

THE STATE OF BLACK MALE COMMISSIONS:



A SURVEY

Written and Edited By:

FRONTLINE SOLUTIONS

Helping Change Happen

THE STATE OF BLACK MALE COMMISSIONS: A SURVEY

FEBRUARY 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Written and edited by Frontline Solutions (www.helpingchange happen.com)

Layout by Jesce Walz (jesce.net)

Published by Twenty-First Century Foundation (www.21cf.org)

Special thanks to Charlene Fassler and Tami Navarro for their research assistance. We are also grateful for the insights of Leon Andrews, Jr., Loren Harris, Renata Cobbs Fletcher and Bryan Echols.

4	Note from the Publisher
5	Foreword
7	Introduction
9	The State of Black Male Commissions: A Survey
22	Dealing with the Challenges
24	Conclusion
25	Appendix A
28	Appendix B
29	Appendix C
30	Appendix D
31	Notes



187 Waverly Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11205
(718) 237-2909 (phone)
(347) 823-1610 (fax)



132 West 112th Street
Lower Level #1
New York, NY 10026
212-662-3700 (phone)
212-662-6690 (fax)
info@21cf.org

NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Twenty-First Century Foundation (21CF) is excited to have partnered with Frontline Solutions to publish this critical research on Black male commissions. The Foundation's Black Men and Boys Initiative was designed to mobilize the organizational, political and financial resources required to move the collective response of the crisis facing America's Black men and boys from discussion to action and, ultimately, to positive impact. The Black male commissions discussed in **The State of Black Male Commissions** are an essential part of the overall national infrastructure needed to realize the positive impact that we desire.

In 21CF's programmatic logic model we stipulate that one of our fundamental goals is "to achieve policy wins and supplement policies/regulations on issues that improve the social and physical conditions of Black communities." Our experience over the past five years has reinforced the assumption that in order to impact policies on behalf of Black men and boys on a national scale, it is essential that a strong, grassroots base be established on both the local and state level.

It also helps to have key government allies at local and state levels who minimally have legislative mandates and convening power and are accessible to local leaders to push for change from the inside out. Two of the Black male commissions noted in the report — the Illinois Taskforce on the Condition of African American Men and the Ohio Commission on African-American Males — are currently vital partners in both the local and national efforts of 21CF's Black Men and Boys Initiative as representatives on the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys Steering Committee.

Another way in which the Black male commissions are intimately related to the 21CF agenda is through activities that fulfill our stated goal "to increase the power, sustainability and effectiveness of poor and working-class Black communities to positively impact issues and outcomes by building strong, Black-led local, statewide, and national core organizations committed to Black social change and larger systemic changes." The Black male commissions discussed in this report are core to increasing that power dynamic. A key element in their power-building plan is the collaborations beyond immediate constituencies through national efforts such as the Dellums Commission and 21CF's 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys. In addition, it is imperative that the local, regional and statewide commissions have strong grassroots connections through relationships like the one highlighted

in the report between the B.B.L.A.C. Committee in Chicago and the Illinois Taskforce on the Condition of African American Males.

It is also important to note that, as Black male commissions are political in nature, their level of influence and the tenure of their existence are both hinged on their structure and the political will of the "champions" who form them. Therefore, as communities seek to replicate or establish similar efforts in their cities, states or regions, it is imperative that they have a keen understanding of the political landscape. Essentially, if the commission is structured in such a way that it does not have sufficient autonomy to push up against the "status quo," or it is not adequately financed through appropriations, then it may merely serve as a diversion instead of a true agent for change. Finally, the report illustrates what we believe to be one of the critical components needed to garner increased sustainability of a Black male commission: the formation of a strong link between the commission and a well-regarded academic and/or research institution, such as the link between the Kirwan Institute and the Ohio Commission on African-American Males.

We hope that **The State of Black Male Commissions** helps provide clarity on an overlooked area of this field and enlarges the understanding of the role commissions can play in advancing opportunities for Black men and boys.

FOREWORD BY LOREN HARRIS

At the dawn of the second decade of the 21st century, America is at a crossroads. Just over a year ago, the nation's economy was imperiled as its financial and housing markets faltered and triggered widespread institutional failures in the finance, insurance and real estate industries. The economic meltdown also fueled a credit crisis, sparked the seizing of capital markets and an escalation toward depression-level rates of unemployment.

The immediate and longer-term effects of the near economic collapse continues to impact broad swaths of Americans. However, in April 2009, *Newsweek* magazine reported what many people across the nation intuitively understood — the recession was disparately impacting substantial segments of the American population.

For example, at the time of President Obama's inauguration, unemployment among Latino and Black males was 11 and 16 percent respectively. In November 2009, the *Washington Post* reported that 34.5 percent of young Black males ages 16–24 were jobless — a rate three times the national unemployment level of 10 percent.¹ Though educated males of color are faring better than less-educated young men, they remain unemployed at rates nearly twice that of college-educated Caucasian males, according to the *New York Times*.² A number of news sources attributed the sharp increase in male unemployment rates to the impact of the recession on occupational sectors that disproportionately employ males — manufacturing, construction, light and heavy industry.

This publication documents the fundamental role that Black male commissions and taskforces are intended to play by addressing the abovementioned concerns. When operating optimally, these entities leverage engagement for the public, private and civil society sectors in addressing the plight of Black males. In this way, commissions and taskforces, along

with local, state and regional groups, help form the foundation of the architecture necessary for addressing the challenges facing Black males and communities. These entities help link previously disconnected stakeholders in the public and private sectors to local efforts working to improve the well-being of Black males. Building multi-sector coalitions is imperative to expanding opportunities for and producing better outcomes among young Black males.

Black male commissions also demonstrate the critical role social, political and economic "elites" can play in raising awareness, leveraging resources and advancing public policies on behalf of Black males. As an extension of government, commissions have the potential to extend the heft of a branch or unit of government; and, in so doing, lend instant credibility to activities of the commission. The promise of this capacity can be fully realized when local stakeholders hold commissions accountable to the primary needs of Black males. Commissions can also establish a community of practice in which advocates, practitioners and scholars working on behalf of Black males and communities are supported and their efforts coordinated to maximize cross-sectoral coordination.

This report highlights the promise of commissions and the challenges of sustaining Black male commissions over time. While a number of commissions like those in Washington, D.C., and Bloomington, Indiana, have found ways to maintain their efforts, a majority of these entities lose traction and become dormant or nonexistent. The life cycle of Black male commissions reflects the relative instability of non-profit organizations and programs working with and on behalf of Black males. The fragility and marginalization of work with this population has been well documented in other publications by these authors and others. To realize staying power, Black male commissions would be wise to learn from the experiences of organizations, programs and other commissions that have managed to sustain their efforts.

¹ Haynes, Dion V. "Blacks Hit Hard by Economy's Punch." *The Washington Post*, November 24, 2009. www.washingtonpost.com

² Luo, Michael. "In Job Hunt, College Degree Can't Close Racial Gap." *The New York Times*, December 1, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/01/us/01race.html?_r=1&ref=us

More specifically, Black male commissions might also consider three strategies to building longevity into the commission model. First, Black male commissions could more effectively develop media ties, employ media-based strategies to inform the public of its efforts and engage professionals from the media community as commission members. Second, commissions could strengthen their model by providing civic leadership that helps advance policy priorities central to improving life outcomes among Black males. Black male commissions willing to advocate for better quality public education, expanded economic opportunities and livable wages would be supporting universal policies that benefit a plurality of people and Black males alike. Third, these entities might do well to leverage the partnership of local institutional and individual philanthropists. Of course there is the obvious opportunity to leverage private funding to support the commission and related efforts. Beyond this apparent potential benefit, engaging the private philanthropic community could

introduce the commission to a network of professionals capable of providing intellectual support, in-kind resources and greater exposure for its work.

The above statements notwithstanding, it is not clear what the life cycle of a commission should be. The work of these groups is mandate driven and, therefore, it is conceivable that when the mandate expires either because the issuer no longer has authority or the original context in which it was issued has changed, then the work of the commission would similarly terminate. However, given the long-term commitment needed to address the concerns tackled by Black male commissions, it also seems reasonable that these bodies would exist in some form for as long as the challenges are present. At issue, at least in part, is what form should the work of commissions take over time and who is responsible for shepherding these entities through some transformative process.

INTRODUCTION BY MARCUS LITTLES

Since 2007, there have been several key reports and publications that have aimed to draw attention to disparities of Black male outcomes and to propose recommendations for how to ameliorate these disparities. The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and the National Urban League each released important reports on the status of Black males in America. The Schott Foundation releases an annual report that assesses the educational attainment of Black and Latino males in all 50 states. The Ford Foundation has commissioned two reports over the last several years. The most recent report, published in December 2008, was entitled ***Momentum: Sustaining Efforts to Improve Life Outcomes for African-American Males.***

Just over a year after the release of ***Momentum***, I am compelled to revisit this report, which I co-authored. Actually, it is not the content of the report that we must re-examine, but rather the title. I am challenged by the assertion that the central aim of the field — peopled by funders, policymakers, academicians and practitioners — is to “sustain efforts to improve the life outcomes of African-American males.” Upon reflection, it seems like “sustaining efforts” is aiming too low. The enormity of the systemic inequities faced by Black communities and exemplified by disparate Black male life outcomes seems to call the field to do more than merely offer support, but to craft advocacy and policy strategies that lead to tangible change for Black males in this country.

