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In America, education was acknowledged as powerful when society realized that slavery could not last for generations using physical coercion alone. The shackles had to be transferred from the body to the mind because as Frederick Douglass said "to educate a man is to unfit him to be a slave". James Madison wrote that "the advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty". Access to education is imperative in the fight for freedom and equality in this country because knowledge is not being diffused sufficiently. Educators are faced with the daunting challenge of closing the Achievement Gap.

The Achievement Gap is the persistent underperformance of African American children when compared to their white counterparts on standardized tests. It emerges before kindergarten and persists through all grade levels and reveals itself in discrepant graduation and dropout rates. In 2011, the National Association for Educational Progress reported that only 14% of African American fourth and eighth graders performed at or above proficient levels on national reading tests. African American children are consistently 26 points behind the general population. These test scores are more than just numbers on paper. They are warning signs of adverse life outcomes including higher rates of unemployment, poverty, imprisonment and homicide.

The documentary, *Bring Your A Game* states that "Failing schools lead to successful prison systems." This assertion is backed up by research that has made the connection between low high school graduation rates and incarceration. The documentary further reveals that "for profit prisons are projecting the number of prisons they will build in 20 years based on 3rd and 4th grade reading scores". The National Education Association reports that 80% of inmates are high school drop outs. The lives of both slaves and inmates reveal that education is the key to liberty and freedom. Those without an education continue to live in chains. Inmates do not suffer alone; their lack of education affects us all. It is estimated that if the male high school graduation rate were to improve by just 5%, the annual crime related savings to the nation would be \$5 billion.

Even America, the richest nation in the world, cannot afford to fail in educating our children. The simple truth is that poverty is less prevalent among people with higher education. Education is the great equalizer. We need to declare war using the weapon of education. We need to fight so that the underserved populations have equal access to education. We deserve to live in a world where engaging educational opportunities are extended to all children. All children deserve an opportunity to be successful in the learning environment because education is the best way to combat poverty and guarantee freedom. Education is indeed the most powerful weapon. It is powerful because it is enduring. Beauty, strength, wealth and freedom can all be forcibly removed, but no one can take away knowledge.