

Good afternoon. Jambo. As-Salaamu alaykum. Habari Gani.

My name is Sharif El-Mekki, CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development, a national organization focused on rebuilding a national Black Teacher Pipeline. My mother and I were proud members of the Founding Delegates of the National Parents' Union. I'm also the father of six children.

Thank you for welcoming us to share our experiences. I pray that it is NOT lost on you that it would be illegal for educators in many states to organize a Convening like this or even read or talk about Black people with their students! Talking about anti-Blackness, Black history and Black pride, reparations and justice is banned in this very country while they incessantly talk about American democracy but really only exporting American hypocrisy.

As a child of 2 BPP members in Philadelphia, a Pan-African framework was a critical part of my upbringing. Two weeks ago, we celebrated Malcolm X's birthday and it is critical to note that this type of learning and orientation is banned in schools by de facto or de jure measures.

Even as an educator who taught and led schools for a quarter of a century, I have never been immune from the imminent threat to pan-Africanism imposed by our educational system. Nor have I been able to fully protect my children or others from these negative, undermining experiences. My mother, who was a career educator, wasn't able to fully protect me when I was a student either after we left our Pan African elementary school.

The pervasive anti-Black mindsets, tendencies and postures that pervade our curricula, educational policies, educator preparatory programming, is intellectually, culturally, emotionally, and spiritually damaging and our schools here in the US are rank with the stench and residue of racial biases and discriminatory practices.

We see it in the disciplinary policies, where Black students initially experience their teachers' racism when they are as young as 3- and 4- years old.

We see it when 80% of our children's teachers in this country are white and too often they have been trained in anti-Blackness and use this ideology to teach our children.

There is no such thing as racial justice without educational justice. We want to send our children to school without fear.

(The legendary Nina Simone said that true freedom is living without fear. I'd say that's especially true for parents with school-aged children who are often forced to

send their children to an American educational system that wasn't created to ensure the well-being of Black children and communities.)

We ask the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent to insist that addressing the centuries of harm done against our people must include educational justice which must include pro-Black measures and other reparations for Black children and communities, including far more Black teachers and anti-racist educators.

As my mother used to say: focus on implementing justice because justice will give birth to peace.

#WeNeedBlackTeachers A luta continua. A vitoria e certa. Pamoja Tutashinda