



# MOMENTUM

**Sustaining Efforts to Improve Life Outcomes  
Among African-American Males**

**A REPORT PREPARED FOR THE FORD FOUNDATION**

By Micah Gilmer, Marcus Littles and Ryan Bowers

Foreword by Loren S. Harris

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## Foreword

By Loren S. Harris

In January 2008 the Ford Foundation published and widely disseminated *Why We Can't Wait: A Case for Philanthropic Action, Opportunities for Improving Life Outcomes for African-American Males* a report highlighting the socioeconomic and health challenges facing marginalized males. The authors of *Why We Can't Wait* built upon the release of the report by conducting scores of interviews, organizing four regional meetings with peer foundations and authoring this follow-up report. *Momentum: Sustaining Efforts to Improve Life Outcomes Among African-American Males* completes their analysis of opportunities for a coordinated philanthropic response to the vulnerabilities experienced daily by young men in marginalized communities. *Momentum* documents the efforts of the Ford Foundation and peer foundations across the country to kick-start dialogue and develop ways for philanthropic organizations to address the socioeconomic and health crises affecting African-American males and their communities.

Together *Why We Can't Wait* and *Momentum* are intended to contribute nuance and understanding to complex issues facing America and many predominantly African-American communities challenged by the increasing underachievement of black males and the attendant effects of their social and economic marginalization. Over the past two years, commentators of varying expertise have weighed in on the plight of black communities, and in particular, African-American males, not always in that order. Media attempts to capture the well-being of black men and families have been mixed. Print and television coverage of these issues has been characterized by some solid journalism and insightful reporting—as well as by poorly researched, inaccurate and uninformative journalistic work. At times, the current discourse has been critiqued as overly intellectual and somewhat removed from lived experiences of African-Americans. In other cases, observers have cried foul in response to what they perceive as unnecessarily mean-spirited and abrasive commentary.

The sort of knotty issues at the core of this conversation—race, culture, class, gender, structural opportunity, individual responsibility seem to prompt widely varied, strongly held viewpoints. Within the African-American community, there has even been disagreement about the “proper” forum for this discourse, with some feeling that the general public is no place to “air the community’s collective dirty laundry.” Others liberally offer critique of flawed cultural norms, particularly among poor and working-class blacks, as a primary explanation for the obstinate challenges facing these communities.

Much has changed since the tumultuous events of the civil rights era and the release of two reports<sup>1</sup> commissioned by President Lyndon Johnson intended to help the nation grasp the well-being of black families and state of race relations in America. But one constant has been the disproportionately poor life outcomes of black males. Black males were overrepresented among the nation’s unemployed in the 1960s, and that remains true today. The hyper-segregation of residential communities limited the social networks and opportunities available to black people four decades ago, and, unfortunately, that truth also holds today.

It was not surprising that black male academic achievement trailed that of their white peers in the years immediately following the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, but more than 50 years later that regrettable reality still lives with us and, by some measures, has worsened. There is ample evidence of individual strides made by the descendants of America’s former slaves. However, the urgent challenge now is how to realize broader achievement among the black males who have been left behind despite sustained periods of economic recovery, legislative initiatives aimed at improving education outcomes and episodic philanthropic investment targeting this group.

1. See Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s 1965 *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* report and Governor Otto Kerner’s 1968 *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* report on the causes of urban riots.

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Over time, foundations across America have supported interventions focused on addressing the nation's most intractable problems. When pursuing place-based approaches, foundations most often do so in the country's toughest communities, which are typically home to disproportionate numbers of African-Americans. Though residents in these communities, however, black males frequently are not direct benefactors of these investments. For example, results from a major residential mobility program in Chicago shows promising outcomes for single, black female householders and their daughters but mixed results among their sons. Such findings fuel calls for investments in targeted interventions focused primarily or exclusively on black males rather than broader, universal efforts.

What foundations are doing to address the worrisome issues disproportionately affecting marginalized black males and their communities is well documented in the pages that follow. What more can be done by foundations remains an open discussion. It is clear that expanding opportunity and ensuring the fullest human development of young men at risk will require a long-term commitment by foundations. The presidents of several foundations are advancing bold visions and demonstrating courageous leadership in allocating targeted resources focused on marginalized males. How to maximize the investments made by individual foundations is perhaps the most crucial challenge in the path ahead.

This concern can be met, and it should be prioritized. The regional gatherings described in these pages provided an initial forum for the ongoing conversations that will be necessary to maintain momentum. Regional coordination among foundations can be replicated in smaller settings and linked to the national coordination being led by Frontline Solutions (the authors of this report). In this way, foundations can create an echo chamber that enhances communication, enables collaboration and ensures broader sharing of lessons learned among grant makers and, importantly, outside philanthropy with leaders in government and private industry who are equally concerned about marginalized males. For example, the New York City-based Winning Strategies Initiative<sup>2</sup> is being spearheaded by lawyers

from several of the city's most prestigious firms. It would be to the benefit of private foundations and stakeholders from private industry to create and maintain streamlined processes for communicating, disseminating developments in their work and, where plausible, collaborating to support the respective efforts. After the general hiatus from foundation investment in this field of work, practitioners, advocates and other stakeholders will no doubt welcome renewed philanthropic interest. However, several lessons from prior foundation investments might prove to be instructive. The inattention to the issues facing marginalized males and the nonprofits working with them has created substantial gaps in the capacity of nonprofits working with marginalized males, and on their behalf, across a range of issues.

Historically, foundations have initiated grant-making strategies exclusively within their issue silos, such as education, workforce development, former prisoner re-entry and foster care. This course is understandable. Foundations have program mandates approved by their respective boards of trustees (or, in some cases, individual donors), which ostensibly enable the organization to make strategic investments around a few coherent issues. But because the problems involving marginalized males have a multidimensional nature, they are not going to be resolved by a single solution using discreet issue silos. Foundations choosing to work in this area can augment their investment of grant dollars by also spending time with grant makers who address marginalized males from wholly distinct fields. The added value of coordinating in this way is the opportunity to leverage the knowledge and expertise in a different but related field.

As evidenced in the body of this report, a growing number of foundations are funding or developing funding strategies focused on marginalized males, particularly black males. At the moment, depending on the geographic focus of the funding approach, most of these efforts are evolving independently of one another. Generally, extant affinity groups have not yet proved to be effective points of connection for grant makers working in this area. For example, a group of grant makers concerned with improving education outcomes

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*2. The Winning Strategies Initiative aims to stimulate the legal, financial services and business communities to partner with the public sector to address the widening social and economic divide between young black men and the rest of society.*

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among black males has elected to form a donor collaborative outside the existing education-focused affinity groups. One exception is the Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE) with regard to its emerging work on African-American males. Also, the Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families (GCYF) affinity group has demonstrated interest in the topic through participation in key meetings and the publication of a special report on at-risk males. It should be noted that national foundations—traditional supporters of special-interest activities among affinity groups—have been slow to fund affinity group work on marginalized males. No doubt there are well-reasoned explanations for this, but one consequence is that any effort to coordinate funders beyond a single identity group, issue or region of the country is hamstrung.

The notion of a coordinated philanthropic response is not novel. However, work focused on marginalized males, particularly black males, has been haunted by a tradition of maverick philanthropy. On numerous occasions, foundations have launched funding initiatives focused on marginalized males that fall short of the intended ambition, leaving debris in the wake. At this nascent stage, foundations have the opportunity to learn from the past, recognize the limitations of solo funding approaches and work with peers as partners to multiply the impact of limited resources, both human and financial.

Given the urgency of the issues—clear and present needs of young males in resource-poor communities and constraints of individual institutional investments—it not only reasonable but imperative that this generation of investments be improved by lessons learned from the past. The field of professionals working with marginalized males merits more sound funding strategies than years past, and, importantly, so, too, do the ultimate beneficiaries, marginalized males and their communities.

On behalf of the Ford Foundation and the authors, thank you for taking the time to review this report and engage in this important conversation. I look forward to discussing these issues with you.

**Loren S. Harris**

*Program Officer, Ford Foundation*

*December 2008*

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## **Introduction: The Foundation for this Moment**

The year 1995 was a moment of hope for the crisis facing black males. In the midst of the dismantling of many of the social supports for black men, civil society placed the success of black men at the fore in extraordinary ways. The Million Man March in Washington, D.C., brought unprecedented (good and bad) media attention. The Kellogg Foundation helped create the Village Foundation, the first institution of its kind dedicated to black men and boys. Publications such as *Emerge* magazine profiled programs for youth that were working. That same year, the Urban Institute published a report based on a mail survey of 282 programs and in-depth site visits to 51 “effective” or “promising” organizations (Majors, Wiener, & Dyer, 1995).

More than a dozen years later, only a fraction of those promising efforts remain. The Village Foundation no longer exists. As a 2007 Ford Foundation report documented, 75 percent of the 51 “effective” programs surveyed by the Urban Institute are no longer serving black males (Littles, Bowers, & Gilmer, 2007). Michael Cross, former director of a program for young men in Detroit, pointed to what might be described as a nationwide crisis in sustainability. “There are programs like ours all over the country that are no longer in operation,” he said, “and it’s not because they don’t work.”

### **Purpose of this Report**

This report is dedicated to making sure that the scenario described above does not happen again. The current interest across the country in the crisis facing black males has yielded significant efforts in philanthropy, the nonprofit sector, private enterprise and some promising proposals in government. As the demography of philanthropy has become increasingly diverse, a critical mass of leaders committed to careful examination of race and gender have created the possibility for a sustainable effort to positively impact the life outcomes of black males. Likewise, the lessons learned over the past decade have created program models with proven success and leaders capable of effective organization. However, few foundations have taken definitive steps in addressing the issues still facing black males. Our analysis identifies several encouraging, though nascent, philanthropic initiatives being launched by national,

regional and local funders. But the overwhelming majority of interested parties have failed to act in meaningful ways. There are myriad reasons for this reticence. Several of those challenges will be addressed below. Additionally, in demonstrating the tangible ways funders have creatively invested in this issue, this document attempts to remove barriers to action.

The following pages will survey the landscape of efforts under way in philanthropy and civil society and outline a concrete plan of action for multiple parties committed to tackling the issues facing black males. No single document can capture the ongoing efforts in countless schools, communities, churches and programs. Rather, this report relies on 18 months of qualitative study of the field of philanthropy to highlight policy innovations, philanthropic initiatives and civil society partnerships that are in some way supported by institutional philanthropy.

We, the authors of this report, conducted interviews with leaders in this field across the country. We were also privileged to facilitate and document one national and four regional gatherings of funders on this issue from April 2007 to April 2008. The insights of more than 240 participants from approximately 80 foundations have informed this paper and are discussed in detail below.

After defining the work in the area of black males, this paper analyzes the current state of philanthropic response to the crises facing black males. A discussion of challenges to this work and strategic opportunities to advance effective approaches follows. The final section summarizes conceptual frameworks that could be used for individuals and institutions facing differing strengths, resources and challenges.

### **Defining the Work**

For the purposes of this paper, we define black males simply as males of African descent living within the United States. We use “African-American males” interchangeably with “black males” throughout this paper. Both terms are meant to be inclusive of Caribbean, African and



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other foreign-born or -descended black males. Defining black males work is quite a bit more difficult. The majority of work that targets black males within philanthropy does not take place within the framework of a black males initiative or portfolio. At the same time, work that claims to serve black males but does not make a targeted effort to reach them often works well for every population but black males.