Basketball coach, legend and author John Wooden led UCLA men’s basketball teams to 10 NCAA National Championships over a 12-year period. Coach Wooden has also written several books that draw upon his years of experience and success as a basketball coach to share what he considers are critical keys to success in life. On the subject of basketball... and life, the famed coach once said, “Never mistake activity for achievement or progress.” His words are apropos to this moment, and thus the question for the field is, how do we ensure that the current litany of activities targeting improved Black male life outcomes leads to real change?

HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT THE CURRENT LITANY OF ACTIVITIES TARGETING IMPROVED BLACK MALE LIFE OUTCOMES LEADS TO REAL CHANGE?

The State of Black Male Commissions is an important survey of the ways in which municipalities, regions and states have mobilized civic leaders to develop and implement public policies aimed at improving the status and well-being of Black men and boys. The report gives a brief contextual history of commissions as “the fifth arm of government”; recalls the history of the emergence of commissions that specifically target Black males; examines the array of compositions, configurations and origins of these entities; profiles and interviews some key

actors in Black male commissions and, through the analysis of a select group of thinkers, scholars and practitioners, explores some key challenges that commissions have faced and potentially will face.

This survey does not attempt to be evaluative, nor does it pose as the final word on this topic. Rather, it seeks to describe, document and give con-

text to the existence and emergence of Black male commissions as entities that to this point are known for the important *activities* they conduct. It is up to the readers of this report — the policymakers, civic and nonprofit leaders and foundation staff and executives — to step up during the next phase in the life cycle of these commissions and ensure that the mobilization of these city-, region- and state-based commissions employ tangible strategies that lead to *progress*. Progress is not measured in the number of commissions that exist, the array of issues they seek to tackle or even the prominence of the stakeholders that comprise these entities. Progress must be measured in the quality of life and social determinants of health indicators that evidence improved life outcomes and well-being for Black men and boys in their respective communities.

The State of Black Male Commissions provides clear research around commissions as one potential strategy for impacting state and local policies as they determine the status of Black males. It is important that the field learn about and from this strategy as part of a larger inquiry around how to more broadly impact public policies to provide access to opportunity for Black males. The historical marginalization of Black men and boys must be combated by sustained advocacy for federal, state and local policies that address systemic inequities facing this population.

At a recent briefing on Capitol Hill on the disparate educational outcomes of males of color, a colleague asked the expert panel to pinpoint the “locus of power” for sustained advocacy and policy reform to improve the educational and other life outcomes for marginalized males. The panelist’s response lasted more than five minutes, but he never actually addressed the question that he was asked. It was another missed opportunity to meet the issue head-on, and yet this question of identifying the leverage points and venues for policy change is not an inquiry exclusively for a so-called expert panel. Rather, it

is a question for all of us in the field. The quality of life for Black males in this country will not improve in local communities until there is an operating strategy for developing the aforementioned “locus of power” for policy advocacy.

It is my hope that you will read this report and think strategically about how Black male commissions can be effective tools for policy change. However, I challenge and implore you to go further and continue to do the hard work and thinking around identifying a menu of the right effective levers and advocacy strategies. Such strides forward will produce policy reforms and innovations to help ameliorate the structural inequities that impede Black males from improved educational, economic, health and social outcomes.

On behalf of Twenty-First Century Foundation, Frontline Solutions and the authors of this report, thank you for taking the time to read this important work. We look forward to investigating and building effective policy advocacy tools that lead to tangible improved life outcomes for Black men and boys.

THE STATE OF BLACK MALE COMMISSIONS: A SURVEY

An Appeal for Action

In late 2003, U.S. Representative Danny K. Davis from Illinois wrote President George W. Bush a letter urging him to establish a federal commission to examine the dire conditions of Black males. “I urge you to take this step to bring national attention to a very serious problem and a great need,” he wrote.

This request, issued shortly after Davis and other national leaders participated in the inaugural conference of the Status of the African American Male Initiative, was not the first plea on behalf of Black males. Nevertheless, Davis’s letter and the appeals of the roughly 1,500 individuals in attendance at the November 2003 national conference in Washington, D.C., did not spark a federal response as he had hoped; nor did it draw significant media coverage.

It is a familiar situation for the many philanthropic bodies, grassroots organizations and citizens who direct their time and energy toward addressing the obstacles facing Black males. The priorities identified by some are not shared by the whole.

A similar silence accompanies the ongoing efforts of state and local commissions and task forces focusing on Black males (unless otherwise noted, in this report “commissions” will refer to task forces as well). These entities bring a unique set of resources to the work around Black males: they are designed to mobilize a diverse body of concerned individuals and organizations; they leverage power at various levels and they provide a government mandate and degree of public exposure that otherwise lie out of reach for practitioners and advocates.

However, no body of research exists on these commissions in their past and present forms. Gathering and disseminating information about the practices, strategies and achievements of these entities — and the obstacles that stand before them — not only increases the general knowledge about this field of work and expands the conversation, but it also provides important exposure to a

specific tool and strategy to improve the life outcomes of Black males.

The commissions and task forces scanned for this report represent an array of city- and state-focused commissions created to effect real change and implement policies that are responsive to social conditions impacting the well-being of Black men and boys. Their mission is worthy, but they face circumstances that are typically far from ideal. For instance, these entities are scattered and often face limited visibility and a sense of isolation — all factors that can easily obstruct commissions from collaborating and strategically aligning their resources.

Reflections on the Continuing Journey

The researchers and authors who have collaborated on this report draw from their experience in issues affecting males of color. The report is not based solely on qualitative research and analysis but also draws from evolving insights over the course of advising foundations, providing technical assistance and strategic support and convening different segments of the field. Several publications in the past decade have documented continuing efforts to help build the field of Black males work. (See “Further Reading” for a list of related reports by Frontline Solutions, the Schott Foundation, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and other authors.)

The image of the three-legged stool has dominated Frontline Solutions’ perspective and analysis of Black males work. This metaphor represents the composition of the three major actors — community-based organizations, researchers and public officials. In an ideal scenario, each of these legs bears an equal share in the ongoing efforts to improve the life outcomes of Black males. Previous reports by Frontline Solutions worked from its scans of two of these sectors, the non-profit/philanthropic field and the academic field. Where it was deemed appropriate, the research has covered government actors who are working to positively shape policy impacting Black

males. Now, by placing the focus directly on the third leg, the public sector, and by thoughtfully considering its unique set of strengths, sources of power and influence, more information can be gathered about commissions and effective collaborative models between government and the other two sectors.

Our Approach

Until now, no official study had been published about Black male commissions, which meant that exploring this field required an approach comparable to that of investigative reporting or genealogical research. The intended outcome was not an exhaustive catalog or compendium of these entities. Rather, the authors aimed for a profile of Black male commissions that was informed by an existing database of literature and observations as well as new research. The final survey represents a cross-section of various regions, of the largest cities in the country as well as a few communities outside major metropolitan hubs, and stands as what the authors hope is a growing body of research on this topic.

Internet research was conducted on 29 states, 47 individual cities and Washington, D.C. A higher priority was given to commissions that had an explicit and sole focus on Black males. To reflect diversity in geography, the initial research group also represented five major U.S. regions (South, Northeast, Midwest, Southwest and West). Additionally, the group struck a balance between rural and urban communities. A final component of the scan focused on variations in the size of population served: cities and states with the greatest numbers of Black residents were included as well as less populated localities that had smaller Black populations but still were home to significant initiatives in service of Black males, as evidenced by either a committed Black leadership in local government or a working relationship with one or more philanthropic organizations dedicated to improving the outcomes of Black males. (A full list of this initial group is provided in Appendix C.)

In situations where the Web did not provide sufficient information, the research team reached out to mayor's and governor's offices and then followed leads on the names and contacts these sources provided. Even searches that did not produce any

commissions or task forces at least turned up local thought leaders in the area of Black males. These individuals stand as potential catalysts for future commissions or entities like them.

The scan turned up a representative group of six commissions that had 1) a visible public presence and 2) staff contacts who were available and willing to participate in the research by telling their story and sharing information about their commissions. Additionally, the scan identified a national network of state-based commissions. The following is a list of these entities:

- Men and Boys of Color Initiative (Oakland, CA)
- Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (Florida)
- Taskforce on the Condition of African American Men (Illinois)
- Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (Louisiana)
- Ohio Commission on African-American Males
- African American Male Initiative (Michigan)
- African American Male National Council (headquartered in Indianapolis, IN)

The final stage of the scan consisted of structured phone interviews with members of these six commissions and the African American Male National Council. Questions focused on six areas:

1. Origins: how the commission started and if there was a particular catalyst behind it.
2. Legal Framework: whether it was created by an executive order, a particular body or council, etc.
3. Commission Members: who they are and how they were chosen
4. Funding: sources & level of funding, funding needs
5. Successes: what the commission has accomplished as well as its actual and intended outcomes; and
6. Collaboration: if collaboration would add value and how, and whether it is collaborating or would like to collaborate with other commissions.

