



## GUEST COMMENTARY

by Dr. Jalal Zuberi

### THE EPA'S POLLUTION POLICY'S IMPACT ON AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN

The President of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Robert Block in his statement of support for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan was speaking on behalf of most pediatricians when he stated "The regulation released today by the EPA is a welcome and needed step to help make the air we breathe safer and cleaner for children."

EPA's historical carbon pollution reduction plan will protect the health of millions of Americans including Georgia's most vulnerable: children, communities of color, older adults and those suffering from respiratory diseases. The public health effects from a changing climate is one of the most serious and challenging issues of our time. Coal-fired power plants, the largest single source of carbon emissions, set the stage for warmer temperatures which can lead to ozone formation, a well-known trigger for asthma attacks and worsening respiratory diseases.

As we see hot weather approaching with temperatures of 80 and above degrees, it's clear that we're entering a season that, for pediatricians and family doctors, means seeing an increased number of heat-related visits and more children suffering from heat and/or ozone induced asthma attacks.

In Georgia, nearly 1 in 10 children has asthma and African American children are twice as likely as white children to have asthma. Each day nine Americans die from asthma and African Americans are three times more likely to die from the disease.

Unregulated carbon pollution hurts us all because it contributes to global climate disruption, leading to rising temperatures, more air pollution, more frequent extreme weather events like we've seen here at home in the southeast, and contributing to the spread of certain diseases. Children are especially vulnerable because their lungs are developing and growing, they breathe at a higher rate than adults, and they spend more time outdoors engaging in vigorous physical activity.

We are likely to see more pollen and mold affecting children with allergies. Moreover, the newly released National Climate Assessment report asserts that ground-level ozone is projected to increase in the Southeast, leading to increases in respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses, including emphysema, and asthma.

As pediatricians, we keep children healthy and help them feel better when they're sick, and we help protect the health of our community. This means we have a responsibility to take whatever actions we can to help our patients.

EPA's plan to cap carbon pollution from power plants is the fastest way to make our air

cleaner and protect our children's health. A recent study from Syracuse and Harvard Universities found that the co-benefits of reducing carbon emissions from existing power plants can reduce other recognized air pollutants, including sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, mercury, ozone and fine particulate matter pollution -- pollutants that can cause asthma attacks, heart attacks, cancer, birth defects and premature death.

In fact, EPA's proposed carbon pollution standards would prevent up to 4,000 premature deaths and 100,000 asthma attacks in the first year they are in place, and prevent up to 6,600 premature deaths and 150,000 asthma attacks in 2030.

The impact of climate change from carbon pollution isn't a political issue, it's a scientific fact. When medical science tells us, as it does today, that the health of our communities is being impacted by something that we have the power to change, we have a moral obligation to protect our children and future generations from the health impacts of climate change. It is time we put politics aside and take the necessary actions to prevent disease and preserve the health of our fellow citizens.

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## GUEST COMMENTARY

by Curley M. Dossman, Jr

### FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL, PUT JOY IN THE EQUATION

You've probably thought about this puzzle. You go to a high school sporting event and see teenagers at their best: quick, coordinated and focused. When you visit the classroom expecting to see that same level of enthusiasm, you encounter kids looking bored, engrossed in their smart phones or chattering about their weekend plans.

As Chairman of 100 Black Men of America, Inc. and President of the Georgia-Pacific Foundation here in Atlanta, I've often wondered about this. Why can't teenagers feel the same excitement about all their pursuits, whether intellectual or athletic?

The answer is, they can. Through the years I've learned that if heart rates don't rise, work can be a dull routine. But it is possible for excitement and discipline to come together in a program devoted to physical, mental and artistic achievement. I see it every year at the "Report From Our Youth Breakfast," one of the highlights of the 100 Black Men annual conference. And the same spirit enlivens our programs around the country.

The agenda, from speeches and spoken word to music and history debates, is entirely in the hands of children ages 8 to 18. The kids plan the program, meet the deadlines, stand in front of the crowd, and every year, they bring down the house.

This formula works because joy drives achievement in these kids. Whether the event is a 100-yard dash, a math competition or run/walk events at the conference led by Olympic champion Tommie Smith, children crave this sensation, which is both physical and mental.

Unfortunately, when you look at programs aimed at improving the lives of black school children, the word "joy" is rarely used. So many national campaigns zero in on childhood obesity, which affects about 36 percent of black school-aged children. Some programs try to improve nutrition. Others promote exercise. Both goals are valid, but joy belongs on the agenda.

Raising heart rates is one of our objectives as 100 Black Men lobbies to restore recess in schools across America, so kids can get a minimum of 30 minutes of exercise each day. In DeKalb County, we started a Tennis and Fitness program for children and their parents. Some 80 kids have participated, and 12 have made varsity in their schools.

Meanwhile, data is what drives our program called the 100 Healthy Living Project, which put fitness and nutrition mentorship programs in middle schools across the country last year. With support from the Coca-Cola Foundation, we tracked the progress

of more than 1,800 students participating in a stunning range of activities --from endurance rollerblading to extreme jumping jacks.

Typically at the start, only about a quarter of the kids meet fitness standards for body mass index, aerobic capacity and other measures. After four to six months of pulse-raising activity, 90 percent to 95 percent of participants are in the zone.

All of our local chapters run fitness events that promote active mentorship in disadvantaged neighborhoods, with a strong emphasis on physical fitness. Why? Because sensations like exhilaration are physical. They raise the heart rate and spirits. You see this in sports and dance, as well as public speaking and healthcare. Mentorship matters because excitement can't be transmitted through passive learning. Joy must be generated person-to-person.

Good work requires health, discipline and focus -- but also joy. We all know that to win in sports, you have to feel it, physically. It's the same in classrooms and in life. Raise your heart rate...and feel great!

Dossman is Chairman of 100 Black Men of America, Inc., and President of the Georgia-Pacific Foundation



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