Statement on Rachel Dorsey, SLP and Learn Play Thrive's plagiarism, appropriation, and erasure of BIPoC Autistic content
November 11, 2021

Foundations for Divergent Minds (FDM) is a grassroots organization that was founded in 2018 to advance and educate on the Neurodiversity paradigm using a systemized framework. This impactful framework took several years to develop prior to the inception of the organization. It draws upon decades of Autistic and disability practice and activism by our founding board members and the broader Neurodiversity movement.

As with all movements, we advance on the backs of those who came before us. Whether they are community icons or little-known elders.
Whether we have a sense of personal affinity for them or dislike them.
Whether their legacies are luminescent, imbrued, or a combination of both.
The fact remains that we are all heirs (enthusiastically or reluctantly) of the work of those who preceded us.

Whether it's Jim Sinclair's Don't Mourn for Us; Damian Milton's concept of the "Double Empathy Problem;" Anita Cameron's tireless organizing and activism; Mel Baggs' influential writings; the establishment of autistic-led organizations such as ANI, ASAN, and AWN; Mónica Vidal Gutiérrez and Sara Acevedo's global, intersectional work; Nick Walker, Remi Yergeau and Athena Michaels-Dillon's work on Neuroqueer rhetoric; Lydia X.Z. Brown and Shain Neumier's decade+ long opposition to the abuses at the Judge Rotenberg Center; Autreat archives; or Zoe Gross launching the Annual Disability Day of Mourning…each new step in advancing disability justice for neurodivergent people builds on what came before.

This phenomenon is true of FDM's work and specifically, our framework as well. For this reason as well as our commitment to integrity, FDM - as private individuals and collectively as an organization - is honored to consistently and publicly credit those whose ideologies, labor, and lifeblood has influenced us and paved the way for us by explicitly giving them attribution. It doesn't matter whether we are philosophically aligned and/or on friendly terms

When we began, we recognized that as we shared the FDM framework with others it would also be built on by others and taken in directions that we, as a small organization, couldn't have anticipated. While we are using this framework to advance disability justice through programs for both adults and children, we know many others using it to change their practices and educate others. This is what we have always wanted and encouraged others to do. Unfortunately, however,

this has also resulted in various entities choosing to take advantage of that by claiming credit without attribution and profit from that work.

This year has also seen an upheaval in the Autistic community with regards to racism and ableism. As an autistic organization comprised of a majority BIPOC and queer leadership, we are acutely and personally aware of our communities' continual erasure.

It's with this backdrop we are seeking equity from Meg Proctor of Learn Play Thrive and autistic consultant Rachel Dorsey, SLP for the appropriation of the Foundations for Divergent Minds framework and repeatedly misrepresenting our work as their own creation.

Shortly after the pre-sale launch of their course "Goal Writing For Autistic Students", we made contact with Rachel Dorsey and Meg (Learn Play Thrive's founder) as we noted a number of blatant and in some instances, practically word for word similarities between this course and our own course - a course that Rachel previously completed. Two FDM leaders, Oswin Latimer and Morénike Giwa Onaiwu, met promptly with Rachel and Meg who acknowledged the concern and revised the website and course description accordingly.

The meeting, we thought, was productive. We were all able to come to a compromise that moving forward, the FDM framework would be appropriately credited. We did not seek monetary compensation nor did we pursue legal action. We emphasized that we are proud that Rachel and Meg are helping to promote neurodiversity and are making positive change in their professions. We did, and do, want them to continue doing so. Our sole, and (we believe) reasonable ask was not to be erased from our own content; please just credit us as opposed to portraying this concept and this content as being something that you came up with on your own.

However, as more and more advertising and promotional information is released by Meg and Rachel, we have noticed a complete lack of transparency that the FDM framework is the basis of the material in this course despite what was agreed to in the meeting. We feel this causes significant harm and call publicly for Rachel Dorsey and Learn Play Thrive to correct this error, apologize, and abide by their promise that no longer would either party misrepresent the material as being developed primarily upon Rachel's epiphany as an autistic practitioner.

We would also urge them both to assess themselves candidly. We beseech you to contemplate the privilege and institutional power that has allowed you to do such harm to autistic colleagues who represent some of the most marginalized portions of our collectively disenfranchised autisic community. Please reflect on how you can repair the damage, intentional or unintentional.

Foundations for Divergent Minds

The power dynamics and imbalance of privilege that are at play in this scenario cannot be ignored when a consultant and a company who are perceived as proponents of neurodiversity and equity unashamedly profit off the uncredited work of an underfunded nonprofit run by volunteers who have donated their time for years in lieu of a salary. Nor can the reality that the optics of a partnership of a white-presenting, licensed therapist and entrepreneurial team to subjugate autistic people of marginalized racial, socioeconomic, and other identities, most of whom could not complete college, have significant health and/or familial challenges, and/or live in poverty, go unnoticed.

We trust that Learn Play Thrive will do the right thing as promoters of ethical, neurodiversity-affirming practices.