Additional questions solicited reflections on lessons learned and suggestions for other commissions. In a few cases, follow-up interviews were conducted to gather more information.

The Fifth Arm of Government

Before exploring in detail the work of Black male commissions, it will help to briefly define commissions, chart their general framework and detail some of the functions they perform.

They may go by several designations — commissions, committees, initiatives, councils or task forces — but these entities all receive authorization from a central governing body to carry out public duties or functions. In contrast to more permanent units like agencies and departments, commissions/task forces are created to fit the circumstances and priorities of the present. Subsequently, their life may be cut short once they publish their final report or submit their key recommendations. Their focus may be a specific directive that organizes members around a single purpose. (A familiar example in history is the Kerner Commission, established by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967 to probe the causes of the race riots that erupted that year.)

Another distinguishing feature of commissions/task forces is their assumed independent status. Because legislators and chief executives frequently identify complex issues that extend beyond their expertise, or are too unwieldy to resolve in a single term of office, the option arises to create an independent body to supplement their efforts. Although the mandate for commissions/task forces stems from a central government department, they perform their functions outside of that department, and their leaders, selected from the public and/or private sector, share decision-making with the elected officials serving on the commission. Such a framework has earned commissions the label of the “fifth arm of government,” a designation that suggests a governmental balance in which the fourth arm, made up of media and citizenry, and the fifth arm, operating as a government-citizen partnership, work to assure the accountability of the other three arms.

The duties of commissions/task forces are manifold. They gather information and evaluate present policies; serve as advisors and produce policy recommendations and raise awareness by calling attention to various problems with applied research. Their position of power and influence can potentially place them at the nexus between

governmental agencies, academic institutions and civic leadership, and they can work toward facilitating collaboration between sectors that might otherwise work in isolation.

Some commissions/task forces carry out their fact-finding operations through public inquiry, in the form of a hearing, forum or series of town halls. Whether staged in the stately chambers of a Congressional hearing room or in the small quarters of a town hall, public inquiries collect the testimony of experts, practitioners and ordinary citizens. What often emerge are personal stories and direct accounts that serve to bolster a case for concerted government action.

Of course, there are no guarantees that commissions will achieve their objectives, or that they will achieve the power balance intended for them. A commission's influence can range from nonexistent to overwhelming, and because they are created by executive decree or legislative statute, they may only fulfill politically expedient objectives that fail to align with the public good. Political analyst Colton C. Campbell writes that a commission can be a “way for lawmakers to favor constituents, to minimize political losses, or to shift blame.”¹ The risk facing commissions — Black male commissions included — is that they become a political stratagem rather than an agent of real change.

From the Beginning: How Black Male Commissions Emerged

In April 1989, the first commission or task force for Black males, the Governor's Commission on Socially Disadvantaged Black Males, was formed. The commission, which has since been renamed the Ohio Commission on African-American Males, was passed by Governor Dick Celeste's executive order and was overseen by the Ohio Office of Black Affairs. As the first commission of its kind, it had no other model but those of previous commissions devoted to other priorities.

In many respects, the Commission on Socially Disadvantaged Black Males set a number of precedents that many subsequent commissions have duplicated. Like its associate commissions, the Commission drew its membership from the academic world,

public sector and the general community, and all stakeholders were well-versed on issues facing Black males and committed to improving their lives. Their focus areas were among the areas of concern that drive the work of commissions today: education, health, employment and criminal justice.

Just a year after forming, the Commission published a major report entitled “A Call to Action” that included 112 recommendations organized under six strategies. The recommendations were designed for the purpose of “effective action to improve the situation of African-American males in Ohio.” The plan detailed by the report rested on two assertions: 1) “The issues affecting African-American males can be resolved”; and 2) “African-American males are an untapped natural resource that can help all Ohioans.”² The Commission’s statements, and the groundbreaking work that preceded it, carried several promising implications for those dedicated to improving the conditions of Black males.

As soon as Governor Celeste issued that executive order, by mandate Ohioan public officials were accountable for the welfare of Black males and were expected to integrate the Commission’s plan of action into public policy. A truly responsive Ohio government would be geared to institutionalize a field of work that long existed under the radar. The expectation was that *all* public agencies would assume the obligation of improving the life outcomes of Black males. Such a scenario would dictate that Black male commissions would be the first but not the only party to carry out the mission.

The Commission on Socially Disadvantaged Black Males inspired the creation of several other Black commissions during the 1990s. Between 1989 and 1999, a total of nine more statewide commissions were established (California, Indiana, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee and Wisconsin).³ Similar initiatives took place on the national stage during that period. U.S. Congress held at least 10 hearings focusing attention on Black men.⁴ Although these commissions shared the same general goal, they exhibited diverse organizational structures, strategies and practices.

Commission Structures

MEMBERSHIP & STAFFING

Improving the life outcomes of Black males requires a broad-based effort, and thus a commission’s leadership often casts a wide net to assemble the right team from the various spheres of government and the public and private sector. Additionally, the team often reflects the broad set of priorities and expertise that such a mission demands. Long before holding its first meeting, successful commissions enlist the experts on the issues of education, health, employment, criminal justice, family supports and economic development, screening in particular those individuals well-versed on their issues as they affect Black male residents in the context of a given city or commonwealth. Often, subcommittees are formed around various issues in order to achieve a sharper focus.

One segment of a commission’s membership is often made up of elected officials, who bring the desired political leverage to the table. They represent various government agencies and departments, the legislative body or city council and sometimes the executive branch in the position of a lieutenant governor or deputy mayor. To assure a political balance, an appointed legislator will usually come from the both the state senate and the house. As an added safeguard, a requirement may dictate that two appointees come from separate parties.

Civil society is represented on the commission by various community members who are not employed by the state or city government. These individuals are either appointed by a high official or the general commission. Community members may be advocates, practitioners, scholars or grassroots activists, and they may be required to have professional credentials such as a certification in clinical psychology or an academic degree in African-American studies.

The private sector is often represented by one or more prominent employers or businesspersons who can serve as a liaison to the business community. Typically, they provide expertise on economic development and workforce training, and they may

ensure the participation of the minority-owned businesses in the commission’s agenda.

A commission’s charter may be amended after its inception to expand the commission’s leadership, as it may decide to bring in more members to broaden its reach or its knowledge base. Alternatively, the commission may decide to scale down its membership. Anthony McCoy, Chairman of the Florida Council for the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, says that although a large initial grouping can ensure diverse viewpoints and a wide-ranging assessment of the conditions affecting Black males, the commission need not remain its original size. “Early on, you can look at issues in a comprehensive manner. Later, such a large commission may become a difficulty,” he said.

Commissions with a significant majority of public servants may require all members to serve without compensation, in which case their hours served is an extension of their responsibilities as a public official. With other commissions, particularly in which community members have senior leadership roles, salaried positions are sometimes created for executive leaders and perhaps other members.

DEPARTMENTS PROVIDING OVERSIGHT & SPONSORSHIP

There is no default department or agency under which a Black male commission serves. The range of departments providing oversight and sponsorship includes Legal Affairs, Civil Rights, Human Services and Health. An alternative to the department arrangement is for a commission to partner with a non-governmental institution. The Ohio Commission on African-American Males recently restructured to partner with the African American and African Studies Community Extension Center of Ohio State University (see sidebar).

One natural consequence is that a sponsoring department helps determine the commission’s focus. For instance, the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, housed in the Department of Legal Affairs, focuses on Black-on-Black crime and the state justice system’s strategy in dealing with that particular epidemic. Michigan’s Office of Community Health housed the Task Force on Improving African-American Male Health, a former version of the state’s current program, and it pursued a mission to “reduce the incidence and mortality of health problems and risk behaviors which contribute to the poor survival of the African-American male.”

VIEW FROM THE GROUND: An Interview with Bryan Echols, Executive Director of M.A.G.I.C. (Metropolitan Area Group for Igniting Civilization)

Committed to strategically advancing a shared agenda to improve the life outcomes of African-American males, the Illinois Taskforce on the Condition of African American Males has developed strong partnerships with three local organizations in Chicago — M.A.G.I.C., the B.b.l.a.c. Committee (Beautiful Black Life Acquiring Consciousness) and the Chicago Community Trust. The B.b.l.a.c. Committee is a coalition of organizations that advocate for policy change to improve the life outcomes of Black men in Chicago, and M.A.G.I.C. is a youth development and community organizing agency based out of the city's South Side.

One individual who has played a major role advising the Illinois Taskforce from the beginning has been Bryan Echols. In this interview, Echols explains how he has used his platform as a community organizer to help push and advocate from the outside in a way that the commission could not.

HOW HAVE INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL BEEN INVOLVED IN THE ILLINOIS COMMISSION?

When State Senator Kwame Raoul and State Representative Marlow Colvin originally developed the concept of the Illinois State Taskforce, they intentionally set out to create a living, breathing, doing task force that collaborates and actually moves policy.

