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BUILDING A  
**BELOVED COMMUNITY**

STRENGTHENING THE FIELD OF BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT

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MAY 2014

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FOREWORD BY LUCY BERNHOLZ | AFTERWORD BY GEOFFREY CANADA



**BMA**funders.org

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**4** FOREWORD

---

**6** EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

**8** INTRODUCTION

---

**12** PART I: MAPPING THE FIELD

**14** PHILANTHROPY

**20** NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

**24** RESEARCH

**28** GOVERNMENT

**32** CORPORATE, FAITH, AND OTHER SECTORS

---

**36** PART II: STRENGTHENING THE FIELD

**38** CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

**42** LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL PLATFORMS

**46** INCREASE THE EVIDENCE BASE

**50** INVEST IN HOLISTIC, PREVENTATIVE, AND SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS

**54** INVEST IN ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

**58** BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS

**62** RETHINK PHILANTHROPY

**64** BUILD LEADERSHIP AT THE GRASSTOPS AND THE GRASSROOTS

---

**66** CONCLUSION: WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

---

**69** AFTERWORD

---

**71** CREDITS & ENDNOTES

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# FOREWORD



What does it take to help an entire population to achieve? What does it take to make that possible while also counteracting systemic

obstacles, built over generations, that seek to hold back that same population? *Building a Beloved Community: Strengthening the Field of Black Male Achievement* is more than your typical philanthropic research analysis. It is more than a call to action; it represents more than analysis and encouragement, theories of change and multidisciplinary approaches. It represents the full potential and hope of philanthropy and civil society. It represents what Martin Luther King, Jr. called The Beloved Community—a global vision in which injustice will not be tolerated because we as a people will not allow it.

The report inspires us to think about the positive opportunities created by reframing norms and shaping new conversations. It calls for understanding success and spreading it, for leveraging powerful voices (such as that of the President of the United States), for informing our work with data and looking for intersections across sectors. All of that is right and exciting.

But this report does more. It presents philanthropy with a radical challenge simply by putting black male achievement at the center of the discussion. Though there have been generations of efforts focused on African-American men and boys, and generations of those efforts have been asset-based, the general philanthropic community does not usually approach this work in this way. When the center of the frame is success it sheds new light on the relationships, dynamics, and edges of the work that surrounds this goal.

For those in philanthropy and communities who dedicate their talents and resources to black male achievement, this report offers a networked energy and new choices. By highlighting strategic options that extend beyond asset-based approaches to shifting whole narratives, the report encourages a big vision. By recognizing the committed nature of thousands of community groups and the episodic interventions from institutional funders, the report reveals one way this work is similar to many other social change efforts. By noting that black male achievement is an agenda item for mayors, governors, presidents, corporate CEOs, and major living donors, the report hints at the extraordinary opportunity of this moment—to go beyond episodic attention to sustained effort, beyond lip service to real change, beyond punctuated action to sustained focus.

The report also holds forth a real opportunity for the majority of philanthropists and civic actors for whom black male achievement is not at the center of their frame. My hope is that we will all take the time to consider our actions in light of this centrality. How does this frame influence your work? How do you fit into a picture that draws on high-achieving black men as an expectation in our society, as the norm in our communities, as an assumption informing your own professional strategies?

On a matrix of race and gender, I, as a white woman, would be placed in a box other than black men. At each stage in this research when the authors and funders reached out to me I asked myself, and them, why me? I am an ally in this work, so what are my responsibilities in that role? What I contribute to this report is a question I have given a great deal of consideration. I know that I can help more

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black men achieve, that I can help change and defeat some of the barriers we've created to that success, and that I have thoughts to add and insights to consider when developing philanthropic strategies. Being an ally is more than just supporting the work of others. It involves extending my self and my networks so that they take on a new shape.

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“ The report hints at the extraordinary opportunity of this moment—to go beyond episodic attention to sustained effort, beyond lip service to real change, beyond punctuated action to sustained focus. ”

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Let's be honest—that's a big task. Why might you do this? What if your success depended on it? The words of the ancient sage Hillel come to mind: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?” These words were not informed by modern-day data analysis, policy reflection, or financial systems mapping. But they still hold true—our success as a society is relational.

This report requires us to reconsider all of our work. Reading it is not just an exercise in learning about the strategies of building sustained networks of funders and organizations committed to black men. It requires me to consider the direct relationship between my own work and the success of these strategies. How do I contribute to or stand in the way of these strategies? How do my pursuits of social change—be they environmental action, health access, thriving families, or community development—accelerate the goals for black men or throw up obstacles to them? And how do

my visions of a fair and just society depend on the widespread achievement and participation of black men?

These are not small questions. They have no one-off answers; they require constant attention. And they are by no means limited to a small group of identified funders or community groups. For more black men to achieve and for those achievements to be recognized as the norm that they should be, we need adjacent allies as well as movement leaders. We need positive opportunities and narratives from all sectors, all domains, and all walks of life. We need to make sure we are not omitting opportunities or making accomplishments invisible.

Doing so requires a steady focus on the goal, the people, and the institutions dedicated specifically to black men. We must also be willing to find and to be allies. Over time, if we are successful, we will find those allies among an ever-expanding network of unexpected, untraditional, and emergent partners.

This report offers a challenge that many have already accepted. For those readers to whom the challenge is new, or seemingly ancillary, I would encourage you to look for ways these goals and strategies intersect with your own. What I can offer, through the words of others, is a reminder of the “why” for making connections between our own frames and the one offered by this report. It comes from the vision of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Beloved Community, and it comes from a medieval sage, Hillel, who noted for posterity the simple and powerful connections that bind us—and our pursuits—to the other.

**Lucy Bernholz**

Visiting Scholar, Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society

Visiting Scholar, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While nearly every indicator of economic, social, and physical well-being finds black males at the bottom, in the words of Lani Guinier, the status of black males is simply the miner's canary: "Their distress is the first sign of danger that threatens us all...These problems are symptoms warning us that we are all at risk." Board members of Open Society Foundations, including Guinier and Geoffrey Canada, helped the Foundation usher in the Campaign for Black Male Achievement, an initiative to promote positive life outcomes for black males and unlock their full talent and potential.

Philanthropic initiatives supporting black men and boys have a rich history, spanning more than two decades, but the genesis of the Campaign for Black Male Achievement in 2008 signaled a new wave of engagement. In the ensuing years, George Soros and Michael Bloomberg's \$60 million investment in New York City's Young Men's Initiative, the launch of the Institute for Black Male Achievement, and, most recently, the announcement of My Brother's Keeper, a White House initiative for young men of color, point to an emerging and vibrant field. Indeed, the confluence of increasingly visible inequities with energized local and national leadership has led many to deem this a historic moment, where possibilities of change—indeed, transformation—exist like never before.

Building on the groundbreaking report *Where Do We Go From Here? Philanthropic Support for Black Men and Boys*, this companion piece, *Building a Beloved Community: Strengthening the Field of Black Male Achievement*, explores the diverse, multidisciplinary, and cross-sector work to advance black male achievement. Based on interviews with 50 philanthropic, nonprofit,

government, academic, and business leaders, the report also offers recommendations for what it will take to strengthen the field moving forward.

**Part I** presents a lay of the land, taking stock of the major sectors engaged in black male achievement and examining opportunities for other constituencies to become more involved. Though we present these sectors in silos for the sake of clarity, the reality is that in many cases, they are working in concert with one another, and it is at these intersections that the potential of the field lies. Key findings include:

- *Philanthropy.* Foundation commitments have grown steadily in recent years. In 2011, foundations awarded more than \$40 million in grants, up from \$29 million in the previous year. Between 2008 and 2011, 191 unique foundations made nearly 900 grants to more than 400 organizations.
- *Nonprofit Organizations.* Survey data from the Institute for Black Male Achievement show that nonprofits with programs focused on black men and boys are largely engaged in direct service activities (62 percent). Most are small, grassroots entities with budgets under \$1 million (65 percent). The vast majority (80 percent) work locally, with 32 percent working at the state level and 34 percent working nationally.
- *Research.* There is no shortage of research on black men and boys. However, scholars engaged in the field are increasingly debunking deficit-oriented representations of black males and contributing to the academic literature by studying factors that promote success.

- *Government.* Significant local, state, and federal initiatives are underway with leadership by elected officials. Among the most prominent are Cities United, focused on local municipalities, and My Brother's Keeper, a national initiative led by the Obama administration. These initiatives identify comprehensive policies in need of change, emphasize the strategic use of data, and include cross-sector partnerships.
- *Corporate, Faith, and Other Sectors.* Interviewees identified the corporate and faith sectors as critical to engage. In addition, a range of other constituencies can be more deeply involved, including celebrities, national civil rights organizations, and professional associations.

**Part II** lifts up recurring themes from our interviews about what is needed to strengthen the field moving forward. In each of these areas, we highlight leading efforts, while noting opportunities to go deeper to achieve desired outcomes. We also identify tangible resources that can help funders, practitioners, and other stakeholders advance their work. Priorities for sustaining and strengthening the field include:

- *Changing the narrative* from one that depicts black males as liabilities or threats to society to one that acknowledges their numerous assets and contributions;
- *Leveraging social media and digital platforms* in creative and powerful ways for grassroots organizing, collaboration, and communication;
- *Increasing the evidence base* by being explicit about goals, disaggregating data, and evaluating interventions;
- *Investing in holistic, preventative, and systemic solutions* that change structures limiting opportunities not only for black males but also for their families and communities;

- *Investing in organizational capacity* and resourcing leaders so that their work can continue over the long haul;
- *Building partnerships and networks* to ensure that activities are coordinated across sectors, issues, and geographic areas and that resources are optimally leveraged;
- *Rethinking philanthropy* and addressing the need for longer funding commitments and permanent endowed funds for black male achievement, as well as considering alternative models of support; and
- *Building leadership at the grassroots and the grassstops*, recognizing that courageous advocates are needed all along the pipeline to advance the field.

Reflecting on the work to date, there are many successes to celebrate. There is also much more to be done. We hope this report provides a snapshot of the breadth and depth of engagement in the field of black male achievement in this pivotal moment, contributes to ongoing efforts to boost strategic collaboration, and invites individuals and organizations from every sector and area of the country to see the role they can play in improving the life outcomes of black men and boys.

To download the report and access podcasts, resources, and bonus content, visit:

**BMA**funders.org

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## INTRODUCTION

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“ YOU KNOW, WHEN TRAYVON MARTIN WAS FIRST SHOT I SAID THAT THIS COULD HAVE BEEN MY SON. ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING THAT IS TRAYVON MARTIN COULD HAVE BEEN ME 35 YEARS AGO....

THERE ARE VERY FEW AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN IN THIS COUNTRY WHO HAVEN'T HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING FOLLOWED WHEN THEY WERE SHOPPING IN A DEPARTMENT STORE. THAT INCLUDES ME. THERE ARE VERY FEW AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN WHO HAVEN'T HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF WALKING ACROSS THE STREET AND HEARING THE LOCKS CLICK ON THE DOORS OF CARS...THERE ARE VERY FEW AFRICAN-AMERICANS WHO HAVEN'T HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF GETTING ON AN ELEVATOR AND A WOMAN CLUTCHING HER PURSE NERVOUSLY AND HOLDING HER BREATH UNTIL SHE HAD A CHANCE TO GET OFF. THAT HAPPENS OFTEN...

WE NEED TO SPEND SOME TIME IN THINKING ABOUT HOW DO WE BOLSTER AND REINFORCE OUR AFRICAN-AMERICAN BOYS...IS THERE MORE THAT WE CAN DO TO GIVE THEM THE SENSE THAT THEIR COUNTRY CARES ABOUT THEM AND VALUES THEM AND IS WILLING TO INVEST IN THEM? ”

**BARACK OBAMA**

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 19, 2013

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Photo: Lance Cpl. Michael J. Ayotte, USMC

**T**he preceding remarks could have been made by almost any black man in America. That they were made by the President of the United States, one of the most powerful men in the world, vividly underscores the reality of being black and male in America.

