



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**The Calhoun School Awarded \$240,000 Grant by W.K. Kellogg Foundation
to Produce National, 3-Part Multimedia Project,
“What Kids of Color Know & White Kids Don’t – Deconstructing Racism”**

The Calhoun School (New York, NY) embarks this spring on a major national initiative intended to reshape the conversation about institutionalized racism and white privilege in our country. The project, presently under the working title: “What Kids of Color Know & White Kids Don’t – Deconstructing Racism,” will include an elementary, middle and upper school curriculum, a documentary film, and an interactive website, intended to reach parents, teachers and students in public and independent schools.

The three-part project has been awarded a \$243,063 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, MI.

Patrick F. Bassett, president of The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) says of the project, “Since most of America is blithely oblivious to the frequent experience of many if not most people of color when it comes to racist assumptions, micro-aggressions, and dismissal of genuine grievances, we haven’t achieved the just and equitable society one hopes all of us aspire to. This project will provide the first step for white kids in fostering a heightened awareness, understanding and knowledge of their peers of color. And when that happens, we’re on the road to eliminating racism, as much as is humanly possible, in the next generation.”

David Alpert, a Calhoun administrator and teacher, is the leader on the initiative. He conceived of the project five years ago after attending a professional development workshop on racism with his Calhoun colleagues. “Ever since that workshop [*Undoing Racism*, hosted by The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISB)], I’ve been thinking about how to meaningfully move the conversation about white privilege to a level of understanding for students,” he says. “As a 50-year-old white man, I was stunned that I was just learning about this invisible white privilege; I realized the conversation had to start earlier. So I left the workshop with the feeling that I had a responsibility to do that.” Now, with thanks to The Kellogg Foundation and after years of program development, grant-writing and planning, he notes “the real work can begin.”

Mr. Alpert, who has former experience as an entertainment-marketing producer for major international corporations, is teaming up with eight-time Emmy award-winning producer Dean Irwin for the making of the documentary, which will begin shooting in September 2012. Central to the film will be the personal stories of students confronting the effects of racism on their sense of self. It is intended to have a positive and dramatic impact on the critical and sensitive dialogue surrounding institutionalized racism and white privilege throughout the US.

The companion curriculum will be co-written by a core team of educators, including Calhoun’s Director of Diversity & Equity Initiatives, Hilary North, as well as Calhoun’s Middle and Upper School students. Finally, an interactive website for students will be designed to “change white kids’ perceptions of their white privilege” and engage them and their peers of color in an on-going, open dialogue. The site will be

hosted by Calhoun and moderated by Middle and Upper School students enrolled in a special interdisciplinary course focusing on institutionalized racism. Partnerships with public and independent school students and teachers will be established to support this work.

Alpert says he is seeking additional funding partners to match the original grant from Kellogg. The expected launch date for all three projects is winter 2014.

From its inception, the idea for the project was fully endorsed by Steve Nelson. "The Calhoun School is deeply engaged in diversity work," says Mr. Nelson. "Perhaps somewhat ironically, independent schools may be the laboratory in which the most effective work can be done. As our nation's public schools have been alarmingly re-segregated, independent schools have crafted increasingly diverse communities of students and teachers. While this progress is encouraging, the most challenging work lies ahead. Our hope is that this multimedia project will invite students and adults to a richer understanding of what each student brings into a diverse community. What are their assumptions and life stories? How do we see one another and what things are not seen?"

Serving on the projects' Advisory Board are leading scholars, educators and artists including David Addams (executive director, The Oliver Scholars Program), Lisa Barbaris (artistic director, True Colors Foundation), David Billings and Margery Freeman (authors and workshop facilitators, The People's Institute of Survival and Beyond), Joel Coen (filmmaker, screenwriter, director), Troy Duster (author and professor of sociology, NYU), Cyndi Lauper (singer, songwriter, activist), Fran McDormand (actor), and Patricia Williams (MacArthur Fellow; professor of law, Columbia Law School; author).

THE W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, established in 1930, supports children, families and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society. Grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and southern Africa.

For further information on the foundation, please visit www.wkkf.org.

The Calhoun School

Founded in 1896, The Calhoun School is a progressive, independent school for pre-school through grade twelve with two campuses on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

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