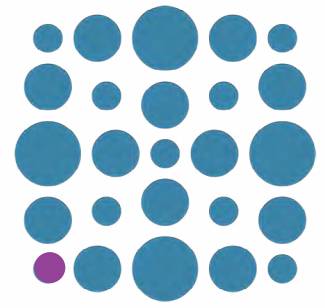


# Background

## The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development

By Mika Hackner



### Summary

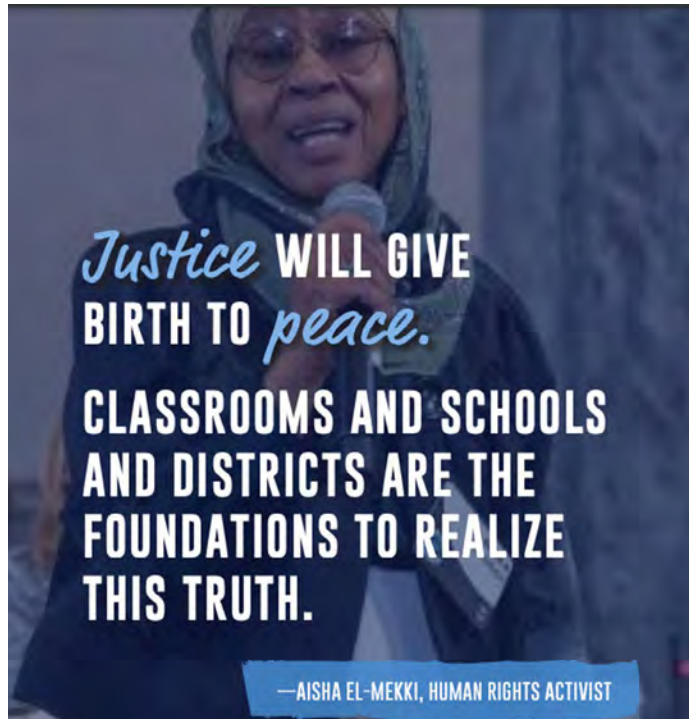
The Center for Black Educator Development (CBED) is a non-profit focused on increasing the number of black teachers in Pennsylvania and across the United States. The organization has received millions of dollars in donor funds, grants from the Philadelphia Board of Education and various school districts. The founder of the organization was on Governor Josh Shapiro's education committee transition team and has worked closely with both Philadelphia and Pennsylvania legislators.

CBED advocates a **radical "anti-racism" agenda - its vision is that black students will only be taught by black teachers.**

It wants K-12 education to be focused on a damaging and divisive anti-racism, DEI agenda. The organization explicitly states that **education is a "political act" and that educators should be "educator-activists."**<sup>1</sup>

**The founder of CBED is Sharif El-Mekki whose parents were members of the Black Panther Party and were part of a cohort that went to Iran by the invitation of the Ayatollah Khomeini.** El-Mekki's mother thought positively about the Ayatollah and El-Mekki himself carried out his middle school education in Iran before returning there as an adult. **He speaks positively about his experiences in Iran under the Ayatollah's regime** while being highly critical of the United States, which he sees as racist and anti-intellectual.

El-Mekki, as a member of the Institution for Higher Education Educator Diversity Consortium<sup>2</sup>, is involved with developing the 'anti-racist' guidelines to be adopted by all Pennsylvania school districts.<sup>3</sup> The guidelines are currently the subject of a lawsuit by various school districts, teachers and parents.<sup>4</sup>



The organization holds an annual [Black Men in Education Conference](#). This year the speakers include **Angela Davis and Abeer Ramdan-Shinnawi**, who runs 'Altair Consulting', an educational consulting firm helping with curriculum development, 'affinity spaces' and other areas of 'professional development.' **Shinnawi also holds extreme views about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.** She has posted on her company's instagram in apparent support of Hamas' attack on October 7th.

Why is an organization whose founder has a radical background and whose organizational vision and mission is explicitly segregationist given a seat at the table to determine the educational direction of Pennsylvania? Why has this organization received millions of dollars from the likes of the Zuckerberg foundation? And why has it received public funding?

1. <https://thecenterblacked.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CBED21-A2E-Retention-Toolkit-012.pdf>

2. <https://www.paeddiversity.org/about>

3. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/Teachers-Administrators/Certification%20Preparation%20Programs/Framework%20Guidelines%20and%20Rubrics/Culturally-Relevant%20and%20Sustaining%20Education%20Program%20Framework%20Guidelines.pdf>

4. <https://thomas-more-society-images.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/4.17.23-Petition-for-Review-submitted-TS-w.o.-attachments.pdf>

<https://www.cbsnews.com/pittsburgh/news/pennsylvania-school-districts-law-suit-new-state-education-guidelines/>



### Supporting Materials

#### Center for Black Educator Development advocates segregation

The Center for Black Educator Development (CBED) began in 2019. CBED was formed to increase the number of black teachers in classrooms.

In its short life - from 2019 to 2023, the Center for Black Educator Development, under its founder Sharif El-Mekki, has established itself as an influential non-profit in Pennsylvania and a key player in educational

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
CONSULTATION IMPACT  
HIGHLIGHTS**

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**DELAWARE RED CLAY CONSOLIDATED & PENNSYLVANIA COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
With support from the Rodel Foundation, we provided technical assistance to teacher-leaders, training them to hold affinity conversations.

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
For this school district that serves 1.1 million students, the Center supported the creation and implementation of a tailored recruitment, hiring and onboarding plan.

**FRESNO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
For this school district that serves 74,000 students, the Center expanded its workshops in anti-bias, anti-racist and equity leadership to reach more educators (from 280 to 400).  
  
We helped the district examine root causes and explore interventions for addressing the disproportionately higher disciplinary infractions and suspension rates among Black students compared to their white peers.  
  
We continued designing and facilitating professional-development series for district high schools, including one focused on supporting a school's climate and culture committee. We also organized and facilitated a districtwide, two-day high school affinity space summit for high school students.

**SAN ANTONIO CITY EDUCATION PARTNERS**  
For 50 educators of San Antonio City, the Center consulted on strengthening their capacity to recruit, hire, onboard and retain teachers of color.  
  
We focused on helping them implement learnings from the Center's own Anti-Racist Guide to Teacher Retention, Inclusive Teacher Recruitment and Hiring Toolkit. We also created and moderated tailored sessions and work plans on inclusive best practices.

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA**  
For 80 school leaders and district office personnel, the Center assisted in the designs and facilitated culturally-responsive teaching practices and collaborated with families through a cultural proficiency lens.

