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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL EXCELLENCE FOR ALL BLACK CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES¹

*We Are Not Only Changing the Education Discourse,
We Are Also Changing Its Course!*

CONTEXT

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims, and the UNESCO World Education 2000 Report issued in Dakar, Senegal affirms, “**education is a fundamental human right**” and “**an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century.**” Also, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 30, states: “**In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.**”

Therefore, we declare that:

- **We exist** as African people wherever we find ourselves. Our perspective must be centered in that reality; and
- **We affirm** that the priority is on the African Family over the Individual. Because we live in a world where “expertness” in alienating and deteriorating cultural traditions is now the norm, our collective survival and enhancement must be our highest priorities.
- **We accept** our moral obligation to “create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments” conducive to excellence in learning and socialization with clearly defined standards and levels of achievement for all. Such learning environments must include culturally connected African-centered curricula, and teachers, administrators and school personnel who are all appropriately educated and rewarded.
- **We recognize** that institutionalized white supremacy systematically mis-educates African, Native, Latino/a and Asian American youth based on hegemonic assumptions and racist policies that are embedded within the very structures of the US educational system. Learning environments for academic and cultural excellence must include curriculum transformation to address African peoples’ experiences truthfully and our interactions with other groups in Africa and the Diaspora.
- **We charge** that we are being oppressed by **Educational and Cultural Genocide**: the institutionalized system of white supremacy that, given the uniqueness of our historical experience, has left us without a heritage language and a sense of home and renders our children and families culturally and emotionally debilitated, threatening the future of our communities. This system of

¹ Adapted from The Declaration of Intellectual Independence for Human Freedom in J.E. King (Editor), *Black Education: A Transformative Research and Action Agenda for the New Century*, NY: Routledge/Washington, DC: The American Educational Research Association, 2005, pp. 20-21).

educational and cultural genocide meets only capitalism's dehumanizing need for mis-educated corporate managers and unskilled workers, prison labor or cannon fodder for imperial wars and global policing and group self-destruction, as our children kill each other in “drug wars” implanted in impoverished and economically abandoned cities and towns throughout the US.

SOLUTIONS

Some solutions to our educational and cultural genocide crisis involve the use of three modes of response to racist domination and hegemonic white supremacy (**AIR**):

- a) **Adaptation**—adopting what is deemed useful;
- b) **Improvisation**—substituting or improvising alternatives that are more sensitive to our culture;
- c) **Resistance**—resisting that which is destructive and not in the best interests of our people.

We see parents, youth and educators working collaboratively as essential to creating an education system in which daily decisions and policies of schools serve our collective interests, including assessments of students and educators that address academic and cultural excellence and a comprehensive approach to the interrelated health, learning and economic needs of African people.

We also recognize that because education is not a business but a public good, academic and cultural excellence must be put before the pursuit of profits, which takes precedence whenever education is run like a business.

There are ways of knowing through the arts and humanities of people of African ancestry that are useful in informing our understanding of our lives and experiences and those of other oppressed people. This deliberately neglected or trivialized learning and teaching methodology will be central to our solutions to combat the normalcy of *Educational and Cultural Genocide*.

Hence, our priority is on pedagogical and curriculum validity over “inclusion” within a decrepit, dishonest, and dying hegemonic Western cultural matrix. Our highest priority must be placed on studies of: a) **African traditions** (history, culture and language); b) **Hegemony** (e.g., uses of schooling/ socialization and incarceration as a means of control, confinement and group self-destruction); c) **Equity** (e.g., funding and making reparations, highly qualified educators and high quality curricula, including arts, music, technology and problem-based learning to level the playing field); d) **Beneficial practice** (at all levels of education, from childhood to eldership) and e) **Re-establishment** of people of African ancestry at the center of science, invention, mathematics and engineering.

Because education research informs practice and practice informs research in the production and utilization of knowledge, context is essential in research: a) Cultural/historical context, including the history of African and African Diaspora peoples; b) Political/economic context; c) Professional context; d) Psychological/social context and e) Technological context, as a way to transform teaching, learning and work itself.

We declare that our charge, therefore, is: To advance a national movement that **advocates** education as a human right and **acts** on behalf of African American/Black children and their families; to hold ourselves, these United States of America and all other countries that are signatories to the University Declaration of Human Rights **accountable** for guaranteeing that all Black children, wherever they are, have access to quality schools, services and resources without discrimination, including quality educators and truthful curricula, and to facilitate effective participation of parents and students in matters involving education policy and related decision making processes, so that our children can be equipped for collective survival and group self-determination, as well as individual advancement, by means of academic and cultural excellence.