The shooting of Trayvon Martin and the President's subsequent reflections brought renewed attention to what Shawn Dove of Open Society Foundations calls "America's unfinished business." Dove and others in philanthropy as well as the nonprofit sector have long been answering Obama's call to action, as they work to improve life outcomes for black men and boys. Their premise is that while nearly every indicator of economic, social, and physical well-being finds black males at the bottom, the status of black males is simply the miner's canary: "Their distress is the first sign of danger that threatens us all...These problems are symptoms warning us that we are all at risk."<sup>1</sup>


Emmett Carson, president of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, elaborates more fully on this concept and explains why a focus on supporting black men and boys is not just a "black issue," but one that is in the national interest: "If you want America to remain great, if you want America to remain globally competitive, if you want an America which continues to innovate and have exciting job opportunities so the next generation will be better off than the last, if that's the America you want, we can no longer afford for people of color in general, black men and boys in particular, to have the life outcomes that they do."

Rhetoric aside, ultimately it will take political will, financial commitments, and boots on the ground to increase opportunities for black men and boys and ensure that they are full and active participants in a democratic society. Indeed, recent developments—including the high-profile commitments by George Soros and Michael Bloomberg, the launch of the Institute for Black Male Achievement, and My Brother's Keeper,

a new White House initiative for young men of color—point to an emerging and "vibrant field that is learning, building, and moving."<sup>2</sup>

With that in mind, the Open Society Foundations commissioned the Foundation Center to take stock of the current state of the field of black male achievement and to provide insights on how to advance field-building efforts and ensure sustainability over time to achieve tangible results. Building on past research by the Ford Foundation and Frontline Solutions, as well as the 2012 report *Where Do We Go From Here? Philanthropic Support for Black Men and Boys*, this report scans the landscape of organizations doing this work and identifies key steps for strengthening the field of black male achievement.

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**“ If you want America to remain great...we can no longer afford for people of color in general, black men and boys in particular, to have the life outcomes that they do. ”** 

Emmett Carson, president and CEO, Silicon Valley Community Foundation

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Based on interviews with 50 philanthropic, nonprofit, government, academic, and business leaders, we examine questions such as: What is promising in the field? Where are the current gaps? What opportunities are there to address these gaps and strengthen the field? What will be required to take the work to scale and achieve desired impacts? And, importantly, what does success look like? There are areas of broad agreement as well as some divergent views, but the collective wisdom of these thought leaders can help guide the black male achievement field in its next steps.

## THE FIELD OF BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT

In *Building to Last: Field Building as Philanthropic Strategy*, Lucy Bernholz and her co-authors define a field as “a multidisciplinary area of specialized practice that engages diverse stakeholders.”<sup>3</sup> Bernholz outlines six design principles for field building: 1) recognize the philanthropic opportunity; 2) establish a research base; 3) prioritize sets of actors and networks; 4) develop and adopt the right standards; 5) build a network infrastructure; and 6) share knowledge.

Looking at the work on black male achievement—defined as efforts to promote positive life outcomes for black men and boys—some of these elements are in place; others are just beginning to take shape. By using the term “field,” we recognize the diverse, multidisciplinary, cross-sector work taking place, while realizing that the work embodies aspects not only of field building, but also of network building and movement building.

Some of this work is population-focused, centering explicitly on black males, or more broadly, boys and men of color. Other work is issue-based, such as efforts related to school discipline reform and reduction of gun violence, issues that disproportionately impact black males. Still other efforts are place-based. While the boundaries of this work may seem hazy, there are clear synergies among those working to advance black male achievement.

## BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT AND BOYS AND MEN OF COLOR

Some organizations focus their work explicitly on black males, while others use the broader umbrella of boys and men of color. Those that focus on black men and boys believe that intentionality translates into more effective approaches that, in turn, are more likely to yield desired outcomes. For example, interventions designed for African-American males may not work well with other groups, and vice versa. A deep understanding of cultural nuances can result in better outcomes for all groups.

Those using a boys and men of color frame argue for greater inclusion, noting the common challenges males of color face. In addition, a boys and men of color frame may be more politically viable and strategic. Still others point to their local context. In California, for example, the rich mix of Latino, African-American, and Southeast Asian communities can make it difficult for programs to have a singular focus on any particular group.

