



## **AFRICAN COMMUNITIES TOGETHER**

Esteemed delegates, fellow advocates, and Honorable Chair,

My name is Dauda Sesay, the National Network Director at African Communities Together. I lead the African Immigrant Leadership Forum (AILEF), a collaborative of over 210 leaders/members representing 110 African-led and African-focused organizations in the United States. This is one of the largest networks of people of African Descent in the United States, where we share information and resources to strengthen the existing immigrant rights ecosystem and our collective effort to advocate for issues impacting our communities.

Today, as we confront the issue of systemic racism, we must remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words: "Our lives begin to end when we remain silent about things that matter." Let us refuse to remain silent. Let us raise our voices and effect meaningful change.

The systemic injustices facing people of African descent worldwide are stark reminders of the pervasive anti-Black inhumane immigration policies. These policies are rooted in discrimination and prejudice, seeking to divide us and set us against each other. But we refuse to be pawns in this divisive game. Instead, we choose to be proactive and demonstrate our collective strength. That is why ACT led the formation of the largest National Network of African leaders, African-led organizations, and African-serving institutions to build the Bigger We. ACT plays a leading role in demanding the Biden Administration provide Humanitarian Parole for Sudanese fleeing war.

Our journey toward justice begins with education reform. We must prioritize the development of inclusive curricula that accurately reflect the histories, contributions, and experiences of people of African descent. Through education, we can counteract the perpetuation of racial prejudice and ignorance, paving the way for a more equitable society.

In tandem with education reform, we must advocate for policy changes across all sectors. From immigration to healthcare, employment, and criminal justice, we cannot tolerate the continued perpetuation of disparities that disproportionately affect our communities. It is incumbent upon us to challenge these systems of oppression and advocate for policies that promote equity and justice for all.

Central to our efforts to address systemic racism is the pursuit of reparations for people of African descent. Reparations, including financial compensation, access to quality education and healthcare services, and economic development initiatives in Black communities, are not just a desire but a demand for justice. It is time for us to recognize and rectify the historical injustices suffered by descendants of enslaved Africans.

As we embark on this transformative journey, let us remember the power of collective action. Together, we can amplify our voices and effect meaningful change. As former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan once said, "There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women." Similarly, there is no force more powerful than the collective action of a united community.

In conclusion, let us seize this moment to act, to empower, and to transform. Let us raise our voices and demand justice, equity, and dignity for all people of African descent. Together, we can build a future where systemic racism is eradicated, and every individual is treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Thank you.

Dauda Sesay

National Network Director