement Environmental Science
11. Advanced Placement European History	12. Advanced Placement Human Geography
13. Advanced Placement Latin: Latin Lit	14. Advanced Placement Latin: Vergil
15. Advanced Placement Macroeconomics	16. Advanced Placement Microeconomics
17. Advanced Placement Music Theory	18. Advanced Placement Physics B
19. Advanced Placement Physics C:	20. Advanced Placement Psychology
21. Advanced Placement Statistics	22. Advanced Placement Studio Art
23. Advanced Placement Studio Art	24. Advanced Placement United States Government
25. Advanced Placement United States History	26. Advanced Placement World History
27. Advanced Placement-French Literature	28. Advanced Placement-French Language
29. Advanced Placement-Spanish Literature	30. Advanced Placement-Spanish Language

Do students have the option to develop critical thinking skills related to the history, culture, experiences, and challenges black people in America face?

A number of silent voices out there believe that they should have this option. Because the College Board requires a national demand before it develops and offers an AP African American Studies course, it is time for silent voices to express themselves.

“What about our elected school board officials?” An elected school board can do many things, but requesting that the College Board offer an AP African American course is not one of them.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did not live long enough to be able to lead a national movement that results in public high school students having access to AP African American Studies. Mahatma Gandhi is no longer with us, either. In the absence of such distinguished leadership, the following twelve-word phrase applies: “If it is to be, it is up to me...or us!”

The Elephant in the Room

Let's address the elephant in the room. The Supreme Court, in a desegregation case, warned citizens that:

the potential for discrimination and racial hostility is still present in our country, and its manifestations may emerge in new and subtle forms after the effects of de jure segregation have been eliminated. (Freeman, 503 U.S. at 490, 112 S.Ct. at 1445)

Columbia University is a short taxi ride from the College Board headquarters in Manhattan. Columbia tells prospective applicants about its courses during orientation briefings. Admissions officials highlight that their core curriculum for all students has a central purpose—"to pass on a body of knowledge from generation to generation."

The absence of an AP African American Studies course demonstrates the limits of knowledge that public education and the Education Industrial Complex are willing to "pass on from generation to generation." Education reform moves along without addressing the strengths of high-achieving high school students to develop critical thinking skills related to the black experience in America.

—So long as thy brother must buy thy daily bread just so long will he lower thy genius, culture and manhood to the price thereof. Secure thou thy own bread, if thou wouldst settle thy standing among men. *The Negro's Ten Commandments* (Number 8), Joseph S. Cotter, Sr. (Poet, educator, and civic leader, 1861-1949)

The opportunity exists for citizens to shape the environment in which black and other minority students learn. Today's fifth-graders may attend public high schools in the future that offer them the option of taking AP African American Studies. Lesson One in their curriculum might be about the effort required for this course to become available to them.

At the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, AP African American Studies did not exist. The College Board's partnership with Florida and other states emphasizes its commitment to equality and equity—just as long as education leaders accept and participate in its efforts to provide college-level courses to high school students in disciplines other than African American Studies.

Rather than locally elected school boards advocating for this course, board members rely on administrators to determine the curriculum available for students. Public dollars pay for what administrators determine to be prudent use of public funds. In Florida, the deal is sweet—weighed in favor of the College Board. All freshmen and sophomores take the PSAT. In Hillsborough County, taxpayers pay for juniors to take it as well. The legislation that formalized the tax dollar exchange for expanded College Board services and AP course offerings in Florida is the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement Act of 2004.

A national demand for AP African American Studies is what is necessary for the College Board to develop such a course offering. The rules appear different when it comes to this. There was no national demand for expanded AP programs at the turn of the century. The College Board—a private, not for profit member association—created the demand through its marketing and other strategies. Educators now say that the only way to get AP African American Studies as an offering to students is for organizations across the country to demand the course.

Leroy and Leona, now fifth-graders—are in big trouble. They live in communities where there are no Dr. Kings and Mahatma Gandhis. Nevertheless, lesser leaders might advocate for a boycott of local AP programs in hopes that it gets the College Board's attention.

Reeshema McCoy-Green comes to mind. She is upset that Wal-Mart does not stock black dolls among its toys in its stores in Tampa Bay. Ms. McCoy-Green has two little ones who will be high school students in a few years. She “feels the discrimination” associated with limited choices for her children—and the subtle ways that it occurs.

An Email to Reeshema McCoy

Reeshema and Eric, Greetings!

This is a follow-up to my comments on Sunday's WTMP 1150 AM Jettie B. Wilds, Jr.'s *Citizens Report*. I had to participate in an Academic Excellence Fellowship immediately after calling in my comments, so I was unable to listen to any of the responses.

Again, I appreciate the action you have taken because of your experiences while shopping for black dolls for your daughter. In a few years, your children will be in public high schools perhaps. Will they have the option to take a nationally recognized college-level curriculum in African American Studies?

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Shopper Upset Stores Have 'No Black Dolls'

BY LEON B. CREWS
Sentinel Staff Writer

Last month, **Reeshema McCoy-Green** went shopping for a Black doll as a birthday gift for a relative. The first store she went to was the Wal-Mart Store on North Dale Mabry near Waters Avenue. **Mrs. McCoy-Green** said what she discovered angered her and she wants some action taken.



REESHEMAH MCCOY-GREEN

"I went into the store and asked where the Black dolls were. A manager at the store, known only to me as **Connie**, told me they only carry Black dolls during the holidays and if I wanted one I needed to go to the hood.

"I left that store enraged, and went to other Wal-Mart stores in the area. They all had the same story. They had rows and rows of white dolls. This gives our children the impression that whites are superior and Blacks inferior."