Once they passed on the idea to the Illinois Department of Human Services, Terence Mitchell was given the green light to move forward and officially begin to create it. But even before Terence got involved in the effort, he was already involved in an intergovernmental coalition convened by the Chicago Community Trust consisting of funders, state agencies and the B.b.l.a.c. Committee members who were working with the Twenty-First Century Foundation's 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys. Where the Chicago Community Trust had interest in supporting Black boys, the Illinois State Taskforce helped to convene all of the relevant groups through a series of roundtables beginning

with the intergovernmental taskforce, and then expanding to the Black Men and Boys table. Terence and I were involved in that effort as well as the B.b.l.a.c. Steering Committee and he borrowed heavily from B.b.l.a.c. structure and its areas of focus (education, fatherhood, criminal justice, health, employment and economic stability) when he developed the Task Force.

My involvement with the Task Force began roughly two years ago, when Senator Raoul asked for my unofficial involvement in helping organize the structure, do some of the behind-the-scenes work as a quiet information source. During the whole process, Terence Mitchell checked in with myself and Jonathan Peck of Southwest Youth Collaborative, Dr. Thomas Fisher from the University of Chicago Hospital, Dr. David Stovall from the University of Illinois-Chicago and Joseph Strickland, M.A.G.I.C.'s founder, as his sounding board and informal advisory council.

FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES, HOW HAVE PEOPLE AT THE GROUND LEVEL CONTRIBUTED TO COMMISSIONS, AND HOW CAN COMMISSIONS ORIENT THEMSELVES TO SERVE AND BE HEARD BY THEIR CONSTITUENCIES?

The Illinois Taskforce is what Jonathan Peck and I had always imagined and always wanted. We wanted the state to recognize the on-the-ground work that was happening locally to improve the life outcomes and systemic conditions surrounding Black males, and we wanted to play a role in helping to create a statewide movement. We could always get lawmakers to listen by bringing a few hundred people from Chicago to Springfield, but we also recognized that if we really wanted to make a change the movement needed to be bigger than Chicago. So we did some work around the metro area trying to cross some traditional barriers and think outside the box in a truly collaborative, unified, regional and statewide nature.

Once Terence was on board, his first course of action was to take Chicago's town hall format on the road. Over a period of a few months the Illinois Taskforce hosted town halls in eight cities, from Rockford in the north to Cairo in the south, the whole time galvanizing and getting folks to be involved.

The response was overwhelming. Terence averaged several hundred at each town hall meeting, and what we saw was that folks really are aware of the data

that's out there, and they see what it's like for Black boys in America on a daily basis. And the town halls were an opportunity for them to filter into something that might have some legs to it.

At the same time, coalition building is no guarantee, and there's a ton of factors beyond our control. If the state doesn't move and blames everything on current budgetary constraints, then nothing happens and it's another task force that comes and goes. But with the Task Force's connection to the 2025 Campaign, we're trying to force the interest level and petition the state to re-appropriate a million dollars to each of the eight state offices for work on behalf of Black males, so that the systems across state government become more intentional about how they service Black men.

We need the state to understand that if I'm a Black male in Illinois, the reality is that in a year's time I could touch at least three Illinois state agencies: Public Health, Department of Corrections and Department of Human Services. But the sad thing is that none of the offices have the ability to communicate what my overall profile is. We learned this because the folks around the table of the Task Force are experts in their fields with their ears to the ground regarding issues affecting Black males, such as Dr. Waldo Johnson from the University of Chicago.

PRACTITIONERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS NEED THE MOST SUPPORT, BUT THEY ALSO DON'T HAVE REPORT-READING BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE RANKS. AND THE FOLKS ALREADY ENGAGED IN POLICY CHANGE WORK NEED TO BE INFORMED ABOUT WHO ELSE IS OUT THERE DOING THE WORK.

WHAT DOES THE FIELD NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COMMISSIONS SERVING BLACK MALES?

Practitioners and service providers need to know that there's somebody out there fighting with them - especially those who are in the trenches working with our young people. [Practitioners and service providers] need the most support, but they also don't have report-reading brothers and sisters in the ranks. And the folks already engaged in policy change work need to be informed about who else is out there doing the work.

Funders need to know that as most foundations stand for systematic change and the uplifting of people, as a society we're only as strong as our weakest link. It is their mission to assist those who are in an unequal position.

Understanding that you can create a funding pool or funders collaborative is important. Funders want to see who else is already involved in something so they can hedge their bets. Funders need to understand that they need to communicate much better around this work.

WHAT ARE THE MOST CRITICAL STEPS THAT COMMISSIONS MUST TAKE IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY COLLABORATE WITH GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS AND ULTIMATELY ACHIEVE RESULTS FOR THEIR CONSTITUENCIES?

Commissions need to hold the position of the practitioners and the community-based organizations in higher regard. They're the ones on the front lines on a daily basis, and they can provide you with the individuals that can tell you what they need, how they need it and when they need it. And the reality is that many of those working in government at the state level aren't as close to the ground. And because Illinois is notoriously political, if you're not in the position that someone's upholding and recognizing your work, and you don't make your political rounds, then someone who's apolitical, like myself, has a much harder time making a difference. My hope is that our elected officials come to know and understand how having grassroots and community-based voices around the table can add distinct value to this work.

I would also like to see commissions in a more complementary role, understanding their position of power and what that means for the emancipation of us as a people. They need to know what role they play in this whole thing. Everything we're trying to do filters back to some policy or systematic change. So they have a responsibility to actually work for us. We need them to use their political know-how and the rule of engagement and export that to the grassroots, so that we can assist them and the work that they do, and vice versa. We need to realize that it's "us" and that we're in it together.

Commissions really are the final piece aiding a national movement. So not only do they need to connect with the grassroots organizations in their own states, but they have to start connecting as commissions. And this is where the 2025 Campaign is vitally situated, because it has mobilized bases of people and organizations in at least six states. So if it can start to develop the blueprint of connections between city, state agencies and grassroots organizations, that [work] can then be duplicated in other places. We need the task forces to smooth the road for us to walk over.

The Roles of Commissions

Because most commission members are well-versed on issues facing Black males, they also have a working knowledge of the programs and services available to help improve the situations of those individuals. There are numerous potential strategies that commissions can employ regarding how to address the many programs and services in their municipality, region or state. Different strategies include focusing on program development, assuming a supportive role as fiscal sponsor or conducting analysis on the programs and services of a geographical area, and the extent to which they effectively serve Black males.

Although some government commissions and initiatives may directly oversee programs or house programs themselves, it is more common for commissions to sponsor initiatives or establish partnerships with existing service providers or institutions. This approach is founded on the understanding that there are already existing programs and services, or that the commission does not have the capacity to develop and operate new programs.

One strategy that the Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys has envisioned is to spin off an organization designed with the explicit purpose of financially supporting programs throughout the state. The Direct Support Organization (DSO) partners with the Council to develop strategic programs and funding plans to support various state initiatives and programs meeting the needs of Black males. In addition to funding programs, the DSO intends to develop a public awareness and marketing campaign to increase participation in various programs.⁵

By and large, many commissions opt out of a programmatic mission, asserting that by mandate they are not service providers. They choose instead to use their expertise and central vantage point to analyze the existing network of programs and services for Black males, and then to coordinate a strategy based on those findings. This analysis often takes the form of a review or inventory. Such a product, as set forth in a 2009 report by the Taskforce on the Condition of African American Men in Illinois, “provides a foundation for measuring investment of time, money and human resources required to improve the lives of African American males.”⁶

A comprehensive inventory of programs and services can fulfill other goals including identifying gaps in service; reducing duplication of services; identifying model programs using best practices and advocating for their expansion; and developing collaborative strategies between state agencies and providers. It is a regular challenge for mayors and governors to initiate cooperation between multiple agencies, but in successful instances, Black male commissions manage to get several different agencies on board to carry out their mission. An inventory of available programs can serve as a particularly useful diagnostic tool to determine how the activities of agencies align with their counterparts.

Using Database Technology: A Short Case Study

Another advantage enjoyed by commissions is their access to databases managed by state or city agencies and research centers. The right database, particularly one that can easily disaggregate data by race and gender, can bolster the case for targeted services and programming for Black males.

Seeking to use the right analytical implement for collecting all pertinent data on the services available to the state’s Black males, the Illinois Taskforce on the Condition of African American Men identified a tool already in use by the state’s Department of Children and Family Services — the Statewide Provider Database. The database, in the words of Illinois Taskforce report authors Arthur Bishop and Dana Weiner, is a “comprehensive, geocoded search tool that allows access to human service provider information.”⁷ The information contained in the database helped the commission address various priorities such as completing its program inventory, identifying service gaps, reducing duplication of services and maximizing coordination among agencies.

The final data-intensive product mapped out different community health, prevention and domestic violence programs throughout the state working under or receiving funding from the Department of Human Services or the Department of Children and Family Services. The main objective was to illustrate cases of program overlap. State agencies can then use these maps for “clarifying service system issues” and developing an informed and comprehensive

strategy for the segment of Black males who would benefit from a continuum of services.

The Faces of Black Male Commissions

One of the initial matters settled on by an emerging commission is the physical boundaries in which it carries out its mission. The geographic scope of Black male commissions ranges in size from a locale as small as Jefferson, Indiana (population: 31,705), to a coalition of several U.S. state-based commissions, as is currently coordinated by the African-American Male National Council. Various challenges accompany being a small or a large commission. For instance, the smaller entities often struggle to preserve a permanent administrative structure, while the larger ones have to labor to achieve full coordination within their extensive networks.

