

NOTE FROM DR. EDMUND GORDON, FEB. 20, 2014,
REGARDING RELEASE OF THIS DOCUMENT:

It is very sad to note that the situation involving the use of standardized tests has not substantially changed, except for the worse. I object to the use of data from standardized tests to implement a punishment and reward approach to accountability for academic achievement. Today I am more reluctant to call for a moratorium on the use of standardized tests with cultural and ethnic minority children than I was forty years ago, but only because testing has become so much a part of our education culture and can be a more positive force. The fact is that we people of color and other marginalized folk should "just say no" to participation in standardized testing for accountability purposes because measurement science now has the capacity to use assessment to better inform responsible teaching and learning. However, testing will likely not make that contribution until the testing industry is forced to do so by our refusal to permit the industry and education systems to test our children in standardized ways that do not serve the optimal pedagogical purposes of the people who must do the learning and teaching. (See www.GordonCommission.org for alternatives.)

[SEE ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT BELOW]



THE INSTITUTE FOR URBAN AND MINORITY EDUCATION
OF TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
AND THE EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE

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July 1st, 1976

To: IUME Staff

From: Paula Russell

Re: Psychological Testing and the
Minority Child

You may be interested in the attached statement on
"Psychological Testing and the Minority Child." This was prepared
by Dr. Edmund Gordon for the Office of Education of the NAACP
for a workshop on testing and minority groups at the National Convention
in Memphis, Tennessee.

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ADVICE TO PARENTS RE:
PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING AND THE MINORITY CHILD

This memo is directed at parents of black or other minority group children who often are the victims of the abusive use of standardized tests. Standardized tests are examinations (usually given through schools or clinics) in which the procedures and questions are always presented in the same way and the answers are fixed so that people in different places and times can be compared. These examinations are usually printed. Your child may be asked to write in her answers or he may be required to speak the answers to an examiner.

Standardized tests have been used in this country for more than fifty years. During all of that time black people and low status, non-English speaking groups have always made scores that are lower than white people. For a long time we were told that this is so because white people are more intelligent than black people. The NAACP, the Association of Black Psychologists and several other organizations and experts do not believe that the trouble is with black people's intelligence; we believe that the trouble is in the tests and the way in which these tests are misused on black people.

Three years ago several of these organizations began calling on the makers and users of these tests to stop abusing black children. We called for a moratorium on the use of standardized tests with black and other minority group members. The testing industry has not stopped. It has not accepted our call for a moratorium. It has done little or nothing to make these tests less harmful and more abuse-proof for our children. In a further effort at correcting this abusive condition, the NAACP has prepared a report of its Conference on Minority Testing. Among the recommendations included in that report is one that calls upon us to educate the

public -- particularly parents -- with respect to the dangers involved in the use of standardized tests on minority-group children. It is with this in mind that the following suggestions are made.

1. There are very few circumstances under which your child can be required to take a standardized test without your permission. In schools and clinics you can refuse to give your permission for such testing or you can specifically state that the school or clinic is not to administer such a test to your child.
2. Since there may be some circumstances under which it is to your child's advantage to be tested, you may give your permission only after the purpose and nature of the test have been explained to you and you have been assured of the following:
 - a. that the test has been determined to be appropriate in language and cultural content;
 - b. that the test results will be interpreted on the basis of norms (standards) established for your child's ethnic, cultural as well as age group peers;
 - c. that the examiner has been adequately trained in psychological testing and has had successful experience in testing children of your child's ethnic group; and
 - d. that the results of the testing will be explained and discussed with you before any use which affects your child is made of these results.
3. If you are in doubt or confused, call your local NAACP and request the name of a psychologist or educator with whom you can consult.

4. Talk to your children about testing. Let them know that they should not take tests without your permission.
5. Help them to understand that if they are going to take a test with your approval, they should
 - a. read carefully but quickly,
 - b. mark their answers accurately,
 - c. do all of the easy questions first,
 - d. do not make wild guesses,
 - e. if they do not understand, ask the examiner or teacher for help,
 - f. if several of the questions seem unfair do not take the test, but write across the answer sheet "This test is unfair! My parents say I must not take an unfair test!"
6. Whether you let your child be tested or not, write to your school board and let them know that you do not approve of standardized testing with tests which are unfair to minorities. Ask for an investigation of your school's testing program. Write to your state legislators and let them know that you object to taxpayers' money being used to support testing which is unfair to minorities.

6/76

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