

COMMISSION ON RESEARCH IN BLACK EDUCATION

Accomplishments & Resources

1. **An Organized Commission Structure and Network of Participants.** Commissioners have been appointed and an advisory body has been organized as an Elders' Council; an effective group process has been established, including an Executive Steering Committee and AERA members constitute a Planning Group; and contractual agreements with consultants and staff have been executed.
2. **Four Commissioned Research Papers & Invited Commentaries.** (a) "The State of Knowledge About the Education of African Americans" (Carol D. Lee); (b) "Teaching Black Students: Best Practices" (Michele Foster); (c) "Black Populations Globally: The Cost of Underutilization of Blacks in Education" (Kassie Freeman); and (d) "Colonial Education: Retrospects and Prospects" (William H. Watkins). These papers, and commentaries by Beverly Lindsay, Ibrahima Seck (Senegal), Petronilha Gonçalves e Silva (Brazil) and Terezinha Juraci Machado da Silva (Brazil) are available on the CORIBE website. Commentaries and Research Reports have also been prepared by Cecile Wright (UK) and Hassimi Maiga (Mali). A. Wade Boykin and Robert E. Slavin also served as discussants at the AERA 2000 symposium.
3. **CORIBE Website.** <www.CORIBE.org>: The Commission website is a resource for those transformative perspectives on Black education, teacher development and research. In addition to supporting public dialogue, disseminating research results and showcasing exemplary curriculum and pedagogy, the CORIBE website has served as a communications hub for the professional education and training of graduate students. The website has also enabled interaction among an active network of scholars and proved particularly useful for the involvement of international educators in Africa, Brazil and the Great Britain. Appropriate "plug-ins" for sound and video, available as free down-loads (Macromedia Flash, QuickTime and Real Player) are necessary to access the multi-media materials on the website.
4. **Online Graduate Institute, PD&T Mini-Course & CORIBE Evaluation Report.** A 6-week online graduate student course included a critical examination of epistemological alternatives to mainstream research paradigms. This distance learning course engaged participants in research and mentoring experiences centered on the Africana worldview perspective and cultural knowledge base. In addition to this course, the OnLine Institute consisted of mentoring experiences and a 4-hour mini-course (co-sponsored with the Professional Development & Training Committee) at the AERA meeting. The mentoring teams were led by Mwalimu Shjuua & Nah Dove (DIRECT Center Database Group and Online Journal Group); Annette Henry (the Critical Analysis Group); Cirecie-West Olatunji (the Web-based Research/Readers Theatre Group); and Linda C. Tillman (the Evaluation Group). The mini-course workshop, "Let's Sit Down Together (OnLine) and Talk about a Little Culture," presenters were faculty and mentors of the online course. Visiting CORIBE Scholars, Ibrahima Seck (Blaise Daigné High School (Dakar, Senegal); Petronilha B. G. e Silva (Fed. Univ. of Sao Carlos, Brazil) and Terezinha Juraci Machado da Silva (Ritter Dos Reis College, Porto Alegre, Brazil) participated in the mini-course with CORIBE Elders, Frank Bonilla and Baba Kwame Ishangi. Renowned New Orleans actor John O'Neal (Junebug Productions, Inc.) stopped by to observe the adaptation of his "Story Circle" methodology during the workshop. The Institute course syllabus and Blackboard.com materials are available on the www.coribe.org website. An animated multi-media presentation of sacred African American music, "A Charge to Keep I Have," opens the Institute page (see "What We Do"). The Evaluation Team, headed by Linda C. Tillman (University of New Orleans), and including William Franklin (Cal State LA) and Jean Ishibashi (U.C. Berkeley), completed a

participatory Evaluation Report that also assessed other CORIBE activities. OnLine Institute Co-Directors: Annette Henry (Univ. of Illinois, Chicago) and Joyce King (MEC, CUNY).

5. **Web-based Research.** A qualitative research/mentoring component of the OnLine Institute involved collecting data on the experiences of Black faculty in academia, analyzing and performing the findings in a Readers Theatre/Minstrel Performance format: “Incidents in the Lives of Harriet Jacobs’ s Children in the Academy”—a session at AERA 2000. Web-based Research Group Leader: Professor Cirecie West-Olatunji, Xavier University of Louisiana. The Program, available on the CORIBE website’s Demonstration Research link, includes important historical information about the history of minstrelsy.

