UN PFPAD Remarks on Education
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Good morning,

My name is Delvin Davis, Senior Policy Analyst with the Southern Poverty Law Center. For over 50 years, our organization has strived for social justice, primarily in the Southern United States. Over the course of these decades, Black people – Black children – have endured discrimination and injustice from the country they call home. Much of that injustice is still pervasive today.

It's the experience of living in a land that needs you but does not love you.

It's the experience of being seen as a source of profit before personhood.

It's the experience that assumes Black teenagers are closer to criminals than children.

In the Southern United States, there are some states that suspend a Black student from school once every 15 minutes. At that rate, by the time we return to our respective homes from this convening, we'll have lost hundreds more to the beginning of the school-to-prison pipeline.

The school-to-prison pipeline is a systemic set of policies that are punitive in nature, forces more suspensions and expulsions, increases the presence of law enforcement in our schools, and ultimately funnels children into our penal system.

In the Southern United States, Black children are arrested 3 to 4 times more often than their white counterparts. Once arrested, they are put into facilities (some run by for-profit companies) well-documented for physical and sexual abuse, excessive use of solitary confinement, and their disruption to education – all contributing to a revolving door of recidivism.

When it comes to Black children, our youth justice system is designed more for punishment, control, and convenient disposal than it does care, rehabilitation, or love – all things children need to thrive.

As Nelson Mandela once said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

All of Africa's children deserve a world that reflects Mandela's vision. Thank you.