

# OPINION

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## Opinion

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Sunday, July 18, 2004

#### Cosby debate misses point:

Thomas Sowell is the latest pundit to join the Bill Cosby parade. As a former classroom teacher with 35 years experience, including one year teaching Cosby's oldest daughter, I think this debate has degenerated badly.

Children of poverty do not choose to be born poor. They would immediately change the trend of having the least-qualified teachers working in the poorest neighborhoods if they could. Children desperately want someone to help them turn on that proverbial light bulb. Anyone who has taught has seen it go on and knows the pure joy it brings to every child and how intensely personal that experience is.

This conversation about "knucklehead" students with droopy pants and teachers who don't hold them accountable misses the point about our nation's responsibility to provide an equitable learning environment for every child; about the economic and moral disparity between the schools in wealthy suburbs and rural counties and impoverished inner cities; and about how best to get the most out of students and teachers (providing an atmosphere of support and encouragement).

Instead, it creates a climate of warnings and punishments and, worst of all, fear. No one does his best in that kind of atmosphere. Sowell knows that from personal experience.

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