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**IBW/BFS Special Taskforce on Preserving and Strengthening Families in Haiti**

**DECLARATION OF INTENT**

African American adoption agencies have a collective interest in being a resource for the children who are homeless and/or without custodial care in Haiti. We are concerned both about their vulnerability and the associated dangers and also about the negative repercussions of well intended, yet misguided efforts to provide alternatives for the children of Haiti who are in need of care. We also wish to express support for Haitian policies, consistent with Haitian culture and tradition, which would ensure Haitian children's optimal development and healing in mind, body and spirit; considering the trauma experienced by the devastating earthquake over and above the day to day suffering we know has existed in Haiti.

Furthermore, as overarching principles guiding the care and support of children in need of care we advance the following points:

- We strongly urge that every effort is made to connect and/or reunite Haitian children with their parents and/or extended family members as soon as possible and feasible. And, furthermore, that needed resources and support to strengthen and preserve the family system (unit) is made available.

- When adoption is the appropriate option for Haitian children, efforts should be made for adoption to occur with families in their own country. We advocate that every reasonable effort is explored to recruit and support the desire of Haitian families to adopt Haitian children.

To support these principles, we commit to the following:

- We intend to advocate that Haitian children displaced by the earthquake are protected and nurtured by reputable Haitian service systems while every measure is taken to reunite them with immediate and extended family and kin in order to maintain Haitian children within their original cultural context.
- We intend to reach out to Haitian orphanages and communities to determine their perspective of the children's needs, to work in partnership to advocate for those needs and to work to develop the needed resources.
- For children who require temporary placements while viable permanent plans are made for their care, we intend to recruit respite families from Haitian, Caribbean and African American communities in the US, and work in partnership with them to become prepared to meet the temporary needs of displaced Haitian children for whom Haitian officials determine need to be airlifted from Haiti on a temporary basis.
- For children whom appropriate Haitian officials have determined require permanent families who have no biological relationship to the children, we intend to work in partnership with identified Haitian orphanages to better identify and assist in developing appropriate criteria in family selection and develop culturally congruent education and training for those wishing to care for Haitian children in order to minimize additional trauma and maximize adaptive outcomes consistent with Haitian culture and values.

The following organizations have endorsed and agreed to participate in the above Declaration of Intent (list in formation):

- Black Administrators in Child Welfare – Washington, D.C.
- National Association of Black Social Workers, Inc. – Washington, D.C.
- National Association of Black Psychologists - Washington, D.C.

- National Association of Black Sociologists - Washington, D.C.
- Black Psychiatrists of America – Houston, TX
- All Healers Mental Health Alliance – New York, NY
- National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice – Atlanta, GA
- International Association of Black Professional Firefighters – White Plains, NY
- Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association – Tillery, NC
- The Center for Nu Leadership Policy on Urban Solutions – Brooklyn, NY
- National Black United Front – Houston, TX
- Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.- Chicago, IL
- Black Family Development Center -Detroit, Mi
- Sankofa Safe Children Center-Chicago, Il
- Haitian American Early Childhood Alliance – Boston, MA
- National Conference of Black Lawyers – Washington, D.C. Chapter
- National Organization for the Advancement of Haitians – Silver Springs, MD
- Nation of Islam – Chicago, IL
- National Center for Health Behavioral Change – Baltimore, MD
- Women of Color United – Baltimore, MD
- Washington, D.C. Chapter of National Association of Black Social Workers
- National Action Network – New York, NY
- The Institute for Advanced Study of Black Family Life and Culture-Oakland, California
- National Voting Rights Museum-Selma, Alabama
- National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America-Washington, DC

The following Black adoption agencies have agreed to be in partnership with the Declaration of Intent:

- Marquita Stephens, Executive Director  
African American Adoption Agency  
1700 Highway 36 West Suite 450  
Roseville , Minnesota 55113

- Ruth Amerson, CEO  
Another Choice for Black Children, Inc.  
2340 Beatties Ford Road  
Charlotte , NC 28216
- Zena Oglesby, Executive Director  
Institute for Black Parenting  
11222 S LaCienega Blvd. Ste 129  
Inglewood , California 90304
- Tonya Williams Bell – Executive Director  
Rejoice Foster Care & Adoption Agency  
1800 State Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17103
- Linda West, Executive Director  
Mississippi Families for Kids  
620 North State Street, Suite 304  
Jackson , Mississippi 39202
- Toni Oliver, Executive Director  
ROOTS  
1005 Virginia Avenue, Ste 130  
Hapeville , GA 30354
- African American Director of an Adoption Agency  
Jackie Wilson, Executive Director  
Three Rivers Council  
307 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Ste, 310  
Pittsburgh , PA 15222
- Association of Black Social Workers, New York City Chapter  
Child Adoption, Counseling and Referral Services  
Barbara Edwards, Program Coordinator  
1969 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10035