

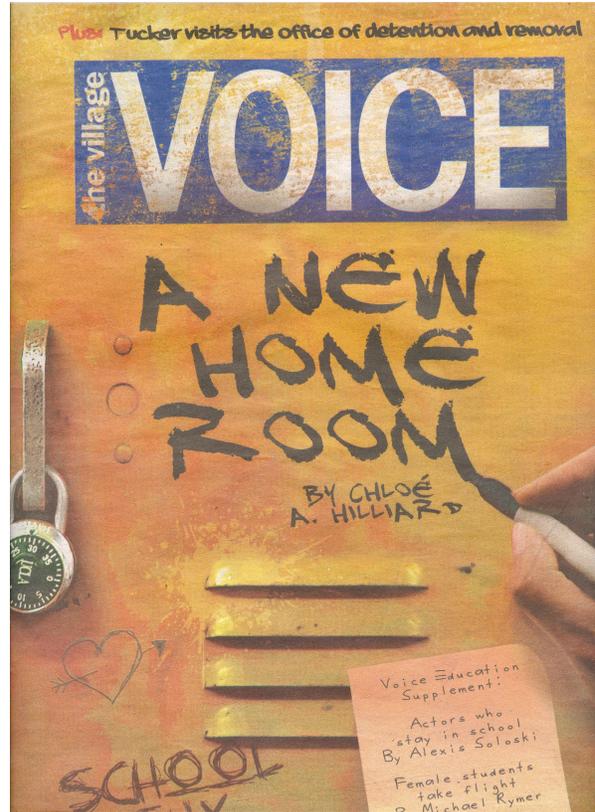
## For Some Black Parents, the New Home Room is Home (excerpted)

Public schools are failing black boys, say a growing number of parents who are homeschooling

by Chloe A. Hilliard  
April 8th, 2008

Say "homeschooling" and what tends to come to mind are the whitest people you know, holding Sunday school every day of the week in their basements, producing kids who can declaim against Charles Darwin for hours on end, but who are so screwed up socially that you can't imagine them getting a date, except years later as part of a group outing to Christian Day at Disney World.

So, with that admittedly over-broad stereotype in mind, it's something of a shock to see the lessons in progress at Bread Stuy, a small café in Brooklyn, where customers sip at their coffee and read newspapers, unaware that a woman named P. Aurora Robinson is holding a homeschooling class in their midst.



Her two teenagers, working at laptops, are tapping away at their writing assignments for the day. They're a little young for coffeehouse literary types, but otherwise look the part: Deion in a baseball cap, Tau wearing his hair in twists, both hunched over their screens, glasses resting on the tips of their noses. They're slender, studious, and seriously into their work.

And they're black.

Robinson, like a small but growing number of black parents, has chosen to take her son Tau out of the public-school system and teach him on her own (Deion is a cousin's child she's also teaching).

In the 2006–2007 school year, the city's Department of Education says that 3,654 students in New York were homeschooled. Most are white, but a growing number are African-American. Black parents tend to take their children out of the schools for other

than religious reasons, and homeschooling groups say black children taught at home are nearly always boys. Like Robinson, some of New York's parents have concluded that the school system is failing the city's black boys, and have elected to teach them at home as an alternative.



Other black parents are forming connections through homeschooling. Yoidette Erima founded Parents as Primary Teachers, a free program that offers music, art, and storytelling classes. She's a mother of two young boys and a former teacher. "As I prepared to have children, I didn't think public or private school was best," says Erima. "We need to improve the public-school system—I'm not promoting letting it go. Most parents can't deal with not working." Erima and her husband live in Bedford-Stuyvesant and

are self-employed; she runs PAPT, and he's a community economic-development lawyer. They seem like ideal people to take on the tough job of teaching their own children.

But does this mean that anyone can do it?

*Full article appears as the cover story of The Village Voice April 9-15, 2008 Vol. LIII No. 15. Photo of PAPT session in progress was not in original publication.*