

(For the Defying the Odds Website)

What the Experts Have to Say

Dr. James P. Comer, Director, Child Study Center, Yale University

Tape 320

Title: **The importance of the Merrill Lynch ScholarshipBuilder program**

1:09:10 Well the ScholarshipBuilder Program that Merrill Lynch funded is very important and made a major contribution in again pointing out that low-income children, given the motivation and support, can achieve at a high level. The thing I'm concerned about is this has been demonstrated before. And we keep demonstrating that low-income children can learn. Our own work in the School Development Program for the past 32 years has been demonstrating that they can learn. And yet we do not institutionalize these approaches, the involvement of parents, teachers, administrators and others on a wide scale. It is still not the case in this country, and that's what needs to be done. This is an important model that reminds us again that it can be done, and they've made a major contribution here.

Asa Hilliard, Professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University

Tape 114

Title: **What makes good teachers?**

Ca 2:03:12 We need knowledge and nurture in order to have good teaching. Knowledge, and I think that this is a common fault with American education in general, is that we tend not to respect teachers' intellect; so we do not require much intellectually out of them. They're as brilliant as anybody else in the culture, but brilliance won't be manifested until it's tested.

Title: **The teacher has to love the kid**

Ca 2:04:40 The teacher has to love the kid. All the great teachers I know say that. Abdulla Lam Shabbaz was at Clark Atlanta U and was one of the greatest math teachers that I've ever met, and he said it was love. Heimi Escalante who was in the movie "Stand and Deliver" - he says it's love. Senichi Suzuki who teaches violin, he says it's love.

John Trotter, Executive Director, Metro Atlanta Classroom Educators (MACE)

Tape 118

Title: **Teachers are scapegoats**

2:05:07 The teachers today are more dedicated, more qualified, better prepared, better trained than any time in the history of Georgia. But the problem is people get frustrated, the policy makers, the legislators, the Governor, whoever the Governor is. People in general, the public, and they want to find an easy scapegoat. And you know you can't fire the parents, you can't fire the students, you can't even write the parents up. We know that

if you could write the parents up, that a lot of schools the parents have been written up, they need to be disciplined because they have abdicated their responsibilities as parents. But you can't do that, so who's the easiest person to blame? It's the teachers.

Title: It all starts in the home

Ca 2:24:05 Here's an assumption: students learn because teachers teach. And therefore if students aren't learning, then teachers aren't teaching. But that's not always the case. It depends on how much motivation you bring to school with you. And if you come from a very abusive background, if you come from a home where there is no reading culture, it's nothing but video games or CD's or whatever. You really don't value an education. You don't bring that motivation to do it. Really it's an anti-reading force that you have to deal with. If you look at Newton's law, it's not just an apathy but an equal force going against it.

Dr. Claire Sterk, School of Public Health, Emory University

Tape 116

Title: The dangers of crack cocaine

3:07:59

Being addicted to crack has all kinds of health consequences to it. One is because you smoke it, it has a very negative impact on your lungs. Also because of the very strong, very quick impact that the drug has, it's very unhealthy from the cardiological perspective, because your heart is beating very fast.

Title: The challenge of the craving

3:13:07 When a person wants to stop smoking crack, they face the challenge of the craving. They want more and they want more. It's not uncommon for a person who used to smoke crack to walk by a building where they used to smoke crack and experience a crack high. It has an incredible psychological impact.

Title: Crack's impact on the African American community

3:18:06 And one of the problems is if you look at where crack is being sold: it is mainly being sold in African American neighborhoods, and poor Af-Am neighborhoods. And that has raised the question that there might be some kind of conspiracy as to why it is only impacting the Af-Am neighborhoods and not the other neighborhoods. You see some of that also translated in the law. Where if somebody is being arrested with a gram of cocaine, their sentence is a lot lower than someone who is being arrested with crack. Crack is the same substance as cocaine. So people have complained, powder cocaine and correctly so, that powder cocaine which is more common among the white person has a lower sentence to it than crack cocaine, which is more common in the Af-Am community.

Betty Phillips, teacher at Capitol View Elementary School in Atlanta

Tape 358

Title: **Does Education make a difference?**

4:19:51 Does education make a difference? Yes it does. Because where I am today, if I was born in poverty, an education will open doors to the world of work. Where I don't ever have to be in poverty again. And it changes, it'll change your whole life.

Ryan Cameron, Atlanta Radio Personality

Tape 97

Title: **The times we live in**

Ca 3:41:40 If you asked anybody that graduated when I did, in the 80s, they would tell you that they would never want to switch places with the kids of today because everything is happening so fast, they are being bombarded by whole other things. The worst thing that we had to worry about in school was maybe a fight. Now they have to worry about weapons. There are kids coming to school and shooting other kids. The things that they have to go through are just incredible.

Title: **There are no excuses**

Ca 3:47:00 You can't, if you come from one place, you can't use that as a crutch. I've come from a single parent home. I grew up with just my Mom but look what I've done. You can't say just because I don't know where my father is, "Oh woe is me, what am I gonna do now?" I think that the young people of today need to see that. Just because you come from a bad neighborhood, you can't use that as an excuse anymore.

Title: **Sit down and say I've been there**

Ca 3:53:00 So I think that it is important that these people realize that these kids have it really tough. Some just go to school so they can get through the day, because home could be a living hell for them. You can't just treat them like animals because they have a lot worse problems than we did. We need to acknowledge these problems with them, sit down and say I've been there. I tell them I had 20 jobs, I started when I was 12. But it was because I was never satisfied with what people told me I was going to be. I had a speech problem and had the book on phonics. I said I'm gonna work in radio.

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