

Value-Creating Education for Global Citizenship (VCEGC) and Africana Economic Empowerment

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Systemic racism and global economic structures have negatively impacted the economic empowerment of people of African descent. Reparatory measures are required. Drawing attention to the agency of Africana people in their own economic empowerment, issues of severe racial inequalities in the educational arena become apparent. In the United States of America and other areas in the diaspora, the school to prison pipeline has stifled the possibilities of economic development.

Education is the key. Education has been a prime, prized commodity in the Africana community. The quest of the enslaved Africans to learn to read and write English, to become literate, precipitated the rise of statutes and laws that prohibited the teaching of these skills to any of the enslaved population. Infractions were punishable by death. Why were such harsh measures mandatory? Because literacy threatened the maintenance of egregious injustice, indeed, a status quo that denied humanity to people of African descent. Education was accurately perceived to play a role in the expansion of liberation consciousness. An educated person of African descent was a threat. In the exploitation of one set of humans over another and their juxtaposition as enemies, education is a mechanism of upward mobility. Only today Africana youth are dropping out of school. The potential of education and the motivation to pursue increased earning and income in the mainstream has lost its appeal or possibility of attainment for too many. Alternatives too often involve criminal acts of drug dealing, violence, theft, bodily harm and senseless murders. The coming generations deserve more than this.

Value-Creating Education for Global Citizenship (VCEGC) is a pedagogy that has a role to play in efforts to enhance the scholastic experiences of Africana youth around the world. Global citizenship is a component of multiple UN initiatives and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The basic premise of VCEGC education is that each student is a valuable human being with unlimited inner resources and potentials which when nurtured through education can contribute to their wellbeing. They can create learning modalities and responses appropriate to their own lives and contribute to the enrichment of society.

Curriculum must be tailored to the needs, realities and history of students of African descent based on culture and relevance. This will enhance students’ motivation to participate in and create value from educational experiences and abilities to redress generations of discrimination and economic inequity. VCEGC intersects well with theories of education that call for culturally responsive, culturally relevant and transformative or reality pedagogy. VCEGC can contribute to a student’s inner awakening and humanistic awareness of self and other as the road toward global citizenship widens. VCEGC is about teaching people how to feel good about themselves and their life chances. This is what many youth of African descent are lacking today. They have not been taught to value themselves or others, that their life itself and their families and communities are of value. Many have no faith or confidence in their abilities, always being beaten and put down. Aspiration levels need elevation along with community and individual consciousness. VCEGC aims to cultivate a resilience in students, allowing them to create value in their lives toward individual and social well-being in the face of any adverse conditions

The School-to-Prison Pipeline

Africana youth are entering juvenile and adult prisons at an alarming rate. Many are railroaded through a judicial and penal system, which has a history of unjust incarceration practices. The judicial system has gained lots of rewards for the masses funneled and shunted through the system, including large for-profit prison structures, strong and financially powerful prison guard unions, special contracts awarded for linens, furniture, phones, etc. The prison system is picking up where the educational system has failed. This school-to-prison pipeline must be derailed. The loss of an educated Africana male labor force participating in gainful employment or entrepreneurial endeavors, negates community progress. Moneys that are spent on increasing police forces, building bigger jails, and paying benefits to guards and wardens can be diverted to enhancing educational programs. The intellectual potential of millions of youth is being wasted. Literacy skills are down with some graduating from schools with no ability to read or at a very deficient level. The present state of education is deplorable. It is going to take a new paradigm.

The plight of the school-to-prison pipeline has great bearing on the entire community. When the male is degraded and assaulted by a racist and discriminatory judicial system, lack of educational nurture, and general demise in terms of jobs and employment opportunities, all segments of the community suffer. Wives, mothers, children all have to adapt their lifestyles to the consequences of mass incarceration. Jobs, housing, and employment relate to life chances and educational probabilities and contingencies. Practices aimed to improve educational outcomes must necessarily be holistic and even revolutionary if we are to divert our students from prison to college. It would be advantageous for VCEGC curriculum to be implemented in the Africana community where global consciousness has been stifled and individual self-esteem almost obliterated. The institutionalization of principles of VCEGC into the curriculum offerings for Africana students could prove to be very fruitful and have long-term beneficial effects.