# Background

## The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



reforms in Pennsylvania school districts.<sup>1</sup> For the quarterly period ending March 31st 2022, CBED had already received \$153,560 from the Philadelphia School district.<sup>2</sup> The Philadelphia School District is the largest in Pennsylvania, and eighth largest in the United States. El-Mekki even served on Governor Josh Shapiro's transition team.<sup>3</sup> CBED is also increasing its influence outside of Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup>

1

<https://www.stateboard.education.pa.gov/Documents/Current%20Initiatives/MasterPlanHigherEducation/Pennsylvania%20Master%20Plan%20for%20Higher%20Education.pdf>

<https://www.pahouse.com/young/InTheNews/NewsRelease/?id=134222>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGLZxP0g6HI>;

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/uconsCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&yr=1949&sessInd=0&smthLwInd=0&act=014&chpt=15K>;

<https://www.stateboard.education.pa.gov/Documents/About%20the%20Board/Meeting%20Minutes/2020%20Meeting%20Minutes/SBE%20Minutes%201-8-2020.pdf>;

[https://www.researchforaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/RFA-Final\\_Report-Evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_Aspiring\\_to\\_Educate\\_Philadelphia\\_Pilot.pdf](https://www.researchforaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/RFA-Final_Report-Evaluation_of_the_Aspiring_to_Educate_Philadelphia_Pilot.pdf);

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2021&sessInd=0&billBody=S&billTyp=B&billNbr=0099&pn=1120>;

<https://www.senatorhughes.com/senator-hughes-fellow-lawmakers-leaders-and-education-advocates-discuss-solutions-to-pennsylvanias-teacher-shortage-crisis/>;

<https://www.senatorhughes.com/standing-up-for-new-and-existing-teachers/>;

<https://senatorlindseywilliams.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/BEFC-Testimony-September-14-2023-Final.pdf>;

<https://www.philasd.org/schoolboard/2024/05/30/board-of-education-makes-strides-in-its-first-action-meeting-to-accelerate-the-school-district-of-philadelphia/>;

<https://philasd.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=6135&MeetingID=337>;

<https://philasd.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/MeetingView.aspx?MeetingID=263&MinutesMeetingID=-1&doctype=Agenda>

<https://philasd.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=4702&MeetingID=263>

<https://philasd.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/MeetingView.aspx?MeetingID=284&MinutesMeetingID=-1&doctype=Agenda>

<https://www.philasd.org/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/96/2022/05/FY22-Q3-QSMR-w-ADA.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.philasd.org/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/96/2022/05/FY22-Q3-QSMR-w-ADA.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.spotlightpa.org/news/2022/12/pa-josh-shapiro-governor-transition-team-full-list/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://go.boarddocs.com/nj/camden/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=D9ANCD5F44BB>



## Background

### The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



**1,769**  
**EDUCATORS**  
**TRAINED**  
**IN 2023**

During the past year, we worked with 1,469 district leaders, school administrators, and classroom teachers who participated in workshops and webinars across the country, including through partnerships with: Academy at Palumbo High School and Philadelphia Academy of School Leaders, both in Philadelphia, BuildUp Birmingham, E3 Foundation, Fresno Unified School District, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Maryland Alliance of Public Charter Schools, Neubauer Foundation and the New York City Department of Education.

We reached an additional 200 educators who participated in sessions we led at ASU+GSV, the Reynoldsburg Symposium and SXSW EDU.

We also worked with 100 high school students through the creation of the Fresno Student Multicultural Affinity Group.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### E-LEARNING COURSES

#### SHARING EXPERTISE IN ANTI-RACIST PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICES

The Center's e-learning courses are accessible and offered as a set of select courses or a subscription to an on-demand, self-paced, full e-learning suite.

Each lesson is broken down into two units lasting 45 to 90 minutes and include interactive videos, educator perspectives, case studies, practical tips and learning assessments.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

IMPLICIT BIAS

MICROAGGRESSION  
NUANCE

CULTURALLY-PROFICIENT  
RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

CULTURALLY-PROFICIENT  
COLLABORATIONS WITH FAMILIES

## Backgrounder

### The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



The Center launched a new e-learning platform on October 3, 2023, offering five full-length (up to 120 mins) courses along with micro-learning.

There are currently 973 student users from Grand Valley State University as part of the K-12 Connect tutoring service in Southeast Michigan. Expansion to 20+ universities underway for the school year:

Belmont Abbey College	Oakland University
Coastal Alabama Community College	Oregon State University
College of Southern Maryland	Ponce Health Sciences University St. Louis, MO campus
Cornerstone University	Queens College
Fayetteville State University	Saginaw Valley State University
Georgia State University	Savannah College of Art and Design
Grand Rapids Community College	Southern New Hampshire University
Grand Valley State University	Southern Utah University
Kalamazoo Valley Community College	University of Illinois
Kent State University	University of Michigan
Liberty University	University of South Florida
Los Angeles City College	Valley City State University
Loyola University Chicago	Vanderbilt University
Michigan State University	Western Governors University
Monroe College	
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State	

CEBD has raked in millions of dollars from donor grants and funding from the city of Philadelphia.

# Backgrounder

## The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



Total Grants in Page Results: <b>US\$8,674,658.00</b> Cash and Non-Cash Grants		Top Grantees	
Top Grantors			
Grantor	Grants total ↓	Grantee	Grants total ↓
The Fellowship BMEC Inc	US\$3,131,591.00	Center for Black Educator Development	US\$4,795,028.00
Silicon Valley Community Foundation	US\$1,190,000.00	CENTER FOR BLACK EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT	US\$2,786,939.00
BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION	US\$579,919.00	CENTER FOR BLACK EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT THE	US\$579,919.00
JEWISH COMMUNITY FEDERATION OF SAN FRANCIS...	US\$500,000.00	THE CENTER FOR BLACK EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT	US\$265,500.00
Elevate 215	US\$468,178.00	CENTER FOR BLACK EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT (MALCOM ...	US\$172,272.00
THE WILLIAM & FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION	US\$436,625.00	The Center for Black Educator Development	US\$75,000.00
NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION	US\$350,000.00		
FIDELITY INVESTMENTS CHARITABLE GIFT FUND	US\$280,750.00		
CAMDEN EDUCATION FUND INC	US\$252,000.00		
CITY FUND	US\$250,000.00		
THE DANIEL B AND FLORENCE E GREEN FOUNDATION	US\$235,000.00		
MASSACHUSETTS HIGHER EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ...	US\$200,000.00		
STONELEIGH FOUNDATION	US\$172,272.00		
THE BARRA FOUNDATION INC	US\$160,500.00		
THE BERSTEIN FAMILY FOUNDATION	US\$150,000.00		
TD CHARITABLE FOUNDATION	US\$100,000.00		
Walton Family Foundation Inc	US\$75,000.00		
MORIAH FUND INC	US\$50,000.00		

