

PRESS RELEASE

April 27, 2004

From: Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education (PTAVE)

Re: Apology for slavery issued by University of Alabama, but slavery-derived whippings still widespread

The University of Alabama's formal apology for its historical ties to slavery is a fine gesture, and we congratulate the university for its good intentions. However, this gesture fails to recognize and address the fact that one of the principal techniques of the slave masters continues to be practiced, and for that reason it is incorrect to assume that slavery is entirely a thing of the past. We refer here to the practice of beating children.

The University of Alabama should act now to promote a ban against the use of slavery-derived whippings and paddlings in the so-called "discipline" of children by their teachers and principals. Educators, after all, are not trained to hit. Violence has no legitimate place in education, and educators should never compromise their professionalism by cooperating with hitters.

Abolition of corporal punishment would accomplish far more for the descendents of slaves by protecting them in the here-and-now (African American schoolchildren receive a disproportionately high percentage of all school paddlings) than by offering apologies for the violence committed against their ancestors. It would bring Alabama's public education system into the modern world, promote educational excellence and elevate teacher behavior to a standard worthy of emulation by parents and all other caregivers. True disassociation from slavery must include a forthright, unequivocal disavowal of slavery's most pernicious legacy: child beating.



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