

Raising a Nation of Black Entrepreneurs: Part I- Exposure

While the Black Community makes up nearly 13% of the US population, we account for less than 1% of the nation's entrepreneurs. 2008 is a prime year to reverse this trend of poverty and ingrain visions of entrepreneurship in the minds of our children. The problem is, most of us do not know where to begin.

The first step is to expose your child to ideas and things that promote business ownership. This process will vary depending on the child's age. A wonderful catalyst question for any child would be to ask them what they would like to be when they grow up. Translate their answer into one of entrepreneurship. Examples would be as follows:

Teacher - Owner of Montessori School

Police Officer - Owner of Security Company

Entertainer - Record Label CEO

Explain to your child the benefits of owning their own business versus working for someone else: more income, greater control and the ability to lead and help others. Ask them if they would prefer to be the person paying others or waiting in line to get paid.

Now that you have planted this seed, you must create an environment conducive of entrepreneurship. Take your child to the library and check out books about their desired business, business in general or even books that illustrate the benefits that are available to the wealthy: trips, homes, the opportunity to do large-scale charity work, etc. Learn about other entrepreneurs that came from humble beginnings and rose to a level of entrepreneurial success.

Just as you must monitor a nutrient-rich flowerbed for weeds, so must you observe your child's environment for deterrents. You cannot plant a lemon seed and expect an apple tree to sprout. Outside of school, what occupies the majority of your child's time? Television programs that promote learning, business or even biography shows provide inspiration. Educational video games or those that rely heavily on logical determination will sharpen your child's thinking skills. Inspirational music is another invaluable tool.

One of the greatest tools that you have at your disposal is the Internet. Use this to expose your child to business owners that look like them. Search the web together for helpful information.

Be consistent in your encouragement. The concept of entrepreneurship must become a part of our children's definition of themselves.

Be on the lookout for Part II- Building Your Child's Network.

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About the Author

Crystal Washington is the CEO of Black-Market Exchange, a business dedicated to promoting black entrepreneurship, networking and community involvement. You can view the company website at www.black-marketexchange.com. Additionally, she is the organizer of the Houston Black Professional Meetup Group, <http://blackbiz.meetup.com/178/>.

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