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EDUCATION LEADER HONORED FOR REALIZING DREAMS OF MLK

Consulate General of Israel Recognizes President of the National Urban Alliance for Work to Institute Education as a Civil Right

STAMFORD, CONN. (February 26) -- The Consulate General of Israel in New York today recognized Dr. Eric Cooper, president of the National Urban Alliance (NUA), with its annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. award for his years of work to bring together races, cultures, and ethnicities in schools that access every child. "Each year in New York City, we commemorate Dr. King's dream of peaceful co-existence between people of diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds," said David Saranga, Consul for Media and Public Affairs. "And tonight, for the very first time, we are extending this tradition and holding the ceremony in Connecticut, honoring an individual who resides here in Stamford... Through the many initiatives in which he is involved, Dr. Cooper has established himself as a role model – not only as a community leader, but as a human being. His work is appreciated not only in New York or even the United States, but also in Israel." Cooper and NUA partner with school districts across the nation, implementing specialized teacher mentoring programs to close the achievement gap – not only between black and white students but also between every student's current performance and his/her potential for excellence. While NUA initiatives target the academic needs of all children, it places special emphasis on the underachievement of black males in urban areas. "NUA's exceptional strategy reminds districts, teachers, and the students themselves that every student can make significant strides every year, not only in their test scores, but also in their belief, hope, determination and confidence – hallmarks of NUA's commitment to all students and to the cities in which they work," said John Ramos, superintendent of Bridgeport Public Schools, where NUA representatives mentor teachers and leads the district's Literacy Initiative. Additionally, NUA has partnered with Israel's International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential (ICELP) to implement research-based assessment techniques in the United States. ICELP's research indicates that current testing methods are misdiagnosing students with behavioral rather than learning disorders and unwarrantedly placing them in special education classes. In the United States, black males are categorized as 'educable mentally retarded' twice as often as their white peers, and the NUA/ICELP partnership is implementing more accurate tests as well as teaching techniques that reach students with behavioral disorders in NUA's districts. For his work in forging this partnership, the first Israeli-American partnership for education, as well as his progress in establishing education as a civil right for children of all races and economic backgrounds, the Consulate General recognized Cooper's efforts to further the dreams of Dr. King.

"We are honored to receive this recognition on behalf of all those who embraced and followed the social justice leadership that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. provides for the country and the world," said Cooper. "America hasn't actualized his dreams just yet, but I am humbled by the leadership of the educators, parents, and citizens of the world who have been tirelessly working to ensure that the

educators, parents, and students of the world who have been tirelessly working to ensure that the peace and equality Dr. King envisioned can be brought to life in our schools." "Eric and the NUA, in uniting so many distinct interests under the umbrella of 'education as a civil right' have done public education an immense service. He has helped us realize how central this issue is to our nation's success as a melting pot and each district's potential to restore hope for every student in every classroom," said Tom Rogers, executive director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents, which will join NUA in leading its *Teaching for Intelligence: Believe to Achieve* conference this March. NUA has worked successfully in over twenty cities across the country, including Albany (N.Y.), Birmingham (Ala.), Bridgeport (Conn.), Indianapolis (Ind.), New York City (N.Y.), St. Louis (Mo.), and Seattle (Wash.). "Enriching the academic fabric of urban schools is a critical issue for our city and for cities across America," said Dr. Eva C. Joseph, superintendent of the City School District of Albany. "The work of Dr. Cooper and the NUA to make Dr. King's message a reality in our public schools -- the hearts of our democracy -- should be an inspiration to us all."

The National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA) ® was founded in 1989 with a vision of school reform based upon three beliefs: all children are capable of attaining high educational standards; intelligence is modifiable, not fixed; and all stakeholders in the community must be involved in addressing the social, cultural, and intellectual needs of our youth.