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Only 47% of Black males graduate!
Read it and make it better.

(January 2012) – The social net for high school dropouts is gone forever. When the manufacturing base in the U.S. was strong, a young man could drop out of high school and safely land at a factory with an $18 an hour job. Today, young African American males are dropping out of high school at the highest rate of any group with only a net of barbed wire to catch them.

According to Jawanza Kunjufu, national education consultant and author of the newly released *Reducing the Black Male Dropout Rate*, ninth grade is the critical year for making the decision to physically drop out, but the seeds were planted much earlier and nurtured by academic failure.

The dropout rate for African American females is 41 percent, but for African American males it’s 53 percent. According to *Education Week 26* (“Diplomas Count…”), each year, more than half of the 1.2 million students who fail to graduate from high school are Black and Latino. The Schott Foundation reports that 2,000 high schools in 20 cities are contributing to almost 80 percent of the dropout rate.

The causes are many, but academic failure, social promotions, grade padding, poor teacher quality, low parental involvement, and post traumatic slavery disorder lead the way, says Dr. Kunjufu.

Eighty-nine percent of African American eighth graders compute below grade level. Many of these students are socially promoted to ninth grade, despite the fact that they are not ready. In low-income high schools, half of African American students read below the sixth grade level. When these students find themselves in high school, unequipped to meet the rigors of algebra, biology, literature, and other first year subjects, they begin to seriously consider dropping out.
It is at this critical moment that Dr. Kunjufu seeks to save them.

**Who’s To Blame**
There is no shortage of finger pointing in the media regarding the Black male dropout crisis. Dr. Kunjufu relates one study where school staff blamed parents and students—and parents and students blamed school staff.

Dr. Kunjufu takes all stakeholders to task—schools, the community, parents, and students. “There is plenty of blame to go around, plenty of responsibility that must be shared if we are to reduce the dropout rate,” says Dr. Kunjufu. “It’s all too easy to blame schools, but schools only have children nine percent of the time. It’s also easy to blame the victims in this crisis, Black males. But they desperately need our help.”

**What We Can Do**
Dr. Kunjufu lays out a comprehensive blueprint, and challenge, to schools, communities, parents, and students. The following highlights the major changes that must take place to get Black male students up to speed academically and to prevent them from dropping out:

**Schools**
- Reduce principal and teacher turnover
- Improve teacher quality
- Implement a right brain Africentric curriculum
- Implement a school improvement plan with higher graduation and GPA targets
- Make schools safe

**Communities**
- Implement Saturday Academies
- Churches adopt schools
- Make communities safe
- Increase the number of Black male mentors

**Parents**
- Read to children, and have them read aloud (daily)
- Single mothers, keep the boyfriend out of the house
- Fathers, be a consistent, strong presence in your son’s life
- Adopt an authoritative style of parenting

**Students**
- Choose friends wisely
- Allocate necessary time each day for reading, study, homework
- Develop a winner’s psychology
- Learn to manage thoughts, emotions, and actions

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Reducing the Black Male Dropout Rate is a book of hope. Dr. Kunjufu challenges Black males to take responsibility for their own lives. Schools, communities, and parents can do a lot, but ultimately change will occur only when African American male students begin to feel empowered and self-confident that they can master the school environment.

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**Reducing the Black Male Dropout Rate**  
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**About the Author**  
National best selling author of over 30 books and consultant to most urban school districts. He has been a guest twice on Oprah and a frequent guest on the Baisden and Sharpton radio show.

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