

## ANTI-TETHERING GUIDE

### *How FBAs Prevent Substitution, Erasure, and Structural Harm*

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## PURPOSE

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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

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### **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.

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## WHERE TETHERING SHOWS UP

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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

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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.

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## WHY TETHERING CAUSES HARM

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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.

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## INSTITUTIONAL ENABLEMENT

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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.

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## WHAT TETHERING IS NOT

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This guide does not reject:

- kinship
- collaboration
- solidarity

It rejects confusion.

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FBA identity is:

- not interchangeable
  - not symbolic
  - not transferable
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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.

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## THE NON-DEBATE RULE

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FBAs do not debate:

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

We define our identity.

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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.

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## FBA PROTECTIVE RESPONSES

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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.

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## CLOSING PRINCIPLE

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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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