Leading with Courage

A professional learning experience on the African American presence at UC

BOLDER HORIZONS: Towards Racial Equity Everywhere

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#UCDoesEquity equity.ucdavis.edu #schoolismyhustle
EQUITY IS EVERYWHERE

SAYS SUMMIT COLLEGE DAY

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

THE BLACK CHILD LEGACY CAMPAIGN

UC DAVIS
from
ECOSYSTEMS
OF OPPRESSION
towards
ECOSYSTEMS
OF EQUITY
“Can an entity born of and beholden to coloniality wrestle itself free of this genealogy?”

–Leigh Patel

Decolonizing Educational Research, 2016, p. 4
ECOSYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

Toxic Polarities

Privilege—Marginalization
Legal—Illegal
Citizen—Alien
Documented—Undocumented
Haves—Have Nots
Powerful—Powerless
Normal—Exotic
Innocent—Guilty
White—Humanity
“To handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching. It kills one's aspirations and dooms him to vagabondage and crime. ...This crusade is much more important than the anti-lynching movement, because there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom.”

– Carter G. Woodson

*The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 1933, p. 3
2009-2010
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE ACHIEVEMENT
IN OAKLAND UNIFED SCHOOL DISTRICT

• 17% of the population, but accounted for 42% of suspensions annually
• 517 students arrested on campus, 75% were Black
• Only 28% scored proficient in English
• Only 30% scored proficient in Math

“School had me believing I was a ‘bad kid’ who needed to be fixed.”
“I’m convinced that schools expect Black children to underachieve. They don’t push them as hard as they do the other kids. I’m convinced. The way I look at it is, I sent three very brilliant young kids to school, and somewhere along the way, they got messed up. They got discouraged.”

“I always think of white folks... They kill you before you die.”
– Richard Wright, Native Son
What is the DNA of this institution?

• 1800s: Oakland Unified School District was founded in the First school district to use IQ testing to track students:
  
  • Tests developed by Lewis Terman, a cognitive psychologist at the Stanford University Graduate School of Education.
  • Terman is the author of *The Measurement of Intelligence* (1916) and *Genetic Studies of Genius* (1925, 1947, 1959).
  • Terman’s graduate student, Dr. Virgil Dickson, became the head research director for Oakland Unified and carried out additional studies on how to use schools as sorting mechanisms for society.

• 1970: First African American Superintendent, Marcus Foster
• 1973: Marcus Foster Assassinated
• 1990s-2000: Evidence demonstrated that the “risk ratio” of sending African American children to school was actually getting worse. The statistics paralleled the experiences, on the ground, of families who were struggling to hold the district accountable for the education of their children.
2010
OUSD Launches the Office of African American Male Achievement (AAMA)

After examining longitudinal data the Superintendent, Board of Education, and community stakeholders came to a jarring conclusion:

Generation after generation, Black families were sending their children to school but the ideals of an oasis of learning were met with the realities of institutionalized racism, low expectations and marginalization.
SEEDING SUCCESS

“Someone has to take responsibility for showing us the beauty of who we are by demonstrating a counter-narrative to the stereotypical images that surround us.” - Brother Abdel-Qawi, School Principal at Oakland High

- Create a safe space for African American children and youth at school
- Recruit and retain African American male mentors and educators
- Utilize a culturally relevant curriculum based upon a pedagogy of brotherhood
- Provide opportunities to experience life outside of school

“I am grateful to have Brother Foster as a catalyst for this work on our campus and appreciate how he facilitates and models Black love for our young brothers to emulate.” –School Counselor
Engage, Encourage, Empower
2015 Manhood Development Classes

- 450 students at 17 school sites
- 80% of students aspire to succeed in school
- 1.13 GPA increase for MDP students (from 1.04 to 2.17)
- 30% increase in reading
- 20% increase in high school graduation
“This class rebuilds self-esteem, relieves the feeling [of] personal responsibility for symptoms of an unjust and racist social system that most severely affects African American males. The class allows for close connections with positive role models who teach, lead by example, and encourage the members of the class to dare to dream about their futures.”

