



June 1, 2023

Epsy Campbell Barr
Chairwoman
Permanent Forum on People of African Descent

RE: The Federal School Discipline and Climate Coalition's (FedSDC) Written Statement for the 2nd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent

Submitted via pfpad@un.org

The Federal School Discipline and Climate Coalition (FedSDC) supports the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent's (PFPAD) global reparatory justice efforts. As we articulated in our oral and written statement during the inaugural session of the forum, we demand the abolishment of ALL, racist and discriminatory policies and practices that continue to violently brutalize, harm, and traumatize children of African descent. Specifically, we call on the forum to include education as a permanent fixture of its Global Reparatory Justice efforts and its permanent inclusion in the taskforce for people of African descent.

Unfortunately, the U.S. has not taken seriously its responsibility to protect children of African descent. While some blame inaction on politics and complex solutions, the truth of the matter is the U.S. does not prioritize protections for children of African descent. This is especially true in the South, where 21 states continue to engage in slave era tactics and practices that originated in tracking down and returning those who were enslaved.

For years, FedSDC, youth and parent organizers, civil rights advocates, directly impacted persons, and many other activists have campaigned and advocated for the elimination of police in schools and the use of policies and practices that allow the brutalization, physical assault, and traumatic abuse of students, youth and children of African descent. We have pushed for more positive school climate efforts - particularly for Black students who are disproportionately harmed in U.S. schools - and an explicit emphasis on racial equity. We have testified before Congress, and have pushed back across four different administrations on calls to "harden" schools. We have advocated for the removal of police in schools, and have shared the personal experiences of directly impacted families and students, including LGBTQIA+ students and students with disabilities on what makes children of African descent feel safe physically and emotionally in schools.

Yet schools in the U.S. have long been places where Black and Brown students are subject to harm based on biases and prejudices. The presence of police officers in and around schools, and the lack of resources for educators and staff to protect students and youth without the continuous and unnecessary involvement of law enforcement is a threat to the safety of children of African descent and denies them the opportunity to learn and thrive.

The physical and psychological policing of Black and Brown young people is a lethal tactic that upholds centuries-old systems of injustices and oppression. With roots grounded in the system of enslavement in America, policing as an institution has always operated in lockstep with its origins—to terrorize and control Black people. ***Education in the U.S. is not reflected in the cultural and educational pedagogy needed to serve and ensure children of African descent can grow, prosper and fulfill their potential.***

Education in the U.S. has often been seen as a model for the world. This body has a responsibility to ensure that education is centered as a cornerstone for addressing systems inequities, and a laboratory for the growth and development of students, youth, and children of African descent to challenge the educational ideologies designed to subordinate and harm them, , and ensure education systems that support state-sanctioned violence and erase the cultures of the African Diaspora are not replicated.

Children of African descent, as have been mentioned throughout the 2nd Session of the PFPAD, no longer need to be subjected to systems that don't support their well-being, and are inequitable and racist. We can no longer allow these deep and disturbing racialized practices and anti-Black racism to continue.

Now more than ever we have to stand united, and demand a better global space and system for our children of African descent. Initiatives to advance racial equity should ensure who you are, where and to whom you were born, where you live, and the color of your skin does not determine your access, opportunities, and outcomes in life. Students, youth, and children of African descent have fallen through the cracks of many systems and are hard to reach unless there are explicit, intentional strategies to identify them and provide tailored support.

To achieve this end and address the aforementioned issues, FedSDC recommends:

1. Intentionally centering education in ***ANY*** task force created under or within PFPAD that seeks to touch all the bodies of work impacting people of African Descent. Education for children of African descent is paramount to their success. This should also include digital equity, and culturally sustainable and relevant African historical pedagogy.
2. Establishment of a second decade in 2025 that includes greater accountability of member states in how they address inequitable, racially discriminatory, and anti-Black policies that negatively impact children of African descent.
3. Creation of structures and systems where the sessions of PFPAD are engaging and focus on actionable agenda that creates outcomes necessary for addressing anti-Blackness in education, and establishing a global youth table focused on advancing racial equity in education.
4. Support the global elimination of corporal punishment, e.g., paddling, whipping, slapping, mechanical and chemical restraint.

5. Support police-free schools and investigate the widespread and systemic use of racist policies and practices that allow and promote violence against children; including state-sanctioned violence against children of African Descent.

Thank you! We look forward to working with you and deepening our collaboration with the forum on these critically important issues.

ABOUT FEDSDC

FedSDC is a diverse group of local community organizers, national organizations, and directly impacted students, youth, families, and community members committed to advocating for legislative and federal action to protect the interests and educational rights of Black and Brown students and youth through a racial and educational equity lens. Establishing police-free schools while implementing effective, non-punitive, and culturally-sustaining practices in schools and alternatives to school discipline, is a core value for our coalition.

Sincerely,

The Federal School Discipline and Climate Coalition (FedSDC)

Our coalition partners present at the 2nd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent:

Economic Equity Roundtable
National Center for Youth Law
National Parents Union
Tech Equity Council
The Coalition on International Aid
The Daniel Initiative

Cc: Members of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent