

## Editorials 5: Is Educated the New Uppity?

Black enrollment in higher education has reached an all-time high. This has stemmed from an awareness of the benefits involved in pursuing postsecondary degrees. Data from the Department of Education shows Black students who earn a four-year degree have incomes substantially higher than those who have only some college experience. However, with an influx of new Black students making the transition between high school and college one might wonder, is educated the new uppity in Black America?

Uppity is defined as, “The taking of liberties or assuming airs beyond one’s place in a social hierarchy,” according to Webster’s Dictionary. Southern slaveholders used to use this word to refer to any Black person who looked them in the eye, as this was frowned upon in a slaveholding society. However, in our current culture working class individuals use this word to accuse more successful people of selling out.

When I was younger, my parents told me a college degree was the only way to get a substantial job and live a prosperous life. Furthermore, it was always understood that my sister and I would attend and graduate from college.

While talking with a group of my peers at DePaul I asked if they had ever experienced any dissent from their neighborhoods. Some stated they received the exact opposite reaction from people in communities; instead of jealousy they experienced an overflow of support and encouragement because they had made it to higher education. On the converse, others stated they had dealt with criticism from people they grew up with, and one student commented; “I’ve been told I must want to be white because I am pursuing a college degree.”

What I do not understand is how on earth the Black community will ever be able to prosper when we spend so much time focusing on the words people use, the clothing they wear, and the cars they are currently driving.

If you do not understand something get a dictionary or better yet ask the person you’re speaking with to clarify what they are saying. However, if you are too proud and stuck in your ways to do this you cannot expect others to stifle their growth in order to remain on your level. It is a shame that in the Black community being educated or smart is always attributed to “Whiteness,” and being ignorant and/or ghetto is attributed to “Blackness.” It is time we face these stereotypes and flip them on their heads. That appears to be what is happening with current traditional students who are enrolling into four year institutions. According to one student, “It is now mainstream to go to college”. Back in the day it may have been a problem for Blacks to be called ‘stuck up’ or ‘uppity’ but I do not think it is now”.

Quote to live by: “Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.” ~ Malcolm X