



Black Teachers Matter

By Educator Barnes - May 10, 2019

Monday, May 6 - Friday, May 10 is Teacher Appreciation Week. Being a black educator, I was curious to know if anyone felt a black educator had made a difference in his or his life. Eric Williams, a former student of Arlington High School, shared that Mr. Roosevelt Griffin, a black Economics teacher, made a difference in his life.

What made Mr. Griffin a great educator?

Mr. Griffin was a great teacher because of his ability to connect with students. He may have rubbed some students and staff the wrong way, but I appreciated his candidness and his willingness to explain the world of economics in his own way.

How did having a teacher that looked like you impact you as a student?

The impact of seeing teachers that come from my socioeconomic background and share my race is a reminder that I can achieve success if I focus on my education.

Have your children had black teachers, and do you think having a black teacher is important?

Two of my children have had black teachers. I believe black teachers are able to connect with minority students on a deeper level. Minorities are typically underrepresented in the school system. Seeing someone who looks like you is a reminder that anyone can achieve if he or she works hard.

Black teachers only make up 7% of the teachers in the US. What do you believe is keeping black teachers out of the classroom?

The two prevailing issues that dissuade black people from going into education are salary and underrepresentation in school leadership. I believe if school districts hired more black superintendents and principals, they would naturally attract more minority teachers.

If you could say anything to Mr. Griffin today, what would you say?

Thank you, Mr. Griffin, for your candid perspective and for providing us with real-world examples of economic disparities in the black community.

Seven percent is not enough. Black teachers must make up more than seven percent of educators in our country. This interview is one of the many reasons why, as Mr. Williams stated, black school leadership is crucial. If we want to diversify our schools, we must start at the top.

Thank you, Mr. Griffin, for making a difference. Thank you to all the black educators who have chosen this profession despite the difficulties and barriers we face.