Most, though not all, of our interviewees believed that a both-and approach is most pragmatic; even with a boys and men of color lens, it is possible to acknowledge race-specific experiences. For example, disaggregating data by race/ethnicity and gender allows organizations to see the impact of their interventions on specific populations. Marc Philpart, who leads PolicyLink’s black male achievement team and also supports its boys and men of color work, notes, “There is value-add to the field if you can marry both approaches. We need to understand and address the specific experiences of certain groups and also practice solidarity that helps us further our shared goals.”

Whether the work focuses on black males or males of color more broadly, many assert that both are ultimately about embracing racial equity and equal opportunities for all. Such a lens emphasizes changing systems to increase access to opportunity, rather than solving the “problems” of individual black men.

In this report, where possible, we focus on work that centers explicitly on black males. However, we also include the perspectives of those who use a boys and men of color frame, recognizing the important intersections and common goals of both areas of work.

“ There is a value-add to the field if you can marry both approaches. ”

Marc Philpart, associate director, PolicyLink



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## PART I

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# MAPPING THE FIELD

THIS SECTION OF THE REPORT PRESENTS A LAY OF THE LAND, TAKING STOCK OF MAJOR SECTORS—PHILANTHROPY, NONPROFITS, RESEARCH, AND GOVERNMENT—IN THE FIELD OF BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT. WE ALSO EXAMINE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHER CONSTITUENCIES, SUCH AS THE CORPORATE SECTOR AND THE FAITH COMMUNITY, TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THIS WORK.

THOUGH WE PRESENT THESE SECTORS IN SILOS FOR THE SAKE OF CLARITY, THE REALITY IS THAT IN MANY CASES, THESE DIFFERENT SECTORS ARE WORKING IN CONCERT WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND IT IS AT THESE INTERSECTIONS THAT THE POTENTIAL OF THE FIELD LIES. THESE CATEGORIES ALSO DO NOT REFLECT THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF THE SOCIAL ECONOMY AND TOOLS OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY, INCLUDING IMPACT INVESTING AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES, ALL OF WHICH THE FIELD WILL NEED TO EMBRACE IN ORDER TO CREATE POSITIVE IMPACT AND OUTCOMES.

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## PHILANTHROPY

“ Endowed philanthropy is the freest capital in the whole U.S. It’s the only money where what you do with it has no bearing on how much of it you’ll have in the future. So if anybody can try a different approach, it should be us. ”

Trabian Shorters, founder and CEO of BMe and former vice president at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

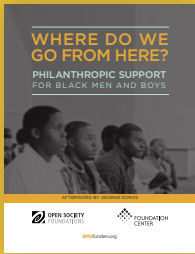
Philanthropic support explicitly designated for black men and boys is more than two decades old, going back to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s African American Men and Boys Initiative, launched in 1992. Two years later, Ford Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Charles Stewart Mott Foundation followed suit with fatherhood initiatives focused on African-American families. However, these family- and fatherhood-focused projects eventually faded away. Since then, there have been ebbs and flows in foundation engagement, with major funders entering (and leaving) the field and others shifting course.

In the past six to seven years, however, there has been renewed philanthropic interest, with a growing cohort of foundations making substantial commitments in support of black males. Among the most prominent and well-funded of these is Open Society Foundations’ Campaign for Black Male Achievement, which was launched in 2008 to address the economic, political, social, and educational exclusion of black men and boys from the American mainstream. The Campaign has sought to build black male achievement both as a brand and as a field, committing over \$50 million to more than 100 organizations.

Importantly, from its inception, the Campaign framed its work around solution-focused approaches and asset-based language—a deliberate counter-narrative to past efforts that focused on “disadvantaged” or “marginalized” males and the “plight” of black males. In its strategic plan, the Campaign emphasizes structural solutions focused on advancing public policy reforms and catalyzing key institutional and cultural changes that can help black males thrive. In that vein, Shawn Dove, manager of the Campaign, states, “The mere naming of the Campaign for Black Male Achievement and calling it that was a success out of the box.”

The Campaign’s investments have been critical to shaping the field. In the years following George Soros’ investment, other foundations have followed suit. John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Kapor Center for Social Impact, and California Community Foundation formed initiatives specifically addressing the experience of black males, while others, including the California Endowment and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, established portfolios focused on boys and men of color.

