Centering Race and Racism on the Road to Justice for Children and Families

The Black Child National Agenda

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Fellow, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG)
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Keynote for PEC's Building Early Links for Learning (BELL) Summit
November 29, 2022
I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I LIVE, WORK, AND BUILD MY FAMILIES’ ECONOMIC WEALTH ON THE LUMBEE TRIBE TAKEN THROUGH COLONIZATION AND ATTEMPTED ERADICATION BY SETTLERS.

LUMBEE TRIBE PROVIDES PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ALL TRIBAL MEMBERS WITHIN THE AREAS OF CUMBERLAND, HOKE, ROBESON, AND SCOTLAND COUNTIES IN NC.
Honoring Black Bodies

Many parts of the US was built by enslaved Africans and their enslaved descendants, and only within the past generation were Black people afforded full rights.

Today, Black individuals and People of Color disproportionately work as service staff across the country. This community is largely responsible for the maintenance of our daily lives, the food and food service available, child care, health care, and many other basic necessities that make our lives easy. The wealth of our nation is due to the forced free labor of these Africans.
About the Equity Research Action Coalition

• University collaborative at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at UNC-Chapel Hill

• focuses on co-constructing actionable research and evaluation with practitioners and policymakers to support the optimal development of Black children prenatally through childhood.

• works at the intersection of research, practice, and policy through anti-racist and cultural wealth frameworks
Take home message

• Early years **matter** for children’s healthy development.

• Addressing homelessness must be **holistic and anti-racist**.

• Attending to the **3Ps** – protection, promotion, and preservation.

• Activate the **Black Child National Agenda**

• Engage in **R.I.C.H.E.R.** actions through our self-inquiry and coalition building
Seeing children and families beyond their homelessness
Ground setting
Early experiences are essential for **building brain** connections that underlie healthy development.

Early adversity can change the **timing of critical periods** of brain development.

Healthy development of the child begins in the **preconception period**.

**Supportive relationships** between the child and the adults in life are **essential** and buffer against stress.

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Lessons from the Science of Early Development

The influence of **access to basic resources** prenatally is powerful and limit chronic stress and help close racial and economic disparities.

Both **institutional racism** and interpersonal experiences of discrimination can influence the health and well-being of both children and adults in many ways.

Advancing child health and development starts prior to birth and matters throughout the life course.

FIGURE 1-1 Variable health trajectories: Life course approach. NOTE: This figure includes several examples; however, there are many other variables that impact health trajectories (see Chapter 3). SOURCE: Adapted from Halfon et al., 2014.
Key Data from Child Care Services Association

Findings

This report demonstrates that two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, Black families and their babies are surviving, although they continue to feel the weight of racism, discrimination, economic strain, and other inequities, compounded by the global pandemic. Racism and discrimination remain a concern for Black families and their babies, along with economic instability and addressing mental health challenges. Our key findings
Over a third of families in poverty have hard time paying for housing; almost 20% of Black middle-income families have difficulty with housing

### Table 1. Black Families’ Material Hardships

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties Paying for Basic Needs (Hard/Very Hard)</td>
<td>32.29%</td>
<td>7.65%</td>
<td>26.64%</td>
<td>7.02%</td>
<td>-5.65%</td>
<td>-0.63%</td>
<td>-17.50%</td>
<td>-8.24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty Paying for:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>45.34%</td>
<td>20.77%</td>
<td>47.25%</td>
<td>13.68%</td>
<td>1.91%</td>
<td>-7.09%</td>
<td>4.21%</td>
<td>-34.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>34.46%</td>
<td>17.49%</td>
<td>35.32%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.86%</td>
<td>-6.38%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>-36.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>30.32%</td>
<td>16.94%</td>
<td>24.77%</td>
<td>11.97%</td>
<td>-5.55%</td>
<td>-4.97%</td>
<td>-18.30%</td>
<td>-29.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Care and Education</td>
<td>18.13%</td>
<td>13.67%</td>
<td>14.68%</td>
<td>9.40%</td>
<td>-3.45%</td>
<td>-4.27%</td>
<td>-19.03%</td>
<td>-31.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>10.88%</td>
<td>11.48%</td>
<td>11.92%</td>
<td>4.27%</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
<td>-7.21%</td>
<td>9.56%</td>
<td>-62.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material Hardships (3 or More)</td>
<td>29.02%</td>
<td>16.39%</td>
<td>25.23%</td>
<td>12.82%</td>
<td>-3.79%</td>
<td>-3.57%</td>
<td>-13.06%</td>
<td>-21.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving Public Benefits</td>
<td>53.91%</td>
<td>18.58%</td>
<td>59.07%</td>
<td>13.79%</td>
<td>5.16%</td>
<td>-4.79%</td>
<td>9.57%</td>
<td>-25.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Free Food</td>
<td>48.96%</td>
<td>22.95%</td>
<td>22.48%</td>
<td>3.42%</td>
<td>-26.48%</td>
<td>-19.53%</td>
<td>-54.08%</td>
<td>-85.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 782; RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6, 2020, and February 16, 2022.*