Based on our analysis, we find five attributes common across black males work:

**1. Acknowledges the Injustice of Unequal Race and Gender Outcomes**

Effective black males work is informed by an analysis that understands the poor outcomes black males face in nearly every category of analysis. Simultaneously, this work proceeds on the assumption that such stark difference is created at least in part by the cumulative effects of racial and gender discrimination. Likewise, black males work asserts that such disparities are not commensurate with a just and equitable society.

**2. Seeks to Address the Injustice of Race and Gender Disparities**

Effective black males work seeks to close the gaps between the success of young black males and their male and female peers. This work does not seek to hinder or impede the progress of any group, but rather implements strategies tailored to the unique situation of black males in the United States.

**3. Employs Targeted Strategies**

The best of black males work recognizes that universal programs often do not effectively aid black males. Black males work is targeted to have a positive impact on black males specifically.

**4. Uses a Race- and Gender-Specific Metric to Evaluate Success**

Just as targeted strategies are necessary to address black males as a population, evaluative tools must be explicit in determining the relative success rate of black males within a particular program.

**5. Engages Work Through a Race + Gender Lens**

GrantCraft, a source for practical wisdom for grant makers, offers Grant Making With a Racial Equity

Lens on its Web site at [grantcraft.org](http://grantcraft.org). The resource argues for an approach to philanthropic work that places race and ethnicity at the fore. While many grant makers may not have portfolios that focus on race, “using a racial equity lens means paying disciplined attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success.” A Race + Gender lens goes a step farther, combining this due diligence with the work of leading scholars on gender, who have developed the concept of simultaneity. What this means is that black males, like other population groups, experience their lives as black and male at the same time. As such, effective grant making must look at race and gender together.

**A Moment of Momentum**

In the spring of 2008, the Ford Foundation, along with various local co-conveners, brought together funders in four regional meetings. Funder convenings in Detroit; Little Rock, Ark.; the San Francisco Bay Area; and Philadelphia brought together more than 200 funders representing more than 70 philanthropic institutions. The institutions that were represented are listed in Appendix B, and a map of where these institutions are located is in Appendix C. The strong attendance at these events reflects at the very least a pervasive interest in addressing this issue.

This interest has been coupled with action by a growing cohort of institutions. Appendix A lists 30 initiatives already under way with targeted approaches to addressing the issues black males face. These encouraging trends point to the potential for translating activity into momentum.

However, there is a single significant barrier to creating lasting change in this area: inaction. There is much work still to be done on this issue, and there are enough varying roles to fit foundations of all shapes and sizes. The following section lays out some of the outstanding needs and strategic opportunities for capturing this Moment of Momentum and laying a foundation that can help turn the tide on black male disparity.



## The Philanthropic Landscape

### **Regional Funder Dialogues on Improving the Life Outcomes of Black Males**

In April 2007, the Ford Foundation published the report *Why We Can't Wait: A Case for Philanthropic Action* to scan research institutions and academicians, policy initiatives, and community organizations in the United States that specifically target black men and boys. On April 27, in advance of the Council on Foundations meeting in Seattle, Ford and the Open Society Institute, in collaboration with Casey Family Programs and the Association of Black Foundation Executives, convened a diverse set of 16 foundations from throughout the country to present the study's findings and discuss how philanthropy could respond to the disproportionately negative life outcomes of black males in America. One of the suggested next steps was to reconvene and invite more philanthropic institutions to learn how foundations are already engaged in grant making that is affecting positive life outcomes for black males and to provide a venue for foundations to collectively engage and learn about the disparities that exist and the opportunities for philanthropy to respond.

Recognizing that local and community philanthropy are central agents in promoting equity and in combating forces that exacerbate unbalanced access to opportunity in communities, Ford engaged funders from different regions in the country to co-convene four regional funder conversations. These convenings provided opportunities for philanthropic institutions from a given region to collectively accomplish several learning and field-building objectives:

- Share information, data and tools that may aid foundations in identifying and addressing the specific issues, systems and policies that contribute to the challenges African-American males face
- Engage local philanthropic partners in specific regions to better understand how to invest resources with goals to better life outcomes for African-American males

- Learn how local philanthropic institutions are making investments that are directly affecting the well-being of African-American males
- Encourage increased and targeted strategic investment by philanthropy in improving the life outcomes of African-American males

To meet these objectives and set an environment conducive to learning and engagement by funders, each convening was limited to staff and board members of foundation and philanthropic affinity groups. A select set of practitioners local to the region were also invited to participate in a panel designed to inform the discussion among funders. The meetings encouraged senior staff members to attend so that key decision makers would be engaged in exploring how their institutions could foster new partnerships and collaborations to produce more sustained, coordinated and effective responses from the philanthropic community to the troubling realities facing African-American males.

These dialogues took place from January to March 2008 in the Midwest (Detroit), the South (Little Rock, Ark.), the West Coast (San Francisco Bay Area) and the East Coast (Philadelphia). The local philanthropic partners included the Skillman Foundation, Chicago Community Trust, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Foundation for the Mid South, Community Investment Network, Southeastern Council on Foundations, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, California Endowment, Northern California Grantmakers, Southern California Grantmakers, Delaware Valley Grantmakers, Philadelphia Foundation, William Penn Foundation and United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania. (See Appendix B for a list of participating organizations.)

These regional meetings and interactions with the co-convening institutions were significantly instructive and provided invaluable context around how black males work, disparity and structural barriers are common regardless of region, yet also distinct according to place.

#### **Brief Recap of Regional Dialogues**

To be expedient, the regional funder dialogues divided the United States into four parts (Midwest, South, West Coast and East Coast). Many commonalities expressed

by participants were consistent across regions (see above). However, each regional discussion also produced conversation points that other areas did not touch on.

#### **Midwest Dialogue**

- Held in Detroit, hosted at the Skillman Foundation offices
- Co-convened by the Skillman Foundation and Chicago Community Trust
- Attended by more than 40 foundation staff members representing 27 foundations from five Midwest states

The Midwest dialogue was composed of large national foundations and rural community foundations as well as local family foundations. The most prominent themes to come up in the meeting were the capacity and sustainability of practitioners; foundation evaluation constructs; and the importance of accessible venues for funders to learn and convene around these issues. Discussion points in Detroit that did not emerge in other meetings include:

- Funder/Practitioner Dichotomy in What Impact Looks Like— A challenge that was brought up in the meeting was the need for funders to be honest with themselves about the fact that their expectations and views of what the impact of practitioner initiatives should look like are often different than those of the practitioners themselves. In looking to fund evaluation, funders should clearly understand these dynamics: “We have our ideas; they may not be the same as the community’s.”
- Funder Venues and Funder Willingness to Share Information—Participants spoke at length about issues of capacity and evaluation, which prompted a conversation about the absence of common spaces to share the lessons institutions and individuals have learned about these issues. Participants also mentioned that challenges of information sharing (such as on best practices and evaluation indices) are caused not just by lack of meeting opportunities, but also sometimes because of a lack of willingness or effort exerted by funders.

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## Southern Dialogue

- Held in Little Rock, Ark., at the William J. Clinton Presidential Library
- Co-convened by Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Foundation for the Mid South, Community Investment Network and the Southeastern Council on Foundations
- Attended by more than 30 foundation staff members representing 25 foundations from six Southern states

The Southern dialogue was composed of community foundations, a national and regional membership grant-making association/affinity group, a network of giving circles and a variety of private foundations, as well as local family foundations. The most prominent themes to come up in the meeting were the need for bold and visionary leadership at the executive level of foundations, community empowerment and “supply-side” strategies, and the importance of accessible venues for funders to learn and convene around these issues. Discussion points in Little Rock that did not emerge in other meetings include:

- Diversifying Decision Making—In each regional discussion, participants talked about the difficulty of translating the critical urgency of the issues facing black males to board members and institutional leadership. The Southern dialogue expounded on the issue of institutional leadership with a conversation on the need for more black males in senior-level staff positions and as board members. The group conversation concluded that reticence to invest in issues of racial inequity in general may be attributed to a scarcity of people of color as part of the governance structure of philanthropic institutions in the South.
- Shrinking Amounts of Philanthropic Dollars—Participants talked about the ever-decreasing amount of philanthropic dollars because of the struggling economy. Interestingly, the meeting in the South was the only region to talk about the implications of that.

## West Coast Dialogue

- Held in Mountain View, Calif., at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation offices
- Co-convened by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, California Endowment, Northern

California Grantmakers and Southern California Grantmakers

- Attended by nearly 40 foundation staff members and invited guests representing 26 foundations from California and Washington

The West Coast dialogue was composed of community foundations, a national and regional membership grant-making association/affinity group and a variety of private foundations as well as local family foundations. The most prominent themes to come up in the meeting were the impact of public policy on subpopulations; the impact of demographic shifts in the region; and the importance of accessible venues for funders to learn and convene around these issues. Discussion points in Mountain View that did not emerge in other meetings include:

- Complexity of Ethnically Diverse Communities—One of the central insights of the meeting centered on how in the Western region, “the simple black/white construct doesn’t exist.” The presence of significant populations of other ethnic minorities complicates conversations about race. Perceived and real black/brown divides can potentially constrain race- and gender-specific conversations to a “zero-sum” paradigm that views gains for one group as losses for another.
- Gentrification and Population Shifts—Participants talked about how high real estate costs and commuting difficulties have caused the displacement of many African-American populations within places like the San Francisco Bay Area in Northern California and the suburbs of Los Angeles in Southern California. Lower-income people “move from the city to the suburbs, but the health disparities remain.” Simple strategies that just “dumped money into communities like Richmond” in the East Bay area of Northern California are perceived as decreasing the ability to make a positive impact in black communities.

## East Coast Dialogue

- Held in Philadelphia at the offices of United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania
- Co-convened by United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, William Penn Foundation, Delaware Valley Grantmakers and Philadelphia Foundation
- Attended by more than 60 participants representing

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about 40 foundations from five East Coast states and the District of Columbia

The East Coast dialogue was composed of community foundations, international and national private foundations, regional associations of grant makers, a variety of private foundations, corporate foundations and local family foundations. The most prominent themes to come up in the meeting were institutional leadership; the importance of public-private partnerships; strategic grant-making approaches; and the importance of accessible venues for funders to learn and convene around these issues. Discussion points in Philadelphia that did not emerge in other meetings include:

- **Need to Support, Inform and Challenge Elected Officials**—Participants discussed the need to make government officials aware of how the policies they are promoting or enacting affect black males, because they may not know how “benign” policies are having a negative impact. The participants in this convening discussed several innovative models of engaging and partnering with the public sector.

- **Reputation Management**—Participants talked candidly about the potential negative fallout that could come with pushing issues of race in philanthropic institutions. Not taking the “comfortable route” can affect career progression. Participants talked about how putting race on the table has become increasingly under attack in this country and how learning to discuss race in a broader context is essential.

### **Overall Observations and Opportunities**

The regional dialogues collectively attracted more than 200 individuals engaged in philanthropy at the staff, board and affinity group level. Naturally, some common themes, analyses, hopes and concerns were expressed in these meetings. The following observations are an overview and synthesis of the discussions that took place across the country.