Beyond the preliminary issue of geography, commissions have to settle on their breadth of focus: should they devote their time and resources to a single issue related to Black male outcomes, or should they address the broad array of needs that boys and men face? Local commissions tend to have a more fluid history and shift their focus to particular issues from year to year. Organizations working in this vein include the Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative and the Booker T. Washington Success Academy in Tallahassee, Florida. State commissions may similarly hone in on a single issue. Two such operations include the Task Force on the Education of Maryland’s African-American Males and the Check Up! or Check Out! program, developed by the Michigan Department of Community Health.

However, most commissions, particularly those working at the state level or beyond, have a comprehensive plan that is typically organized around a maximum of five issues, such as education, health, employment, criminal justice and economic development. Distinct subcommittees, made up of experts from the respective fields, may be formed to handle their targeted issues.

THE CITY LEVEL

Among the set of older city-based commissions is the D.C. Commission on Black Men and Boys. Established in 2000 by Congresswoman Eleanor

Holmes Norton and Eddie Williams, former president of the Joint Center of Political and Economic Studies, the Commission’s purpose is to describe the needs and successes of Black males and identify the appropriate government, business and community services for them. Its activities thus far have included staging public hearings; organizing special events, including a Men’s Town Hall Meeting for a frank discussion on STDs and assisting men with obtaining employment, job training, résumé-writing and life skills.

Another commission with a long history is the Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males, established in 2001. This body, which operates out of the Community and Family Resources Department, has implemented or helped coordinate a number of long-standing programs over the past several years, including the 21st Century Scholars Program, which provides university scholarships to low-income students who have honored their academic pledges, and the Outstanding Black Male Leader of Tomorrow Award, which recognizes the contributions and achievements of young Black men in the Bloomington community. Beyond its programmatic efforts, the Commission has expanded its reach by sharing its ideas and networking with like-minded groups, including the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males and the African American National Council. In 2005, commission members delivered a workshop to attendees of the Seventh Annual African American Male National Conference on best practices for developing a local commission.

Because city-based commissions are more locally oriented than their larger counterparts, they generally employ a more targeted focus on a handful of issues, programs and events. Fewer full-time staff and public officials operate these kinds of commissions, a limitation that also affords opportunities for community figures and grassroots efforts to have a more visible presence.

THE STATE LEVEL

Statewide commissions face the burden of serving larger target populations than those of their local counterparts, but greater capacity and funding for state commissions also mean greater resources to tackle the many problems that Black male citizens face.

In a majority of cases, state commissions sponsor programs or establish partnerships rather than operating programs themselves. Their reputation rests in great part on the formation of public policy, often manifested in an annual report with a set of recommendations that detail the approaches that state agencies and other players can take to improve Black male outcomes. The recommendations are often broken down or categorized to spell out the state agency responsible for handling an action or the process by which the recommendation should be carried out (i.e., legislative, administrative, executive order).

In recent years, a few state commissions have taken novel approaches toward collecting their data. The Taskforce on the Condition of Black Men in Illinois supplemented its applied research and inventory of best practices with a commonsense strategy of soliciting the input of those most affected by the Task Force's work: the state's African-American men. The research that informed its 2009 report, "A Closer Look: An Examination of Black Men in Illinois," drew largely from observations taken during a series of statewide town hall hearings and listening sessions in six different locales. These sites, which are home to 70 percent of the 1 million African American males who reside in Illinois, invited over 500 participants to give their views on the "causal factors underlying disparities in the condition of African American men in Illinois."⁸ The more than 50 final recommendations submitted by the Task Force were derived in part from suggestions and remedies provided during those hearings and listening sessions.

The more useful reports of state commissions entail a clearly defined, actionable plan to implement their recommendations. One representative example, a December 2006 report by the Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African-American Males, illustrates the depth of analysis that a task force organized around a single theme can achieve. The report includes a total of 18 recommendations organized under the six goals of "Skilled, culturally competent teachers," "High standards and academic

opportunity," "In-school support," "Family and community support," "Prevention and intervention services" and "College preparation and financial assistance."⁹ The Task Force recognized that their recommendations are useless in a vacuum and that they "need policies attached to make them actionable and accountability to make them enforceable." Suggested next steps for the state included delegating funding for the state's education agencies to perform implementation evaluations in 2-3 years' time and establishing an independent group to, according to the report, "monitor our progress and to hold our feet to the fire if we fail to make it."

Another task force with a different focus but equally ambitious plan was the Michigan Task Force on Improving African-American Male Health, established in 1995. That same year the Task Force issued the report "Challenge of a Lifetime: Improving the Health of African American Males in Michigan." In

THE TASK FORCE RECOGNIZED THAT THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS ARE USELESS IN A VACUUM AND THAT THEY "NEED POLICIES ATTACHED TO MAKE THEM ACTIONABLE AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO MAKE THEM ENFORCEABLE."

the months that followed, Task Force members witnessed the rare occurrence of a recommendation taking flight: in response to the documented healthcare gap between African-American males and other groups, the MEDTEP center of the Henry Ford Health System created a program in 1997 called the African American Initiative for Male Health Improvement (AIMHI —

"aim high"), funded by the Michigan Department of Community Health.¹⁰ Today the Department of Community Health still supports a similar mission through its Check Up! or Check Out! initiative, which through a pilot program has targeted about 1,400 Michiganders.

Increasing Collaboration

STATEWIDE

As the work around Black males continues to establish its footing in the public sector, opportunities increase for commissions to collaborate and build a unified voice on government policy. For Black male commissions, collaboration is key to institutionalizing this emerging field and promoting the welfare of Black males as a national priority. It is

instructive at this point to take a closer look at the different types of networks linking together commissions and other organizations of the public sector.

One of the prominent features of the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males (ICSSBM), which has been active since 1993, is its network of local commissions. Since its inception, the state commission has established locally based commissions to facilitate action in Indiana's cities and towns. There are currently nine operating commissions, located in Anderson, Bloomington, Evansville, Fort Wayne, Gary, Indianapolis, Jeffersonville, Michigan City and Muncie.

"THE KEY IS GUIDING AND LEADING AND FORMING COLLABORATIONS. AND IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, WE HAVE TO SHOW PROGRESS."

— David Hummons, Chair of Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males

Local commissions work in consultation with ICSSBM's leaders. Although the state commission is actively engaged in developing its network, it fully recognizes the local commissions' independence. Each commission is responsible for prioritizing the areas in which it serves the Black males of its community, as well as determining the local government office that houses it.

The Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males has benefited from the state's framework, and it has experienced stability through the support of Bloomington's Community and Family Resources Department. One of its major achievements has been the release of "Race and Criminal Justice in Monroe County, Indiana: 2003 Report from the Monroe County Racial Justice Task Force," which discusses racial disparities in the criminal justice system. The report and the task force received recognition from the American Bar Association Justice Kennedy Commission as a "model project implemented by a community that made a commitment to the elimination of racial disparity in its criminal justice system."¹¹ The support that the Bloomington Commission receives has empowered its leaders to keep moving forward. Says commission chair, David Hummons, "The key is guiding and leading and forming collaborations. And in the final analysis, we have to show progress."

REGIONAL

In the quest to promote the well-being of Black males as an official priority, many advocates and practitioners look for national leadership from the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). The CBC's organizing efforts culminated in one particular regional organization, the New York/New Jersey State of the African American Male (SAAM) initiative. This initiative, while not a commission in the strictest sense, shares many

of the same goals and organizing principles. The national SAAM initiative was launched in 2003 under the auspices of the CBC Foundation and the executive leadership of Rep. Danny Davis (IL).

SAAM's central goal was to hold conferences in various regions to discuss the policy initiatives needed to improve the economic and social well-being of the country's Black men. A total of 11 conferences were held, and each meeting involved participants of the local CBC delegation. Following a conference held in June 2005 in New York, a congressional delegation kept momentum going by establishing this regional arm with the mission of "creating the infrastructure necessary to execute the administrative and programmatic tasks related to SAAM." Five conveners lead the New York/New Jersey initiative — four U.S. Congressional members from New York and one from New Jersey.

NATIONAL

The U.S. government has not established a federal commission on Black males, but in recent decades there have been four organizations coordinating in this field on a national scale: the Dellums Commission, formed by the Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; the National Task Force on African-American Males, established by the Kellogg Foundation; the Black Male Commission of the National Urban League and the African American Male National Council (AAMNC).

Of the four commissions listed above, only the **AAMNC** directly coordinates with Black male commissions working on the state level. The 11-member

council, an affiliate of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, seeks to act as a catalyst group to afford opportunities for commissions. It organizes a conference every other year with the goal of investigating issues and generating solutions focusing on Black males.

A total of eight national conferences have been held thus far, each organized around different themes. Past conferences have focused on health, education and criminal justice; and keynote speakers have included U.S. Representative Danny Davis, Dr. Julia Hare and Dr. Michael Eric Dyson. The objective of the meetings is to educate commission leaders and help develop appropriate legislative strategies for positive impact in the African-American community. Since 2001, the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males has served as the primary conference facilitator.

