Written by Fred Easter
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There are some young brothers and sisters at MCTC that are doing some terrific things. They have founded a chapter of Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB). I believe it's the first in Minnesota.

I hope to come to know a lot more about SAAB, and these remarkable young people, in the months to come. What is already clear to me is that they are working together toward their joint success there.

Among their number are ex-felons and single parents. Most are some years removed from their last High school classroom. But they want this opportunity at MCTC to work for them and they see their unity as a positive addition.

There are gifted and talented faculty of color and staff there as well. All in all, despite the challenges, this is a community about which one has to feel optimistic.

Last week was SAAB week. I attended two of the events. Two powerful sisters, Lissa Jones and Sarah Walker, of Second Chance, presented at one of the events. I am still reeling from some of the factual data that Sarah shared.

Did you know that in 1980; 14% of African-American brothers who didn't finish High School found their way to prison? Today 40% of that group is finding their way to the joint. That's a nearly 200% increase in 31 years. This, and other chilling data, highlights the United Way's decision to cease funding alternative schools. For example, before Reagan's War on Drugs began, there were about 200,000 Americans incarcerated across the country. Today, that number stands at 2.4 million. The 1000% increase is largely a function of that "War". We have not seen substantial increases in murders, rapes, burglaries and assaults. Nor have we seen substantial increases in the captures and convictions of the major importers and distributors of illicit drugs. The rank and file of the drug trade is crowding the prisons.

Recently, I saw an interview of Russell Simmons. He used the phrase "the mathematics of modern slavery". It is an apt description of the forces behind what we see happening in our communities.

The United Way doubled down on its decision to pull support of recreation by pulling its support of alternative schools. But the brothers and sisters of SAAB are locking arms to create an encouraging counterpoint to this doom and gloom. They deserve all the support they can get.