### **Observations**

- **Same Story, Different Place**—The series conveners were very intentional in approaching each of these regional meetings without preconceived notions of the severity of disparities in each region. One of the pur-

poses of the meetings was to identify data and studies that document disproportionality. In each region where these meetings took place, participants referred to recent local studies, all of which document similar gaps in outcomes such as employment, economic empowerment, incarceration, education and health among Black males and their white male peers. These meetings and the information shared provided clear evidence that even though the places were distinct, the disparities are much the same throughout the country.

- **Black Boys vs. Black Men**—Each of the regional dialogues was framed around improving the life outcomes of African-American males. However, in each meeting there was an interesting commonality: The conversation was consistently pushed to focus on black boys. It is important to note that two of the four host organizations (Skillman Foundation and the Center for Youth Development at the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania) had grant-making focus areas that targeted black boys. But in neither case did the hosts impose their own program focus on the conversation. There was an apparent higher level of comfort among the foundation staff participants in framing this issue in terms of “saving our black boys” as opposed to a frame that acknowledges the challenges that black men face. In two of the dialogues, at least one participant raised the question, “What about black men? We’re only talking about boys.” These attempts to broaden the conversation were generally acknowledged by head nods in the room but ultimately were not supported by a sustained conversation.

- **Making the Case**—Each of the meetings included lively discussions about how to reach various audiences. The language often used in these discussions was, “How do we make the case for this work?” The question was applied to marketing within philanthropic institutions, particularly to board members and senior staff members. It was also applied to media and venues where public discourse and opinion are influenced, as well as to the public sector and elected officials. Participants spoke at length about the need for relatable language and frameworks with which to communicate to peers, superiors and boards. Some participants felt they were operating in an environment in which “black male fatigue” has had an impact (see page 20). Some meeting participants brought up the strategy of

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framing the case along economic lines. Funders talked about the propensity to frame this issue from only a moral point of view as opposed to raising the economic potential of black males work to produce tangible results for the cost of investment.

- **Regional Distinctions**—One of the primary learning objectives of the regional dialogues was to better understand how these issues are distinct according to region. Interestingly, the meetings in the South and on the West Coast were the only ones in which participants repeatedly referred to a distinct regional identity as a lens to understand the challenges black males face in their region. The meeting in the South focused on the vastness of the region and the numerous rural communities that offer a unique set of challenges in terms of access to opportunity and resource for black males. The West Coast participants were concerned with the implications of a smaller African-American population in the region; the large immigrant populations in the West; the misnomer of the West Coast as a “progressive” place; and distinct migration patterns along the West Coast. Interestingly, the Midwest and East Coast participants did not identify as strongly as a region, though the issues raised in these convenings attest to unique experiences, perspectives and analyses.

- **The Fear Factor**—By design, the regional dialogues were not intended to be venues for passionate or emotive arguments about a moral obligation to “save” black males. However, many participants found it difficult or impossible to completely separate personal feelings and earnest commitment to this issue from the more linear strategic thinking and solutions-oriented frame for addressing these issues. Similarly, in each of the convenings there were analyses of affect and emotion that had important strategic implications in the framing of community solutions. One such insight was the perceived need to acknowledge that “we” (meaning not just society, but also foundation staff members in the room) have “our own fear of black males.” In every region, a discussion ensued about how fear of black males shapes an individual’s perspective, that person’s grant-making analysis and how the person frames this work. Fear is a factor that participants were challenged to acknowledge, both internally and institutionally.

- **Private Parties**—On April 27, the Ford Foundation and Open Society Institute convened a Funders Dialogue on Black Men and Boys in Seattle. Of about 25 staff people attending the meeting, all but one were of African descent. One of the points raised was the importance of engaging more foundation personnel who are not of African descent to be part of these strategic conversations, so as not to create the impression that these are “private parties.” In response, significant outreach was made to all senior foundation staff members to join these dialogues. Personal invitations, phone calls and the like were extended to a diverse pool of funders. Interestingly, the dialogue participants were overwhelmingly composed of African-American foundation staff members. At the West Coast convening, only two persons in attendance were not African-American, and they were staffers at one of the convening institutions. The East Coast convening was the only one of the four in which at least 25 percent of the attendees were not of African descent.

### **Opportunities**

- **Philanthropic Partnership With Government**—In each of the convenings, participants discussed the necessity and opportunity for philanthropic institutions to partner with the public sector. Philanthropy’s relative flexibility in supporting innovative programming presents the opportunity to inform policy with models that work. Likewise, philanthropic capital can be leveraged to influence policy. Each of the meetings promoted the idea of partnership with the local, state and federal governments as well as the importance of supporting advocacy institutions to influence public policy. Thus, with respect to government, the opportunity is both one of partnership and pressure.

- **Lifting Up What Works**—Many of the participants indicated that the meeting was attractive to them because, while their institutions were aware of the disparities data, they needed additional information on best practices, examples of grant-making approaches and evaluation constructs to help inform their own analyses. Participants in each meeting went on to request that foundations currently engaged in grant making that targets black males (as well as those that are exploring doing so) document their process, lessons learned and challenges. As more funders are seeking to engage in this work, it is a vital opportunity to share

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learning and promote what works for the broader field.

- Let's Do This Again—Meeting participants overwhelmingly expressed their desire to find venues through which they can continue to engage in learning, networking and exchange around these issues. They consistently advocated for networks of support that go beyond “simply meeting” to help build action-oriented learning communities with local or regional expertise.

The observations and opportunities that emerged from the regional funder dialogues clearly demonstrated the wealth of learning and constructive exchange that occurred during the convenings. Nevertheless, each of the observations and opportunities also presented numerous challenges. Public will and perception, institutional racism, charity-based grant-making approaches that do not acknowledge the role of structure, a struggling economy, the lingering memory of past philanthropic identity-based efforts that flopped ... the list of potential impediments is indeed substantial. Philanthropy's ability to make an impact in improving the life outcomes of black males is in part dependent on its ability to acknowledge and mitigate the dynamic obstacles that obstruct the progress of African-American communities and inhibit the effectiveness of this field of philanthropy. However, it is equally important to apply a resolve and an analysis that do not allow opposition (whether structural, personal or circumstantial) to deter responding to this American crisis.



### **The Philanthropic Classroom: Levels and Types of Foundation Engagement**

While this publication in part attempts to document philanthropic activity and identify gaps within the sector, a focus on initiatives cannot fully describe the emerging critical mass of leadership focused on black males work. A few funders have initiatives emerging, but many more, while committed to this issue, are still figuring out how to approach it. Likewise, even for those with specific agendas or analyses on black males work, institutional marketing presents potential barriers to action.

The funders who made the time and expended the resources to come to black males convenings over the past year were all invested in seeing progress on the life outcomes of black men and boys. They were literally “in the room,” present, and engaged. But the room was filled with folks at different levels of leadership and with different institutional contexts.

The following analogy is a light way of characterizing those “in the room.” Just as a school classroom has a diverse set of kid “types,” the room of funders contained a wide set of players. Likewise, just

as each type of student has specific assets and liabilities in the classroom, funders from a wide variety of situations have valuable contributions to make to the emerging field of black males work.

#### **Dinosaurs Kid**

One of the most entertaining kids to have in a classroom is the dinosaurs kid. This child loves dinosaurs. She probably has a T. rex lunch box and brings dino-action figures every week for show and tell. She looks forward to the field trip to the museum all year and seems to know more about fossils than the tour guide.

The dinosaurs kid is great to have in class, because he or she brings a level of excitement. The dinosaurs kid is incredibly energetic in science class and relates photosynthesis to a love of ancient plants.

But sometimes the dinosaurs kid wants to talk about nothing but dinosaurs. Sometimes, when the teacher is trying to talk about nouns and verbs, or addition and subtraction, the only thing the dinosaurs kid wants to do is count his or her action figures.



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The thing about the dinosaurs kid is that, despite an incredible depth of knowledge in a particular area of excitement, at times that knowledge can get in the way of the broader educational experience.

In the same way, funders who specialize in particular issue areas often think that black males work can be attacked from only one angle: “If we could just fix our schools, everything else would fall in to place,” or “this issue is really about criminal justice.” The expertise of different funders contributes invaluable knowledge and incredible energy. The issues facing black males, however, are so interrelated that only holistic approaches with multiple partners will have maximum impact (see Intersectional Approaches section, page 25).

### **E.T.**

E.T. has to phone home. This kid is incredibly caring, committed to being involved in school life and well-liked by the other kids. E.T. wants to be involved. E.T. wants to be a part of the chess club, wants to be on the volleyball team, wants to go to a friend’s house to work on the group project. But E.T.’s parents “don’t play.” E.T. knows “I have to ask my parents.” The nice thing about E.T. kids is that you can count on them to be responsible, to not compromise their future for the present moment. The tough thing is that unless they can get buy-in from authority, it’s not going to happen.

In the room of funders, many expressed a need to make the case for their work to their superiors. Even influential CEOs have made clear their need to “phone home” to their boards. Leaders need resources to clearly articulate the importance of black males work.

### **Hand-raiser**

The hand-raiser can be the best kid in the class or one of the most difficult. This kid wants details. When the teacher says the class is going to the playground, everyone cheers—everyone, that is, except the hand-raiser. “How long are we going to stay outside?” When the teacher explains the day’s desk-work and everyone else starts quietly, the hand-raiser wants to know if it’s O.K. to play on the computer once finished. The hand-raiser has the uncanny ability to see problems where all the other students see only fun, and to see

opportunities before anyone else. The hand-raiser ensures that the entire classroom has clarity on every detail of the day. But, at his or her worst, the hand-raiser can bring the energy of a good classroom to a screeching halt.

Throughout the funder convenings, there was no shortage of challenges highlighted by the folks in the room. However, key leaders in the conversation were able to also lift up innovative solutions, to highlight available resources, and to anticipate future challenges.



### **Note-passer**

In a simpler time before text messages, the note was the gold standard of surreptitious adolescent communication. Folded over and over, written in secret codes with dozens of different colored pens, the note has taken many forms. By far the most infamous note presents the recipient with the opportunity to commit or simply string the sender along: “Do you like me? Check ‘yes,’ ‘no’ or ‘maybe.’”

The note-passer places the onus on the recipient. The note-passer doesn’t have to put his or her feelings all the way out there but can still fish for a commitment from the intended target. The note-passer wants a relationship, but without risk or danger.

The great strength of many funders is in building effective partnerships. As the above analysis demonstrates, the issues facing black males are so intractable they can be effectively dealt with only in partnership. But sometimes a desire not to “go it alone” can get in the way of taking leadership on such an important issue. Funders looking for partnership and support must be proactive and entrepreneurial in building coalitions.

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## **Show-off**

In every classroom, in every school, in every community around the country, there is one special kid who just has to be the center of attention. The show-off can't step on the basketball court without wearing the latest pair of Jordan's. The show-off has the official National Double Dutch League jump-rope. When it's time for the Friday spelling test, the show-off's paper is the first one turned in.

The show-off brings an incredible energy and is a fun kid to have in the classroom. But sometimes that kid with the new Jordan's is a terrible basketball player. Sometimes that spelling test that was turned in first is half wrong. Sometimes the kid with the jump-rope can't turn or jump. And the worst part is, if the show-off doesn't get his or her way, sometimes that is the kind of kid who will take his or her jump rope/basketball/marbles and will slip-and-slide home so no one else can play.

