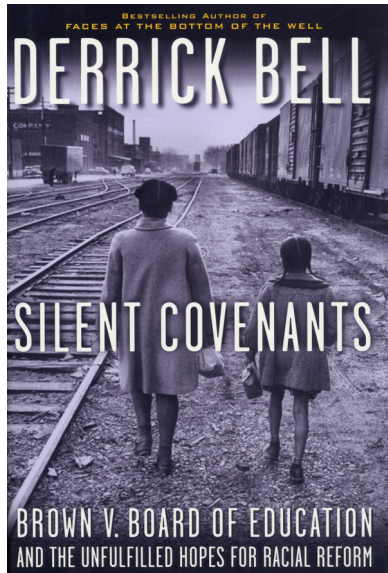


*The following passage is excerpted from the book, **Silent Covenants**, by Derrick Bell.*



## Supplemental School Programs

A major part of the educational challenge today goes beyond curriculum, trained teachers, decent facilities, and adequate resources: that is, the motivation to learn which is so sadly lacking in many children, particularly those from lower-income areas. Many educators do not see how providing motivation is a prerequisite to effective teaching and learning.

Those schools and youth programs able to provide motivation tend to be successful. In New York City, the Harlem Boys' Choir is a well-known example of using music as the incentive to motivate youngsters to learn and grow. Others are the **All Stars Talent Show Network** and the **Joseph A. Forgiione Development School for Youth**. Both programs, supervised by **Dr. Lenora Fulani**, are privately funded supplementary-education ventures that serve tens of thousands of inner city kids each year. Fulani believes that her out-of-school programs and projects help to motivate the children.

Researchers and practitioners in the field of supplementary education—often referred to as after-school programs—have made important discoveries over the last decade that bear directly on the achievement gap. These findings show that poor kids, who may have few enriching experiences outside of school, do not develop as learners in the ways that more privileged kids do. The **All Stars Project** creates those experiences for young people of all ages using a performance-cultural model.

**Fulani** explains that her programs focus on issues of development and motivation. They relate to the young people as people who have the capacity to perform ahead of themselves—meaning as more than, or other than, who they are. In the **All Stars**, they are taught how to create performances on stage as a way of learning to perform in life. In the **Development School for Youth**, she says:

We teach young people to use performance skills to become more cosmopolitan and sophisticated—to interact with the worlds of Wall Street, with business and the arts. In becoming more cosmopolitan—in going beyond their narrow and parochial and largely nationalistic identities—they acquire a motivation to learn as a part of consistently creating and recreating their lives.

**Fulani** reports that it doesn't take long, for example, for the young people in the **Development School** to grasp that they have to learn new ways of speaking, reading, and writing to sustain themselves in the interactions with corporate executives they are meeting with as part of the curriculum. This developmental approach is specifically designed to address the academic failure of poor kids. Children of well-to-do families receive supplementary education as a matter of course. Their parents expose them to the workings of the world, to travel, culture, dialogues at home about current events, government, and the arts. Study after study, at one university after another, have shown that these kinds of supplementary experiences enhance, if not determine, the children's learning capability.

In this brief summary of schooling alternatives, the solutions offered by Gail Foster, **Lenora Fulani**, and other educators share common principles. They believe deeply that children can learn. They recognize how barriers of poverty, cultural deprivation, and the lack of positive life models and experiences can block learning potential. They know that effective teaching begins with creating and building motivation to learn by involving students in sports, artistic endeavor, or other skills-development activities that serve as "door openers" to overcome insecurities and antilearning attitudes. In effect, to quote John Holt, a school principal and, for many years, the director of the summer camp I attended as a child: "Accept children as you find them, and then take them as far as they can go."