

TACOMA, Wash. - **Joe Clark**, the principal who used a baseball bat to bring order to a tough high school, says public education is "brain dead," and if changes aren't made soon, "we're going to become a Third World nation."

In a speech marking a college endowment that will help create scholarships for minority students, Clark, whose get-tough tactics at **Eastside** High School in Paterson, N.J., were portrayed in the Warner Brothers movie "Lean on Me", said, "Public education in this country is institutionalized child abuse."

He said the current state of public education is the result of "liberal officials who were not born; they were excreted" and blasted the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the "current crop" of civil rights leaders, saying they were "more interested in self-aggrandizement than civil rights."

He described affirmative action as an insult to blacks: "It's a Band-Aid given to blacks by liberals; they're telling us, 'You are not capable of competing with us whites, so we're going to give you this help.'"

"Affirmative action isn't going to help blacks. Until black kids are coming out of college at the top of the class, we're not going to have a solution."

Clark was especially hard on young black males. He said, "Somebody's got to tell them, 'If you don't stop this, we're going to beat the hell out of you.'"

"They've got to quit blaming 'whitey' for their troubles. They've got to understand that nobody can ride your back if your spine is straight. If you can't make it in this country, you're just no good. There's no other place like this country."

Clark called for the establishment of a voucher system, a controversial method of school funding in which parents choose the schools their children attend and state funds follow the children. Parents are free to choose private or public schools.

Public education is "brain dead," he said, and if changes aren't made, the United States is "going to become a Third World nation."

"The education system is rotten to the core," he said. "And it's not going to change until we have a voucher system that gives parents the right to choose the schools for their children. We must have competition among schools" if we want to improve them."

Clark acknowledges the controversy he creates. He told his listeners, "I'm considered a highly controversial character. You're either going to love **Joe Clark** or you're going to hate my guts. But I don't care whether you like me or not. If you notice turtles, the only time they make progress is when they stick their necks out. People love success, but they hate successful people."

Clark underwent open-heart surgery last summer and has not returned as principal of **Eastside** High since ending a seven-week hospital stay.

"I'm on medical leave and I will never go back," Clark said later. "It's a case of the fish outgrowing the pond."

CITATION (CMS STYLE)

"Public school system is rotten, principal says." *Houston Chronicle*, November 23, 1989: 1. *NewsBank: Access World News*. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.atxlibrary.idm.oclc.org/apps/news/document-view?p=AWNB&docref=news/0ED7AF8C285E6EBD>.