A lot of the public discourse around black males is dominated by institutions with the social capital to proclaim themselves leaders on this issue. The show-offs in the field of black males work are key in bringing these issues to the fore, in keeping black men and boys on the public agenda. But sometimes, the actual work being done does not match the level of talk.

## **"All-American"**

The all-American kid is truly a joy. He or she is well-liked by the other kids and teachers alike. The all-American is captain of the team, president of the club and plays the clarinet, violin and didgeridoo. There's not a whole lot of bad things to say about this kid. The only problem is, the all-American kid doesn't sleep. The all-American is performing to an incredibly high standard of excellence, but it takes a toll emotionally.

Giants in the field of black males work are undertaking incredible efforts to build a robust field within philanthropy. They are funding gatherings and research, and they are developing innovative and effective programming. But often they are doing so within institutions that do not fully understand their work, or within portfolios that are not truly geared to this work. The all-Americans in black males work are stretching their social capital to get the work done. The all-Americans need partners; they need help.

## **Mobilizing the Classroom**

These analogies don't capture the entirety of the folks in the room of philanthropy. At convenings across the country, funders suggested adding kids like "the truant" and "the shrimp," and many more would need to be included to cover all of philanthropy. The most salient point of this analogy is that each and every one of these "kids" has an important role to play in building a robust, healthy field of work. The next section of this report articulates a plan for each one of these important stakeholders to be engaged.



### **Opportunities and Low-Hanging Fruit**

Over the course of six funder conversations, numerous interviews and interactions with the swath of characters in the philanthropic classroom, the sector expressed a wide variety of potential funding priorities, institutional challenges and strategic opportunities. Several key ideas emerged as particularly promising solutions.

#### **Infrastructure and Networks of Support**

- **Information Clearinghouse**—This item is listed first because it was repeatedly cited as high on the list of national priorities. Despite the growing body of black males work taking place across the country, there is no central clearinghouse for information, best practices and collective learning. Nor, at the time of this paper’s publication, are there any concrete plans for the development of this important resource. An ideal online clearinghouse would serve as a one-stop shop for such necessary information as relevant data, abstracts of research, key publications and best practices.
- **Philanthropy Learning Communities**—Two national and four regional convenings of funders have helped jump-start a conversation around philanthropic

responses to the issues facing black males. National conversations must continue at least annually. In addition, support is needed for local networks to serve funders in a particular region. Such networks seem to be developing in the Midwest, the Philadelphia area, and the West Coast. California Endowment has committed to kick-starting this process with convenings in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. Ongoing support for these and other emerging communities is a continuing need.

- **Practitioner Networks**—While the Twenty-First Century Foundation’s 2025 campaign has taken the first steps in establishing practitioner communities in Oakland, Chicago, Los Angeles and New York, support is still needed for communities of practice in both metropolitan and rural areas across the country. Likewise, this network needs a separate, robust online community for best practice and information exchange.
- **Scholar Networks**—The Scholars Network on the Well-Being of African American Men, based at the University of Michigan, is made up of 12 scholars from across the humanities and social sciences fields, all

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working on issues central to the life outcomes of black men and boys. While this national group (funded by the Ford Foundation) has begun preliminary work in advancing new perspectives on the issues facing black males, local networks of scholars are also needed. Local networks could work with philanthropic and practitioner groups to develop applied strategies utilizing scholarly expertise and local knowledge.

- Policy Advocate/Civil Society Communities—While significant black males work has a consistent history despite inconsistent philanthropic support, the advocacy community is notably lacking in strong, cutting-edge institutions with a track record of work on this issue. Philanthropy can play a leadership role in bringing traditional civil rights organizations, advocacy groups and other stakeholders to work addressing policy and other systemic issues that serve as impediments to the success of black men and boys.

### **Supply-Side Strategies**

One of the concerns consistently voiced by funders has been the seemingly intractable nature of black male disparity. As one executive put it, “there aren’t enough resources in philanthropy to solve this problem.” A critical role for institutional philanthropy is to leverage dollars to increase the “supply” of both institutional and individual leadership. Several promising approaches to expanding financial resources and leadership are listed below. These examples are but a few ways to help ensure a mature community of practice.

- Increasing Philanthropic Capacity: The Giving Circle Model—The 2008 ABFE Report *Stepping Up and Stepping Out: Profiles of Philanthropy Responding to an American Crisis* highlights “A LOT,” a giving circle focused on black males in the Raleigh/Durham area of North Carolina. The group pools resources and makes small grants to organizations, and it engages its members in education about the field of philanthropy. Institutional philanthropy can develop such groups and help provide resources through matching funds or simply making time and expertise available.

- Increasing Leadership Capacity: Youth Involvement in Community Organizing—Nonprofits such as MAGIC (Metropolitan Area Group for Igniting Civilization) in Chicago and Brotherhood/Sister Sol in Harlem

are prime examples of organizations that help inform and empower young black males, through societal and political analyses, to actively engage in community organizing efforts. The efforts are aimed at changing the systems (on such issues as child welfare, education and criminal justice) that often impede the access of young black males to opportunities for upward mobility. These organizations exemplify strategies that engage young black males as reformers with a political voice and a leadership role in communities.

- Increasing Teaching Capacity: Call Me Mister—The Call Me Mister program works with South Carolina public and historically black universities to provide debt forgiveness and tuition assistance for black males and other underrepresented minorities committed to becoming teachers. This program and others like it represent an opportunity to increase the supply of trained and equipped leaders. This model has since been adapted for City University of New York’s Black Male Initiative.

- Increasing Collaborative Capacity: Engaging Corporate Philanthropy and the Business Community—The Pipeline Crisis/Winning Strategies Initiative is an effort to leverage the expertise and resources of New York City’s legal, financial, business, government, philanthropic, academic and media communities to support the life outcomes of African-American males. Winning Strategies has also commissioned several work groups of leading scholars and experts to produce a needs assessment and policy recommendations in core areas relating to the well-being of African-American males. More information on this and other innovative programs is available in Appendix A.



### **Challenges to Effective Work Focused on Black Males**

While this paper has emphasized opportunities for action and the innovative solutions of leaders in philanthropy, it is also important to acknowledge the many challenges to this work. These challenges were often the first and foremost topics of conversation among funders. The most determined of these individuals saw these challenges not as excuses for inaction but as obstacles to overcome. Several funders were candid enough to state explicitly that people are often uncomfortable talking about race and gender. Specifically, there is a desire among many individuals within American society (including those involved with philanthropy) to magically morph to a post-racial utopia where the differences of the past are erased. In addition, the painful history of women's oppression surfaces understandable tensions and concerns about philanthropic investments that could undermine advances for women's rights and freedoms. While all of these challenges are negotiable, they deserve careful enumeration and consideration.

### **The Limitations of "Males of Color" as a Framing Tool**

Much of the work targeting black males takes place under a "males of color" framework. This verbiage is more politically palatable for a number of reasons.

First, "of color" as a designation avoids more direct discussion of race, which in turn makes the moniker a more comfortable handle for those hesitant to talk about race. Likewise, the category is "inclusive" in grouping together considerations of African American, Latino, Asian and Native American males.

This framework has several challenges in serving as a frame for effective black males work. While the outcomes among these groups in terms of economic opportunity, education and other indicators are similar, experiences, histories and opportunities for each of these groups have been very different. As a result, institutions that attempt to intervene in these patterns must have culturally appropriate programming to be effective for any of these male populations. This level of cultural expertise and institutional capacity is rarely housed in a single institution of any kind.

To cite an example, a program focused on reducing incarceration rates defines its mission as focusing on "black and Latino" males. Yet, the program's advisory board is made up of more than a dozen African-Americans, with only one Latina member. Likewise, program staff members are black and don't speak Spanish. Here, we see how a "males of color" frame

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creates the illusion that the program is equipped to serve both populations, when the program really is better suited to focus on black males. Another program could be created with appropriate cultural knowledge to address the issues of incarceration among Latino males.

Black males scholar Alford A. Young Jr. has begun the work of examining the particular ways in which black males perceive work and opportunity. His book *The Minds of Marginalized Black Men*, in focusing on what young black men think about their world, serves as an introduction to the sort of culturally specific issues faced by lower income black men in an urban context. An understanding of these life stories is critical to effectively employing a race + gender lens for meaningful black males work.

### **Lack of Institutional Leadership**

Several institutions have developed responses to the confounding issues facing black males, but none of them has a long-standing track record of black males-specific work, or even work that is engaged through a race + gender lens.

However, the emerging interest of several important national organizations, as detailed elsewhere in this report, presents a significant opportunity. If incentives persist for these institutions to remain engaged with this work, they will continue to stay plugged in. Also, new institutions are emerging with credibility, expertise and commitment to this issue. Just as the inattention of philanthropy over the past 10 years has created a sustainability crisis, a long-term commitment of resources can create a sustainable community of work within civil society.

### **Black Male Fatigue**

One of the great fears expressed by many funders over this issue remains a potentially short attention span. Because the challenges facing black males are complex and deep-rooted, instantaneous “results” are not always feasible. As the shifting winds of public discourse bring new “flavors of the month” to philanthropy’s attention, many fear the current momentum on black males work may be lost. Likewise, given the discomfort of many in talking about race, let alone race and gender together, attention may easily shift to more familiar terrain.

However, along with these very real fears, funders also expressed guarded optimism. While it is important not to overemphasize the shifts in public discourse that the 2008 presidential campaign has engendered, several leaders felt that the current moment presents a unique opening of a national conversation around race and gender.

Regardless of whether the attention of society at large remains focused on this issue, the onus is on philanthropy to capitalize on the current opportunity to create a sustainable field. A healthy field can then assert itself, using the tools of advocacy and media relations to help promote its agendas. The potential for “black male fatigue,” in fact, points to the need to redouble efforts to create a vibrant, sustainable community of practice around this issue.

### **Prioritizing Gender Equity While Focusing on Black Males**

One of the greatest priorities for black males work must be improving black male disparity in a way that is sensitive to the continuing need to redress centuries of systematic oppression of women in the United States. In a nonprofit sector whose available resources are limited, the issues facing women and the issues facing men can often seem to be in competition in a zero-sum game.

But in actuality, programs that focus on empowering women could become more effective by working in conjunction with equally effective efforts for men. While competition for resources is real, leaders in practice with women assert that work with black males represents an important complement to their work. Similarly, feminist scholars such as bell hooks, Beverly Guy-Sheftall and a host of others have asserted the importance of focusing black males for all of American society. Shanell Williams, program director for the Center for Young Women’s Development in San Francisco, asserts the importance of “safe spaces for men to work through their issues.” The center works with young women transitioning out of the juvenile justice system, “challenging women to move beyond their trauma, to reclaim their personal power.” Williams conveys a keen analysis of the interconnectedness of the issues facing black men, women and children and highlights the importance of gender-specific work for advancing the empowerment of marginalized communities.



## **Connecting Black Males Work to Women's Empowerment**

By Shanell Williams

When you address black men and the issues they are struggling with, you are addressing the black family as a whole. We cannot deal with the issue of black men, black women and black children in silos.

Many of the women in our program are mothers. All too often, the fathers of their children are incarcerated, do not have the means to pay child support, struggle with substance abuse or, as a result of their anger and frustration at feeling their powerlessness in society, physically, mentally and emotionally abuse some of the young women we work with. Each one of these issues that deter black men from being involved in the family structure have deep consequences for black women and children.

