



**Submission to the United Nations
Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent**
On the occasion of its 30th public session, 23-27 May 2022, at UN HQ, New York

Clearing the Way for Children of African Descent to Flourish

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To: ohchr-africandescent@un.org

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This submission is in response to the invitation of the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD) to: 1) provide information; 2) share positive measures; and 3) make recommendations on the human rights situation of Children of African descent globally.

Information

Community Healing Network and the Association of Black Psychologists write to call your attention to the centuries-old lie of White superiority and Black inferiority as the most basic continuing threat to the human rights of children of African descent around the world. Because we, as a global society, have not paid attention to fundamental principles that drive human behavior, our efforts to address the problem of systemic anti-Blackness have been misdirected.

This submission calls on the members of the WGEPAD to confront the lie of White superiority and Black inferiority, and its underlying psychological and societal dynamics—which are at the root of the dehumanization of people of African descent. It is the year 2022 and children of African ancestry all around the world are still burdened by that lie which, all too often, deems them to be less beautiful, less lovable, less capable, less, intelligent, less worthy, less valuable than other children. That lie was devised long ago to justify the Transatlantic trafficking and enslavement of African human beings, and the colonization of Africa. It paved the way for the multigenerational degradation and dehumanization of African people. And it is still with us today, quietly undermining the health, wellbeing, and fundamental dignity and human rights of children of African descent.

The lie is the root cause of the devaluing of Black lives and the underdevelopment of Black communities around the world. It is the most powerful barrier to the progress of people of African ancestry, and unless it is extinguished, our children’s wellbeing will continue to be compromised.

Children of African ancestry, no matter where they find themselves in the world, must grapple with questions of identity, self-worth, acceptance of their authentic selves by the broader global village, and truncated dreams and aspirations. All too often, their basic needs for safety, stability, shelter, food, and social safety nets are unmet or compromised, which undermines their physical, mental, and social health.

For example, children in certain South African schools are not allowed to wear their hair in their cultural styles; youth in the United Kingdom, Portugal, and other parts of Europe must contend with police harassment and over-incarceration; youth in the United States must face over-involvement in the child welfare system, over-policing and juvenile incarceration, and limited access to recreation and quality education; youth in Latin American countries often suffer social invisibility—and if seen, they suffer from societal neglect and marginalization (consider for example, the Garifuna in Honduras and Afro-Cubanos in Cuba).

The recent report on Afro-descendent children in Latin America by the United Nation’s Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean reveals significant deficiencies, gaps, and violations of rights in fundamental areas of development and wellbeing, both in terms of basic health and nutrition indicators, as well as in access to education, and basic infrastructure services.

The organized enslavement and colonization of African people ended officially long ago, but the lie of White superiority and Black inferiority is still adversely affecting the world’s perceptions of us and all too often our perceptions of ourselves.

The lie is part and parcel of the cultural air that we all breathe; a pervasive aspect of the collective psyche of what has been for centuries a highly racialized world circumscribing the lives of Black people from the womb to the tomb. Like the air we breathe, it is unseen and often unrecognized, even by the conscious mind. It is very easy to ignore. It has been ignored for too long, at our children’s peril.

Anti-Black racism is born out of the lie of White superiority and Black inferiority, a mindset that persists, with adverse consequences in every area of life for children of African descent across the Diaspora. This is a serious matter. As noted by the American Academy of Pediatrics, racism is a social determinant of health that has a profound impact on the health status of children, adolescents, emerging adults, and their families. It is a socially transmitted disease passed down through generations, leading to the profound racial inequities we see today.

In the United States, the lie is tacitly at work in the glaring racial disparities between Black and White children and youth in health, education, employment, housing, access to recreation, criminal justice, and nearly every other area of life.

The United Nations (2015) reports that people of African ancestry are today among the “poorest and most marginalized groups” and “have limited access to quality education, health services, housing, and social security.” According to the U.N., these descendants of the victims of enslavement “all too often experience discrimination in their access to justice, and face alarmingly high rates of police violence, together with racial profiling.”

In the United States and around the world, we see shocking examples of people of African descent being treated in dehumanizing ways. The brutal murder of George Floyd in the United States in 2020 gave rise to demonstrations across the Diaspora. That global response shows that no matter where they live, children of African descent face similar assaults on their dignity, their wellbeing, and their lives.

Children and youth across the African Diaspora cry out “Black Lives Matter” precisely because, for far too many people in this world, Black lives do not matter as much as White lives—and that is because of the lie of White superiority and Black inferiority.

Unless, we, people of African ancestry, free ourselves and our children from the lie, our lives will continue to be devalued and we and our children will continue to suffer.

Positive Measures

Since 2006, CHN has been building the global grassroots movement for emotional emancipation to mobilize Black people across the Diaspora to free ourselves and our children from the lie.

This document follows up on our January 28, 2016, written submission (attached), in which we called on the then-members of the WGEPAD to put at the top of its agenda the issue of freedom from the lie of White superiority and Black inferiority for Black people in Africa and across the Diaspora.

