



AFRICAN LINK INITIATIVE

Evidence-based identity development for
youth of African descent throughout the Diaspora

Sankofa Collaborative

Slavery, It Happened Here, Too – Stories from New Jersey Part II

Panel: Finding Connections with Africa

October 11, 2023

Acknowledgments

Self-determination

“It is a mistake to trust someone (person, system, or institution)
to properly educate you
when your enlightenment is not in their best interest.”

- Shazel Muhammad

THE THREE PART PROGRAM



AFRICAN LINK INITIATIVE (ALI)



Where do I
come from?



Where
am
I now?



Where can I
go/grow
from here?

Service-
learning
Birthright
Trip



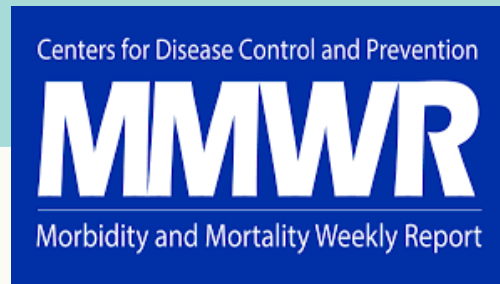




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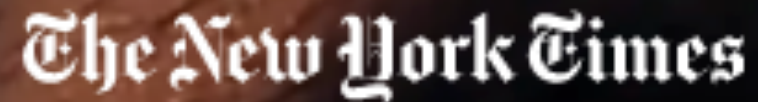


THE WHY



“Black teenage girls are more likely to report symptoms of depression than Black boys or white teens”

THE WHY

The New York Times

"From 2013 to 2019 the suicide rate of Black boys and men 15 to 24 years old rose by 47%, and by 59% for Black girls and women of the same age."

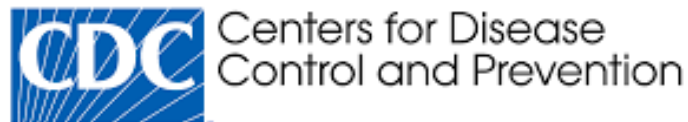
NJ Spotlight News

For Black children, racial inequities and intergenerational trauma are driving forces in suicide risk, according to New Jersey experts.

THE WHY



“Youth of color bear tremendous stress from racial discrimination, which is associated with suicidal behaviors.”



“From 2000 to 2020, the suicide rate for Black youth ages 10-19 increased 78% and Black youth ages 5-12 are twice as likely to die from suicide than their white counterparts.”

If you don't know where you come from, it's
hard to understand where you are.
It's even more difficult to see where you are
going.

Rev. Dr. Joseph Lowery

1921-2020



Changing the Narrative

We handicap our youth by not focusing on a more complete telling of the story of their larger history, culture and ethnicity that originated outside of and long before the advent of chattel slavery, the construct of American culture or white supremacy and oppression.



"A strong racial or ethnic identity has been shown to buffer the negative effects of discrimination on children's social and emotional well-being."

- Digital Promise.org



THE WHY



Major protective factors that help protect people from suicide include: connectedness, life skills, self-esteem, and cultural beliefs.

THE THREE PART PLAN

AFRICAN LINK INITIATIVE (ALI)