At the center we have seen so many situations where a young woman's partner will turn to the underground economy for opportunities lacking in mainstream society. This in turn leads to extensive jail time, loss of opportunity to access education and an inability to

take leadership within the family structure. We have seen young mothers whose partners are released from jail with two strikes [under three strikes mandatory minimum laws] who have these young women go out and sell their drugs for them. As a result of that, those young women are now incarcerated, with children who will end up in the foster care system.

If we can do the work to heal black women, and to heal black men, and bring them together, we will restore what is broken, and that will be transformative and powerful. But before black men and black women can come together, there needs to be a unique space for both of them to heal. So I challenge all of you to really own this issue. It is easy for us to intellectualize what is going on because we are free, we have jobs, we are not out there. But we really need to own this and to really feel it. We have a responsibility to take the next step. And it's not just for the black man; it's for the black family.

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## Frames That Haven't Been Used

A cursory review of literature on the well-being of black males suggests some crucial priorities, many of which are intuitive, all of which warrant greater attention. Matters such as improving education and employment outcomes are fairly obvious and have garnered much of the early investment of foundations. The points below outline specific issues, populations, areas and partners that have been largely overlooked in the initial philanthropic response. These priorities present unique opportunities for almost every imaginable philanthropic institution or individual donor.

### Issues

There a number of issue areas that leaders in the field of philanthropy have identified as under-resourced. These include:

- Access to affordable housing (particularly for single unmarried men)
- Gender-based violence
- Political enfranchisement

### Populations

Similarly, several population groups warrant greater focus and investment, including:

- Many initiatives target black male students who are either very high performing or very low performing, often overlooking black boys and young men who are average (B & C) students.
- Sexually diverse males
- Custodial fathers

### Geographic Areas

Additionally, specific geographic areas can be deemed somewhat neglected by philanthropy:

- The American South generally
- Rural black America (both in the South and throughout the country)
- The Pacific Northwest

## Key Partners That Must Be Engaged

Lastly, mainstream philanthropic institutions have not fully engaged with several sectors made up of institutions with philanthropic components, mandates and/or values:

- Faith community (as a philanthropic source)
- Corporate foundations and the business community
- Government





## Next Steps for Philanthropy

Over the past two years, the authors of this paper have listened and engaged funders, studied and responded to their questions, and documented their grant making (and lack thereof). The following section seeks to guide— even to challenge—funders to 1) develop a grant-making strategy designed to improve the life outcomes of black males; and 2) address some of the most glaring investment gaps for the emerging field of black males work.

### Funder Tips for Embarking in Grant Making that Targets Black Males

**1. Get Your Facts Straight**—It is vital that foundations invest ample time learning about the specific challenges that black males face in their geographic service area. Naturally, there are some commonalities throughout the country. However, it is important that funders understand the specific factors that exist in their given communities. Foundations should ensure that their information-gathering and framing process includes:

- Gathering localized data sources that paint an accurate picture of levels of disparity
- Identifying and engaging local nonprofit, grassroots and community leaders who work with black males in the local community
- Learning from these institutions’ strategic considerations, promising practices and potential pitfalls
- Becoming informed of the models other foundation have pursued for improving the life outcomes of a specific demographic

Getting your facts straight is not a recommendation to invest solely in research, as in some ways black males have been studied and overstudied. Rather, this recommendation proposes that institutions merely acknowledge the fact that complex internal cultures and the differing life histories of individuals within institutional philanthropy necessitate the development of “common ground.” This base of operation must be grounded in the documented realities, local community of practice and collective learning of peer institutions.

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**2. Develop a Strategic Approach**—Every foundation committed to doing this work must develop an informed approach that fits within its institutional mandate and target population. The following are just a few examples of grant-making strategies that funders have employed to “get this work done.” Each approach has its pros and cons, but it is important that funding institutions choose one and/or develop a tailored model of their own.

Black Male-Specific Grant-Making Approaches — The Association of Black Foundation Executives’ April 2008 publication, *Stepping Up and Stepping Out* profiles three funders engaged in black males work. All of these funding entities have either an initiative or an overall institutional mission that explicitly focuses on black males. The publication highlights Chicago Community Trust, A Legacy of Tradition and the Schott Foundation for Public Education. Additionally, several institutions, including the Rising Oak Foundation, Open Society Institute’s Campaign for Black Male Achievement, and the Twenty-First Century Foundation, focus on black males.

These funding models are not the norm. In many cases, black males are not specifically identified as a target population, while in others black males are identified specifically, but not exclusively, such as in “males of color” initiatives. In other cases, black males are not singled out, but form a significant subpopulation of the target demographic.

Issue-Specific Grant-Making Approaches Particularly Relevant to Black Males—In some cases, foundations are (or can choose to become) engaged in specific issue areas that are of particular relevance to black males. Foundations have at times been engaged with such issues as fatherhood, incarceration and the achievement gap. For these and other issue areas in which the disparity data for black males is substantial, a targeted grant-making approach that acknowledges and seeks to address this disparity in culturally specific ways presents the greatest opportunity for success.

Issue-specific approaches are marked by the funder asking the “who” question: Who specifically has been most affected by the mortgage lending crisis?

Who makes up the largest percentage of the state’s prison population compared with their share of the total population? What demographic in a specific geographic area has the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS cases? What demographic in this metropolitan region has the highest unemployment rate?

Once the reality of disproportional outcomes has been demonstrated, a targeted grant-making approach within the issue-focused work can be applied. At a minimum, such an approach must require grantees to articulate a focus and critical competency for addressing this population. Such a “front-end” focus must be accompanied by a “back-end” inclusion of black male-specific components to help determine the program is effective.

Intersectional Approaches to Black Males Work— Because of the severity and complexity of problems facing black males, it is increasingly important to take seriously the interconnectedness of the issues. Intersectional approaches combat the “sector silos” highlighted in *Why We Can’t Wait* and allow multiple partners with varying expertise to work together. The following are examples of intersectional approaches to investing in improving black males’ life outcomes.

Youth Development, Sexual Identity and Masculinity— This emerging line of black males work combines the work of reframing progressive black masculinity with tools for engaging sexual diversity within the black male population. Leaders in this field include Mark Anthony Neal, the author of *New Black Man* and member of the Scholars Network on the Well-Being of African-American Men; Byron Hurt, the filmmaker behind *Beyond Beats and Rhymes*; and the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition, a human rights organization focusing on sexual diversity and discrimination.

Foster Care, Incarceration/Sentencing Policy and Health—Dr. Henrie Treadwell at the Morehouse School of Medicine has written about the impact of the mandatory sentencing and strict drug laws on African-American communities. She cites data that indicate that of the 2.1 million people incarcerated in 2005, 548,300 were black males between the ages of 20 and 39. Treadwell goes on to link the high incarceration

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rates for black males to the “war on drugs,” which led to a significant rise in the prison population.

The disproportionate incarceration rates of black males and females results in overrepresentation of their children in the foster care system. Black children make up a third of the foster care population. Dr. Treadwell’s research also demonstrates the connection among community health, access to health care and incarceration. As inmates live in woefully unhealthy environments, the community receives another jolt—when the prisoner comes home. Prisons have become a nest for many infectious and chronic diseases ranging from HIV/AIDS to hepatitis to tuberculosis. In fact, the rate of confirmed AIDS cases in prisons runs five times [as high as in] the general population. Inmates are ineligible for Medicaid when they are incarcerated, so their health care services are limited. When Medicaid benefits, as well as other benefits, are lost upon incarceration, there is often a lengthy lag time for reinstatement when a prisoner is released.

The Morehouse School of Medicine, Casey Family Programs and California Endowment are all working to address these issues with integrated approaches that acknowledge the interconnectedness of these issues and systems.

Education, Employment and Incarceration: The School-to-Prison Pipeline—Work around the school-to-prison pipeline highlights the connection among harsh school discipline policies, the growth of the prison industry and high levels of incarceration for black males. Coalitions of diverse sectors of society have come together to advocate for less draconian school discipline policy, alternative sentencing programs and legal rights education of underprivileged youth. For example, the Mississippi Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Coalition includes educator, community, civil rights, legal and public policy groups dedicated to using cost-effective and humane ways to prevent the funneling of Mississippi’s children from its schools into the juvenile justice system. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the ACLU, the Advancement Project, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Children’s Defense Fund have served as national leaders in this effort.

These intersectional approaches highlight the need to address multiple issues simultaneously to have positive impact on the life opportunities of black males. While it is important for actors both in philanthropy and civil society to focus on the areas in which they have greatest expertise, organizations can multiply their impact through partnership by attacking related issues simultaneously. A list of current activity and potential partners is in the following section.

Whether a foundation’s preference is black male-specific, issue-specific or intersectional, it’s important, as a funder engaging in black males work, to decide which approach to take.

**3. Watch Your Back**—The reality is that more than a few foundation staff members can give firsthand accounts of their proposal, idea or case for investing in black males work being shot down before it had a chance to even get off the ground. The philanthropic sector, like the larger society, will undoubtedly have some strong reservations, and sometimes outright opposition, to this work. Individual funders as well as institutions must be aware of and prepared for the opposition they are sure to face from colleagues. Questions will be posed about the distinction between black males and other groups of color; accusations will be made about whether this work poses a threat to the women’s movement and gender equity; debates will be incited about personal responsibility, structural inequity and pathology. Opposition will take the form of foundation executives, foundation staff members, current grantees, foundation board members and executives and staff members from other foundations. Opposition will be white, black and Latino, male and female. It is important for any foundation to understand that no matter how “progressive” a picture it may have of itself as an institution, issues of race and gender will almost never advance without struggle. Therefore, as an institution (or individual) embarks upon investing in black males work, it is vital to be cognizant of the opposition.



## **Conclusion: The Time for Action is Here**

Clearly, much work is yet to be done. The ideas mentioned in the previous section point to only a fraction of the creative opportunities available to philanthropic organizations to get involved.

There is a place for every “kid in the classroom” at this table. There is a job for every shape and size of philanthropic organization, a frame to fit nearly every institutional mandate. Supply-side strategies such as the giving circle model present the opportunity for even those outside the bounds of institutional philanthropy to invest in this issue.

The future of our nation depends upon the ability of civil society and government to face the challenges of this population and others that are also vulnerable.

Real change in the life outcomes of black males will not come simply because it is an issue that the more than

240 funders who attended last year’s convenings “care deeply about.” Real change will happen because the elements of a healthy field are supported and because a critical capacity for information sharing, learning communities and collective action was created and sustained by those with the means and the will to do so.

The time for talking is past. The time for action is here. For more information about how you can be involved, contact the Marginalized Males Funders Group at [mmfgrp@gmail.com](mailto:mmfgrp@gmail.com).

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## Appendix A: Civil Society Activity in Black Males Work

This section presents a series of short profiles of civil society initiatives engaged in black males work to demonstrate a critical mass of institutions and activity in this emerging field. It categorizes a sample of these initiatives into six general categories: stakeholder mobilization efforts; advocacy initiatives; policy alternatives; philanthropy; academia; and popular culture.

The specific set of institutions, initiatives and policies that this section identifies were strategically selected to clearly demonstrate the different types of institutions and initiatives that comprise this field. This sample does not seek to depict “best practices” or the most effective initiatives, but merely to be representative and diverse. Other efforts are under way to conduct a more exhaustive compendium of black males initiatives nationwide, which will include a wider variation of sector and capacity.

