BLACK VISION CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

PREPARED FOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

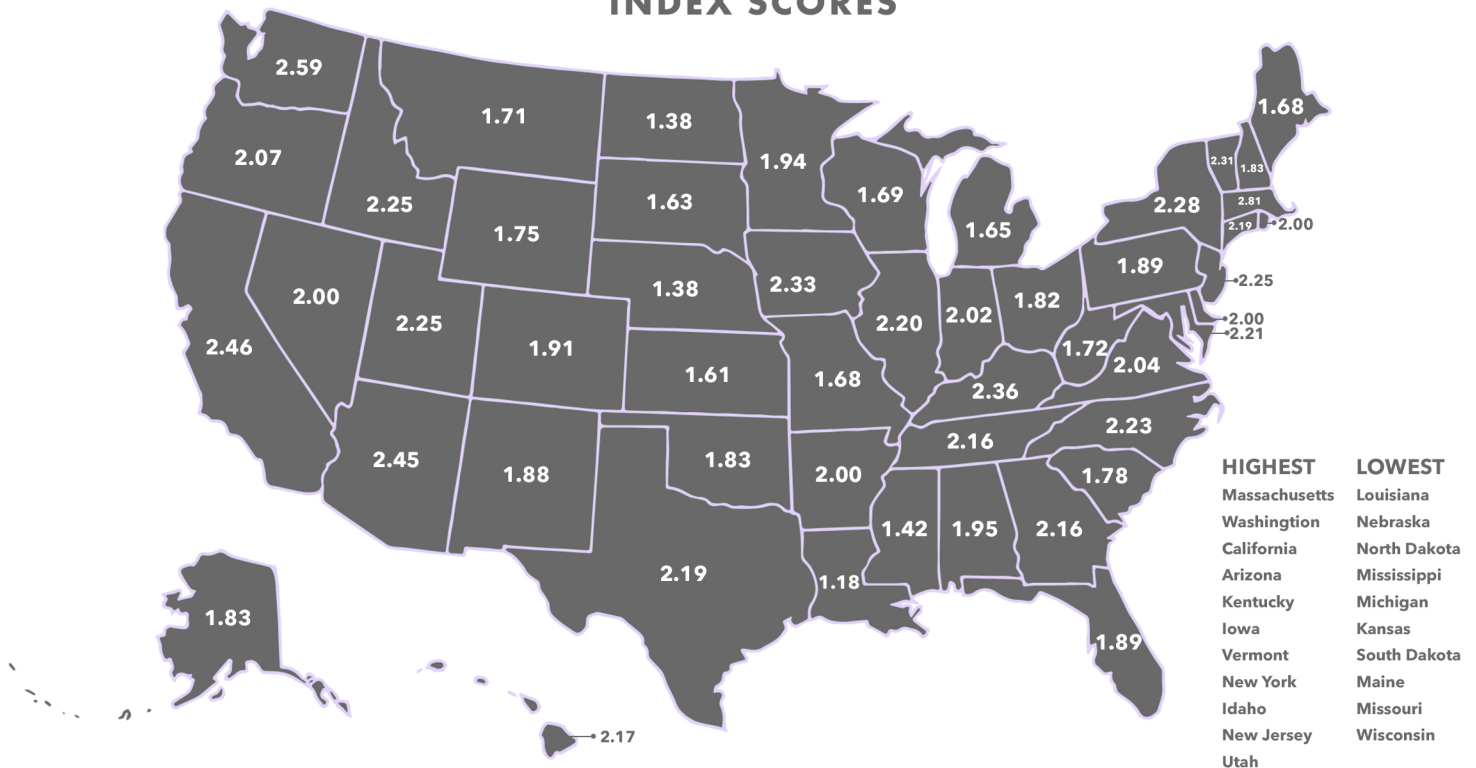## UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

PHOTOGRAPHY © ARALE REARTES

OVERVIEW

Higher education in the United States continues to remain stagnant in efforts of ensuring their black students thrive. According to the USC Race and Equity Center, public universities and colleges combined enroll more than 900,000 Black students. However, the comprehensive report documented that the status of Black students at these universities has exhibited to be more of a hindrance than support.

Furthermore, the University of California's Office of the President conducted the largest university system climate study in 2014. The results indicated that Black students across each campus – and even more so for those who also identified as Queer, Non-binary and Transgender – were not only underrepresented, they also experienced more discomfort than their non-Black peers with the overall climate. The UC system has announced the goal to create a healthier environment, that will normalize the promotion equity, inclusion, and respect for diversity. This will prompt students to thrive from the point of admission to graduation.

Therefore, it is valuable that students have the opportunity to explore ideas thoughts surrounding racial justice and coalition building within academic spaces. This conference is a multi-campus collaborative event. The intention being to make a space where students, staff, and faculty will network across nearby campuses to receive essential tools to navigate higher education.

STATEWIDE EQUITY INDEX SCORES

Map of the United States showing equity index scores by state:
2.59, 1.71, 1.38, 1.94, 1.68, 2.07, 1.69, 2.31, 1.83, 2.25, 1.63, 2.28, 2.81, 1.75, 1.65, 2.19, 2.00, 1.89, 2.25, 2.00, 2.46, 1.38, 2.33, 2.20, 2.02, 1.82, 2.21, 1.91, 1.61, 1.68, 1.72, 2.04, 2.45, 1.88, 1.83, 2.00, 2.36, 2.23, 2.16, 1.78, 1.42, 1.95, 2.16, 2.19, 1.18, 1.83, 1.89, 2.17

HIGHEST	LOWEST
Massachusetts	Louisiana
Washington	Nebraska
California	North Dakota
Arizona	Mississippi
Kentucky	Michigan
Iowa	Kansas
Vermont	South Dakota
New York	Maine
Idaho	Missouri
New Jersey	Wisconsin
Utah	

Read the full report: "Black Students at Public Colleges and Universities"

THE VISION

This partnering conference will be held at the University of California, Irvine. The event will take place in Spring 2019. Delegations from USC and UCLA have expressed support and will be present. This initiative intends to create a space that prioritizes Black people. It will be open to all from each of the campuses who are interested in exploring thoughts and discussions as they relate to race, critical theory, media, and healing within academia. Respective campus delegations within Southern California will meet with one another to create a network of support while attending predominantly white institutions.

This is a promising and productive opportunity that is needed, especially for Black Queer, Non-binary, and Transgender students. The following are examples and context of the most recent climate for Black students within the UC system. At UC Irvine, in the past five years, Black undergraduate and graduate students, professional staff, and faculty have organized and protested the University's resistance to institutional changes. They have demanded basic need services, such as Black psychologists, a Black resource center, general cultural competency education, departmentalization of the then-African American Studies Program and divestment from policing institutions. Similarly, since 2015, Black students at UCLA have released and continue to push for a set of demands in hopes of creating a more welcoming space.

The project organizers considered which of the three universities would host the inaugural event. Thinking ahead, it is likely this project will expand over time to include neighboring universities to participate. To centralize the conference in Southern California, UC Irvine seemed the most appropriate. In terms of considering the safety of hosting non-white and Black students at UC Irvine, it must be acknowledged that there is a history of explicit anti-Blackness within the city of Irvine. There have been multiple records of residents harassing Black students and making reports to law enforcement after seeing young Black people in surrounding neighborhoods. Organizers are taking precautions by coordinating with the University's administration and training volunteers to appropriately guide and support attendees. While UC Irvine is spearheading the project, students, administrators, and faculty from UCLA and USC will participate and benefit from this event.

DEOGRAPHY © JUSTIN JANES

The Black Bruins, 2013

30 The number of schools (out of 506) where the six-year graduation rate for Black undergraduates equaled or exceeded the graduation rate of all undergraduates.

40 The number of institutions that employ zero full-time Black instructors. On 44 percent of public campuses, there are 10 or fewer full-time Black faculty members across all ranks and academic fields.

THE THEME

When thinking of what it means to "prioritize" Black people, one must consider the current state that Black bodies must survive against. Given the current national context – where white supremacy is condoned daily and publicized by elected officials, and the surge in racist, homophobic and transphobic hate crimes are the horrifying embodiment of anti-blackness – it would mean to work towards creating spaces that produce Black queer joy.

At the university level, this project will create an expectation for similar recurring projects. Where a new school of thought can imagine and produce spaces for Black queer joy as a way of remaking experiences and future without having to wait for the institutions to catch up. To imagine and enact spaces of young Black queer joy is not only radical but visionary.

Black Queer and Non-binary respondents of UC Irvine's Campus Climate Survey

Respondents that faced multiple marginalizations were the most uncomfortable with the campus climate and diversity of UC Irvine. Of these respondents, those that Identified LGBQ and Transgender or Genderqueer dealt with more discomfort in their departments, academic units, work, and clinical setting.

Black Queer and Non-binary respondents of UCLA's Campus Climate Survey

Respondents that face multiple marginalizations are underrepresented. From these respondents, those that identified as Femme, Genderqueer, and Transgender also reported they dealt with more distress than white student in the classroom setting.

Read the full report: "UC System Campus Climate Project Final Report".

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Ericka Hart embodies and actively implements the core goal of this event in her very own advocacy. She is an academic, a social activist, and a sex educator that presents critical points from a Black queer lens. Hart's delivery of promotion of equity has built a large following via digital media and mainstream networks. Her keynote speeches are notorious for being interactive and constantly engaging with audience members to customize a useful and applicable discussion. As a keynote speaker, she will leave attendees with tools and motivation to thrive in academia.

PHOTOGRAPHY © KRIS GRAVES

Ericka Hart, February 2019