DR. CLARA DENISE WEST — PROFESSIONAL BIO

Clara Denise West, Ph.D. is an award-winning author, engineer, educator, songwriter, and the creator of **Koko and Friends™**, a restorative SEL and moral-development universe designed to protect childhood and rebuild the emotional and moral foundations of children and families. Blending systems engineering with trauma-responsive practice and storytelling, Dr. West creates transformative programs for schools, communities, and youth.

Dr. West is one of fewer than **3,000 Black women in U.S. history** to earn a Ph.D. in engineering and less than one percent of only **8,000 women nationwide** to hold the **FCC Extra Class Amateur Radio License**, the highest level of amateur radio certification. Her rare combination of technical mastery and human-centered design informs her work developing communication, SEL, and leadership systems for children.

Her mission began when her eight-year-old daughter attempted suicide after severe bullying. Traditional interventions failed, and her concerns were dismissed by the school. Only a simple story about a small bullied bug named Koko opened her daughter's emotional door. This moment birthed **Koko and Friends™**, now a comprehensive ecosystem of books, animation, music, workshops, parent resources, community programming, and youth-centered leadership development reaching children nationwide.

Dr. West is the architect of the **Koko and Friends Anti-Bullying Program™ (ABP)**, a K–12 restorative SEL and moral-development system addressing root causes of harmful behavior, including distorted peer norms, belonging pressure, emotional dysregulation, trauma, and social-media–driven performance behavior. She also created **Not On Our Watch™ (N.O.W.)**, a community sustainability model placing a trained **Community Program Coordinator™** in schools to support climate, connect families to resources, and sustain cultural change over time.

Her additional innovations include **Koko and Friends Life Lab™** (STEM + SEL learning), **Koko and Friends Jukebox™** (AI-assisted SEL music platform), the **Long Shots Locker Room™** youth entrepreneurship marketplace, and a **Communication Systems STEM Program for Girls™** based on her Extra Class license.

Her award-winning storytelling and media work — including *Koko and Friends: The Long Shots*, recipient of the **Mom's Choice Gold Award** — has been featured in national film festivals, New York Women in Film & Television, educational showcases, and press interviews.

Across every project, Dr. West is guided by a single conviction:

Childhood is sacred. Emotional safety is non-negotiable. Every child deserves a village strong enough to protect their identity, dignity, and joy.