5

CBED works closely both with the City of Philadelphia Board of Education and the State of Pennsylvania State of Education.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Funding data from [Quidnunc.ai](https://www.quidnunc.ai)

<sup>6</sup><https://www.philasd.org/schoolboard/2024/05/30/board-of-education-makes-strides-in-its-first-action-meeting-to-accelerate-the-school-district-of-philadelphia/>;  
[https://philasd.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=6135&MeetingID=337](https://philasd.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=6135&MeetingID=337;);

<https://philasd.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/MeetingView.aspx?MeetingID=263&MinutesMeetingID=-1&doctype=Agenda>

<https://philasd.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/CoverSheet.aspx?ItemID=4702&MeetingID=263>  
<https://philasd.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/MeetingView.aspx?MeetingID=284&MinutesMeetingID=-1&doctype=Agenda>

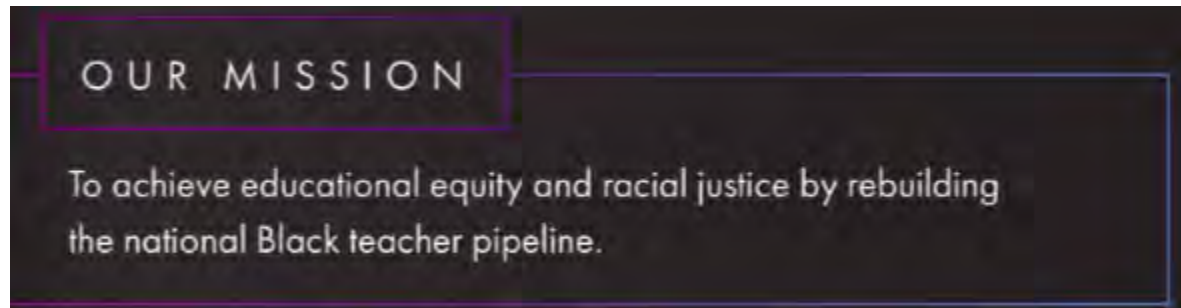
<https://www.philasd.org/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/96/2022/05/FY22-Q3-QSMR-w-ADA.pdf>

## Background

### The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



Increasing the number of black school teachers in our classrooms, particularly male school teachers, sounds like a worthy cause - however CBED's agenda is extreme. And it is not hidden. Rather, it is presented as the selling point of the organization.



The Center for Black Education Development wants black students to be taught by black teachers only. In other words, they advocate segregation in the service of “anti-racism.” They want all teachers to be experts in “anti-racism” and they want their educators to be “educator-activists.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://thecenterblacked.org/>





**FREEDOM SCHOOLS LITERACY ACADEMY**

## **WHERE STUDENTS LEARN TO BE EDUCATOR-ACTIVISTS**

An intensive five-week summer and year-round afterschool program, Freedom Schools Literacy Academy merges the philosophy of Freedom Schools (its focus on Black pedagogy) with the science of teaching literacy and the Center's intergenerational model for developing Black educators.

Our approach to instructor experiences is steeped in Black culture, history and pedagogy. Everything is designed to affirm our racial identity and the roles we each can take in rebuilding the national Black teacher pipeline. All to advance racial justice and educational equity.

Our faculty of dedicated Black teachers support the professional development and student-teacher experiences of Black high school and college students interested in teaching careers. The Black teacher apprentices, in turn, provide early literacy instruction to young Black scholars.

All Freedom Schools Literacy Academy participants are eligible to apply for the Center's Black Teacher Pipeline Fellowship that provides academic support, professional coaching, college scholarships and retention bonuses.

Freedom Schools Literacy Academy provides college and high school students opportunities to explore and deepen their interest in becoming not just teachers but educator-activists.

CENTER FOR BLACK EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT 11

### CBED believes that the role of the teacher is to be a political activist

In the “[Respecting Educator-Activists of Color: The Anti-Racist Guide to Teacher Retention](#)” developed by the CBED with the apparent support of the Pennsylvania Department of Education to help school districts retain black teachers- CBED defines educator-activists as the following:

An educator-activist is one “whose viewpoints and teachings are based on the understanding that educational justice and racial justice are intertwined (p.16).”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <https://thecenterblacked.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CBED21-A2E-Retention-Toolkit-012.pdf>





Educator-Activism is further defined -

“EDUCATION ACTIVISM A practiced commitment to liberating education from the racism inherent in America’s institutions, including our schools, that continue to deny educational equity and prescribe compromised learning and academic outcomes for Black students and, as a result, compromise the humanity of all (p.16).”<sup>9</sup>

“Our goal in preparing this guide is to help you retain educators of color, especially educator-activists-of-color who believe: that teaching can be a form of activism, every lesson plan is a political document, and every classroom interaction a political statement. Educators who understand their role as freedom seekers and fighters fueled by their love for each and every one of their students (p.16).”<sup>10</sup>

The guide tells districts to seek black teachers with a particular political ideological bent and provides them with a checklist for hiring teachers (pp.16- 17):<sup>11</sup>

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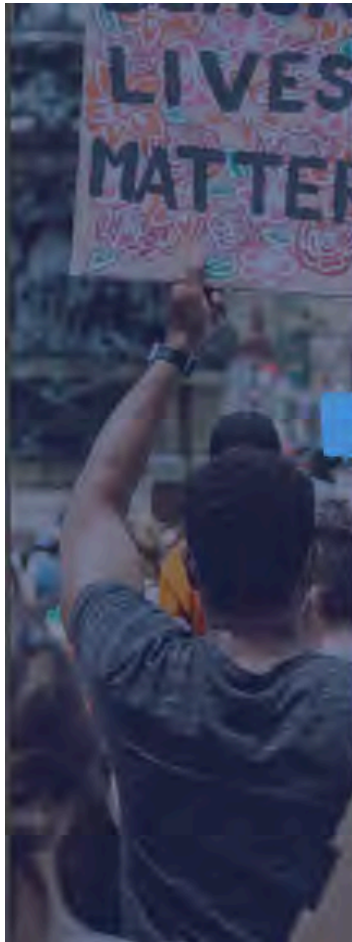
<sup>9</sup> <https://thecenterblacked.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CBED21-A2E-Retention-Toolkit-012.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://thecenterblacked.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CBED21-A2E-Retention-Toolkit-012.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://thecenterblacked.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CBED21-A2E-Retention-Toolkit-012.pdf>

# Backgrounder

## The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



Our goal in preparing this guide is to help you retain educators of color, especially educator-activists-of-color who believe: that teaching can be a form of activism, every lesson plan is a political document, and every classroom interaction a political statement. Educators who understand their role as freedom seekers and fighters fueled by their love for each and every one of their students.