Equity Research Action Coalition
UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
Black households less likely to own homes and homes less likely to have equity compared to other families.

Children who are experiencing homelessness are likely experiencing other adversities.

- low wealth
- low income
- poverty
- food insecurity
- low birth weight & preterm
- infant mortality
- maternal mortality
- housing insecurity
- limited early education access
- suspension/expulsion
- AND SO MUCH MORE...
Housing Justice!?!?!?
3Ps of Justice: Transformative Agenda

PROTECTION – How are we ensuring children and families are free from harm, trauma, and adversity?

PROMOTION – How are we fostering the health, wealth, and educational excellence of children and families?

PRESERVATION – How are we preserving the family, culture, language, community, and identity of children and families?
10 Policies

1. Maintain Child Tax Credits and Income Supports
2. Address Racial Disparities in Wages and Career Advancement Opportunities
3. Invest in Black-Owned and Black-Led Businesses, Organizations, and Institutions
4. Expand the Family and Medical Leave Act
5. Expand Health Insurance
6. Expand Universal Access to Early Care and Education
7. Address Harsh and Unfair Discipline Practices
8. Ensure Equity in Early Intervention and Special Education
9. Ensure Culturally Responsive Curricula and Practices through Workforce Development and Training
10. Pass Reparations
3Ps + Black Child National Agenda

**PROTECTION POLICIES**

1. Maintain Child Tax Credits and Income Supports

7. Address Harsh and Unfair Discipline

8. Ensure Equity in Early Intervention and Special Education

**PROMOTION POLICIES**

2. Address Racial Disparities in Wages & Career Advancements

4. Expand Family and Medical Leave Act

5. Expand Health Insurance

6. Expand Universal Access to Early Care and Education

**PRESERVATION POLICIES**

3. Invest in Black-Owned and Black-Led Business, Organizations, and Institutions


10. Pass Reparations
Where do we go from here?
BE RICHER!

- Re-educate about history
- Integrate rather than just desegregate
- Critical consciousness
- Humility of privilege + Human Dignity
- Erase racism + other -isms
- Re-vision different ways & approaches + Radical mindset

Our country will be enriched by limiting the dehumanization of people and eradication of racism and bias in all aspects of our world, including programming, policy, & research.
Take home message

• Early years **mater** for children’s healthy development.

• Addressing homelessness must be **holistic and anti-racist**.

• Attending to the **3Ps** – protection, promotion, and preservation.

• Activate the **Black Child National Agenda**

• Engage in **R.I.C.H.E.R.** actions through our self-inquiry and coalition building
Resources

Advancing Equity & Embracing Diversity in Early Childhood Education
Elevating Voices & Actions
Theresa D. Suka, Kristen Harper, Christina M. Lloyy, and Janna Mandling
October 2021

Black Parents and Their Babies: The Dual Pandemic of Racism and COVID-19, 2019–2022
October 2022

Black and Latino Families with Babies Reaping Value from the Child Tax Credit
By Priscilla J. Tucker, Melanie Bolotin, Lilian layout, and Joanne Y.T.
October 2021

Introduction
This is the third book in a series that aims to achieve the impact of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) on economic household by African American and Latin American families. The book provides information on how to help families with children under the age of 17 in 2021. The child tax credit is a refundable credit of up to $3,600 per child under the age of 17. For families with children under the age of 17 who qualify, a $3,000 credit is available for the child tax credit.

Building a Universal Preschool System Around Head Start
Theresa D. Suka, for Tomorrow's Recovery
August 2021

Black Parents and Their Babies: Attending to the First 1,000 Days

Do Not Look Away
Embracing ANTI-BIAS Classrooms
Theresa D. Suka, Joanne Y.T., Rona Dorwe, and Janna Mandling
October 2021

Equity Research Action Coalition
UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
Thank you!!

Comments?? & Questions??

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