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“It’s Always a Disaster” — Young People on Marriage

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The Boston Globe offers a frightening view of marriage in the eyes of young African-Americans. The article is haunting as it reveals the bleak view of marriage held by these young people:

“I’m not looking forward to marriage,” says Nakeeda Burns , a 17-year-old resident of Revere and daughter of a single mother, “and I don’t think we [people in general] should be married, because I see how other marriages ended up in my family and on television. It’s always a disaster.”

Even the married couples these teens know don’t seem particularly happy. “All of my friends who are married, they tell me not to get married,” says Anderson Felix , 17, of Dorchester. “ ‘Wifey is going to keep you on lock.’ ‘Everywhere you go, she’ll call you every five minutes.’ I won’t be able to deal with that.”

Anita Marshall blurts out, “I want a big wedding if I get married,” but she doesn’t think she’ll make it to the altar. Her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother were married; now they’re all divorced.

More:

Their disillusionment mirrors a growing resistance to marriage among African-Americans. In the post-Civil War era, when African-Americans had the option to marry legally for the first time, many did. The 1890 Census showed that 80 percent of African-American families were headed by two parents, according to Andrew Billingsley’s 1992 book, “Climbing Jacob’s Ladder: The Enduring Legacies of African-American Families .”

But in 1970, census figures showed that only 57 percent of black men and 54 percent of black women were married. By last year those numbers had slipped to 42 percent for men and 35 percent for women. In comparison, 68 percent of white men and 63 percent of white women were married in 1970, vs. 59 percent of men and 57 percent of women in 2005.

This is not only a matter of demography — but of worldview and the future of marriage as an institution. When young people see marriage as a “disaster” in the making, something essential to civilization and human happiness is lost.

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