When the Ford Foundation commissioned *Why We Can't Wait* in the spring of 2006, the report's authors identified noticeable “activity” within organizations and civil society relating to African-American males, though much of it was uncoordinated, unaware of what other parts of the field were doing, under-resourced and without clear leadership. The assessment was taken from conversations and site visits with 61 organizations, which are listed in the appendix of *Why We Can't Wait*.

Since 2006, the authors have documented more than 100 organizations nationally that have efforts under way in various stages and with varying capacities, not to mention a growing number of foundations that are operating or exploring how to implement grant making that helps improve the life outcomes of black males. The story collectively told by these organizations and depicted in these profiles indicates that the field of black males work has survived the rigors of birth through the early 1990s and is now at a critical stage in its development.

### Stakeholder Mobilization Efforts

Efforts are under way in most large cities, and in some cases across several states, to bring together individuals, groups and institutions concerned with supporting African-American males. For the past few years, the 2025 Campaign has been working on a national level to convene and coordinate several prominent national institutions and a growing network of regional clusters of like-minded organizations. Policy Link, in addition to its national presence, is concentrating on black males work around its base in the San Francisco Bay Area. On the East Coast, the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition, an historical civil rights institution, has most recently begun mobilizing its member institutions around black males work. The State of Black Men in America tour has worked to engage and educate African-American men and the black community from the ground up through open invitation public events. The National Urban League focused its 2007 annual State of Black America report on the plight of black males.

The 2025 Campaign: The mission of the Twenty-First Century Foundation is to facilitate strategic giving for black community change. Specifically, 21CF works with donors to invest in institutions and leaders that solve problems within black communities nationally. In November 2005, the Twenty-First Century Foundation, the National Urban League, Public/Private Ventures and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund came together to host a national conversation of scholars, practitioners and advocates focusing on issues that affect black men and boys. The name of the campaign is derived from its goal to improve the lives of black males, so that a black male child born in 2007 will have significantly improved life outcomes by the time he turns 18—the year 2025.

Though still in its initial stages, the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys has already begun to establish itself through major convenings of national, regional and local organizations to create and implement

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comprehensive strategies to support black males. The five core areas in which the campaign seeks to make an impact are education, employment, fatherhood, justice and health—with media and policy woven throughout. The campaign’s steering committee, which consists of 25 foundation members, policy experts, research specialists, organizers and local practitioners, has been charged with developing and managing the organizational structure and strategic planning for the campaign. It also serves as the hub for regional networks in Chicago, Oakland, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and New York. Currently the campaign is based at the Twenty-First Century Foundation, which is located in New York, but efforts are under way for it to become a separate, self-sufficient entity, encompassing a broad national network.

Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition: This Philadelphia-based nonprofit unites government, business, neighborhoods and individual initiative in an effort to improve the quality of life in the greater Philadelphia region, build wealth in urban communities and solve emerging issues. GPUAC also provides business services, manages programs and partnerships and drives positive change. Beginning in 2007, GPUAC began providing a venue for its member organizations whose primary constituency is African-American males. These meetings have allowed the community leaders to learn about one another’s work and share their analyses, institutional challenges and personal investment in improving the life chances of black males. Through partnerships with Philadelphia’s mayor, Michael Nutter, and joint initiatives with California-based Policy Link, GPUAC has been able to expand the ability and commitment of its own institution as well as others to serving black men and boys.

Policy Link: This national research and action institute advances economic and social equity under the slogan “Lifting Up What Works.” Policy Link utilizes strategies to promote equity in communities. It works in specific places (among them California, Louisiana, Newark and Philadelphia) and uses an array of tools for community change (research, convenings, best practices and an equitable development tool kit). Policy Link has been working with public, philanthropic and nonprofit institutions in Oakland to craft strategies, address issues and mobilize resources to improve the life outcomes of males

of color in the San Francisco Bay Area. Additionally, at its March 2008 Equitable Development Summit in New Orleans, Policy Link provided a forum for practitioners, scholars, policy makers and funders to collectively learn and discuss issues and community solutions targeted to remediate the gross disproportionality of negative outcomes for males of color in communities throughout the country. These sessions and workshops drew upwards of 400 participants.

State of Black Men in America Tour, Conference and Workshops: Kevin Powell is an activist, political consultant and businessman. Powell produced a series of town hall meetings across America called the State of Black Men Tour, which visited more than 20 cities through the end of 2006 and culminated with “Black Men in America ... A National Conversation” in June 2007 in New York City. The “Black and Male in America” Conference included internationally respected scholar and author Michael Eric Dyson; actor and Letters to a Young Brother author Hill Harper; BET correspondent Jeff Johnson; and anti-sexist activist and award-winning filmmaker Byron Hurt. Powell has continued to provide monthly venues for black males to discuss issues pertaining to individual, societal and institution and black male empowerment. These monthly Black Male Empowerment workshops take place in Brooklyn, N.Y.

National Urban League: Established in 1910, the National Urban League states a devotion “to empowering African-Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream.” Currently, NUL is headquartered in New York and has more than 100 local affiliates throughout the country. Urban League program areas include education, economic empowerment, racial justice, health and civic engagement. Since 1973, the NUL has produced and released an annual State of Black America report. This report is intended to be a “barometer of conditions in the African-American community in the United States.” The 2007 State of Black America report, *Portrait of the Black Male*, examines the root causes, current conditions and potential remedies to the gross disproportionate outcomes of black males compared with white males and black females. The report looks through three primary lenses: education, economics and social justice. Additionally, NUL formed a Commission on the Black Male “to address concerns about the level of incarceration among young African-American men.”

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## Advocacy Initiatives

What distinguishes these organizations advocating on behalf of African-American males from most other high-capacity, national advocacy institutions is that their approach has been markedly hands-on and ground up. The Equal Justice Initiative, for example, has engaged in litigation to support juvenile justice and voting rights. The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and the Advancement Project have worked individually and together through policy and offering technical assistance to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, through its creation of the Dellums Commission, has given the field a fresh, comprehensive set of policy research reports on a host of issues affecting black men and boys. And finally, CLASP, in line with its history of producing high-caliber applied research, has lent its services to help craft and implement the policy agenda for the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys.

**Advancement Project:** Through law, public policy and strategic communications, Advancement Project, a democracy and justice action group, acts in partnership with local communities to advance universal opportunity, equity and access for those left behind in America. Ending the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track, is a multiyear, multisite youth and adult organizing effort to halt the unwarranted criminalization of children by their schools. The campaign, launched in 2004, is implemented in partnership with community groups in Denver and several counties in Florida. The Advancement Project also provides advice nationally. The project's investment in local partnerships reflects its grass-roots commitment. As co-director Judith Browne-Dianis put it, "To stop the criminalization of children of color, federal legislation alone will not suffice. We must have local movements that push for change at the district level and that focus their advocacy on schools, police and district attorneys. Schools must be held accountable for putting youth on a path to prison."

**Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies:** The Joint Center, a national public policy institute conducting research on issues affecting African-Americans, established the Dellums Commission in 2005 to analyze the physical, social and emotional health of young men of color and their communities and to develop an ac-

tion plan to alter the public policies that limit the life paths of these young men. Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums chaired the commission, which consisted of 25 members, including academics, elected officials and practitioners, who were asked to prepare background papers on specific issues. The commission ultimately released 11 reports in 2006 on the following topics affecting young men of color: the child welfare system; juvenile justice system; prison industrial complex; juveniles transfer to adult court; media images and messages; community health strategies; health needs of youth in the juvenile justice system; public education; higher education; indigenous men; and higher education.

**The Health Policy Institute,** an arm of the Joint Center, is working to pull together people and partners in various communities to implement the strategies and recommendations outlined in the reports. Its findings have already influenced some of the policies in the Office of Men's Health in the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and the AFL-CIO has also taken steps to integrate several of the recommendations. Funding provided by the Kellogg Foundation supported the majority of the commission's work. As of the writing of this report, that funding has ended. The Health Policy Institute's staff has been reduced to two individuals who have not been able to devote much focus to continuing the work of the commission.

**NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc:** This national nonprofit has been providing public interest legal counsel on the issue of race since the civil rights movement. Through its School to Prison Pipeline project, LDF has focused on addressing the gamut of educational policies and practices that apply a criminal justice approach to school and district issues, which tend to push children of color out of schools. The use and overuse of suspension, expulsion and arrest through "zero tolerance" and "three strikes" policies by school personnel has disproportionately affected African-American and minority males; many of the youth who are being removed to alternative schools and juvenile centers have severe learning disabilities. Schools also face an incentive to remove generally lower-performing, higher-needs students to improve the appearance of their school's graduation rates and test scores. LDF has been assisting organizations and communi-

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ties to figure out available legal strategies to combat and dismantle this pipeline. Most of LDF's efforts have been involved with local school district policy, on the front end of the pipeline, before a youth's point of contact with the law enforcement system. There has been no litigation in School to Prison Pipeline work thus far; rather, the work has been focused on policy, by consulting with coalitions and organizations.

Center for Law and Social Policy: This national nonprofit advocates on behalf of low-income parents, children and youth in the areas of education, workforce development and economic justice. CLASP is providing leadership in the crafting of a national policy agenda for the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys. CLASP's partnership primarily works with the Policy Work Group of the 2025 Campaign, which has been guiding the process and supporting the campaign's learning groups in their various tasks and development. Through this collaboration, CLASP is conducting background policy research and helping the campaign establish and roll out its national agenda.

Equal Justice Initiative: This private, nonprofit organization in Alabama provides legal representation to indigent defendants and prisoners who have been denied fair and just treatment in the legal system. EJI litigates on behalf of condemned prisoners, juvenile offenders, people wrongly convicted or charged with violent crimes, poor people denied effective representation and others whose trials are marked by racial bias or prosecutorial misconduct. The organization works with communities that have been marginalized by poverty and discouraged by unequal treatment. EJI is committed to challenging racially discriminatory policies, sentencing and tactics that have made mass imprisonment a crisis in many communities of color. It considers indigent defense reform and legal assistance to the poor as vital to alleviating the problems caused by unfair criminal justice policies. One of the statistics that guides EJI's work is that black men are eight times as likely to be incarcerated as white men. Without reform, it is estimated that 40 percent of the black male population in Alabama will permanently lose the right to vote as the result of a criminal conviction. EJI addresses these issues through education, community outreach efforts, litigation and policy reform.

## **Policy Alternatives**

The following policy and legislative acts indirectly yet concretely stand to improve the well-being of black men and boys. Although each of these proposals obviously had its elected official champion, numerous back entertainers, organizers, academics, funders and advocates were crucial to their success. The PREP Program, through legislation passed by Philadelphia's City Council, ensures both wrap-around services for ex-offenders and employment opportunities in companies that have contracts with the city. The Second Chance Act, recently signed into law, similarly supports prisoner re-entry efforts by building ties with families, communities and employment, and by supporting the creation and funding of evidence-based interventions. Lastly, the Pennsylvania Costing-Out Study, which was commissioned by the state's General Assembly, has successfully calculated and made a case for the cost of adequately educating children in each of the state school districts, taking into account poverty, disabilities, geography and the local tax base.

