



## If We are Going to Shut Down the Government, Shut it Down to Build Up Our Schools, Not to Build a Wall

By Shawnta S. Barnes - January 19, 2019

With change comes struggle and sacrifice. Many times when we want change, we have to sacrifice or others around us have to make a sacrifice. Currently, 800,000 federal workers are being forced to make a huge sacrifice for a wall. Of all the pressing issues in America, this should not be the president's highest priority. If we are going to force families to go without pay, it should be for a change that will have great benefit for our society.

What is the point of building a wall to keep out criminals when our education system is pushing children into the criminal system because it hasn't adequately prepared them to become

productive citizens? The children most affected by our education system are children of color, and the people populating our jails are people of color. While we are worrying about what is happening across the border, we need to do a better job of taking care of the children who live within our borders.

As a black mom, I am constantly angered by the dismal academic achievement of black children. Here is some recent data from the Indiana Student Achievement Report:

- Black students in 2016 scored 181 points less on the SAT than white students.
- Black students have the highest likelihood of attending a D or F school when compared to other ethnicities
- When looking at IREAD data, black students fall the farthest behind with an average gap of 11 percentage points below the state average passing rate and 14 percentage points below white students' passing rate.
- When looking at ISTEP data, for every one black student who is proficient in math and ELA, there are three who are not.

This report said 75% of black students are not proficient in math and English/language arts. This is alarming. This should make us fight and demand change. This is worth making a sacrifice. This is worth shutting down the government until we find a solution.

With our nation's leader, I feel like I am trapped inside the Twilight Zone or some bad reality television show that will not end. We cannot keep being distracted by the antics and theatrics of the president. We have to keep our focus on the real issues in our community even if the leader of our country will not.