DNA ancestry
tracing



influence
r
academy



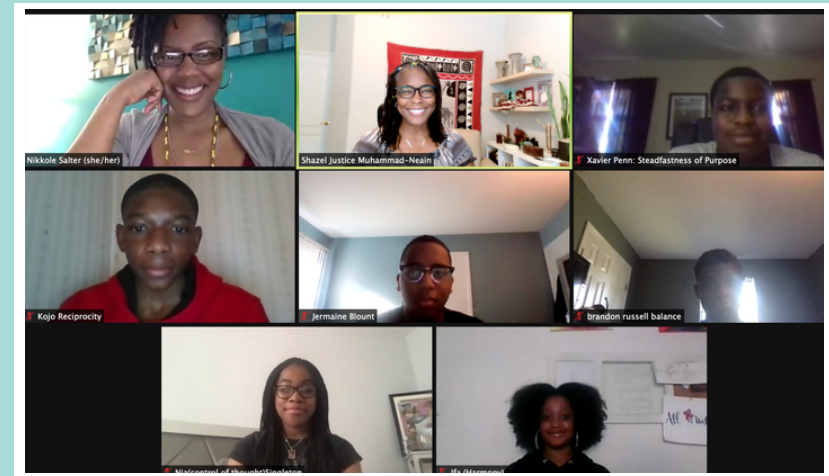
teen
summit

birthright
trip

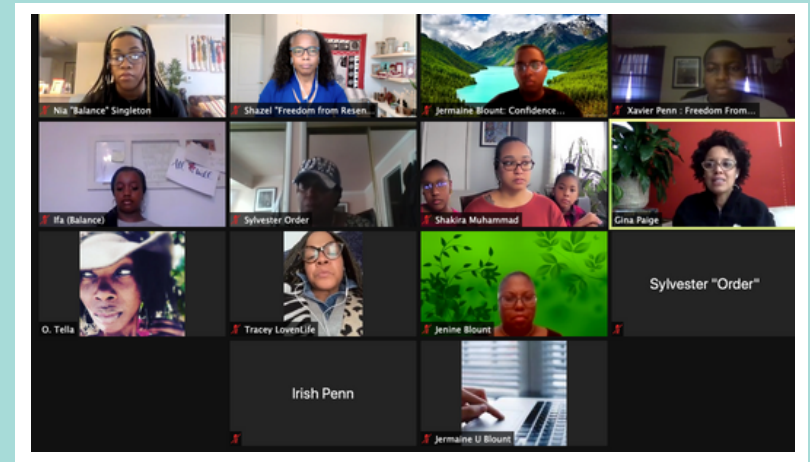




Acclaimed authors and educators, Anthony Browder and Atlantis Browder visit ALI.



Actress, activist, and playwright, Nikkole Salter visits ALI.



A chat about DNA and ancestry with African Ancestry Co-Founder & President, Dr. Gina Paige

180+ hours of identity development and critical thinking workshops

100% Virtual

[Click here for our Year in Review Brochure](#)



African Link Initiative **TEDEd**Club

TED-Ed's presentation literacy program



Connects students to a global community of youth voices

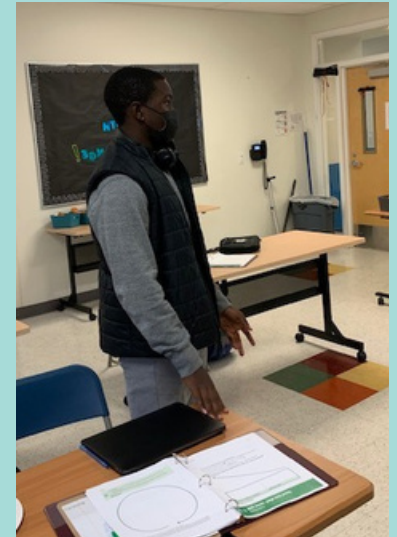
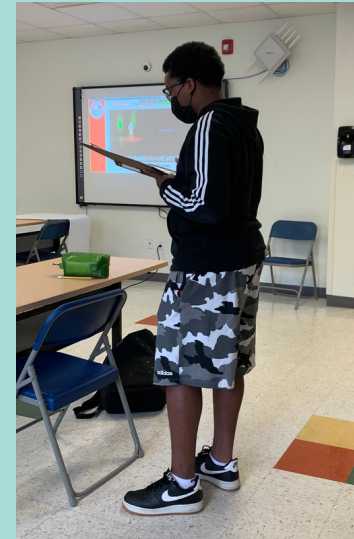


Supports students in discovering, developing and presenting their big ideas



Brings the TED stage to students around the world

60+ hours
of public speaking &
presentation training
(virtual & in-person)



LIVE!



African Link Initiative TEDEd Student Talks





Family Reunion & African Ancestry Reveal

99 attendees (via Zoom)



Countries and Ethnic Groups Revealed



Bioko Island/
Equatorial Guinea
(Bubi)



Cameroon
(Tikar, Bamileke)



Gabon
(Fang)



Ghana
(Fante)

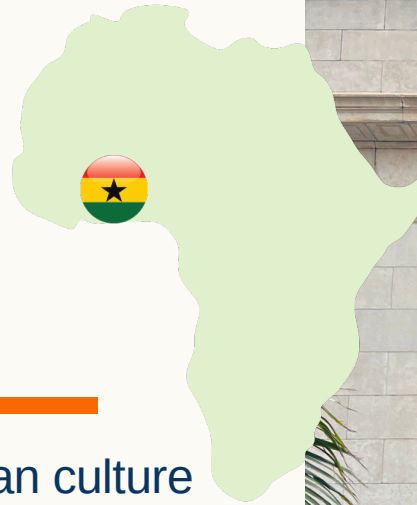


Nigeria
(Yoruba, Fulani,
Hausa)



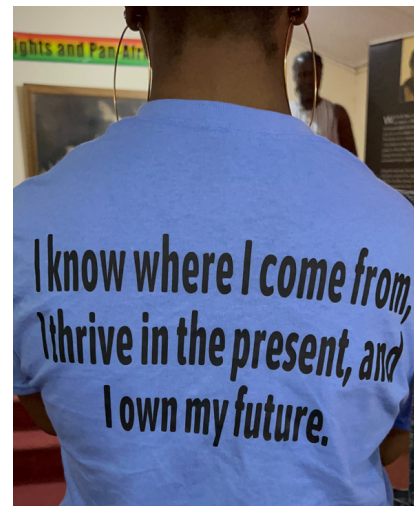
Sierra Leone
(Mende)

CAPSTONE: GHANA HOMECOMING



- 14-days experiencing African culture and exploring African history in Ghana
- Adopted a school in Koforidua
- Visited Cocoa Research Institute, Assin Manso Ancestral Slave River, Elmina Slave Dungeon, the W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Centre for Pan African Culture, Ashanti Palace, and Ancestry Wall.
- Other culturally significant sites





We adopted Nyame Bekyere School!