As you design, implement and continually improve your retention efforts, you need to continue recruiting educators of color. You cannot just fire at will and build a great institution of learning. You need to hire and coach extremely well, make tough decisions and changes to your school culture so that it attracts and cultivates the educators of color you need leading our classrooms.

### SEEK:

**Those who see in all our students the potential to succeed in school and life.** And those who can also help our families manage increased responsibilities for home learning.

**Those who understand the extra stress and burden that the pandemic has wrought on marginalized communities**—where parents and grandparents don't have the luxury of working from home. Where families struggled more than ever to keep their children fed, housed, safe and healthy. Where people are outraged about systemic inequities and healthcare disparities made them more vulnerable to COVID-19 and its consequences.

**Those who know schools have historically not offered refuge from racist ideologies** that sanctioned the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black and Brown people. The teachers you seek recognize that schools have too often served as incubators of these cruel and violent forces.

**Those determined to change the unjust narratives by stepping up and into classrooms**—their chosen venue for righting what's wrong—because schools must be the safest place to practice healthy defiance.



### CHECKLIST FOR RECRUITING EDUCATORS AND EDUCATOR-ACTIVISTS OF COLOR

SCHOOL NAME:

- ☐ **Do they reflect the students they will serve, not just in terms of racial identities, but experience and worldviews?** Do they offer not just windows to the world, but powerful, empowering mirrors to bright futures?
- ☐ **Do they hold themselves accountable for what their students learn (and don't learn)?** The best educators don't shirk this sacred responsibility and know the right formula for providing student support while setting high expectations. As subject experts, they also possess the ability to help their students care and be curious about their own learning.
- ☐ **Is the candidate compassionate, committed to supporting students, their academic success, and their full potential?** If we think they would ever say something like "we're not a social service agency" then don't hire them. The ones we want are the educators who see students as having higher-order needs, too often tied to sustained traumatic stress, that can only be met by someone who knows to ask students "what happened to you?" and not "what's wrong with you?"
- ☐ **Do they embrace Black history and Black pedagogy?** Do they connect the fight for educational justice with racial justice? Do they strive to correct the teaching of our community's past from the prism of victimization and oppression to one of resilience, resistance and revolution?
- ☐ **Do they know the difference between schooling and education?** How to break the institutional racism that has dictated lower expectations and harsher discipline for students of color? Are they activists who can simultaneously teach and inspire, rather than assume the role of a missionary or warden?
- ☐ **Do they know how to operate as problem solvers who earn the trust of those in their charge?** Someone who earnestly asks students and their parents about their aspirations, and the rules, regulations and values they live by—rather than insisting on their own?
- ☐ **Is the candidate someone who strikes you as having both courage and humility?** Will they hold not only themselves accountable, but also their colleagues and school leaders?
- ☐ **Will they help us address the challenges educators of color face to persist through the student-activism pipeline to become the best educators they can be?**
- ☐ **Will they interrogate their own mindsets about Black and Brown children and communities?** Are they willing to dive deep into assumptions of race, class and privilege?





**3. SOCIAL ACTIVISM.** Education is a political act. Done right, a liberating education can upend white supremacy and a racist history of using education as an oppressive social force and schools as oppressive social enforcers.

With the right cultural pedagogical approach(es), education can encourage social activism, not just academic achievement and positive racial-identity development. The ability of students (and other members of a school community) to recognize, understand and critique educational and other social inequities. Their sense of empathy and agency to change the world for the better in ways they define and direct.

Effective cultural pedagogies take into account teaching and learning are intertwined with power dynamics, including racially charged ones, and educational equity cannot be taken for granted. Whereby success is buoyed by hard work and an educational context that is consistently fair to everyone.

Effective cultural pedagogies also recognize that families and communities are assets in student achievement, valuable in their overcoming bias, discrimination and prejudices. Everyone has a role to play. Collective responsibility is encouraged because we all lift as we climb.

In CBED's 2022 report on its [Pilot Teaching Academy program](#), the organization said the following:

"We seek to develop in our students a greater interest in pursuing teaching as an act of social justice and servant leadership(p.2)."<sup>12</sup>

CBED talks about having a model of "educational justice" which includes(pp.7-8):<sup>13</sup>

### A Liberating Educational Philosophy

"Embodiment of the highest levels of excellence not limited by norms set by white standards that stigmatize marginalized children as perpetually behind."

### The Black Experience, Front and Centered

"Pedagogical explorations, ideological frameworks and documented practice of educational thinkers and writers throughout the African diaspora. The language, philosophy and theories which helped people of African

<sup>12</sup> <https://thecenterblacked.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CBED-22-TeachingAcademy-005.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://thecenterblacked.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CBED-22-TeachingAcademy-005.pdf>





descent organize their educational systems, while adapting or learning from these systems to improve and enrich our current reality. Literature and programming that values and explores the cultural experiences and the intellectual inheritance of participants while exposing them to the larger world as conscious change agents.”

### The Practice of Communal Learning

“Shared growth over individual advancement.”

### The “Objectives and Competencies” for students in this program include:<sup>14</sup>

- Engage in quality scholarship, writing and research to be able to critically review educational theories, practices, institutions, systems and policies.
- Form a liberatory educational philosophy and practice grounded in Black pedagogy to co-create ideal educational environments for Black students and fellow professionals.
- Broaden civic awareness and strengthen a dedication to social change, liberation and activism.

### And Culturally-Powered Competencies

- Reflecting on One’s Cultural Lens and Individual Cultural Identity
- Recognizing and Redressing Bias in the System in/Adjacent to our Educational System
- Drawing on Students’ Culture to Inform Curriculum and Instruction
- Bringing Real-World Issues into the Classroom, Ensuring a Global Context and Interconnectedness of Curriculum
- Modeling High Expectations for All Students
- Promoting and Embracing Student Differences
- Collaborating with Families and the Local Community Communicating with Humility and in Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Ways Respecting,
- Embracing and Incorporating the Integrity of Students’ Cultural Knowledge
- Understanding the Tenets/Nuance of Micro-Aggression(s) and Their Impact on Diverse Learners

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<sup>14</sup> <https://thecenterblacked.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CBED-22-TeachingAcademy-005.pdf>



The CBED developed its own curriculum “LeCount-Catto curriculum” which is based on black pedagogy and historical frameworks and helps students make the connection between teaching and activism.