We described the work that we were then doing. This submission is an update on the positive measures we have taken since our last report to free children of African ancestry from a deadly mindset—the most fundamental threat to their human rights.

In 2018, CHN launched its 2018-2020 Global Truth Campaign and Tour in collaboration with ABPsi to take our healing initiatives on the road—to equip Black parents and other adults to help Black children “Defy the Lie of Black Inferiority and Embrace the Truth of Black Humanity.”

At each Tour stop, we presented the following movement-building initiatives: ***Breathe, Baby, Breathe***, a retreat for Black parents and other adults responsible for Black children; ***Clearing the Way for Black Children and Families to Flourish***, a town hall meeting to introduce the movement for emotional emancipation to the larger community.

The Truth Tour was launched in October 2018 from New Haven, Connecticut, and made stops in Kingston, Jamaica in November 2018; Los Angeles, California, in March 2019; Rochester, New York, in May 2019; Pasadena, California, in June 2019; Portland, Oregon, in July 2019; Richmond, Virginia, in August 2019; and Omaha, Nebraska, October 2019.

CHN timed its Global Truth Tour to stop in Virginia on August 20-22, 2019, to coincide with the observance of the 400th anniversary of the first recorded forced arrival of Africans in the United States—in Virginia in 1619. By holding our 2019 Valuing Black Lives Global Summit at the place in the United States in which Thomas Jefferson promoted the poisonous lie that Black people are inferior, we sought to honor our ancestors by drawing a sharp line between a past shaped by the lie of Black inferiority and a future driven by the truth of Black humanity.

After the COVID 19 pandemic put a stop to the Truth Tour, CHN moved its activities online. CHN piloted the first virtual intensive version of its signature initiative, the Emotional Emancipation Circle (EEC). The EEC is a culturally grounded self-help support group process through which Black people are working together to heal from the multigenerational trauma caused by the lie. The EEC 101 4-Week Intensive condensed the 10-part EE Circle to make it easier to deliver, with the explicit goal of equipping participants to emerge with personal emotional emancipation proclamations and concrete action plans for freeing themselves from the lie.

The EEC process is resonating with people across the Diaspora. Here are highlights of what participants have shared:

--*“The EEC should be the first line of defence for Afrikans living while Black.”*

--*“It gave us a time to vent and let things out that we have held in for so long.”*

--*“I love the circles because they are safe. They’re letting me unpack years and years of painful things taught to me in direct and covert ways about me and my race. And we are coming to the truth of the beauty of our Blackness.”*

--*“As a social worker who supports elders facing their final days on this earth in hospice care, it breaks my heart that in these final hours of life they are finally able to lay their burdens down and tell their stories of racial trauma.”*

To help meet the urgent need for healing spaces in the Black community as a result of the brutal killing of George Floyd, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the many other assaults on the lives and dignity of Black people, CHN developed and presented a series of virtual Rapid Response Ubuntu Healing Circles. Designed specifically to be deployed in times of racial crisis, these

Rapid Response Healing Circles were offered online in April 2020, throughout the week of jury deliberations in the trial of the officer who murdered Mr. Floyd. Immediately thereafter, in late April, CHN launched a new healing circle called the Emotional Lunch Break, which provides an online space for emotional refreshment every Tuesday at noon, which attracts people across the Diaspora.

Our annual Community Healing/Wear Sky Blue Days celebration, designed to put “time for healing” from the trauma caused by the lie of White superiority and Black inferiority at the top of the global Black community’s agenda, was held online on October 16-18, 2020. On this occasion, CHN launched the Decade to Defy the Lie of Black Inferiority and Embrace the Truth of Black Humanity, a multi-year public education campaign to raise awareness of the continuing power of the lie and ways to eradicate it.

Recommendations

The lie of White superiority and Black inferiority is the thread that runs throughout the fabric of global systemic anti-Blackness.

We urge WGEPAD to:

- 1. Put the issue of freedom from the lie front and center in its deliberations.** At the end of the day, we are psychological beings designed to operate as social beings. The lie has permeated our children’s existence at the most fundamental level. If we do not address the problem at its core, we cannot expect to see sustainable change in the human rights situation of our children;
- 2. Publicly acknowledge and work to persuade others** that unless we, people of African ancestry, address the issue of freedom from the lie, our efforts to improve the lot of Black children will continue to yield limited and fleeting results;
- 3. Hold public sessions focused specifically on the historical and continuing impact of the lie on children of African descent and how the Diaspora can be mobilized to free itself from the lie--once and for all.** This, in effect, requires a resocialization of individuals, societies, and the global village. It also requires a careful assessment of the impact that the dehumanization of people of African ancestry has had on humanity as a whole. In other words, we need to find ways to recalibrate the sense of humanity among all human beings;
- 4. Use its platform to encourage governmental and non-governmental organizations to conduct country-level audits** focused on identifying how the lie manifests itself in their context and the impact it has had on children of African descent, and developing strategies to extinguish the lie;
- 5. Promote across the Diaspora—community initiatives and public education campaigns** aimed specifically at healing from, and extinguishing, the lie.

Our children deserve to live their lives free of the lie. It is our responsibility to clear the way so that our children can flourish.

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