Elizabeth Deravil
Grade 12
TED-Ed Speaker

ALI's TED-Ed Student Talks Program was enlightening because it helped me to learn more about my strengths, weaknesses, and fears. This opportunity will also help me in my future because I have a better understanding of public speaking and sharing ideas that I am passionate about.

The Impact



Xavier Penn
Grade 8
ALI & TED-Ed Speaker

Participating in the African Link Initiative helped me to understand how expansive African history truly is.

The Impact



Zoubir Yazid, Ph.D
Director, Organizational
Development,
Boys & Girls Clubs of
Mercer County

Simply put, the ALI program is by far one of the most innovative/engaging research-based programs I have had the chance to implement within our organization.



Oluwatoyin Tella
Parent of ALI Scholar

ALI is an experience for young adults that helps them formulate and contextualize who they are. ALI is a safe and nurturing space that reinforces the positive in their history, their community and lineage and gives them a foundation in self-worth. I think self-worth is a key word for this program.

www.AfricanLink.org

What's Next?

AT AFRICAN LINK INITIATIVE

01

Millstone Township Historic Preservation Commission

Historic Marker &
Chapter Book for
children.

02

The Right to Fight

America's 250.

Armed Forces
Heritage Museum,
Montford Point
Marines Association.

03

Farming in Color

Reconnecting youth to
their food supply.

Camden Dream Center,
Feeding America,
Princeton University

04

Trent House Assoc. & Trenton Ninth Grade Academy

Our next cohort of ALI
Scholars.

Give Back.

SUPPORT YOUNG SCHOLARS

01

Join our Village

Board of Directors and Friends of ALI Advisory Board positions are open.

02

Share our Work

Do you know someone who would like to support our work?

03

Volunteer

Offer your expertise in curriculum development and instructional design.

04

Donate

Sponsor a scholar or a program. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

African Link Initiative is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit registered in the State of New Jersey, U.S.A.

Our Partners...



As Seen



ALI Media Spotlights



[ESSENCE](#)

'Beyond the Return': Black Women Entrepreneurs In U.S. & Africa Fueling Movement For Future Partnerships



[News12 New Jersey](#)

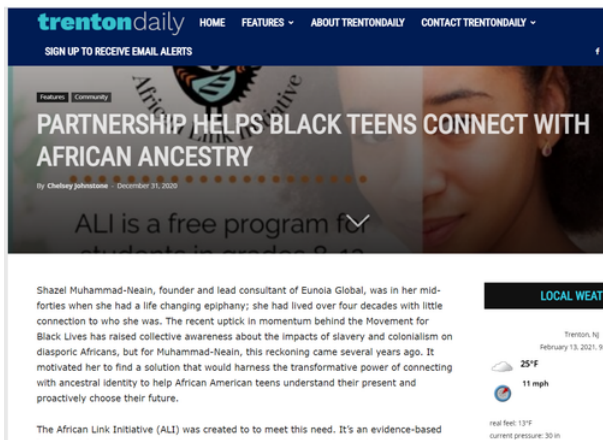
New initiative allows Black teens to discover their ancestral links to Africa



[BBC News](#)

African Diaspora: Returning home but what are the opportunities?

ALI Media Spotlights



[Trenton Daily](#)

Partnership Helps Black Teens Connect with African Ancestry



[Community News](#)

African Link Initiative helping teens connect with their heritage and culture

After struggling with her identity for decades, N.J. woman wants to help Black youth explore heritage



[NJ.com](#)

After struggling with her identify for decades, NJ womn wants to help Black youth explore heritage

Contact me to learn more

Shazel Muhammad

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w: www.AfricanLink.org





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Alvarez K, Polanco-Roman L, Samuel Breslow A, Molock S. Structural Racism and Suicide Prevention for Ethnoracially Minoritized Youth: A Conceptual Framework and Illustration Across Systems. *Am J Psychiatry*. 2022 Jun;179(6):422-433. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.21101001. PMID: 35599542; PMCID: PMC9765395.

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[Robert M. Sellers](#), [Nikeea Copeland-Linder](#), [Pamela P. Martin](#), [R. L'Heureux Lewis](#). Racial Identity Matters: The Relationship between Racial Discrimination and Psychological Functioning in African American Adolescents. 2026, Apr. Journal of Research on Adolescence. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2006.00128.x>

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LINKS



African Link Initiative TED-Ed Talks:

- [Haiti, What Happened to Us? | Elizabeth Deravil](#)
- [How Black Women's Pain Has Contributed to Medical Science | Ifa Tella-Swan](#)
- [I CAN Breathe | Nia Joi Singleton](#)
- [Hidden History | Jermaine Blount, Jr.](#)
- [The Single Story of the Black Experience in Film | Xavier Penn](#)

[African Link Initiative TED-Ed Talks Post Show Interviews](#)

[African Link Initiative adopts Nyame Bekyere School in Koforidua, Ghana](#)