Philadelphia Re-Entry Employment Program: PREP is an innovative prisoner re-entry model based on the premise that productive employment and social supports can help ex-offenders break the cycle of criminal behavior and imprisonment. By leveraging Philadelphia's numerous contracts with private vendors, and the jobs created by and dependent upon its public dollars, the city has, through PREP, won private-sector concessions for one of its hardest to employ populations. The PREP process begins six months prior to release from prison, when inmates in the Philadelphia prison system are given the option of joining the program. Once enrolled, inmates receive a pre-release assessment and individualized package of life skills, employment and other assistance upon parole.

The program then aims to secure and maintain the employment of ex-offenders with companies that have city contracts. Through PREP, all businesses with city contracts in excess of \$1 million must identify job opportunities for ex-offenders and explain why ex-offenders who applied for employment were not hired. Contractors are offered a \$10,000 per year tax incentive for each ex-offender they hire and keep employed for at least six months. To receive the incentive, employers



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must provide each ex-offender with \$2,000 in tuition assistance, pay at least 150 percent of the minimum wage and provide adequate health care benefits. If an ex-offender is terminated, the business must promptly cite the reasons.

Recidivism Reduction and Second Chance Act of 2007 (H.R. 1593): This legislation, generally referred to as the Second Chance Act, was introduced by Representative Danny Davis, Democrat of Illinois, with the aim of supporting the re-entry of ex-prisoners into society by providing employment, health and social supports. It was passed in both the House and Senate and was signed by President Bush in April 2008. The legislation of the Second Chance Act sets forth six goals aimed at helping formerly incarcerated persons successfully reintegrate into society. The sponsors of this legislation seek to accomplish this goal by authorizing funds for new, innovative programs for ex offenders and expanding and enhancing existing supports.

Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2007 (S.1626): This legislation was introduced on June 14, 2007, by Senator Evan Bayh, Democrat of Indiana, and co-sponsored by Democratic Senators Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas and Barack Obama of Illinois to support the health of low-income families, particularly regarding father involvement. It would amend the Social Security Act with respect to several key features, including funding for responsible fatherhood programs; requirements to ensure procedures to address domestic violence; activities promoting responsible fatherhood; grants to healthy family partnerships for domestic violence prevention; services for families and individuals affected by domestic violence; developing and implementing best practices; and eliminating the separate work participation rate for two-parent families under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. In February 2008, the bill was referred to the Finance Committee. The likely next steps would be for the Finance Committee to hold hearings on it, redraft it and possibly integrate it into a larger piece of legislation. The bill would have to be passed by the Finance Committee and made into law before the end of the 110th Congress, or it will be removed from the books. Months before then end of the session, it continued to languish.

Pennsylvania Costing-Out Study: In 2006, the Pennsylvania General Assembly enacted Act 114 instructing the State Board of Education to determine the adequate educational costs for all students in Pennsylvania public schools—no matter where they live. The intent of this “costing-out” study was to help the state adjust its funding formula to reduce the disparity between high-spending and low-spending school districts. In winter 2007, the firm that conducted the analysis presented the report, *The Costing-Out of the Resources Needed to Meet Pennsylvania’s Public Education Goals*, to the State Board. It found that the statewide cost of adequate public education was \$21.6 billion, compared with actual spending of \$17.3 billion. Among its findings, the report identified a base cost of \$8,003 in per pupil spending, plus additional weights for students with disabilities and for those in poverty. The report found that 94 percent of districts with 92 percent of the students (1.7 million) were spending less than their adequacy levels. The least wealthy districts would need an additional 37.5 percent (compared to the average of 26.8 percent). State aid is distributed so that poorer districts receive more funding per pupil than wealthy districts. The General Assembly is working toward establishing a commission to carry out the recommendations of this report. Similar educational funding commissions and costing-out studies are under way in Illinois, Maryland and Oregon.

New York’s Earned Income Tax Credit for Non-Custodial Fathers: The State of New York recently adjusted its largest wage subsidy program, the Earned Income Tax Credit, to include noncustodial fathers as beneficiaries. The EITC was established by the federal government in 1975 to offset the effect on the paychecks of low-wage workers of flat taxes such as Social Security, sales and property taxes. By restricting the availability of EITC to low-income individuals who work, EITC was created to make employment more attractive than welfare, through its potential to increase a low-income worker’s wages by as much as \$2 an hour, or more than \$4,000 annually. Research has proved EITC to be a major success, and with a price tag of \$40 billion annually, it has become the federal government’s largest anti-poverty program. Six states have added an additional credit to the federal EITC. The state and federal programs are designed to have the largest impact on the wages of workers who have one or more chil-

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dren who reside with them. New York is the first state in the country to expand EITC eligibility to low-income noncustodial parents (90 percent of whom are fathers). New York's EITC offers up to \$1,600 a year in refundable credit, three times as much as other states' EITCs, which offer \$500 a year for single adults or noncustodial parents. New York's expanded EITC significantly improves the ability of low-income noncustodial fathers to make child support payments, which in many cases have consumed such a large percentage of their already modest paychecks that the payments have discouraged on-the-books employment.

### **Philanthropy**

The foundation community has played the role of catalyst and convener for the rest of civil society to organize around a black males agenda. This report examines in detail the state of philanthropy collectively with regard to black males work. The following nine profiles outline several of the major philanthropic efforts involving black men and boys as a starting point for a larger discussion. The Ford Foundation has made several investments, which have included mobilizing funder efforts; commissioning a set of reports to inform and support the emerging black males work field; and supporting scholarly interdisciplinary exchange. The Changemakers competition recently released an RFP for competitive models to support at-risk males. Winning Strategies Initiative, through its network of corporate funders, and the Association for Black Foundation Executives as the nation's premiere association of black funders, have leveraged their networks to build two distinct black male initiatives. Open Society Institute has launched a policy campaign to target black males focusing on education, economics and public health. The Foundation for the Mid South commissioned a report around black male outcomes by conducting a regional data analysis. The Community Investment Network, through facilitating local giving circles, has organized like-minded individuals who are giving their personal wealth to support black male issues; A LOT serves as one such example.

**Ford Foundation:** Loren S. Harris of the Ford Foundation's Community and Resource Development unit engaged Frontline Solutions to conduct a scan of research, policy and advocacy and of direct service organizations working with black men and boys or on

the issues they face. Based on dozens of interviews and reviews of hundreds of scholarly publications, the resulting report, *Why We Can't Wait: A Case for Philanthropic Action*, found that the significant work being done in a variety of areas was hampered by a lack of connection and infrastructure for research dissemination, collective action and communal support. Since the report's publication, the foundation has invested in a set of regional funder dialogues to engage more funders around black males work, the development of the Scholars Network on the Well-Being of African-American Men and Masculinity, and in the Twenty-First Century Foundation's Black Men and Boys Fund and the 2025 Campaign.

**Changemakers and Robert Wood Johnson Young Men at Risk Competition:** Ashoka's Changemakers and Robert Wood Johnson launched a collaborative competition on "Young Men at Risk: Transforming the Power of a Generation." This competition is aimed at identifying the most innovative approaches to helping a generation of young people around the world fulfill their potential and become healthy, successful adults. While addressing the entire pattern of changes required for a shift, a major focus of this competition is reducing health disparities and improving the health of disadvantaged populations. The competition was open to all types of organizations (charitable organizations, private companies or public entities) from all countries. The Changemakers community then voted online to select the three award winners from the field of finalists; each winner was awarded \$5,000. The competition offers the opportunity for finalists and winners to showcase their work to major investors, decision makers, media and peers worldwide. It also provides RWJF and other funders and thought leaders with a uniquely valuable and rich opportunity to learn about promising innovation taking place around the world.

**The Pipeline Crisis/Winning Strategies Initiative:** This initiative is an effort to leverage the expertise and resources of New York City's legal, financial, business, government, philanthropic, academic and media communities to support the life outcomes of African-American males. The initiative began in 2006 as a collaborative effort of Sullivan & Cromwell, Goldman Sachs and Harvard Law School's Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice to address the negative

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circumstances and increase the ranks of young black men in the pipeline to higher education and legal, financial or other careers. Winning Strategies has also commissioned several work groups of leading scholars and experts to produce a needs assessment and policy recommendations in the following core areas relating to the well-being of African-American males: (1) early childhood development; (2) public school education; (3) employment and economic development; (4) criminal justice, prison reform and re-entry; and (5) opportunities for high achievers. Thus far, the Pipeline Crisis/Winning Strategies Initiative has held two annual forums, produced multivolume reports through its work groups and taken steps to invest in local programs to support its overall mission.

Association for Black Foundation Executives:

The ABFE's mission is to promote effective and responsive philanthropy in black communities. For the past year, ABFE has been providing support to the growing network of funders involved in black males work, while learning about issues and strategies for philanthropy to consider in responding black males issues. ABFE has co-hosted several funder dialogues and conference calls on this matter. Additionally, it has commissioned a survey of grants that have targeted or explicitly affected the lives of African-American men and boys and issued a publication that shares the findings of the survey. *Stepping Up and Stepping Out*, published in May 2008, profiles three philanthropic black male initiatives. ABFE has received grants to help mobilize foundations in California around engaging in black males work. Lastly, as the organization is reviewing its programmatic focus, the board and staff are considering whether and how to play a more central role in organizing philanthropic responses to the issues that most affect the life chances and opportunities of African-American males.

Open Society Institute: OSI is a private operating and grant-making foundation that works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve its mission, OSI seeks to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal and economic systems and that safeguard fundamental rights. OSI's U.S. Programs supports people and organizations that advance a more

open society within the United States and around the world. In 2008, OSI launched the Campaign for Black Male Achievement, a three-year, cross-program campaign to provide expanded resources to address, and help reverse, the ways in which African-American boys and men are stigmatized, criminalized, and excluded from the U.S. economic and political mainstream.

Foundation for the Mid South: This regional development foundation brings people together, strengthens communities and multiplies resources. By working with people with a wide range of resources, skills and talents, the Foundation for the Mid South strives to nurture families and children, improve schools and build the economy for all people in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. FMS can best be described as a regional adaptation of the community foundation model, utilizing local philanthropy as well as contributions from national funders. FMS has begun exploration of a black males initiative by researching a report on black males in the mid-South. The report, *Black Male: Why the Mid South Cannot Afford to Ignore the Disparities Facing its Black Men and Boys*, focuses on the status of African-American males in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The intent of the report is to provide compelling data and statistics and raise awareness to the disparities facing the Mid South's black males. FMS limited the scope of the report to three challenges facing black men and boys in the region: education, health, and criminal justice.

Community Investment Network: The CIN, a non-profit organization, encourages organizations and individuals to think and act more strategically with their giving to impel greater social change in their communities. It promotes and supports strategic collective giving and community problem-solving by providing knowledge and information regarding various tools and strategies. In 2003, Darryl Lester of HindSight Consulting Inc. began some intentional work with young adult African-Americans in the U.S. South to focus how they engage and give back to their communities. For many of these young adult leaders, their intellectual and financial capital was undervalued and not being tapped or acknowledged. Along with the support of various sponsors, HindSight organized these individuals into collective groups known as "giving circles" to

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strategically invest their time and talent back into their communities in an effort to address issues of race and equity. Several years later, this organizing work has yielded nine giving circles, including A LOT (profiled below). At CIN's annual conference in October 2008, there was a workshop for its members on how giving circles can improve the life outcomes of black males in their local communities.

