



## **Building an Empowerment Agenda Inclusive of LGBT people at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**

**The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC)** is a civil rights organization dedicated to empowering Black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, while eradicating racism and homophobia. As America's leading national Black LGBT organization focused on federal public policy, NBJC has accepted the charge to lead Black families in strengthening the bonds and bridging the gaps between the African American and LGBT communities and recognizing the existence and contributions of Black LGBT people.

Since 2003, NBJC has provided leadership at the intersection of national civil rights groups and LGBT organizations, advocating for the unique challenges and needs of the Black LGBT community that are often relegated to the sidelines. NBJC envisions a world where all people are fully-empowered to participate safely, openly and honestly in family, faith and community, regardless of race, gender identity or sexual orientation.

NBJC is committed to supporting policy change at the federal level that impacts the lives of LGBT people and helps move Black LGBT people and families closer to achieving full equality. In 2011, NBJC launched its **HBCU LGBT Equality Initiative** designed to seek policy change within the US Department of Education's **White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)** and to promote the development and delivery of culturally competent administrative, faculty, student and staff support services for LGBT people.

### **CURRENT CLIMATE / PROJECT MOTIVATION:**

- HBCUs develop many of the future leaders of America, especially Black America, as part of its core success story. With more than 300,000 students, mostly Black and of African descent, there is no data available to establish how many of those students self-identify as LGBT. In addition, there are minimal (if any) policies or support structures for LGBT people within the 105 institutions of higher learning.
- Federal allocations and student fees are the lifelines to most HBCUs in this country. With an inclusion mandate from the President and the US Department of Education, this could be the most opportune time to move one of the largest collective populations of Black people in the country to an inclusive understanding of the LGBT community. The current climate at most HBCUs is as if LGBT people do not exist. There is no institutional mandate to recognize LGBT people or to create a safe, nurturing space for self awareness and an uplifting environment for the needs of the LGBT community.
- Although HBCUs have been beacons of hope for the African American community, the lack of resources and support for the LGBT population has resulted in lower retention rates, higher suicide rates, and peer-to-peer bullying for LGBT students.

### **NBJC'S ADVOCACY AGENDA:**

- LGBT people should be considered an "**underserved population**" for purposes of outreach and services at HBCUs
- HBCUs should be required, as a condition of receiving federal funds, to **adopt nondiscrimination policies** that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity
- **Discretionary funds should be targeted**, where appropriate, to provide services specifically to HBCUs that express special needs for inclusion training and curriculum development on LGBT issues.