Activist-Educators at CBED talk about the curriculum on EdPost [podcast](#), below are quotes from the podcast:

The curriculum drives the idea of “communal learning ...this idea that’s counter to rampant individualism and the spirit of capitalism that permeates the learning process where it’s like about your individual merit and your individual success.”<sup>15</sup>

The curriculum is “grounded in rules to be present within the space of like understanding the current context which in this case is education - how did education really come to be what it is right now, what are the factors that led to that and what are the like the roots of how education became what we are currently look at. But then thinking beyond that, being present throughout like the history of time and space, not to be all mystical, but like going back to fundamentally the process that people of African descent engaged when they were thinking about what it looks like to pass on knowledge before there even had to be consideration of liberation. We were free to do what we self-determined ourselves to do , what was that education process like, what were the objectives, how do we start to look back at the values that were held in that space and the way that people operate when they are free and think about what can be reiterated in the present so that we can practice freedom as self-determined human beings today but also use whatever tools necessary in order to engage with the current oppressive reality and resist that so we do a whole lot um throughout the curriculum. The curriculum itself is two years long the reiteration with every unit in every lesson is based on those principles and that idea what does it mean to really be a liberated human being in this current context what does it feel like to be able to really stand on the historical processes that our ancestors have established for us and our elders have trained us in and then how do we use that in order to create a better reality.”<sup>16</sup>

“The curriculum is designed to help folks uh understand what to avoid what to embrace what to learn and what to unlearn in order to be a liberatory educator - you know these are things that i feel like i like that in many cases we kind of as particularly as like africans in america um we tend to fall into education like we happen to come across the right people the right institutions the right realizations to be like hey you know what this is probably something i want to do or we have the right privileges um but many of us aren't afforded that and i think it's about expanding and being intentional about expanding that privilege right by creating a curriculum that does those things...”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4MTkOmOcoY>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4MTkOmOcoY>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4MTkOmOcoY>



“...made me think of some of the students that we currently have in liberation academy and thinking about that that unlearning process and that identification like once they have that awareness it's like oh oh no like this is oppressive you are oppressing me you are in my way like you are not here to help me and they're not like um that light coming on is like a it's bittersweet you know because you are thankful that the students that you have and care about are now equipped to be to face what's going on around them but also it's that realization of like i i've been harmed you know like there were people in my space around me who did not mean my highest good in the space that is supposed to be for my highest development and that that's rough but what they are encouraged to do beyond that is start to act like no we can't that's not going to happen to my my little cousin or it's not going to happen to the grade after me like now we need to like mobilize in order to do something different.”<sup>18</sup>

“... providing an alternative to this western context that we are surrounded by is crucial.”<sup>19</sup>

#### Extremists at Black Men in Education Conference

This year's Black Men in Education Conference will host Angela Davis as well as Abeer Ramdan-Shinnawi. Shinnawi also presented at last year's conference.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4MTkOmOcoY>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4MTkOmOcoY>

# Backgrounder

## The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



The speakers at last year's conference included: the Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia, PA State Senator Vincent Hughes and Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Dr. Khalid Mumin.



# Backgrounder

The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development





 <p><b>TAYE DIGGS</b> AWARD-WINNING ACTOR, AUTHOR &amp; CHILD LITERACY AMBASSADOR</p>	 <p><b>DR. CHRIS EMDIN</b> NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR, Robert A. Nislund Endowed Chair in Curriculum Theory &amp; Professor of Education, USC</p>	 <p><b>DR. MICHÈLE FOSTER</b> SCHOLAR, RESEARCHER &amp; PUBLIC SERVANT</p>	 <p><b>DR. JARVIS GIVENS</b> AWARD WINNING AUTHOR &amp; PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES Harvard University</p>
 <p><b>SENATOR VINCENT HUGHES</b> PA STATE SENATE, 7TH DISTRICT Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman</p>	 <p><b>MALCOLM JENKINS</b> AUTHOR, ENTREPRENEUR &amp; RETIRED NFL PLAYER</p>	 <p><b>DR. MARC LAMONT HILL</b> AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST, AUTHOR, PROFESSOR &amp; ENTREPRENEUR</p>	 <p><b>DR. KHALID MUMIN</b> PENNSYLVANIA SECRETARY OF EDUCATION</p>
 <p><b>DR. CAMIKA ROYAL</b> INCISIVE SCHOLAR-WARRIOR, CRITICAL RACE THEORIST &amp; URBAN EDUCATION EXPERT</p>	 <p><b>DR. ROBERT SIMMONS III</b> HEAD OF SOCIAL IMPACT &amp; STEM PROGRAMS Micron Technology</p>	 <p><b>DR. IVORY TOLDSON</b> NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION INNOVATION AND RESEARCH, NAACP AND PROFESSOR</p>	 <p><b>DR. TONY B. WATLINGTON, SR.</b> SUPERINTENDENT School District of Philadelphia</p>

# Backgrounder

## The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



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**centerblacked BIG #BMEC2024 NEWS:** Powerhouse Dr. Angela Davis joins us on the Main Stage this November!

Through her activism and scholarship over many decades, Davis has been deeply involved in movements for social justice around the world. Her work as an educator — both at the university level and in the larger public sphere — has always emphasized the importance of building communities of struggle for economic, racial, and gender justice.




It's an honor for her to join us as we gather in support of [#BlackMenInEd](#) - educators and those who support their success.

Get your tickets before they sell out - the link is in our bio!

Edited · 8w


**teachfortheculture** 🔥🔥🔥

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July 30

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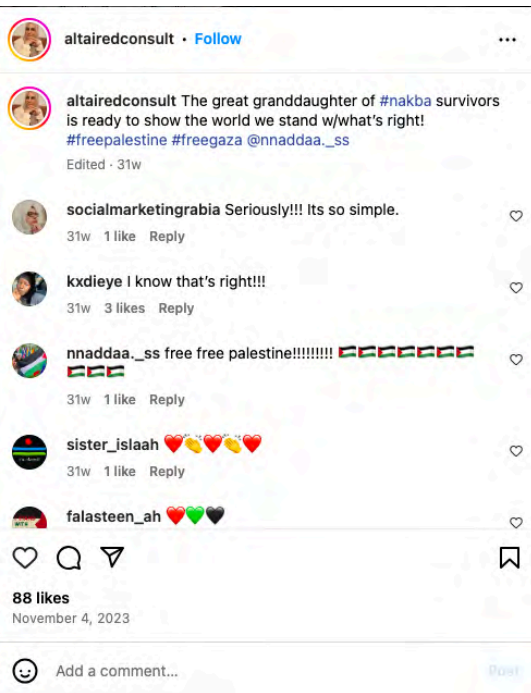
The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development