6. **Culturally-Nurturing Research Demonstration Project.** “The People Who Could Fly: An Introduction to Songhoy-Senni,” the language and culture of the Songhoy people of Mali, West Africa, is a research demonstration project that CORIBE supported (See “What We Do” page). The Songhoy Empire in Mali was the last of Africa’s great classical civilizations. This web-enhanced course includes five multi-media prototype lessons that were developed and pilot-tested with high school students (New York) and demonstrated for teachers (New Orleans and Staten Island). These lessons, based on Hassimi Maiga’s Conversational Songhoy Language textbook, and his experience teaching Songhoy at Southern University in New Orleans, immersed learners in African deep thought, language, heritage, contemporary cultural practices and Africanist survivals in African American culture. An animated lesson on “*Black Is*” presents essential concepts in the Songhoy language, proverbs and a folktale that demonstrate the positive connotations of “blackness” in the Songhoy culture and worldview (e.g., “*wayne bibi*”—“Black sun” or “*hari bibi*”—“black water”). A lesson on “Counting” includes a video clip of a Songhoy wedding event: a Garasa (Griot) counts the bride’s gifts and gives every tenth item to the groom’s sisters. The video clip of two Songhoy women greeting each other in the lesson on “Greetings” demonstrates the quintessential importance of respect for family and social relations among Songhoy people. The course also includes documentary photos and videos of the “Enthronization Ceremony” of the Paramount Songhoy Chief that took place in Gao, Mali, January 27, 2000. Research Team Participants: Dr. Hassimi Maiga (Univ. of Mali), Dr. Joyce King (MEC, CUNY) and DrRaShon (TekAfrika Digital Media), were assisted by Evelyn Crawford, filmmaker and Ibrahima Seck, camera person.

7. **Regional meeting/Community Outreach Strategy.** A diverse community Research Priority Panel convened by CORIBE and local sponsors in Detroit, MI, in March 2000 urged researchers to focus attention on and support learning experiences that engage youth and teachers in inter-generational community-building activities. Co-Convenors: Grace Lee Boggs (Community Activist), Alma H. Young (Dean, Wayne State Univ.), Glenda Price (President, Mary Grove College and Detroit School Board member). Participants included Chinese-, Latino-, Palestinian-, European- and African American educators, parents, teachers and public and private school administrators.

8. **Working Colloquium.** A meeting of Commissioners, the Elders Council, AERA leaders and invited scholars and community participants held on St. Simon’s Island, Georgia, June 30 - July 2, 2000, focused on “Framing a Transformative Research & Action Agenda for the New Millennium.” A The meeting began with a “Story Circle” on transformation in education and a Keynote Conversation among Sylvia Wynter, Edmund W. Gordon and Asa G. Hilliard III. In addition to discussing CORIBE’s commissioned research papers, working sessions focused on vital principles for Black education and socialization, criteria for the evaluation and application of research in Black education, African American/African cultural sanctity and the vocation of the Black scholar/educator. The setting, a guided heritage tour of the Black experience on the island and a cultural presentation reinforced connections between today’s educational and socio-economic problems and the history of

African peoples of the Diaspora. The Colloquium papers by Sylvia Wynter and Asa Hilliard as well as the AERA Task Force report prepared by Edmund Gordon are available on the website.

9. **Congressional Black Caucus Conference/CORIBE Open Forum & Commission Meeting**.

The CORIBE website was featured at the Congressional Black Caucus Education Braintrust conference, "Closing the Digital Divide: Build Schools First," hosted by CORIBE Commissioners and Congressman Major R. Owens September 16, 2000. Ronnie Lowenstein (President, the Educational Technology Think Tank/ ET-3), organized the conference. CORIBE's Open Forum, "Capturing Cultures and Empowering Communities through Technology," was presented in collaboration with the National Commission on African American Education and the National Association of Black School Educators (NABSE). Two consultants of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, Karen Buller, National Indian Telecommunications Initiative < www.niti.org > and Bruce Lincoln, Columbia University <<http://hr2k1.adcorp.org>>, Robert P. Moses and the Algebra Project staff and CORIBE Scholar, Hassimi Maiga (Univ. of Mali/Medgar Evers College, CUNY), presented technology demonstrations.

10. **Soros Foundation Open Society Institute Grant**. The Commission has received a grant from the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute to document and distribute 5000 copies of a report on the Commission's work in the form of an interactive multi-media Compact Disk (CD). The CD will include "best practices" exemplars featured at the CORIBE "Educational Excellence Expo." (April 2001).

11. **DIRECT Center DataBase**. CORIBE provided technical support for the implementation of the online relational database, an electronic abstract retrieval system, the "Database on Culture Transmission in the African World" (DCTAW). Developed by Mwalimu Shujaa and Nah Dove (Medgar Evers College, CUNY), this bibliographic database consists of key terms and concepts embedded in document abstracts as links to an online glossary. The prototype of the DCTAW can be accessed from the Demonstration Research link on the CORIBE website.

12. **AERA Sessions**. The Commission sponsored two sessions at AERA 2000. The research papers were presented at a symposium, "The People Who Could Fly: A New Millennium Research Agenda on Black Education." Reverend Dwight Webster presented an overview of Black sacred music and the Christian Unity Baptist Church choir performed the metered hymn, "A Charge to Keep I Have," the theme song of the OnLine Institute. (See Research Papers above.) Division G sponsored: "Incidents in the Lives of Harriet Jacob's Children in the Academy: A New Millennium Minstrel Readers Theatre Performance." (See web-based research above.) At the AERA 2001 annual meeting, the Commission will present an interactive "Educational Excellence Expo: Search for Knowledge: Using Our Cultural Practice." Consult www.AERA.net or the CORIBE website for information regarding the AERA 2002 annual meeting program.

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 process-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 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. For example, discussions among the Commissioners and Elders Council generated ten "Vital Principles" for Black education, socialization and research. These principles serve as the conceptual framework the Transformative Research and Action Agenda presented in the Report of the Commission. These Vital Principles below 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, that “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 Black 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 action agenda addresses 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.