



The Alliance for Equity in Higher Education

American Indian Higher Education Consortium

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education

As we continue to celebrate the unveiling and opening of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial, there is a hue and cry for the rededication of our nation to the principles of interdependence, community and ecumenism that undergirded Dr. King's Walk and his Dream.

Forty-eight years ago, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his Coalition of Conscience were nudging the nation toward making real its egalitarian ideals and becoming a more peaceful, tolerant and just society, Americans attempted to turn back the clock on the progress being made, by brutalizing and ultimately assassinating Dr. King. Today, as the nation pauses to remember the life and legacy of Dr. King, the 112th Congress is threatening to reverse the strides we have made toward becoming a more equitable, compassionate and civil society since the death of Dr. King.

Today we are witnessing an assault on education, the foundation of a strong, enlightened nation, the great equalizer in a society that is both just and free. By cutting billions of dollars from education, the 112th Congress is mimicking the despotic governments that restrained citizens and deprived people of liberties, governments against which Thomas Jefferson railed when he observed, "*If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.*"

We will lose the soul of this nation if we pull the safety net out from under infants, children, and families at a time when the median income for non-elderly households is falling, the costs of housing, healthcare, food and fuel have increased by double-digits, and too many in America are not working. We will become a third rate nation if we

allow nearly \$10B in cuts to educational funding to eviscerate programs designed to prepare, inspire, educate and graduate youth and adults. We will betray our promise of

upward mobility if we decimate support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Predominantly Black Institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities and take money from the Pell Grants critical to our neediest students. We will say that Dr. King's Dream, and the American Dream, is closed to many of the poor if we eliminate or inadequately fund programs like GEAR UP, TRIO, Head Start, Healthy Start and Community Health Centers, the very programs that make that dream possible.

To underfund education is to eat our seed-corn. No doubt there are many competing priorities, including getting our national debt under control. We must, nonetheless, invest in education above all else. The future of our nation is at stake -- the Jeffersonian choice between being ignorant or being free.

We urge the great Coalition of Conscience that will converge on the nation's Capitol for the unveiling of the King Memorial to coalesce around a singular appeal to Congress: a greater investment in education for those Americans whose future is the American future: low-income and first generation students, racial, ethnic and religious minority students, and in the institutions that are educating disproportionate numbers of these students: HBCUs, PBIs, HSIs, and TCUs. Only by making this investment can we keep Dr. King's Dream alive and make America thrive!

Lezli Baskerville, Esquire
President & CEO
NAFEO

Carrie Billy, Esquire
President & CEO
AIHEC

Dr. Antonio Flores
President & CEO
HACU

AIHEC, HACU, and NAFEO work collaboratively as The Alliance for Equity in Higher Education