

ANTI-TETHERING GUIDE

How FBAs Prevent Substitution, Erasure, and Structural Harm

PURPOSE

This guide provides Foundational Black Americans (FBAs) with clear language, boundaries, and standards to identify, name, and prevent tethering, which is a form of structural harm that collapses, substitutes, or erases our lineage-based identity.

It is designed as a practical reference for use across media, institutions, organizing spaces, and public discourse.

This guide supports:

- lineage protection
 - narrative integrity
 - accurate representation
 - prevention of resource and policy diversion
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WHAT TETHERING IS

Tether (noun)

An individual, domestic or foreign, who deliberately collapses Foundational Black American identity into pan-ethnic, diasporic, or immigrant categories by:

- adopting FBA culture, language, history, or struggle
 - leveraging that adoption to gain access, legitimacy, or influence
 - advancing agendas that dilute, replace, or erase lineage-specific justice claims
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Tethering (verb)

The deliberate act of identity collapse, substitution, or conflation.

Tethering constitutes structural harm because it:

- weakens covenant clarity
- obscures accountability
- distorts identity classification

- redirects resources, representation, or political outcomes away from FBAs

Tethering is a structural violation, not a symbolic, accidental, or benign act.

WHERE TETHERING SHOWS UP

Tethering occurs across both institutional and public-facing spaces.

Institutional Settings

- academia
- media
- philanthropy
- nonprofit and civic organizations
- political systems

Public and Cultural Spaces

- social media and content creation
 - public commentary and debate
 - historical storytelling and education
 - coalition and solidarity framing
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COMMON TETHERING BEHAVIORS

FBAs should be alert when the following patterns appear:

- using “we” language that implies shared lineage without clarification
- treating proximity as equivalence
- framing FBA history as a generalized or global Black experience
- invoking FBA trauma to legitimize unrelated agendas
- centering non-FBA experiences inside FBA-specific narratives
- teaching or narrating FBA history without FBA sources, authority, or consent

These behaviors replace accuracy with appropriation.

WHY TETHERING CAUSES HARM

Tethering produces harm through three interconnected mechanisms.

- **Historical Distortion**
When distinct lineages and jurisdictions are blurred, accountability for U.S.-specific harm to FBAs collapses.
- **Data and Classification Corruption**
Lineage-specific outcomes are absorbed into aggregate categories, distorting SSDH and ISDH analysis and obscuring FBA-specific harm.
- **Policy and Resource Diversion**
When the harmed population is unclear, repair becomes impossible and resources, protections, and remedies are redirected away from those to whom they are owed.

Intent does not neutralize impact.

INSTITUTIONAL ENABLEMENT

Tethering is often enabled by institutions that:

- collapse lineage-based identity categories
- reward substitution or representational displacement
- fail to uphold identity clarity and consent

Institutional silence or neutrality sustains structural harm.

WHAT TETHERING IS NOT

This guide does not reject:

- kinship
- collaboration
- solidarity

It rejects confusion.

FBA identity is:

- not interchangeable
- not symbolic
- not transferable

It is rooted in:

- blood and lineage
- U.S. jurisdiction
- unpaid labor
- legal exclusion
- generational harm
- cultural endurance within the United States

Respect and collaboration do not require identity collapse or substitution.

THE NON-DEBATE RULE

FBA's do not debate:

- our identity
- our history
- our harm
- our eligibility

We define our identity.

Public debate shifts authority away from the lineage and creates unnecessary conflict.

Respond with one of the following actions:

- cite
- clarify
- defer

- disengage

Debate is misalignment.

FBA PROTECTIVE RESPONSES

When tethering occurs, FBAs must:

- name the behavior clearly
- restate lineage boundaries
- refuse collapsed framing
- disengage from misaligned spaces
- document patterns for accountability

Harm is assessed by outcome and impact, not rhetoric, intent, or self-identification.

CLOSING PRINCIPLE

Distinction and consent are the foundation of solidarity and collaboration. They ensure engagement honors lineage, maintains accountability, and prevents substitution. Without them, solidarity becomes extraction and collaboration becomes harm, constituting a structural violation under USBA standards.

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