



## National Council for Black Studies, Inc.

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### MEDIA STATEMENT

January 30, 2023

### **NCBS statement regarding the Florida Department of Education's rejection of Advanced Placement African American Studies pilot**

As the premier professional organization representing Black/Africana Studies instructors, researchers, scholars, and students, it is imperative that the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) formally address the intrusive, politically motivated and retrogressive decision by the Florida Department of Education and governor to reject the Advancement Placement (AP) African American Studies pilot course recently submitted by the College Board.

The Florida Department of Education's decision to reject the African American Studies pilot course is one element in a systematic plan to suppress instruction engaging the experiences of people of African descent in Florida's public higher education institutions. This latest attempt to subject academic practice and institutions to such retrogressive and racist policies violates students' moral and legal rights to a quality education free from deliberate falsifications, discriminatory exclusions and "sanitized" depictions of life and history immune from critical scrutiny. Also, these heavy-handed and unwarranted political intrusions in the educational process in attempts to dictate narrow notions of education have a negative and chilling effect on teachers, limiting their ability to provide the inclusive quality education students deserve and of which they are capable and to which they are committed. Faculty members at some institutions already have begun to modify course content to comply with recently enacted, draconian laws restricting the content of the materials examining the experiences of people of African descent that can be presented to students.

NCBS fully supports the implementation of the AP African American Studies pilot course and is equally prepared and willing to collaborate and assist in its deployment. Developed in cooperation with scholars from across the country, the AP African American Studies course will provide students with opportunities to enter any college or university with a background that will, along with other benefits, enable smooth entry into Black/Africana Studies, African American Studies, American history, and many additional degree programs,

The Florida Department of Education's ill-informed and erroneous assertion denying the intellectual rigor and educational value of Africana Studies and African American history is a self-indicting denial of decades of assembled data and experience. Indeed, no evidence was



offered for the contention, for it is not evidenced-based, but rather rooted in prejudicial political and racial preferences. From its founding, Black/Africana Studies insisted on two central ideas, rigorous intellectual inquiry and community service. For those reasons, Black/Africana Studies courses have emphasized the development of critical-thinking capabilities that students can utilize to develop innovative and ethical approaches to solving pressing social problems in the United States and abroad. Moreover, Africana Studies and African American history offer a critical contribution to humanity's understanding of itself from its earliest cultural and civilizational origins, to US society's self-understanding in its diversity, complexity and internal challenges, to a critical pedagogy providing necessary correctives, inclusions and innovative insights for the historical record and current life and thus, to the valuable and useful quality education our students, communities and society deserve.

The vacuity of the above-mentioned claims by the Florida Department of Education is evidenced even further by the extensive presence of Black/Africana Studies, African American Studies, and cognate programs, departments, majors, and minors in the United States. Black/Africana Studies academic units are supported by a sophisticated national infrastructure that provides solid guidance regarding organizational structure and the training of faculty teaching Black Studies courses. In 2000, there were approximately 50 degree-granting departments and more than 200 programs housed in units with various titles including Black/Africana Studies, African American Studies, African Studies, and African Diaspora Studies in colleges and universities across the United States. During that same year (2000), colleges and universities in the country awarded in excess of 600 undergraduate degrees in Black/Africana Studies along with seventy 70 master's degrees, and 7 doctoral degrees in African American Studies. In 2017, according to data.usa, 995 degrees in Black/Africana Studies were awarded across the country.

NCBS is committed to continue resisting attacks on Black/Africana Studies, African Americans Studies—and, by extension, virtually any academic program or program offering about people of African descent—in Florida or elsewhere in the United States. NCBS members invite faculty, students, and Black/Africana Studies alumni to join in resisting the unabashed effort to cancel inclusive instruction. Together, we can work to ensure that Black/Africana Studies continues to reaffirm and expand its vanguard role in generating vital and valuable knowledge, and cultivating expansive capacities in our students for critical thinking, love of learning, mutual respect and empathetic concern for others and an active commitment to social and human good and the sustained well-being of the world. And we know from historical and current experience and study that to achieve the quality education and just and good society we want and deserve, there must be struggle, constant and consistent struggle. For as our honored ancestor, Frederick Douglass affirmed "if there is no struggle, there is no progress."

**Endorsed by the NCBS Board of Directors on January 30, 2023**

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### *About the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS)*

The National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) is the leading organization of Black Studies professionals in the world and is made up of individuals and institutions engaged in the study of the African world. With members who reside both inside and outside the United States, NCBS is the one body that brings together experts who endeavor to build the discipline of Africana/Black Studies across the globe. The NCBS's mission is to foster intellectual discussion, research, and teaching on people of African descent worldwide, promote the interests of its diverse membership, and encourage civic engagement through network building and scholarly activism. If you wish to interview an NCBS Executive Committee member, please contact the NCBS national office at [info@ncbsonline.org](mailto:info@ncbsonline.org) or (513) 790-1108.

