

FOREWORD:

THE CRISIS IN BLACK EDUCATION

By **Alicia L. Moore & La Vonne I. Neal**

“When children attend schools that place a greater value on discipline and security than on knowledge and intellectual development, they are attending prep schools for prison.”

Angela Y. Davis

African Americans have endured centuries of racial barriers to education. In each century, African Americans have deployed different strategic and tactical methods (e.g., movements, legislation, presidential executive orders, etc.) to storm all of the educational gates to gain access to education. For example, during the twentieth century, Dr. Carter G. Woodson posited, “When you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his actions.”¹

Control of Black thought in the twenty-first century includes (1) school finance, (2) literacy, (3) the school-to-prison pipeline, (4) criminalizing behavior of Black children in schools, and (5) curriculum, just to name a few. Throughout this issue, guest editor Alfred W. Tatum introduces new scriptwriters—doctoral students who are deploying new action-based research initiatives (e.g., textual lineage of Black students, racialized neoliberalism, educational policy, youth identity development, social justice, necropolitics, etc.). These scholars are reimagining counterstrategies against controlling Black thought using scientific and social tactics. Their collective imagination includes investigating (1) the causes of marginalization and methods to spark genius through curriculum redesign and pedagogical knowledge, (2) what makes Black education Black, (3) the nuances of oppression experienced by Black girls, and (4) the relationship between sovereignty and power.

We leave you with one final thought from Woodson: “Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better.”² The new scriptwriters have inspired us to continue to storm the gates to make it better.

Teacher Resources:

- White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans:

<http://sites.ed.gov/whiecaa/>

“On June 26, 2012, President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order to establish the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans to restore the United States as a global leader in education. President Obama, through his vision and use of his Presidential authority, sought to strengthen the nation by improving educational outcomes for African Americans of all ages and to help ensure that this population would receive an education that prepares them for college and productive careers to contribute to the wellbeing of society.”

- School Funding Fairness: http://www.schoolfundingfairness.org/National_Report_Card_2016.pdf

<http://www.schoolfundingfairness.org>

“The fifth edition of the NRC uses funding data from the 2013 Census fiscal survey, the most recent data available. The report goes beyond raw per-pupil calculations to evaluate whether states are fairly funding their public schools by distributing funding relative to student poverty. To capture the differences in state public education finance, the NRC uses four interrelated ‘fairness measures’—Funding Level, Funding Distribution, Effort, and Coverage—that allow for state comparisons while controlling for regional differences.”

• Black Lives Matter:

<http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

“Black Lives Matter is a chapter-based national organization working for the validity of Black life. They are working to (re)build the Black liberation movement. Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.”

• My Brother’s Keeper Initiative:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper>

“President Obama signed a Presidential Memorandum establishing the My Brother’s Keeper Task Force, an interagency effort, chaired by Assistant to the President and Cabinet Secretary Broderick Johnson, that will help us determine what public and private efforts are working and how to expand upon them, how the Federal Government’s own policies and programs can better support these efforts, and how to better involve State and local officials, the private sector, and the philanthropic community in these efforts.”

Notes:

1. Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, ed. Daryl Michael Scott (Washington, DC: ASALH Press, 1933/2005), xiii.
2. Ibid., 17.



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