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## Dumbo University

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As George W. Bush famously asked, "Is our children learning?"

Apparently not in the twin capitals of liberalism, D.C. and New York.

In a ranking of 50 states and D.C. by how much each spent per pupil in public schools in 2005, New York ranked first; D.C. third. The state spent \$14,100, and New York City just a tad less.

And the bountiful fruits of this massive transfer of taxpayers' wealth?

In D.C., nearly half of all black and Latino students drop out. Of those who graduate, nearly half are reading and doing math at seventh-, eighth- and ninth-grade levels. D.C. academic achievement ranks 51st, last in the U.S.

Yet last week came a report from New York that makes D.C look like M.I.T. Some 200 students, in their first math class at City University of New York, were tested on their basic math skills.

Ninety percent could not do basic algebra. One-third could not convert a decimal into a fraction.

If this was a representative sampling, nine in 10 CUNY students not only do not belong in college, they do not qualify for their high school diplomas. As for that third who can't do decimals and fractions, they should not have been allowed into high school until they could do sixth-grade math.

As 70 percent of all CUNY students are graduates of city schools, a question arises: What are the taxpayers of New York getting for the highest tax rates in the nation?

If a private business annually turned out products that were of inferior quality than the year before, management would be thrown out by the board. Yet, the education racket has been shaking us down for four decades, and turning out graduates that know less and less.

Scholastic Aptitude Test scores peaked around 1964. Ever since, the national average has been in an almost unbroken descent.

So embarrassing did it get that, a few years ago, the SAT folks retooled the test to produce higher scores. Now there are more 1600s. But the national average continues its decline, and the gap between blacks and Hispanics, and Asians and whites, endures.

Is it not a time for truth?

Just as there are many kids who do not have the athletic ability to play high school sports, or the musical ability to play in a high school band, or the verbal ability to recite poetry well or star in debate, not every kid has the academic ability to do high school work.

By the end of the first two months in first grade, an alert kid can tell you who are the smart ones and who are the athletes.

No two kids were ever created equal -- not even identical twins. The family is the incubator of inequality, and God is its author. As the parable teaches, each of us is given different and unequal talents.

Given equality of opportunity, the brightest will inexorably rise, and the less talented -- athletically, artistically, academically -- will fall behind. All things being equal, the fastest kid will always win the race.

This campaign to equalize test scores among unequal students is utopian and unattainable, and amounts to a scam by the education industry.

How many times have they promised progress? And how many times have they delivered?

It is time to look not only skeptically, but cynically, on further demands for billions for education.

Rather, follow the money. Look for who is getting the jobs, the TV appearances, the consulting contracts, the grants, the titles, the limo drivers. Because, at bottom, that is what it is all about -- the transfer of wealth and power from those who earn it and those who produce it, to those who produce little or nothing.

The city colleges, now the City University of New York, were once municipal jewels. They nourished an intellectual elite from the ethnic groups that came in the great immigration wave before 1924. As open admissions -- letting in every high school graduate in the city who applied -- was being debated, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew weighed in against.

"If these quality colleges are degraded, it would be a permanent and tragic loss to the poor and middle class of New York, who cannot afford to establish their sons and daughters on the Charles River or Cayuga Lake. New York will have traded away one of the intellectual assets of the Western world for a four-year community college and a hundred thousand devalued diplomas."

Agnew quoted historian Dan Boorstin:

"In the university, all men are not equal. Those better endowed or better equipped intellectually must be preferred in admission, and preferred in recognition. ... If we give in to the ... demands of militants to admit persons to the university because of their race, their poverty, their illiteracy or any other nonintellectual distinction, our universities can no longer serve all of us or any of us."

**The limousine liberals knew better.**

**Now, they have CUNY students who can't handle fractions.**

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Mr. Buchanan is a nationally syndicated columnist and author of [Churchill, Hitler, and "The Unnecessary War": How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World](#), ["The Death of the West,"](#) ["The Great Betrayal,"](#) ["A Republic, Not an Empire"](#) and ["Where the Right Went Wrong."](#)

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