The AAMNC played a close supportive role in the development of the Florida Council for the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, activated

in 2007, serving as an advisor on its founding charter and legislative strategy. The AAMNC also schedules quarterly conference calls, during which the commission chairs and directors who serve on the board collaborate and share information. "The council is not a clearinghouse," says its chair, State Representative Vernon G. Smith. "It's just a way for us to network."

Currently, the following member commissions make up the council:

- Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males
- South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs
- California Commission on the Social Status of Black Males
- Governor's Commission on Reducing Racial Disparities in Wisconsin's Criminal Justice System
- Connecticut African-American Affairs Commission
- Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans
- Kansas African-American Affairs Commission
- Ohio Commission on African-American Males
- Washington Commission on African-American Affairs
- Florida Council for the Social Status of Black Men and Boys
- Pennsylvania Governor's Advisory Commission on African American Affairs

The Kellogg Foundation founded the **National Task Force on African-American Males** in 1992. Chaired by former Atlanta mayor and UN ambassador Andrew Young, the Task Force issued a report entitled "Repairing the Breach: Key Ways to Support Family Life, Reclaim Our Streets, and Rebuild Civil Society in America's Communities." A total of 61 detailed recommendations formed the foundation of the initiative that the Task Force called Project 2000.

Created in 2002 and chaired by Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums, the **Dellums Commission** was a research-focused panel designed to "analyze policies that affect the physical, emotional, and social health of young men of color and their communities." Its 25-member panel consisted of academics, practitioners and elected officials. In 2006, the Commission released 11 background papers covering topics such as the child welfare system, the juvenile justice system, media images and messages and the health needs of youth. Its final recommendations, detailed in its report "A Way Out: Creating Partners for Our Nation's Prosperity by Expanding Life Paths of Young Men of Color," were informed by those 11 reports.¹²

Launched in 2004, the **Black Male Commission** was established by the National Urban League (NUL) with the mission of "identifying issues, and finding potential solutions aimed at eradicating the policies and practices that impede the development, productivity and empowerment of the Black men in the areas of joblessness, education, health, incarceration and violence." Since 1973, the NUL has released an annual State of Black America report and in 2007, the report's focus was entitled "Portrait of the Black Male." The report, which featured a foreword by then-U.S. senator Barack Obama, offered a balanced perspective on the causes and solutions to the alarmingly low outcomes of Black males. It also included five Prescriptions for Change to "help empower African Americans, especially young Black males, to reach their full potential."¹³

A DISTINCTIVE PARTNERSHIP: OCAAM AND OSU

Dating back to 1989, the Ohio Commission on African-American Males (OCAAM) may have the longest track record among Black male commissions, but it still has persistently faced the familiar struggle of remaining viable. A few years ago, leaders recognized that adapting was critical to the Commission's survival. Then the right opportunity presented itself.

In 2008, the Commission initiated a partnership with the largest single-campus university in the U.S., Ohio State University. For OCAAM, the partnership means having the financial backing of a firmly established 501(c)(3) and access to top-level research. The arrangement serves Ohio State by providing another partner to reach more Black males, the population segment with the least access to higher education.

For Executive Director Samuel Gresham, an original member of the commission dating back to 1989, having Ohio State's backing means the school offers a brand and a level of credibility that makes organizational development a much less daunting undertaking. "When we talk to a foundation like Schott, they have our trust," says Gresham.

OSU provides two research partners for OCAAM, the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity and the Todd A. Bell Resource Center on the African American Male. Each research arm offers its own resources for OCAAM to utilize. The Kirwan Institute, a research-focused organization, has thus far coordinated with OCAAM on two projects: a "State of Black Ohio" public policy document and a broad-based data collection project that will encompass 12 Ohio communities to get the most recent and far-reaching data on the state's Black male population. "We use the Kirwan Institute as a research arm. It gives us legitimacy, and we don't have to replicate our research efforts," Gresham says.

The Bell Resource Center conducts its own research. Additionally, it provides support for Black male university students through its partnerships with school districts, agencies and other universities. The center and the Commission work together to improve matriculation rates and decrease drop-out rates in Ohio's colleges. "Given the opportunity for collaborations with the Bell Center and the Kirwan Institute," says Gresham, "I don't know of any other college in the country with this particular degree of synergy."

Despite the endless possibilities that OCAAM imagines in its new location, Gresham has experienced challenges with the arrangement. One major obstacle is offering attractive incentives for professors to contribute their research and writing. "A commission-based project like ours rarely aligns with the priorities of a tenure track. It's hard to make professors do anything," he says. Also, although academic writing can offer high-level analysis, it doesn't always translate into the policy material that OCAAM seeks for its grassroots lobbying efforts.

Gresham is certain, however, that having its base at the largest single-campus university is a great advantage. Hundreds of OSU students embrace the vision of OCAAM and its partners, and they step up to participate. "They see it as adventure," he says.

Other commissions have recognized the advantages of the university-commission model, including those yet to be formed. Bilal Qayyum, a community leader pushing for the rebirth of the Philadelphia Commission on African American Males, believes there are vast research opportunities in the field at Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania, and other local schools. The Commission on the Status of Black Males in Bloomington has also solicited research from its local institution, Indiana University, to ground its reports in appropriate data.

DEALING WITH THE CHALLENGES: LESSONS LEARNED FROM BLACK MALE COMMISSIONS

The series of interviews that helped inform the writing of this report exposed a number of challenges that leaders of commissions face in carrying out their work. One of the most commonly articulated obstacles was ensuring that commissions were sustainable and fully funded.

Another challenge, and one that has obvious connections to sustainability, is the political opposition and neglect that this domain of the public sector faces. Ohio Commission Chair Samuel Gresham reports that “the subject of Black men and boys is not an intellectual argument, it’s a political power game.” A commission without a vocal and powerful constituency often struggles to achieve its goals.

Other challenges include the pressure commissions bear to keep the long view and not operate in “crisis mode”; a failure to achieve collaboration within and among commissions and the age-old dilemma of unheeded recommendations due to a lack of public or political will. The creation of coalitions is meant to be a means to an end. Thus, the question that remains is whether and how the various forms of commissions and task forces can affect tangible and measurable change in the life outcomes of Black men in their respective communities.

We asked three national leaders and experts in public policy and race and gender to put forward their thoughts and recommendations concerning how (or whether) these commissions can be tools that leverage change for Black males. Leon Andrews, Jr., Executive Director of the Institute of Youth, Education, and Families at the National League of Cities; Loren Harris, Principal of Thinking Man Consulting; and Renata Cobbs Fletcher, Vice President for Youth Connections and Reentry at Public/Private Ventures each provided their perspectives on how Black male commissions can be catalysts to advancing the agenda of increased outcomes of Black men and boys.

The insights from each expert expanded on issues articulated in the report as well as those that were neglected or underappreciated. All three contributors expressed faith in the potential of commissions to address the fundamental concerns about Black males, but they recognized the real challenges that these entities face and the essential qualities they must possess to be effective agents of change.

One commonly voiced challenge — and perhaps the greatest facing commissions — is remaining

sustainable. Loren Harris recognized that the short life cycle that many commissions and task forces suffered was a familiar dilemma among all organizations focusing on Black males, a reality that offers mutual learning opportunities for both non-profits and commissions. “To realize staying power, Black male commissions would be wise to learn from the experiences of organizations, programs and other commissions that have managed to sustain their efforts,” he writes.

Harris identified two other keys to longevity: strong public relations and philanthropic partnerships. “Black male commissions could more effectively develop media ties, employ media-based strategies to inform the public of their efforts and engage professionals from the media community as commission members,” he said. Regarding the advantages of engaging individual philanthropists, Harris envisions more than just cash funding but also the opportunity to interface with “a network of professionals capable of providing intellectual support, in-kind resources and greater exposure for [a commission’s] work.”

Leon Andrews, Jr., believes commissions can be afforded more longevity if they act as fiscal sponsors. As a prime example of an effective commission entrusted with this role, he cites the San Jose Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF), a highly collaborative network organized to prevent, intervene and suppress gangs. The MGPTF has direct oversight of the Bringing Everyone’s Strength Together (B.E.S.T.) funding program, which issues grant monies ranging from \$5,000 to \$225,000 to 25 or more community organizations. With specialized knowledge and proven expertise, a Black male commission is positioned to be an ideal fiscal sponsor. (See Appendix A for Andrews’ and Cobbs Fletcher’s full responses.)

Much attention has been given to the analytic strengths of commissions. Renata Cobbs Fletcher sees many functions that commissions can perform in this capacity. She writes:

Commissions can enhance their contributions and advance the field by conducting exhaustive federal, state and local policy and structural analysis that links to a parallel examination of existing, high-quality, evidence-based or promising programmatic strategies. Commissions could then offer strong recommendations about real steps to eliminating policy barriers, redirecting or reallocating public funding streams, testing new program and partnership innovations and supporting the replication of solid programs.

