

TRUMP CHAMPIONS EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

Bill Donohue comments on President Trump's visit today to a Catholic school in Florida:

Unlike President Obama, who opposed giving poor blacks the same right that he and Michelle exercised by enrolling their children in a private school, President Trump believes in educational equality. His trip today to St. Andrew Catholic School in Pine Hills, Florida, is an important statement.

Students from St. Andrew Catholic benefit from the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship. The program, which started in 2002, provides tax incentives to businesses who fund private schools. Currently, more than 92,000 Florida students are using this program to escape the public schools. This initiative is targeted at poor families, overwhelmingly non-white.

To qualify, the student must (a) either currently be in foster care (or was placed there during the past year) or (b) qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program. The student must also be in a household where the income does not exceed 260 percent of the federal poverty level.

In the 1970s, I taught at a Catholic school in Spanish Harlem and saw first-hand the yeoman job of Catholic education in the ghetto. There was a public school across the street but it had to be closed down because of all the gang violence and rapes. But my students were not only safe, they thrived academically, as well as spiritually.

Those opposed to school choice extend beyond the selfish interests of the teachers' unions; it extends, in some cases, to anti-Catholic bigots. Indeed, there is an outcry right now in some quarters of Florida: Activists are upset because

nearly 70 percent of the students enrolled in this program are in religious schools.

If poor blacks in Florida, and elsewhere, choose Catholic schools to enroll their children—many of whom are not Catholic—we should not blame them or the Catholic schools. We should instead address why the parents made this choice and do something about lousy public schools.

Kudos to President Trump. Let's see who objects to educating poor blacks being funded by the corporations. My guess is it will be those who scream the loudest about equality, yet do everything they can to keep the poor in their place.