

COMMISSION ON RESEARCH IN BLACK EDUCATION

Vital Principles for Education, Socialization, Research and African People

A central concern of the Commission on Research in Black Education has been: How can education research effectively improve the lives of Black people and advance human understanding? To deepen our understanding of what is needed to address the fundamental problems of Black education and research, CORIBE began its work through a culturally nurturing process-building approach that consisted of a series of innovative inquiries and demonstration projects including: focused analyses of the state of research knowledge and best practices in Black education, a cross-disciplinary focus on culture as an asset in learning and establishing a network of scholars and educators on the global, regional and community levels linked electronically.

At CORIBE meetings, including the July 2000 invitational Working Colloquium where CORIBE's activities were reviewed and discussed, Commissioners, CORIBE scholars and invited guests focused on conceptual and methodological questions that are on the cutting edge of thought and practice in Black education. Since the historic *Brown vs the Board of Education* decision that declared segregated and unequal schools illegal, the research establishment's predominate focus on Black education has produced negligible enduring positive effects. The Vital Principles that follow represent the consensus that emerged as central to CORIBE's concerns about the quality of knowledge this research has produced as well as research practice with regard to Black education and socialization. These Vital Principles synthesize recurring issues that have emerged as central to CORIBE's concerns about the quality of knowledge and Black education and socialization.

1. We exist as African People, an ethnic family. Our perspective must be centered in that reality.
2. The priority is on the African ethnic Family over the individual. Because we live in a world where expertness in alien cultural traditions (that we also share) have gained hegemony, our collective survival and enhancement must be our highest priorities.
3. Some solutions to problems that we will identify will involve differential use of three modes of response to domination and hegemony: adaptation—adopting what is deemed useful; improvisation—substituting or improvising alternatives that are more sensitive to our culture; and resistance—resisting that which is destructive and not in the best interests of our people.
4. The “ways of knowing” provided by the arts and humanities are often more useful in informing our understanding of our lives and experiences and those of other oppressed people than the knowledge and methodologies of the sciences that have been privileged by the research establishment despite the often distorted or circumscribed knowledge and understanding this way of knowing produces.
5. Paradoxically, from the perspective of the education research establishment, knowledge production is viewed as the search for facts and (universal) truth, while the circumstances of our social and existential condition require the search for meaning and understanding.
6. The priority is on research validity over “inclusion”. For research validity highest priority must be placed on studies of:
 - a) African tradition (history, culture and language);
 - b) Hegemony (uses of schooling/socialization and incarceration, for example);

- c) Equity (funding, teacher quality, content and access to technology); and
 - d) Beneficial practice (at all levels of education, from childhood to eldership).
7. Research informs practice and practice informs research in the production and utilization of knowledge; therefore context is essential in research:
 - a) Cultural/historical context;
 - b) Political/ economic context; and
 - c) Professional context, including the history of AERA and African people.
 8. We require power and influence over our common destiny. Rapid globalization of the economy and cyber-technology are transforming teaching, learning and work itself. Therefore, we require access to education that serves our collective interests, including assessments that address cultural excellence and a comprehensive approach to the interrelated health, learning and economic needs of African people.
 9. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims, and the UNESCO World Education 2000 Report recently issued in Dakar, Senegal affirms, “education is a fundamental human right” and “an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century.” We are morally obligated to “create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning and socialization with clearly defined levels of achievement for all.” Such learning environments must include appropriate curricula and teachers who are appropriately educated and rewarded.
 10. African people are not empty vessels. We are not new to the study of and practice of education and socialization that is rooted in deep thought. We will not accept a dependent status in the approach and solution to our problems.

Recently, Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, during a state visit to Bahia, Brazil, urged Brazilians to join in the African Renaissance by recognizing and celebrating Brazil’s Africanness. CORIBE is advancing a transformative vision of education education, socialization and research that can contribute to the “African Century,” – a vision that attunes our work and consciousness to our cultural knowledge base. In addition, CORIBE’s globally inclusive research and agenda will address our concerns about the conditions of education that Black people “here and there” share with other groups, particularly other historically marginalized people of color in the Southern hemisphere. Black education is the lifeblood and economic mainstay of the education research establishment. The Commission asks, on the other hand, can research become one of the forms of struggle for Black education? These Vital Principles will support the struggle against mainstream approaches and ameliorative research practices that have failed to alleviate the crisis in Black education.