



Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education
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PTAVE is a 501(c)(3)
nonprofit organization
E.I.N. 94-2884062

August 31, 2006

Van Jones, Exec. Dir.
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
344 40th Street
Oakland, CA 94609

Dear Mr. Jones:

Last week, after mailing your organization samples of our free booklet, "Plain Talk about Spanking," Executive Asst. Sadiyah Seraaj responded. She praised our work, but informed us that the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights would not be able to use our materials, and would return them if we wished. She explained, "the work of the Ella Baker Center is of a different focus than that of PTAVE."

Are we to understand that your organization purports to address the issue of violence in the teen and adult community while ignoring the violence experienced by children at the hands of their caretakers? Many of these children — infants and toddlers, in fact — receive horrendous treatment from their uneducated young black parents. We must remind you, the current crop of Oakland's street gang members, whose activities are periodically in the news, were once such children. Why your organization deems the issue of violent child rearing to be outside your focus is a mystery to us. Have we missed something?

In a recent article titled "Too much anger in black youth today," syndicated columnist, Clarence Page, quoted the renowned Harvard professor of child psychiatry, Alvin Poussaint, on this very subject. Dr. Poussaint said:

"There's an overuse of beating kids — corporal punishment . . . So that you have 80 percent of black parents believing you should beat them — beat the devil out of them. And research shows the more you beat them, the angrier they get."

I consider that article to be mandatory reading for people in our business. You'll find it in its entirety at www.nospank.net/cpage.htm. Please weigh Dr. Poussaint's comments carefully and then reassess whether or not "spanking," "switching," "whopping," "smacking," "beating," etc., should be included or excluded from your organization's focus.

I sincerely hope that the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights will come to recognize that the only way to break the cycle of human rights abuses that plague our society is to reeducate parents in nonviolent childrearing methods, and through appropriate legislation, make those methods the only acceptable standard.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jordan Riak, Exec. Dir.,

cc: Members, PTAVE Board of Directors