Foundation commitments have grown steadily in recent years. In 2011, foundations awarded more than \$40 million in grants, up from \$29 million in the previous year. Between



The Foundation Center's 2012 report *Where Do We Go From Here? Philanthropic Support for Black Men and Boys* documents the wide range of activities supported by foundations and provides baseline funding data.

## BMAfund.org

**BMAfund.org**, launched in March 2013, lifts up the role of philanthropy in supporting black men and boys. With an array of resources, the site strives to facilitate engagement, collaboration, and strategic decision making among funders and other stakeholders.

2008 and 2011, 191 foundations made nearly 900 grants to over 400 organizations. Importantly, while large, national foundations contribute the bulk of grant dollars, there are numerous local and regional foundations, such as the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation in Arkansas, Skillman Foundation in Detroit, and Kapor Center for Social Impact in the San Francisco Bay Area, that are playing critical roles in advancing the conversation about black male achievement in their local communities.

These foundations tackle a wide range of issues. The Open Society Foundations' Campaign for Black Male Achievement's portfolio focuses on education and family, as well as strategic communications and building the capacity of the field. The Heinz Endowments has done critical work on community engagement and communications, using its base in Pittsburgh as a testing ground for initiatives that can be scaled more broadly. As health foundations, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the California Endowment bring the language of prevention, early intervention, and well-being to their work.

Loren Harris, who led the Ford Foundation's work on black males in the mid-to-late 2000s, has seen philanthropic efforts for black males shift over the years. He remarks, "Philanthropy is better coordinated than it was five years ago, for sure. The donor community hasn't reached an optimal operating state of coordination, but the foundation leadership has recognized that this is an area for collective action, for collective impact. This sends a very strong

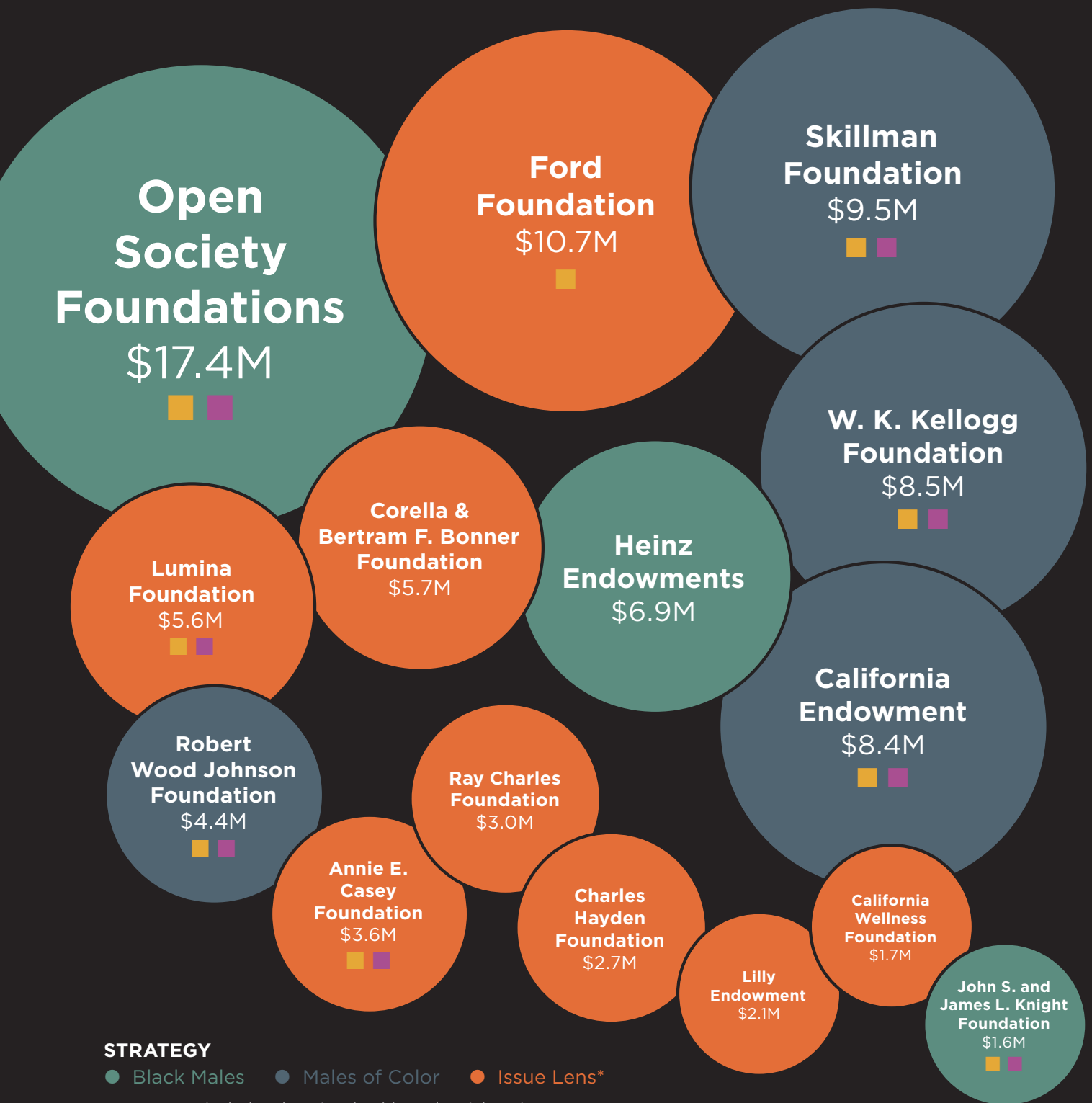
signal that things are being done differently, that foundations see that there's a greater opportunity to collaborate."