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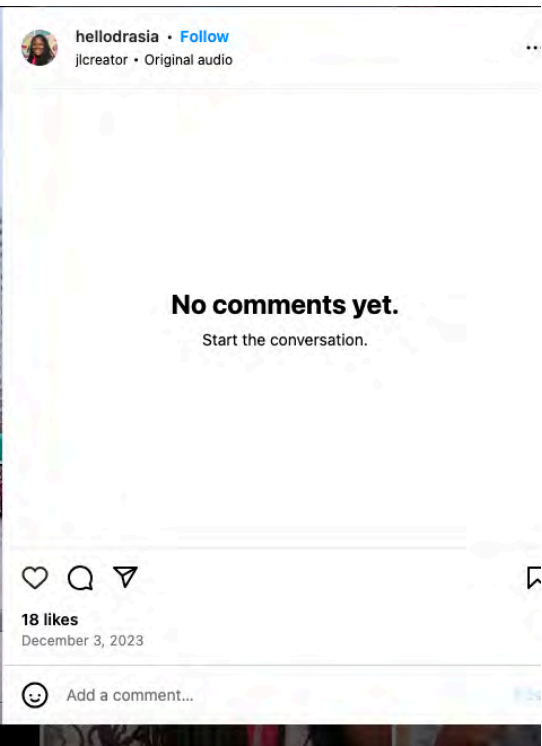
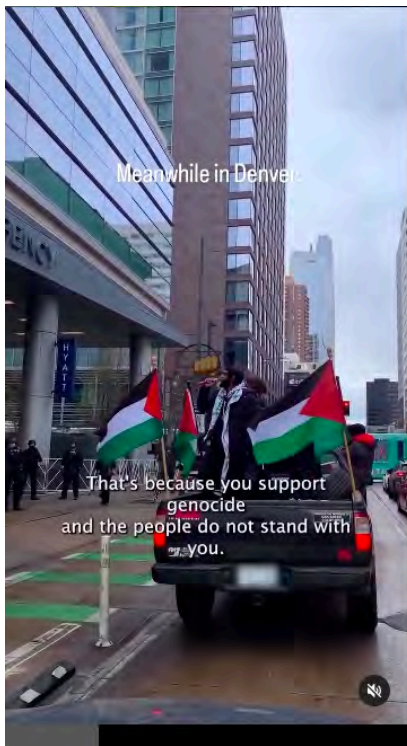
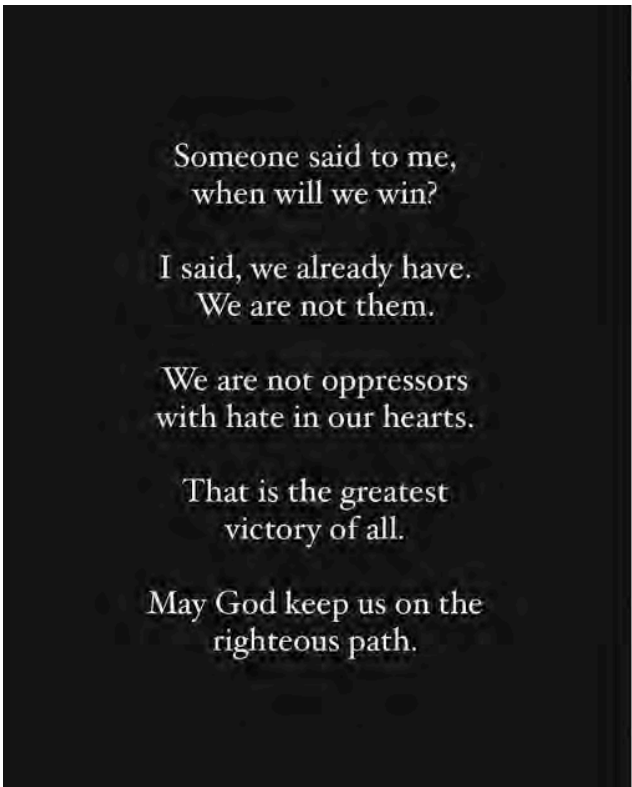
## The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development