Mrs. McCoy-Green wrote a letter to the Wal-Mart Corporate Offices and she said she never got a response.

"I was actually told at one store they only order four Black dolls at a time. They don't order them in any kind of volume.

"I think this problem is predominant and is practiced by virtually all the department stores in the area. They don't even have black and white versions of the same doll."

In response to **Mrs. McCoy-Green's** complaint,

Tara Raddohl, National Media Relations Director for Wal-Mart said they do carry African American dolls all year at several of their stores and she would be happy to direct **Mrs. McCoy-Green** to the store where she can find what she's looking for.

"As with all our product offerings, assortment can vary by market. Our goal is to provide products at an everyday low price, for whatever product our customer is buying.

"We also have a great program called site to store, which means our customer can order products online at Walmart.com and have the product shipped to the store at no cost, and pick up the product at the store. We have African American dolls at our stores year round."

Raddohl said they will conduct an investigation into what **Mrs. McCoy-Green** said the manager told her at the Waters and Dale Mabry Store.

Below are some contacts at the College Board. Like Wal-Mart, the College Board has an extensive network of consumers and it has the potential to send uplifting (and other) messages to consumers of Advanced Placement classes. Perhaps you would not mind sharing what you think with the officials who can shape messages of inclusion for your children when they reach high school. Here we are in the second decade of the 21st century. You cannot find black dolls in Wal-Mart. I cannot find AP African American Studies in any of the nation's public high schools!

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Professor of History, University of Central Florida, Orlando FL
Chair of the Academic Assembly for the College Board

In His Service,
Jason

<http://press.collegeboard.org/releases/2011/college-board-honors-4-districts-advanced-placement-district-year-awards>

The College Board Honors 4 Districts with Advanced Placement® District of the Year Awards Districts in Chicago; Tampa, Fla.; Hudson County, N.J.; and San Bernadino, Calif. to Be Recognized at the AP® Annual Conference in July

The Quality of Competitive Applicants

Top national universities in America each year receive thousands of applications from college-bound high school seniors. Many of these applicants are students who have taken multiple AP classes while in high school. Indeed, students who get A's in AP classes demonstrate to admissions officers their ability to perform well in college-level classes. More importantly, the classes show that a student develops critical thinking skills related to various disciplines. The applicant with AP Biology, for example, might reflect a student who is capable of further skills development in STEM disciplines.

The School District of Hillsborough County is a leader—a beacon, if you will—in producing high school graduates with demonstrated mastery of AP classes. The graduating classes of 2008 through 2011 each include at least 4,000 seniors who have one or more AP classes on their transcript. Many of these 12,000 young people are in college.

Districts across the nation are producing college applicants with multiple AP classes on their transcripts. Yet, not one of the admissions officers at America's Best Colleges has ever reviewed the file of an applicant who has developed critical thinking skills through an AP African American Studies class. No high school applicant offers admissions officers a chance to

select students who demonstrated through a nationally recognized curriculum that they are able to grasp the history, traditions, culture, opportunities and challenges that blacks in America face.

Because there is no AP African American Studies course, all of this year's applicants to America's Best Colleges will be offering their critical thinking skills and other talents—minus any demonstrated ability to grasp “black life” studied from a college-level perspective. Rewind the movie for the past ten years and one realizes that hundreds of thousands of applicants lacked this ability.

Perhaps college admissions officers might wonder out loud to the College Board about the abilities they are not seeing in the applicants with AP classes on their transcripts.

Response to Correspondence to School Board in early July

Bottom Line Up Front: The solution to any problem is TTP (Talk To People); if that doesn't work, try TTMP (Talk To More People)

- An item related to asking the College Board for an AP African American Studies class will not appear on the School Board agenda;
- The School Board does not determine curriculum;
- Adding AP African American Studies will require a national demand for it;
- The superintendent will talk to the vice president for College Board AP Programs;
- Among the considerations is costs associated with developing and sustaining an AP African American Studies course;
- Contacts at the College Board might help review the history of previous efforts to offer AP African American Studies (something is stopping it from happening);
- Have people and organizations I know create the national demand

Whatever happened to, “**Yes, We Can!**”?

In His Service,
Jason



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July 6, 2011

Subject: Public Comment Follow-up

School District of Hillsborough County
ATTN: Ms. MaryEllen Elia, Superintendent
901 E. Kennedy Blvd.
Tampa, Florida 33602

Ms. Elia, Greetings!

At the June 14 School Board meeting, I made public comments reference to [Agenda Item 8.04](#) Approve Memorandum of Understanding with The College Board as a Partnership for the College & Career Readiness Reform Model, 2011/2012 Through 2013/2014 (*Deputy Superintendent*).

One specific request was that Hillsborough County Schools propose that the College Board create an Advanced Placement African American Studies class for students in our public schools. Later this month, the College Board will recognize our school district for its "profound achievement in using AP courses to create a culture focused on college readiness."

The Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement Act of 2004 formalized the already existing partnership between the state, school districts, and the College Board. In the decade of growth in our outstanding AP program, I have often wondered who would advocate for providing students the opportunity to take a nationally recognized college curriculum related to black students and their cultural heritage, traditions, opportunities, and challenges. The opportunity to do so again arises as the [district leadership accepts the Beacon Award](#) from the College Board in San Francisco on July 22.

Might I expect to see an item on the agenda for the School Board's July 18 meeting that recommends that the board approve a request to the College Board to include an AP African American Studies course in its offerings available to students focused on becoming college ready?

In His Service,

Jason

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Cc: Honorable Doretha Edgecomb, Chair
School Board of Hillsborough County

THE FRUIT OF LOVE IS SERVICE. THE FRUIT OF SERVICE IS PEACE.
Mother Teresa's Business Card