These activities are vital to the field and also align with the work of an organization like Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), a national leader in identifying and designing innovative programs. Cobbs Fletcher sees mutual benefits between her organization and commissions. Analysis conducted by commissions could inform P/PV’s Ready2Thrive, a national resource center and practitioners’ network focused on improving social outcomes for marginalized youth and young men of color. And by tapping into the practitioners’ network, which operates through a web-based platform, commissions could access a database of “best practices and programmatic innovations in areas including but not limited to education, fatherhood, workforce development, violence reduction, prisoner reentry, criminal and juvenile justice, sexual and reproductive health, civic engagement and mentoring.”

One facet of this report that Andrews felt deserved more attention is the public role mayors can play in this arena (by extension, we can apply the same thinking to governors and the commissions they oversee). In the case of San Jose, executive leadership was a key asset to steering the MGPTF in the right direction. The challenge for every mayor in Andrews’ view is framing issues that are specific to

Black males but still relevant to the general constituency. He writes:

The bottom line is aligning issues with priorities of the mayor and city without losing the primary purpose of the urgency for issues that might not currently be priorities within the city. Not an easy balance but finding that balance has been an effective strategy for many cities that make children and youth priorities and one I hope will also make Black males more of a priority.

Another issue that experts felt deserved much more consideration was the commission approach to policy reform. Commissions can not improve life outcomes without pushing for changes to policies that negatively impact Black males. Cobbs Fletcher identifies several such policies, including the eligibility requirements for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other government benefits that exclude men; licensing and employment application barriers for ex-offenders and the elimination of the Pell Grant Federal law, which restricts educational access to prison inmates seeking college funding. “These are just a few of many examples of the kinds of barriers that must be actively addressed by a viable and forward-moving commission,” Cobbs Fletcher argues. Harris echoes her argument by recommending for commissions a reform agenda devoted to improved public education, expanded economic opportunities and livable wages — all reforms, he points out, that benefit the general populace as well as Black males.

A final question that was raised is concerned with the commission mandate. How long should a commission plan to exist? Should it ever expire? Harris recognizes this is one issue that does not need to be immediately resolved in light of the immense, comprehensive tasks that lie before Black male commissions. “Given the long-term commitment needed to address the concerns tackled by Black male commissions,” he writes, “it also seems reasonable that these bodies would exist in some form for as long as the challenges are present.”

“COMMISSIONS COULD THEN OFFER STRONG RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT REAL STEPS TO ELIMINATING POLICY BARRIERS, REDIRECTING OR REALLOCATING PUBLIC FUNDING STREAMS, TESTING NEW PROGRAM AND PARTNERSHIP INNOVATIONS AND SUPPORTING THE REPLICATION OF SOLID PROGRAMS.”

CONCLUSION

The State of Black Male Commissions attempts to explore the history and emergence of these commissions; examine the varied structures and specific examples and profiles of commissions targeting Black male outcomes and incorporate some ideas and analysis offered by national thinkers and practitioners in public policies impacting Black communities. The authors of this survey do not assert a specific position on ways to leverage the impact of Black male commissions or best practices for mobilizing these entities to influence local and state level policy change. Rather, the authors contend that without a significantly strengthened policy innovation and reform infrastructure, we will see only marginal improvement in the life outcomes for Black males. Thus, it is our hope that the information, ideas and analyses presented in this survey inform collective and institutional strategies to equip entities with sufficient perspective and power to effectively move the policy needle on the local, state and federal level. Such endeavors can ultimately effect tangible life opportunities for Black males.

APPENDIX A: FIELD RESPONSES

RENATA COBBS FLETCHER Public/Private Ventures

It is clear that these diverse commissions have laid important groundwork upon which we now stand in our collective work to improve social and health outcomes for marginalized African-American males.

In part, the diverse objectives of each commission highlighted in the paper speak to the myriad of intersecting issues that must be addressed structurally, culturally, programmatically and through policy changes: education, fatherhood, workforce development, violence reduction, prisoner reentry, criminal and juvenile justice, sexual and reproductive health, and so on. Each commission's approach and focus is of equal importance to the overall equation.

Now, however, I believe we must advance our work through action-based objectives. Through the work of these commissions and other contributors, a strong body of research exists that delivers the staggering statistics we are all working to change, as well as the many factors involved in creating these statistics. In many ways, the argument has been made and won. Now, the steps for changing these statistics and a solid, implementable road map for how to get there needs to be pursued. Moving forward, commissions must be comprised of city and state governmental offices and policymakers, corrections departments, child welfare and child support enforcement agencies, social service practitioners, employers, faith-based and community-based organizations, funders and others. Their work must certainly be informed by all of these constituencies but also should be shaped by their own participation and perspectives.

We know from our experience and research that much of what is currently being offered as solutions to improving outcomes for our most marginalized population — Black males — is either not being implemented on a scale that achieves significant impact or is not effective. Why not? Are they reaching the intended targeted young men? What programs

and approaches are promising and how can we replicate them? Commissions can contribute greatly to local, state and federal efforts by driving the creation of transparent, accountable and common data systems for state and local agencies and departments, community programs and others to enter information so that we might better understand what is and is not working, and why. Funding recommendations could be made on the basis of analysis of this data conducted by commissions.

Additionally, commissions should practically examine which existing policies are hindering efforts to reduce unemployment rates, support training and education opportunities, provide financial support, etc. For example, what work supports can be leveraged by Black males earning low wages? Without changes to eligibility requirements for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other benefits, supports can be minimal. Because certain government benefits (e.g., Medicaid, the EITC, etc.) are intended to assist women with children, many females can access certain benefits from which men are excluded. The creation of similar programs and/or expansion of existing programs to include more men would be highly advantageous in promoting sustainable changes.

What licensing and employment application barriers must be stripped away for those returning to their communities with criminal backgrounds? For Black males returning from prison and jail, many jobs are off limits due to regulatory barriers for a number of vocational licenses, and because of questions about criminal backgrounds that are asked on most employment applications. And, the elimination of the Pell Grant Federal law currently bars inmates from receiving Pell Grants that could open the door to a college education. Students with drug convictions are, in some cases, also barred from financial support for higher education. Unfortunately, many states have followed the federal government's lead by gutting their own prison education programs, even though research shows that former prisoners who earn college degrees are more likely to find jobs and avoid re-incarceration.¹⁴

These are just a few of many examples of the kinds of barriers that must be actively addressed by a viable and forward-moving commission.

Commissions can enhance their contributions and advance the field by conducting exhaustive federal, state and local policy and structural analysis that links to a parallel examination of existing, high-quality, evidence-based or promising programmatic strategies. Commissions could then offer strong recommendations about real steps to eliminating policy barriers, redirecting or reallocating public funding streams, testing new program and partnership innovations and supporting the replication of solid programs.

This information could be utilized as action tools for invested stakeholders to move forward in their respective fields and locations. This type of work by commissions could also serve as excellent resources for advancing the current males of color work being conducted by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), a national leader in creating and strengthening programs that improve lives in low-income communities. P/PV has created Ready2Thrive, a national resource center and practitioners' network focused on improving social outcomes for marginalized youth and young men of color. The overall goals of the project are three-fold:

- To improve the effectiveness of future programs and policies geared toward young males of color;
- To take seriously the critical role that culture and related perspectives about masculinity, identity, race and racism play in informing perceptions and realities about work, incarceration, sexual practices, education, relationships and parenting; and,
- To design and test program innovations on-the-ground that will contribute to the programmatic and policy learnings in related fields.

The web-based **Ready2Thrive** practitioners' network will disseminate in broad scale the promising practices and approaches to working with marginalized males of color, and will help practitioners reach across silos and build transparent and comprehensive best practices and programmatic innovations in areas including but not limited to education, fatherhood, workforce development, violence

reduction, prisoner reentry, criminal and juvenile justice, sexual and reproductive health, civic engagement and mentoring.

Ready2Thrive, funded by the Ford Foundation, will create a national resource for stakeholders that fosters the use of evidenced-based and promising practice, peer exchange, skills acquisition and policy recommendations, maximizing the expertise levels of practitioners and moving this emerging field into a place of greater national prominence and priority. The website will be launched in early 2010. Clearly, the work I propose be undertaken by commissions moving forward could greatly enhance these efforts. ■

LEON ANDREWS, JR. National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

More cities are successfully using the "fifth arm of government" to effect tangible and measurable change in the lives of children, youth and families. This report highlights education, employment, criminal justice, health and family/fatherhood as consistent focus areas identified by Black male commissions across the country and also raises challenging questions about sustainability for local Black commissions. The National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) brings an experience and capacity working on similar focus areas that also include issues of sustainability.

The report highlights that Black male commissions have been effective at conducting analysis on programs and services, with some examples that have led to program development. Conducting analysis, identifying needs and assets and making recommendations are more traditional roles of local commissions. However, while the report describes more expansive roles for commissions it has not shown how Black male commissions can be structured in these roles including designations to assume a more "supportive role as a fiscal sponsor." In that light, this analysis offers important takeaways for further consideration about what role mayors can play, how Black male commissions can be a part of a cross-systems collaboration strategy, whether Black male commissions should remain separate from

other related commissions and what authority or oversight would be appropriate for a Black male commission. The San Jose Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF) represents a best practice of a local commission for considering some of these expanded takeaways for Black male commissions.

