

Resolution 16: Black Play Matters: Why Joy is the Revolution NOBEL Women Must Champion

Sponsored by Sen. Tonya Anderson, Georgia

WHEREAS, play is recognized internationally as a fundamental human right affirmed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNESCO's Charter on Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport as a right for all, and for generations Black communities have used play through athletics, art, music, dance, storytelling, and imagination as radical acts of survival, resilience, and joy in the face of systemic oppression; and

WHEREAS, Black children disproportionately experience "adultification bias," are denied safe spaces for play, and are subjected to over-policing and harsher discipline in schools and communities, with Black students suspended at rates 3.8 times higher than white students for identical behaviors; and

WHEREAS, research consistently shows that play is essential to cognitive development, emotional regulation, and resilience across all ages, while Black communities face systematic barriers including 44% less park space per person than white neighborhoods and environmental racism that limits access to safe recreation; and

WHEREAS, Black people have been systematically denied joy and play, from laws that criminalized enslaved people's gatherings, to contemporary incidents like Black women being removed from public spaces for "laughing too loudly", yet have continually reclaimed play as a liberatory practice and form of resistance; and

WHEREAS, play is particularly vital for people with disabilities and elderly adults, providing alternative pathways for communication, learning, and community connection while improving mental health resilience and reducing social isolation; and

WHEREAS, Black Play Matters, an initiative of the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, affirms that justice requires not only the dismantling of harm but also investment in joy, imagination, and thriving opportunities for Black people of all ages and abilities; and

WHEREAS, the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women has long championed policies that advance the health, empowerment, and sustainability of Black communities; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the **National Organization of Black Elected Legislative (NOBEL) Women** endorses and supports the Black Play Matters initiative and its mission to ensure that Black people of all ages and abilities have access to safe, joyful, and culturally affirming play experiences; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NOBEL Women encourages federal, state, and local elected officials to:

1. Prioritize equitable funding for parks, recreation centers, community spaces, arts programs, and cultural facilities in Black neighborhoods;
2. Reform school discipline policies and public space regulations that criminalize normal behaviors and disproportionately impact Black communities;

3. Invest in community-led programs that center Black joy, healing, cultural expression, and intergenerational connection;
4. Address environmental racism to ensure all communities have access to clean, safe spaces for recreation and gathering;
5. Support legislation that recognizes play, recreation, and cultural expression as public health priorities and fundamental human rights;
6. Fund accessible programming that serves people with disabilities and creates inclusive opportunities for all forms of play and creative expression; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NOBEL Women commits to using our collective legislative power and influence to advocate for policies that support Black Play Matters' vision of communities where Black people can play, create, celebrate, and thrive without fear of criminalization or discrimination.