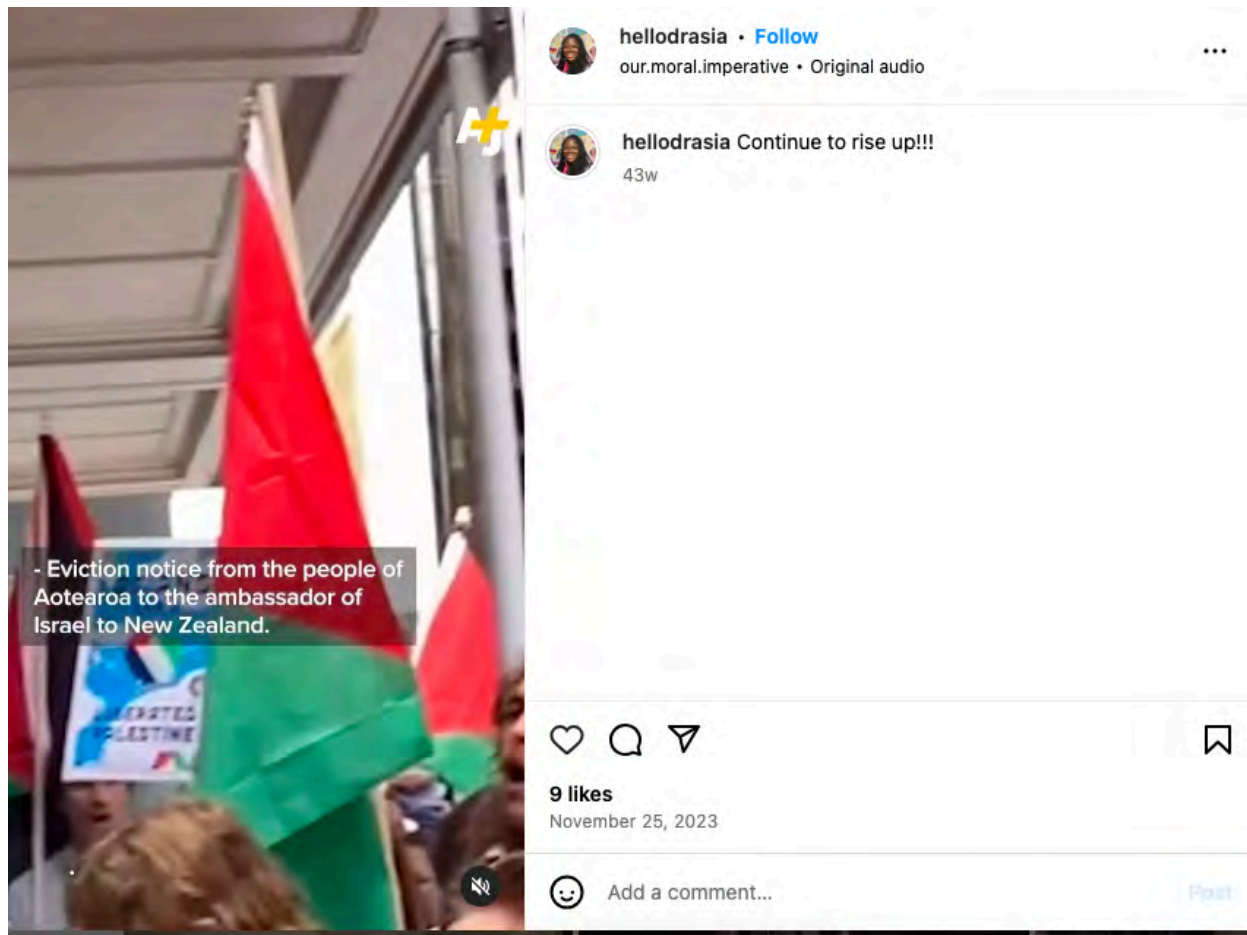
# Backgrounder

## The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



# Backgrounder

## The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



### El-Mekki, Iran and anti-Americanism

Why is El-Mekki and the CBED comfortable with inviting radicals to talk at their conference? Perhaps because they share similar ideological viewpoints?

El-Mekki's schooling from Pre-K on was heavily influenced by the Black Panthers. His Pre-K was a masjid associated with the Black Panther Party. His elementary school was Nidhamu Sasa<sup>20</sup> - a 'freedom' school based on the Black Panther mold where black students were taught by black teachers only (exactly the program that

<sup>20</sup> <https://nnpa.org/essa/tag/nidhamu-sasa/>



CBED advocates). El-Mekki talks proudly and positively about his family's connections to the Black Panther Party.<sup>21</sup>

He went to middle school in Iran and talks glowingly about that time<sup>22</sup>.

His mother, Aisha El-Mekki, spoke positively about Ayatollah Khomeini and post-revolutionary [Iran](#):

“During the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Sister Aisha was intrigued by the integrity, spirituality, and fighting spirit of the leader of the movement, the late Imam Khomeini. With her husband and her best friend, meetings were established to discuss Islam and the situation in Iran. They conversed with Iranians to learn more about the revolution. Eventually, Sister Aisha and Brother Yahya decided to move overseas to Tehran, joining her lifelong friend (since 4th grade), Mama Shakurah, already living there. Sister Aisha said she moved there for several reasons. She wanted her children to witness a country united in its efforts to make a change. She wanted them to experience living in a Muslim country. And, she wanted a safe environment to raise her black boys. She loved that Imam Khomeini continuously stood up to the bully without any fear. He called out the oppression of America and other superpowers. When the revolution happened, Iran seized the U.S. Embassy and took the conspiring spies working there as hostages. Yet, Imam Khomeini ordered the release of all of the African-Americans and women. He stated that they had suffered enough oppression at the hands of the United States. Sister Aisha was amazed that across the world there were people of faith and a leader who could deeply comprehend the plight and struggle of African-Americans. She would visit Imam Khomeini with her dear friend Sister Shakurah and her son Mikyeil. As she told the story, she was so vehemently overwhelmed at that moment that she found herself frozen and clinging to a pillar. Eventually, security had to help her to leave.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> <https://phillys7thward.org/2017/02/the-black-panther-party-and-me/>;

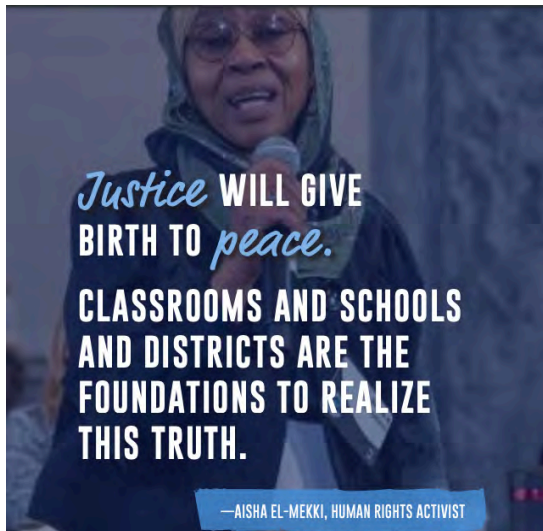
<https://beckmanaward.mj.unc.edu/previous-projects/each-one-teach-one/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://thephiladelphiacitizen.org/immigrant-refugee-education-america/>;

<https://www.bridgespan.org/dreaming-in-color-sharif-el-mekki>;

<https://beckmanaward.mj.unc.edu/previous-projects/each-one-teach-one/>

<sup>23</sup> [https://phillymuslimfreedomfund.org/bio\\_mama\\_aisha.pdf](https://phillymuslimfreedomfund.org/bio_mama_aisha.pdf)



Sharif El-Mekki talks about his love for Iran in an interview with the “[dreaming in color](#)” podcast.

“Islam didn’t separate itself from politics because creating poverty is a political decision. Denying people education is a political decision. Deciding who gets to eat, who has access, equity, all of that are political decisions. And so how can you be led by faith and say, “I’m going to do good work, but I’m going to ignore all the conditions that created the conditions for me to have to do this good work.” It was combined.... And being in Iran and getting to see even education, how they approach education. And even seeing, I understand why you look today and pound for pound and per capita, Iran produces more engineers and doctors, scientists, than many other countries. To be that small, but there’s such an emphasis on education and understanding...Being in a country where a lot of youth have a decision to make. I would say there are other options, but main three options, join the military, go to college, or be a teacher. It’s looked at at that level of service to the country to go to a village where they may not even have running water. They may be farmers in these super rural areas, but going there, and this is your kind of Iran Corps instead of AmeriCorps. You go and you’re teaching a villager.”<sup>24</sup>

By the same token, in the same podcast El-Mekki is highly critical of the United States:

“And so when we think about that in this anti-CRT hysteria, which is really anti-intellectualism, which is synonymous for America anyway. This is America. We’re anti-Black and anti-intellectual. We can’t burn you at the stake, so we’re going to burn your school down. We’re going to burn your pedagogical frameworks down. We’re going to burn your books. It’s other ways to burn things.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.bridgespan.org/dreaming-in-color-sharif-el-mekki>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.bridgespan.org/dreaming-in-color-sharif-el-mekki>