In San Jose, CA, MGPTF is a highly collaborative network organized to prevent, intervene and suppress gangs. It was established by then-Mayor Susan Hammer in 1991. The Task Force provides a coordinated inter-agency response to gang-related incidents that result in serious injury or death. MGPTF is comprised of city, county, state, community-based organizations, police, faith community, schools, parent groups and other community stakeholders. To ensure support and coordination at the highest levels of government and throughout the community, as well as effectiveness in operations, the Task Force operates through two components — a Policy Team and a Technical Team. One of the Task Force's key strategic tools is the Bringing Everyone's Strength Together (B.E.S.T.) funding program. The city provides B.E.S.T. with general fund monies to enable yearly grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$225,000 awarded to 25 or more community organizations, each of which offers specific programs.

The YEF Institute is at the forefront of building capacity of municipal leaders to strengthen families and improve outcomes for children and youth. With focus areas (i.e., education, employment, criminal justice, health, family/fatherhood) cross-walking into the work at the Institute, the report shows that there are a number of opportunities to work and learn from other organizations contributing to Black male commissions. The San Jose model is one of many promising examples that can be used to help enhance local Black male commissions and to address issues of sustainability.

The San Jose example raises important issues about whether a mayor can play a similar leadership role on a Black male commission. Black male commissions have been successful at bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, but is it the right mix? The San Jose model describes a collaboration of key decision-makers from the different sectors, systems and levels — not just individuals with strong content expertise. San Jose's MGPTF was

given direct oversight to fund gang prevention programs, a structural arrangement that was absent in the local Black male commission examples examined in the report. Having a more supportive role as a fiscal sponsor would expand the influence of Black male commissions, and MGPTF and other local commission examples can serve as helpful models.

Some final thoughts speak to a shared concern about the possibility of Black male commissions being marginalized. It is a similar concern confronted at the Institute for many children and youth issues and how they get prioritized in local government. Mayors are constantly juggling competing priorities with many of their essential roles defined by infrastructure, public services, public safety, economic development and sometimes education. The bottom line is aligning issues with priorities of the mayor and city without losing the primary purpose of the urgency for issues that might not currently be priorities within the city. Not an easy balance but finding that balance has been an effective strategy for many cities that make children and youth priorities and one I hope will also make Black males more of a priority.

With a few examples of mayoral leadership (i.e., Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett), further efforts would be helpful in understanding how mayors balance the delicate political issues that arise in cities, particularly where mayors might have a more difficult time making the case for why focusing on Black males would take precedent over other racially vulnerable populations in their city. The National League of Cities would be very interested in learning more from cities across the country that have done it already and working with other organizations to enhance and sustain efforts to improve the life outcomes for Black males. ■

APPENDIX B: INTERNET RESOURCES ON BLACK MALE COMMISSIONS

Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys
<http://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/3300.htm>

Indianapolis Commission on African-American Males
www.icaam.org

Commission on the Status of Black Males in Bloomington
http://bloomington.in.gov/sections/viewSection.php?section_id=151

Michigan City Commission on the Social Status of African American Males — Video Archive of Meetings
<http://www.alco.org/index.php/alco-tv/38-michigan-city/103-michigan-city-commission-on-the-social-status-of-african-american-males>

Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys — Home Page
<http://www.cssbmb.com>

Dellums Commission
<http://www.jointcenter.org/hpi/pages/dellums-commission>

Schott Foundation for Public Education
<http://www.schottfoundation.org/drupal/publications-reports>

National Urban League — The State of Black America
<http://www.nul.org/thestateofblackamerica.html>

Maryland Taskforce on the Education of African-American Males
http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/28/0e/00.pdf

APPENDIX C: FURTHER READING

Anderson, E., ed. 2008. *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Carter, P. 2005. *Keepin' It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Casey Family Programs. 2005. *Breakthrough Series Collaborative: Reducing Disproportionality and Disparate Outcomes for Children and Families of Color in the Child Welfare System*.

Hrabowski, F. A., K. I. Maton, and G. L. Greif. 1998. *Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African-American Males*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. 2006. *A Way Out: Creating Partners for Our Nation's Prosperity by Expanding Life Paths of Young Men of Color*.

Littles, M., Bowers, R., & Gilmer, M. 2007. *Why We Can't Wait — A Case for Philanthropic Action: Opportunities for Improving Life Outcomes of African American Males*. New York, NY: The Ford Foundation.

———. 2008. *Momentum: Sustaining Efforts to Improve Life Outcomes Among African-American Males*.

Merida, K. 2007. *Being a Black Man: At the Corner of Progress and Peril*. New York: Public Affairs.

Mincy, R. 2006. *Black Males Left Behind*. Urban Institute Press.

National Task Force on African-American Men and Boys, A. Young, and B. W. Austin. 1996. *Repairing the Breach: Key Ways to Support Family Life, Reclaim our Streets, and Rebuild Civil Society in America's Communities*. Dillon, CO.: Alpine Guild.

National Urban League. *The State of Black America 2007: Profile of the Black Male*. Silver Spring, MD: Beckham Publications Group.

The Schott Foundation for Public Education. 2005. *Public Education and Black Male Students: The State Report Card*, 2nd ed.

Sen, R. 2006. *A Positive Future for Black Boys: Building the Movement*. Cambridge, MA: The Schott Foundation for Public Education.

Toldson, I. *Breaking Barriers: Plotting the Path to Academic Success for School-Age African-American Males*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.

Trammel, M., Newhart, D., Willis, V., & Johnson, A. 2008. *African American Male Initiative Report*. Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

United States Commission on Civil Rights. 2000. *The Crisis of the Young African-American Males in the Inner Cities: A Consultation of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, April 15-16, 1999*, Washington, D.C.

APPENDIX D: IDENTIFIED SITES OF BLACK MALE COMMISSIONS, BY CITY AND STATE

NOTES

CITIES

South

Atlanta, GA
Baton Rouge, LA
Birmingham, AL
Charlotte, NC
Columbia, SC
Daytona Beach, FL
Durham, NC
El Dorado, AR
Jackson, MS
Jacksonville, FL
Knoxville, TN
Little Rock, AR
Louisville, KY
Macon, GA
Memphis, TN
Miami, FL
Moss Point, MS
New Orleans, LA

Norfolk, VA
Richmond, VA
Savannah, GA
Selma, AL
Tallahassee, FL

Northeast

Baltimore, MD
Buffalo, NY
Hartford, CT
Newark, NJ
New Haven, CT
Paterson, NJ
Philadelphia, PA
Pittsburgh, PA
Rochester, NY

Midwest

Chicago, IL

Cincinnati, OH
Cleveland, OH
Detroit, MI
Kansas, City, MO
Lansing, MI
Milwaukee, WI
Minneapolis, MN

Southwest

Beaumont, TX
Phoenix, AZ

West

Denver, CO
Oakland, CA
Portland, OR
Richmond, CA
Seattle, WA

STATES (including Washington, D.C.)

South

Alabama
Arkansas
Florida
Georgia
Kentucky
Louisiana
Mississippi
North Carolina
South Carolina
Tennessee
Virginia

Northeast

Connecticut
Maryland
New Jersey
New York
Pennsylvania
Washington, D.C.

Midwest

Illinois
Indiana
Michigan
Minnesota

Missouri
Ohio
Wisconsin

Southwest

Arizona
Texas

West

California
Colorado
Oregon
Washington

- ¹ Campbell, Colton C. 2002. Discharging Congress: Government by Commission. Westport, Conn. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- ² Governor's Commission on Socially Disadvantaged Black Males, Ohio Office of Black Affairs. 1990. Ohio's African-American Males: A Call to Action.
- ³ Trammel, Ming. Newhart, D., Willis, V., & Johnson, A. 2008. African American Male Initiative Report. Battle Creek, Michigan: W.K. Kellogg Foundation.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Annual Report, 2008. Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys. [http://myfloridalegal.com/webfiles.nsf/WF/JFAO-7N5A/\\$file/2008report.pdf](http://myfloridalegal.com/webfiles.nsf/WF/JFAO-7N5A/$file/2008report.pdf).
- ⁶ Final Report, 2009. "A Closer Look: An Examination of African American Men in Illinois," Illinois Taskforce on the Condition of African American Men in Illinois.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Report, 2008. Task Force on the Education of Maryland's African-American Males. Maryland State Department of Education.
- ¹⁰ "African American Initiative for Male Health Improvement (AIMHI)." Henry Ford Health System. <http://www.henryford.com/body.cfm?id=39785>.
- ¹¹ Schmitt, Robert. "Panel to Discuss Concerns Regarding Race." Indiana Daily Student. Sept. 27, 2004.
- ¹² Dellums Commission web page. <http://www.jointcenter.org/hpi/pages/dellums-commission>.
- ¹³ National Urban League. The State of Black America 2007: Profile of the Black Male. Silver Spring, MD: Beckham Publications Group.
- ¹⁴ The New York Times, "Closing the Revolving Door" Editorial, January 27, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/25/opinion/25thu3.html>.

THE STATE OF BLACK MALE COMMISSIONS: A SURVEY

WRITTEN AND EDITED BY FRONTLINE SOLUTIONS

PUBLISHED BY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUNDATION