



AHAM EDUCATION

Art of Happiness and Mindfulness
Academy of the Heart and Mind

A Statement by AHAM Education, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, to the 2023 United Nations Water Conference.
March 24, 2023

Prepared by Knellee Bisram, Lead NGO Representative to the UN ECOSOC

Water is life. We are water. Water is our medicine.

Protecting our water is an act of protecting ourselves.

Water Resiliency IS Human Resiliency.

Indigenous and communities of color are leading the water justice movement. Yet, PFAS contamination in their water sources was 22% higher than expected. Experiencing water consciousness and healing, we cultivate “water affinity” and become advocates to protect it. We call urgently for the following water resiliency solutions.

- ***Investing in trauma-informed intergenerational water-based healing*** to restore broken linkages with water among historically marginalized groups - women, youth, indigenous, people of color and vulnerable coastal and small island communities:
 - a. **increasing water affinity** through contemplative and faith-based practice such as AHAM’s “Be Nature” mindfulness immersion practices, peace walks, mindful community clean ups, blue mindfulness, diversity in aquatics programs in historically segregated and ancestral spaces, rituals and prayer practices that honor and protect nature,
 - b. **educating the public** on water healing properties, US, LAC, and SIDS water history, restoring relationships to and protecting waterways for personal and community healing, sustenance, and employment, and
 - c. **developing and teaching curricula** on holistic water literacy and safety, learn-to-swim, lifeguard and aquatic job training from a cultural humility and eco-conscious lens.

- ***Building water awareness and activism through film screenings*** combining storytelling with historical and evolving scientific understanding about water injustices in



AHAM EDUCATION

Art of Happiness and Mindfulness
Academy of the Heart and Mind

marginalized communities, traditional and indigenous water conservation methods, water healing properties on physical and mental health, holistic and nature-based technological solutions to mitigate contamination and scarcity, whole-society benefits of restoring water culture and employment of marginalized groups in aquatic industries.

- ***Educating marginalized communities on cost-effective zero waste practices*** via
 - a. **family campaigns** to reduce plastic and switch to glass. New chemicals that have replaced BPA are still not safe, continue to mimic estrogen, and is not guaranteed safe plastic for the environment,
 - b. **community clean-ups** to remove and repurpose plastic instead of disposing in a landfill where it contaminates our soil and waterways, and to incorporate simple paper and glass reuse for storing food items,
 - c. **youth education and leadership** through art, nature immersion, storytelling and literature on water culture, local STEM camps, idea incubators, and zero waste hands-on practices, and
 - d. **reviving oral traditions** about the history of water pre and post colonization including Land Acts education.
- ***Passing legislation*** that measures and conserves water use, tracks and bans PFAs pollution, protects water sources, applies indigenous methods of adaptation and mitigation, and enforces a constitutional, infeasible, fundamental, enforceable right to clean and healthy waters.
- ***Stopping infringement of Tribal Treaty Rights and passing Rights of Nature*** for all Tribal Nations in the southeast USA. In North Carolina, pass General Assembly Legislation for the Rights of Nature by 2025, city resolutions in all cities by 2028, and by 2030 pass all Rights of Nature for all Tribal Nations in North Carolina, Virginia and South Carolina, including Urban Indian Centers. Coalescing voices and actions of indigenous peoples of the Americas to pass Rights of Nature legislation.
- ***Increasing political participation*** and decision-making by traditionally marginalized groups, who care for 80% of the world's biodiversity.



AHAM EDUCATION

Art of Happiness and Mindfulness
Academy of the Heart and Mind

- ***Incorporating climate equity*** in fiscal planning, budgeting, project prioritization, program and policy development among BIPOC communities through listening sessions, town halls, and community participation in decision-making bodies at the local government level, adopting and implementing the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Action Plan with special focus on equity in a municipal context and an Asset Based Community Development Project serving Spanish speaking residents.
- ***Making explicit linkages between toxic and predatory industries*** (biomass, fossil fuel extraction, production, and storage, utility companies and their waste storage, including coal ashe, nuclear waste and nuclear rods, and fracking) choosing to move into, industrialize and toxify waterways of poor BIPOC communities, making it unsafe for fishing, swimming, and performing daily activities and traditional ceremonial practices.

We are pleased to make this joint statement in collaboration with the Southeast Climate and Energy Network, Seven Directions of Service, Diversity in Aquatics, Prawanka, and BlackCat Media. Refer to our Water Action Commitment at [Water for Healing, Justice, and Action.](#)