

STRONG MEN & WOMEN



IN VIRGINIA HISTORY

2014 STUDENT WRITING CONTEST

Eastern Region Essay Winner

Garrett Jones

**Greenbrier Christian Academy
City of Chesapeake**

According to the NAACP, “African-Americans now constitute nearly 1 million of the total 2.3 million incarcerated population in the U.S.”

The disparity of incarceration between African Americans and other races is an issue plaguing the core of the black culture. I believe the reason for the disproportionate number of incarcerated African Americans lies within the African-American community itself. The community places limited value on education, which often leads to young men and women growing up believing in only two options for financial success: crime and/or professional sports. Historically, the African-American community was not afforded the opportunity for an education; therefore, education has lacked priority within the black culture.

My father’s parents never finished high school because they had to work to support their families. My father was always told to “pass” in school, but he was never told to maximize his potential because his parents did not fully realize the impact an education could have on his future. My father, however, was able to obtain a college degree through his athletic abilities in football. He says that if he had not been recruited to play football in college, he doubts he would have gone to college. Fortunately, after attending college, he realized the importance of education in his life, and he instilled that value in me.

I am very passionate about increasing the awareness of the value of education in the African-American community because I was blessed with parents who have taught me its importance. I believe I can make an impact in the black community by uniting the parents, the school system, and the community. If students are receiving failing marks in any class, the student and the parents should be required to attend classes—financed by the city or county government and provided by public youth organizations—that teach study skills.

While the African-American community still struggles with the value of an education, I would hope to positively impact those values with joint cooperation from parents, their children, and the community. In order for this idea to succeed, those who understand the value of education must spread that knowledge to others within the community.

