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Teenagers ‘Who Have Never Seen a Wedding?’ William Raspberry on ‘Why Our Black Families Are Failing’

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Columnist William Raspberry has written a must-read article published in today's edition of *The Washington Post*. In "[Why Our Black Families Are Failing](#)," Raspberry argues that family disintegration begins with the loss of a marriage culture. How bad is the crisis? Here's Raspberry's candid analysis: "What is happening to the black family in America is the sociological equivalent of global warming: easier to document than to reverse, inconsistent in its near-term effect — and disastrous in the long run."

He pointed to a recent press conference held by a group of black pastors. Look closely at his report:

Fatherless boys (as a general rule) become ineligible to be husbands — though no less likely to become fathers — and their children fall into the patterns that render them ineligible to be husbands.

The absence of fathers means, as well, that girls lack both a pattern against which to measure the boys who pursue them and an example of sacrificial love between a man and a woman. As the ministers were at pains to say last week, it isn't the incompetence of mothers that is at issue but the absence of half of the adult support needed for families to be most effective.

Interestingly, they blamed the black church for abetting the decline of the black family — by moderating virtually out of existence its once stern sanctions against extramarital sex and childbirth and by accepting the present trends as more or less inevitable.

They didn't say — but might have — that black America's almost reflexive search for outside explanations for our internal problems delayed the introspective examination that might have slowed the trend. What we have now is a changed culture — a culture whose worst aspects are reinforced by oversexualized popular entertainment and that places a reduced value on the things that produced nearly a century of socioeconomic improvement. For the first time since slavery, it is no longer possible to say with assurance that things are getting better.

Raspberry cited a youth worker who sees teenagers "who've never seen a wedding." This is a truly significant development — especially as given attention in *The Washington Post*. Raspberry cited the work of the [Seymour Institute for Advanced Christian Studies](#), a group that identifies itself as "A 21st Century Think Tank for the Global Black Church." I'll be taking a look at the Institute's new report on the black family.

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