“And so we have to be not only super vigilant about it and finding ways to resist. And we can't rely on our oppressors to give a thumbs up and endorse what we know is liberatory pedagogical frameworks, liberatory teaching, liberatory content. Because every teacher, even Black and beyond, if they're worth their salt, they should constantly be interrogating the curricula ...”<sup>26</sup>

“Yeah. Listen, what did Malcolm say? Everywhere is the Deep South if it's south of the Canadian border. So act accordingly.”<sup>27</sup>

As an adult, when principal of the Anna Howard Shaw Middle School, El-Mekki mentioned his travels to Iran as an adult as part of a successful grant application to the NASA Explorers School program.<sup>28</sup> The grant proposal included this piece of information: Mr. El-Mekki is a visionary instructional leader that ensures the program remains viable and relative and the NASA goals remain in sight, providing fidelity to the team. He has traveled to Iran to study and establish a partnership with a middle school to do a comparative analysis on how higher science and mathematics concepts are taught at the middle school level in Iran as opposed to the United States. Mr. El Mekki will identify and combat trends in the school that interfere with our stated objectives and chart the course for what must be done to enable students to achieve full participation in all areas of STEM.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.bridgespan.org/dreaming-in-color-sharif-el-mekki>

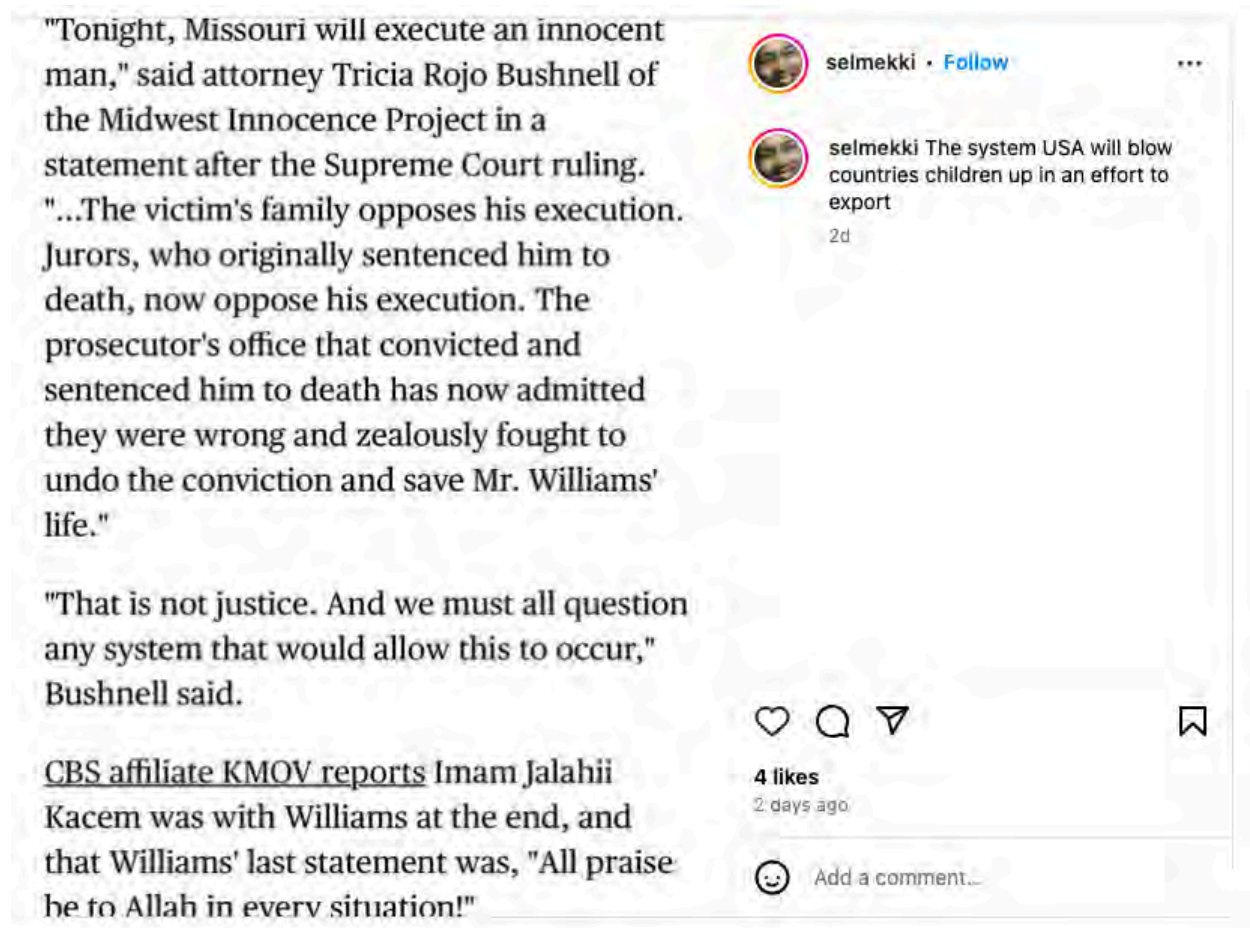
<sup>27</sup> <https://www.bridgespan.org/dreaming-in-color-sharif-el-mekki>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/stories/2004/06/07/daily15.html>;  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20061229081356/https://www.wcu3einstitute.org/Default.aspx?tabid=238>

<sup>29</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20061229081356/https://www.wcu3einstitute.org/Default.aspx?tabid=238>

## Backgrounder

### The Radicalism behind the Center for Black Educator Development



El-Mekki has contributed to articles for Louis Farrakhan's "Final Call" publication.<sup>30</sup>

He also frequently quotes Paulo Friere - author of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" which advocates that teachers use their classrooms to awaken the political consciousness of their students.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.finalcalldigital.com/articles/what-did-2020-mean-for-black-people-;https://new.finalcall.com/2023/03/28/mind-wars-and-fighting-for-the-proper-education-of-black-children/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://phillys7thward.org/2016/09/the-total-sum-of-our-childrens-school-experiences/>



### Summary

The Shapiro administration as well as the Philadelphia District School Board and other districts throughout Pennsylvania and the United States, as well as private donors, have embraced an organization which advocates a radical, Black Panther's- style approach to education.

The founder of CBED, Sharif El-Mekki, comes from a family embedded in the Black Panther Party, with ties to Iran, sympathies for the Ayatollah Khomeini, and who has applied that outlook to the “anti-racist” pedagogy he is pushing in Pennsylvania and beyond. No wonder that the flagship conference which is meant to encourage black men to enter education would include radicals like Abeer Ramdan-Shinnawi.

Why is the Shapiro administration prepared to work with this group? Why is the City of Philadelphia willing to allow this dangerous ideology to spread to its youth?

Mika Hackner  
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Jewish Institute for Liberal Values



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