

Dr William Ackah Transatlantic Roundtable on Religion and Race and Birkbeck, University of London

Recommendations for the session on Education

I recommend to the forum that it lobbies UNESCO to set aside a proportion of its Higher Education Chairs and award them to African descendant scholars from global south countries with a view to establishing interdisciplinary African descendant centres of Excellence in multiple global south sites. These research and teaching centres would become hubs whereby African descendant scholars and students from across the globe could interact and work on African descendant based solutions to African descendant problems. Wisdom and knowledge exists in abundance in communities in the global south but for far too long power and resources mean that all the major academic centres of excellence where cutting edge research and teaching is taking place is outside of the global south. Many of the brightest African descendant scholars get lured by scholarships, research grants and other incentives to move to the global north and other places, where their knowledge and skills are tapped primarily to benefit the same places that continue to exploit and denigrate African descendants.

We need to reverse this so the recommendation is that we push for spaces of Pan-African interdisciplinary centres of excellence. Institutions that have benefited from enslavement and colonialism and who continually exploit global south communities via educational and labour market extraction need to be the ones to initially pay for the establishment of these centres. Possibly via a levy on each international student they recruit to their programmes.

I am also recommending that African descendant education forum stakeholders lobby higher education agencies at the UN, the Commonwealth and other international forum to establish scholarships and research grants that facilitate linkages and connections amongst African descendant researchers and educators around the world. The flow and production of people and knowledge should be from global south to global south and from global north to global south, with infrastructure being in the global south to produce the knowledge and to facilitate exchanges of people and ideas.

I recommend that with permission, academics and other educators with interest in this should be identified via the secretariat and lists with contact details shared so that these recommendations can be refined and actualised by an African descendent forum education group without all the burden falling on the secretariat to organise and facilitate meetings.