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**Q&A**

Henry Organ, once a controversial Sequoia Union High School District trustee, wants to see more Andrew Youngs and fewer O.J. Simpsons. The associate director of foundation relations at Stanford University elaborates on his views about black athletes and black issues in general in this interview with staff writer Judy Miller.

## How blacks should funnel their efforts

**Q. Blacks in the Ravenswood School District are divided on whether a pending desegregation suit which could place their children in currently white-dominated districts will be helpful or harmful. How do you feel?**

A. My only concern about cases like that where you're talking about mergers of districts would be the impact on the control of the district. It didn't take me long to see that cases like Brown vs. Board of Education were mainly concerned about desegregation of student bodies when it was my feeling all the time that we should be concerned about desegregation of school boards, because that is where the clout is. Unless there is some desegregation at that level, any other level really isn't going to work.

**Q. The fear being that the board in the new combined district or districts would be white-dominated whereas blacks currently control the Ravenswood board?**

A. Yes. When I was on the Sequoia board I was the first representative of any kind, black or white, from the Ravenswood attendance area, and had it not been for the fact that I was appointed, there would still be no blacks selected...primarily because the community represented such a small percentage of the voting population.

If we're not careful we're going to have a duplication of that with the Ravenswood city schools. I look at it more politically than educationally.

**Q. So you feel minority representation on school boards might be more of an answer than busing?**

A. Yes, I think in spite of all the publicity, a lot of it adverse within the Ravenswood School District over the last 10 years, some gains have been made, and I think sufficient time has to be given the community to make a viable district.

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# Q&A

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**Q. After your years of relative turbulence and agitating, have you seen any positive change for minority students in the Sequoia Union High School District?**

A. No, I haven't seen much change at all. The only positive change I've seen is that the board had the audacity to appoint a black superintendent. I was truly shocked at that, pleasantly so.

**Q. What are some of the problems you see?**

A. I take the risk of being critical, but I don't think that many black students have seen the rewards of a formal education. I haven't seen many blacks who attempted to get a formal education get that far. So why in the hell should they bust their asses for the books?

I don't worry for example about standardized tests — whether or not they are culturally biased — because I'm pretty much convinced based upon the street wisdom I've seen manifested by black youth that they can learn pretty much whatever they want. But the thing is they are just not interested in it.

I think instead of a lot of educators concerning themselves with the cultural bias, they need to address themselves instead to somehow convincing black youngsters that they do have a chance through formal education. Most of them now have seen rewards totally in the entertainment field, mainly music and athletics, and this is where they are directing their efforts. And this is where they succeed. If they would dedicate themselves just as sincerely and aggressively in the academic field, I think they could succeed there just as well.

**Q. So they are not perceiving any reward in formal education?**

A. They see their elders and they see their parents and friends much older who had formal education who are just strictly catching hell on the job market. So they say, "Why should I go through that nonsense. Be successful in spite of the odds in athletics, make \$200,000 or \$300,000 a year for two or three years to me that's worth the risk."

I'm tempted to believe that it's not by accident that this attitude prevails among black kids. I think what I call the athletic industrial complex has created an environment such that this is the only thing they can hope for, like some giant vacuum that sucks them in whether they want to or not.

The tragedy is the black youth who are being made the country's jesters. I think there are more important things for the black community to do than to have its progeny thrown to the wolves like that.

**Q. You say jesters? Could you elaborate on that?**

A. Entertainers. Whether it's on the football field, basketball field or the baseball field or on the stage plucking a guitar. The thing is the skills that the youth are picking up are not skills that are going to help the black community.

**Q. So what is the answer to breaking off the playing field and into the board room?**

A. Here is where I draw a very tight line. I shall not attempt to infringe upon the rights of any individual or any parent to raise their kids the way they want to or to prevent kids from pursuing the career they want. I do have some problems with institutional facilitation of this.

I get a little bit concerned when Bear Bryant, who's the head coach at Alabama, can get a black kid in school quicker than the NAACP can. I get a little concerned when the NCAA changes the rules so they can recruit more aggressively in inner cities. And we know who the residents of inner cities are.

I get a little bit concerned, for example, that coaches from the hill schools (Woodside, San Carlos and Carlmont) were down in East Palo Alto because Ravenswood High School is being closed seeing if they can encourage some of the better athletes to go to their schools. That's what desegregation meant to them — all of a sudden our particular high school in the hills being the champion.

**Q. What about the good aspects of sports?**

A. They talk about teamwork, competitive spirit and that sort of thing. I think that can be developed through forensic societies and debate teams. Let physical education take up the rest.

I don't think the white community would allow a significant percentage of its youth to become involved in varsity athletics.

**Q. So a black kid could get the idea that the route to recognition or reward is pretty much limited to athletics and entertainment, so a disproportionate number of blacks are depending on those fields?**

A. Yes. The prevailing issue is that generally a society expects its youth to acquire tools to improve the lot of that society. This has not been the case in the black community. There are larger numbers of black youth that become educated, and it hasn't really resulted in any improvements in the black community primarily, because they are not addressing themselves to the needs of the community. I

think if I had to live my life over again, I would pursue skills more relevant to the needs of that community.

**Q. For example?**

A. I think, for example, there is a great need for people in business and economics. I think there is a need for people in the health sciences, in public management and law and in technology, especially here on the Peninsula. These are skills that if acquired could be of direct benefit to the black community.

**Q. Would you actively discourage athletic scholarships to black athletes?**

A. I would discourage athletic scholarships on any terms. I think that a lot of institutional resources are wasted in that area. The primary purpose of an institution is not athletics. I think that a lot of institutions are drifting in that direction.

**Q. Is that the direction at Stanford?**

A. I see that happening at Stanford, and it troubles me. I see big-time football coming to Stanford. I've begun to notice little things like ads being placed in the paper for block tickets and things like that.

If the desire to become big-time football, big-time sports comes to Stanford, it is automatically going to mean more recruiting of black athletes, and that bothers me. The same kind of recruiting is not going on for promising black scholars in other fields.

**Q. Do you feel alone in your view or is this something that you see the community sensing also?**

A. I think there are a lot of outstanding academic programs within the university that are becoming concerned about this new dimension of varsity athletics becoming big. If you look at the outside world, there's a finite amount of money available. And some of the programs are going to be competing with varsity athletics. It is a cause for concern.

**Q. What steps would you propose to reduce participation in athletics?**

A. I think limitations have to be placed on the number

of varsity sports that a youngster should be allowed to engage in.

At the college level, I would eliminate athletic scholarships, and I think that would send the message down to the various communities that if it's a family in need, they are going to have to find financial aid through some other skill than athletics.

**Q. If you cut off athletic scholarship, aren't you cutting off one way for blacks, or whites for that matter, to get into college?**

A. Yes. I think there are some kids in the pipeline now who probably would be blocked, but I think that if the proper attention is given to academics, they can have access to college on academic scholarships rather than athletic.

**Q. Isn't there some middle ground that could be reached without discouraging blacks from athletics?**

A. I think the problem is so severe within the black community that severe steps have to be taken.