– Brother Jahi
RIGOROUSLY RELEVANT

- Go Tell It To the Mountain /James Baldwin
- Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization/Anthony T. Browder
- Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop/Jeff Chang
- African People In World History /John Henrik Clarke
- The Pact/Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, & Rameck Hunt
- The Mis-education of the Negro /Carter G. Woodson
- The Autobiography of Malcolm X/Malcolm X
- The African Origin of Civilization/Cheik Anta Diop
- The Wretched of the Earth /Frantz Fanon
- Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey /Amy Jacque Garvey
- The Spook Who Sat By the Door/Sam Greenlee
- Introduction to African Civilizations /John G. Jackson
- The World’s Great Men of Color /J.A. Rogers
- The Golden Age of The Moors & They Came Before Columbus/Ivan Van Sertima
From Ecosystems of Oppression Towards ECOSYSTEMS OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Policy Advocacy → Ban Zero Tolerance, Adopt Restorative Justice, AA-Focused Priorities

Cleaning Up The Pond

Changing School Culture
- Hire and train teachers
- Increased Parent engagement

Changing the Narrative
- Kingmakers of Oakland
- Strategic Communications

Moving Curriculum
- Khepera Curriculum
- 3rd-12th Grade

Inoculating The Fish

Self Esteem & Mentoring
- Manhood Development program
- Man Up Conferences

Out Of Classroom
- Field Trips/College Tours
- Conferences

Leadership Council
- Mentor younger students
- Advocate for better school conditions
SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE

Media Narrative

2012

Black boys see bleak future at school

Oakland Tribune
Detailed reports highlight challenges facing black boys in Oakland schools

2015

Oakland aims to lift students who are young, male and black

Oakland Tribune
Every black male student in Oakland can be a king
100% of OUSD schools required to set asset-based goals/outcomes for African-American male students

**Discipline & Policy**
- Suspensions: 55%
- Incarcerations: 40%

**Equipped Teachers**
- 2x More African American Male Teachers
- 92% retention rate for AA Male Teachers – highest in district

**Relevant Curriculum**
- 3rd-12th grade curriculum with Black/Brown narrative leads to more engaged and inspired students
Oakland dared to name institutionalized racism—and not the children—as the problem. Consequently, all aspects of the Manhood Development Program were predicated on helping these students not just survive in a racist world, but also thrive with the tools to advocate for themselves and their communities.
“If the youth are not initiated into the village, they will burn it down to feel its warmth.”

-African Proverb
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ROOT CAUSES ➔
ROOT SOLUTIONS
SYSTEMS OF ALIGNMENT spurred on by PARTNERSHIPS WITH A PURPOSE
EQUITY

. personal . political . professional .
What are you doing to stop and/or curtail the spread of white supremacy in your self, community, and this world?
"If we’re gonna heal, let it be glorious."

—Warsan Shire as depicted by Beyoncé in Lemonade
The 3 I’s of SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

(Watson, 2019)
Describe being a young Black male in America:

- Scared, hiding, survival
- Underestimated, underappreciated, alone
- Dangerous, humbling, targeted
- Hard, need to be a hard worker, very stereotyped
- Feared, not respected
- Underestimated, statistic, ignorant
- Horrible, bad, sad
- Hard, poverty, poor
- Hard, unfair, scary
- Hard, stereotypical
- Hard, discrimination, dangerous
- Discriminated, unfair, treated differently
- Mistreated, life, hard
- Lonely, broke, oppression
Responsibility

Rigor

Relevance

Relationship
Identity: How Do I See Myself?

• I am a Diamond in the Rough.
• I am a Miracle in Disguise.
• I am the Essence of Time.
• I am Unstoppable.
• I am the Victorious One.
• I am the Blood that Pumps your Main Artery.
• I am that Breath of Fresh Air.
• I am the Bullet in the Chamber.
• I am the Chosen One.
• I am the American Dream.
DIVERSITY + HIGHER EDUCATION =
Dream Work
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What really matters?

BLACK LEADERS AND #BlackChancellorsMatter
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What is the bolder horizon?