

## Bill Cosby Leads Forum at Howard

Contributed by Victoria Fortune -- Black College Wire  
Monday, 21 September 2009

MSNBC broadcasts discussion on parenting, children

A line of people waited outside of the Howard University Aldridge Theatre on Sept. 20 to attend the "About Our Children" forum featuring longtime entertainer and activist Bill Cosby.

The forum, hosted and televised by MSNBC, was moderated by Independent Women's Forum CEO Michelle D. Bernard and included panelists who touched on topics ranging from education to poverty.

"I want people to think back on history and realize that there is truly nothing that we can't do," Bernard said. "Today is just the first day of what will be a national grassroots mobilization effort where we will gather parents and children to really take the bull by the horns to do everything that we can to ensure that every child has a shot at the American dream." The panel included Dr. Alvin Poussaint, psychiatry professor at Harvard University, NAACP President Ben Jealous, author and publicist Terrie Williams, and Michelle Rhee, chancellor of the D.C. public school system. The panel began with a discussion of parenting and education.

"Outside of your house, and even in the TV sets, we can't trust those people to tell our children correct things or to give them love," Cosby said. "You've got to go visit the schoolteacher. Someone is spending six to seven hours with your child, and you don't want to know who it is?"

Fifty years have gone by since *Brown v. Board of Education*, and America is still having a dialogue about equal education among all students.

Chancellor Rhee has been in the public education field for 17 years and believes there is a preconceived notion that parents don't care.

"What I have found in my career in education is that I have never met a mother anywhere who didn't want the same thing for her children that I want for my children," Rhee said.

Civil rights activist Dorothy Height, an audience member, also expressed her thoughts on single parenting and ways in which the Howard University can help in educating students who have lost hope.

"One of the things that we have to do is try to find the time to teach the students how to learn certain skills," Height said. "There are many organizations in the community who have programs that are helpful. I think we have to just say to the children that they have to have hope there will be a future. I know it's hard to do, but they have to look at and see."

As Height spoke about restoring hope within the children, the panel also spoke about the emotional health that the children face. "The most important thing that a parent should remember is the harder the kids push back, the closer we have to come to them," Rhee said.

"You value yourself, you value your life, and you will value your child," Cosby said.

{moshaloscan}

Victoria Fortune writes for *The Hilltop*, the Howard University student newspaper, which originally published a version of this article.