**A LOT:** A Legacy of Tradition is a black males-focused giving circle based in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Triangle in North Carolina. Group members receive training in strategic philanthropy and contribute personal resources for a group grant-making fund. A LOT conducted its first grant-making cycle in 2007. The group made grants to four community organizations in the Triangle area: Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Durham, the Exodus Foundation (for transitioning from incarceration), Hip Hop Haven of Raleigh (for a program where black men read to black boys) and the Durham Nativity School.

**Chicago Community Trust:** The board and staff of Chicago Community Trust are beginning an initiative, led by senior program officer Phil Thomas, that targets improving the life opportunities of black males. The trust is engaging community institutions, gathering research and supporting cross-sectoral collaboration, thinking and learning to inform a grant-making program that the foundation would like to focus on black males. The trust's current investments in black males work include a grant to the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture at the University of Chicago to do a local and national scan of philanthropic, advocacy, practitioner and research focused on black males; a grant to support the Intergovernmental Committee (Race and Policy Institute at the University of Illinois) to continue a working group of county and municipal government personnel and community service providers who meet monthly to identify service and funding gaps pertaining to African-American males; and grant support to 2025 Chicago to convene annual town hall meetings that mobilize grass-roots organizations, elected officials and activists to develop community solutions, raise public awareness and influence public discourse on black males in Chicago.

## **Academia**

Despite a persistent lack of resources and rewards for pursuing black males work (Littles, Bowers, and Gilmer 2007), considerable efforts are under way within academia. Clemson University, in partnership with higher education institutions across South Carolina, has developed Call Me Mister, a scholarship program for black males committed to becoming teachers. Morgan State University's Sankofa graduate student initiative utilizes research in collaboration with the state's community college chancellors in an attempt to bolster retention rates of black males. Likewise, Dr. Henrie Treadwell at the Morehouse School of Medicine continues groundbreaking work in making the connection between the hyper-incarceration of black males and a corresponding health crisis. David Pate of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee continues groundbreaking work on fatherhood. Additionally, recognized leaders such as Ron Mincy continue important work. The Scholars Network represents a focused effort designed to create a space for the cultivation and promotion of new conversations around the issues facing black males.

**Scholars Network on the Well-Being of African-American Men and Masculinity:** The Scholars Network was formed with the task of creating enhanced dialogue and collaborative scholarship that seeks to positively impact the life outcomes of black males. As the 2006 report, *Why We Can't Wait* documented, scholars working on issues pertinent to black males were often disconnected from one another and unaware of scholars working in other fields or disciplines. The Scholars Network was created to address this problem by bringing mid-career scholars from across the country together to confer and potentially to create research capable of enhancing the efforts under way by policy advocates and direct-service practitioners. The group, which will continue to meet biannually, is in the development stages of an edited volume on black males. The participating scholars are:

**Alford Young Jr.** (project director),  
University of Michigan

**William Jelani Cobb**, Spelman College

**Jennifer Hamer**, University of Illinois-Urbana

**John L. Jackson Jr.**, University of Pennsylvania

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**Sean Joe**, University of Michigan  
**Waldo Johnson**, University of Chicago  
**Athena Mutua**, University of Buffalo  
**Mark Anthony Neal**, Duke University  
**Pedro Noguera**, New York University  
**Lauren Rich**, University of Chicago  
**Deidre Royster**, College of William and Mary  
**Sudhir Venkatesh**, Columbia University

The Scholars Network is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation. For more information, contact Al Young at [young@umich.edu](mailto:young@umich.edu).

### **Popular Culture**

There has been a noticeable increase in coverage and analysis of challenges facing black males in America. Filmmaker Byron Hurt has produced several works that have analyzed and provided commentary of black masculinity and manhood. There have also been several nonfiction books in the past few years with central themes that offer commentary, personal accounts and/or critique of the black male experience in America. These books are a departure from historical publications or books conceived with the rigor of the academic standards. Whatever their political viewpoint, these books have had substantial impact on popular culture and media, garnering vehement reactions and significant sales.

**News Media:** Over the past 24 months, several major news outlets have led the way in placing the issues facing black males at the fore. Erik Eckholm of The New York Times has worked closely with scholars to translate research on black males to a wider audience. This coverage has also been supplemented by important leadership from Time magazine, Newsweek, The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post and the British Broadcasting Corporation.

**Film:** "HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes" is a riveting documentary that tackles issues of masculinity, sexism, violence and homophobia in today's hip-hop culture. The film includes interviews with famous rappers, academicians, public intellectuals and students from Spelman College. The film explores such pressing issues

as women and violence in rap music, representations of manhood in hip-hop culture, what today's rap lyrics reveal to their listeners and homoeroticism in hip-hop.

Filmmaker Byron Hurt, an avid "hip-hop head," former college athlete, activist and African-American male, formulated this film as he began to notice and think about how stereotypical rap videos had become. Thus, Hurt decided to make a film about "the gender politics of hip-hop." Hurt asserts that many of hip-hop's representations of manhood are "limited and narrow." In *Beyond Beats and Rhymes*, Hurt explores important and provocative questions and viewpoints on black male masculinity and hip-hop culture. Hurt asks, "What do today's rap lyrics tell us about the collective consciousness of black men and women from the hip-hop generation?"

Produced by actor Mario Van Peebles, the documentary film "Bring Your 'A' Game" brings together a host of accomplished black male celebrities to offer wisdom and encouragement to young black men. In the film, figures such as Dick Parsons, Damon Dash, Geoffrey Canada, Sean "Diddy" Combs and Newark Mayor Cory Booker discuss the importance of graduating from high school and other keys to achieving success. As an educational tool, 'A' Game targets a range of audiences to pull them into the conversation; including young black males, other influential people of color and the general public. The film was supported with funding provided by the Twenty-First Century and Ford foundations.

**Books:** Hill Harper's "Letters to a Young Brother: MANifest Your Destiny" was inspired by Rainer Maria Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*. Harper, a young black actor and graduate of Brown University and Harvard Law School, offers similar inspiration to young men clamoring for advice and encouragement at a time when popular culture offers little positive direction.

Legendary comedian Bill Cosby (author of "Fatherhood") teams up with Dr. Alvin Poussaint (a psychiatrist and author of "Lay My Burden Down") to pen "Come On People: On the Path from Victims to Victors," which takes a hard look at the state of black America and shares the authors' vision for strengthening America by addressing the crisis of people frozen in feelings of low self-esteem, abandonment, anger, fearfulness,

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sadness and feelings of being used, undefended and unprotected. The authors are particularly concerned about young black males, who they say are relinquishing family responsibilities in increasing numbers, largely for lack of proper role models.

Radio host and best-selling author Larry Elder wrote “Stupid Black Men,” in which he takes on the mindset that those who rail against racism as the root of all problems end up hurting precisely those they claim to be helping.

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## Appendix B: Funder Dialogue Participant List

Recognizing that local and community philanthropy are central agents in promoting equity and in combating agents that exacerbate unbalanced access to opportunity in communities, the Ford Foundation engaged funders from different regions in the country to co-convene four regional funder conversations. These convenings provided opportunities for philanthropic institutions that share a regional identity to collectively accomplish several learning and field-building objectives:

- Share information, data and tools that may aid foundations in identifying and addressing the specific issues, systems and policies that contribute to the challenges African-American males face
- Engage local philanthropic partners in specific regions to better understand how to invest resources with goals to better life outcomes for African-American males
- Learn how local philanthropic institutions are making investments that are directly affecting the well-being of African-American males
- Encourage increased and targeted strategic investment by philanthropy in improving the life outcomes of African-American males

Below is a list institutions that were represented at the convenings.

### Midwest Convening

*Black United Fund of Michigan*  
*Chicago Community Trust*  
*Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan*  
*Community Foundation of Greater Flint*  
*Consultant to ABFE*  
*C.S. Mott Foundation*  
*George Gund Foundation*  
*Imagine Fund*  
*John S. and James L. Knight Foundation*  
*Joyce Foundation JPMorgan Chase Foundation*  
*Kalamazoo Community Foundation*

*Kellogg Foundation*  
*Knowledge Works Foundation*  
*Kresge Foundation*  
*Lilly Endowment*  
*Lumina Foundation*  
*Muskingum County Community Foundation*  
*Polk Brothers Foundation*  
*Ruth Mott Foundation*  
*Skillman Foundation*  
*Southfield Public Schools*  
*State of Michigan Governor's Office*  
*Toledo Community Foundation*

### Southern Convening

*Aristotle*  
*Charles Frueauff Foundation*  
*Clinton School of Public Service*  
*Community Foundation of South Alabama*  
*Community Investment Network*  
*Ford Foundation*  
*Foundation for the Mid South*  
*Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families*  
*Jessie Ball duPont Fund*  
*A Legacy of Tradition*  
*Lightner Leadership Development Organization*  
*Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation*  
*Marguerite Casey Foundation*  
*Mississippi NAACP*  
*MLK Community Inc.*  
*Mobilizing Communities*  
*Morehouse School of Medicine*  
*New World Foundation*  
*Phil Hardin Foundation*  
*Southeastern Council on Foundations*  
*Southern Education Foundation*  
*St. Francis County Community Development Corp.*  
*Twenty-First Century Foundation*  
*Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation*

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## **West Coast Convening**

*Association of Black Foundation Executives*  
*Bay Area Community Development Coalition*  
*California Endowment*  
*Casey Family Programs*  
*Center for Young Women's Development*  
*College Access Foundation of California*  
*D.C. Children & Youth Investment Trust Corp.*  
*East Bay Community Foundation*  
*Edgewood Center for Children and Families*  
*Eurasia Foundation*  
*Ford Foundation*  
*Frontline Solutions*  
*The Genius Group Inc.*  
*James Irvine Foundation*  
*Liberty Hill Foundation*  
*Marguerite Casey Found*  
*Marin Community Foundation*  
*Mitchell Kapor Foundation*  
*Philadelphia Foundation*  
*Rising Oak Foundation*  
*Silicon Valley Community Foundation*  
*St. Francis Medical Foundation*  
*Twenty-First Century Foundation*  
*United Way of the Bay Area*

*Ford Foundation*  
*Friends Fiduciary Corporation*  
*Frontline Solutions*  
*Grantmakers for Children Youth and Families*  
*Heinz Endowments*  
*Open Society Institute*  
*Pennsylvania Council on the Arts*  
*Philadelphia Education Fund*  
*The Philadelphia Foundation*  
*Philadelphia Mayor's Office*  
*POISE*  
*Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*  
*Rutgers Community Health*  
*Schott Foundation for Public Education*  
*Stoneleigh Center*  
*TCC Group The Lenfest Foundation*  
*Twenty-First Century Foundation*  
*United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania*  
*Wachovia*  
*William Penn Foundation*

## **East Coast Convening**

*100 Black Men of America*  
*After School Institute (Baltimore)*  
*Annie E. Casey Foundation*  
*Associated Grantmakers of Massachusetts*  
*Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers*  
*Atlantic Philanthropies*  
*The Boston Foundation*  
*Brandywine Health Foundation*  
*Casey Family Programs*  
*Chestnut Hill Health Care Foundation*  
*Collaborative for Building After-School Systems*  
*D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corp.*  
*Delaware Valley Grantmakers*  
*Eagles Youth Partnership*  
*Echoing Green*  
*Enon Tabernacle Church*  
*First Hospital Foundation*