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According to James Traub (Jan. 16), the daily experience of failure in ghetto families and neighborhoods overwhelms the effects of even the best schools. He calls for more comprehensive preschool programs, but admits these would not transform the inner-city environment, which is the root of the problem. Such transformation would require jobs programs, housing, health care and a “living wage” — proposals currently on “the fringes of political discourse.”

Traub reflects a mentality of fiscal triage, where preschool must be pitted against school in the competition for scarce tax dollars, and where fundamental solutions cannot be pursued for lack of resources. But such resources would be available except for a colossal misuse of federal and state tax revenues.

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