Collaboration is occurring through several donor networks that include a focus on black males, the most significant being the Executives' Alliance to Expand Opportunities for Boys and Men of Color. Formed in April 2013, the Alliance brings together a growing cohort of foundation presidents who have committed to increasing investments, as well as raising public will and policy attention, to boys and men of color (see sidebar on p. 18). In addition, ABFE's Learning and Action Network (LAN) centers on black male achievement and allows funders to learn about and learn from each other's work.

The Executives' Alliance and the LAN work in close collaboration to leverage resources and coordinate efforts. Leaders from 11 foundations are also engaged in an intensive collaborative planning process to build the philanthropic scaffolding and engagement of the federal initiative, My Brother's Keeper. Ray Colmenar, senior program manager of the California Endowment, believes these efforts are critical to strengthening the field: "We don't have enough resources to be inefficient in the way we engage and support this work. To the extent that we can see natural alliances and alignment, we should exploit those."

In addition to formal networks with regular meetings, there have been several foundation-initiated convenings to bring key stakeholders together. Open Society Foundations gathered

# TOP 15 FOUNDATIONS FOR BLACK MEN & BOYS, 2008-2011: FUNDING, STRATEGIES, & NETWORKS



### STRATEGY

- Black Males
- Males of Color
- Issue Lens\*

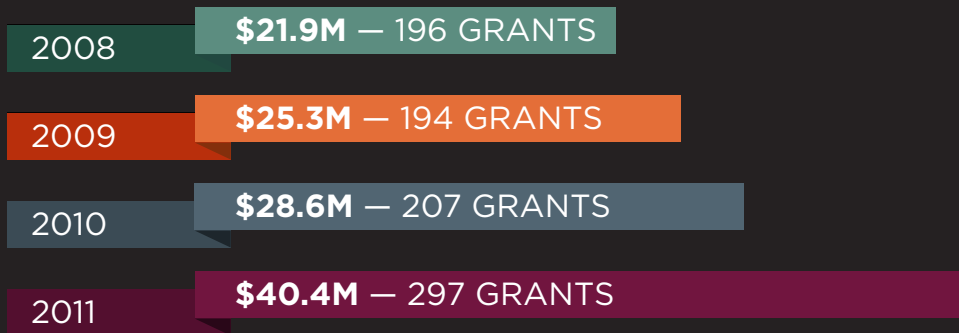
\* Issue areas include education, health, and racial equity.

### NETWORKS

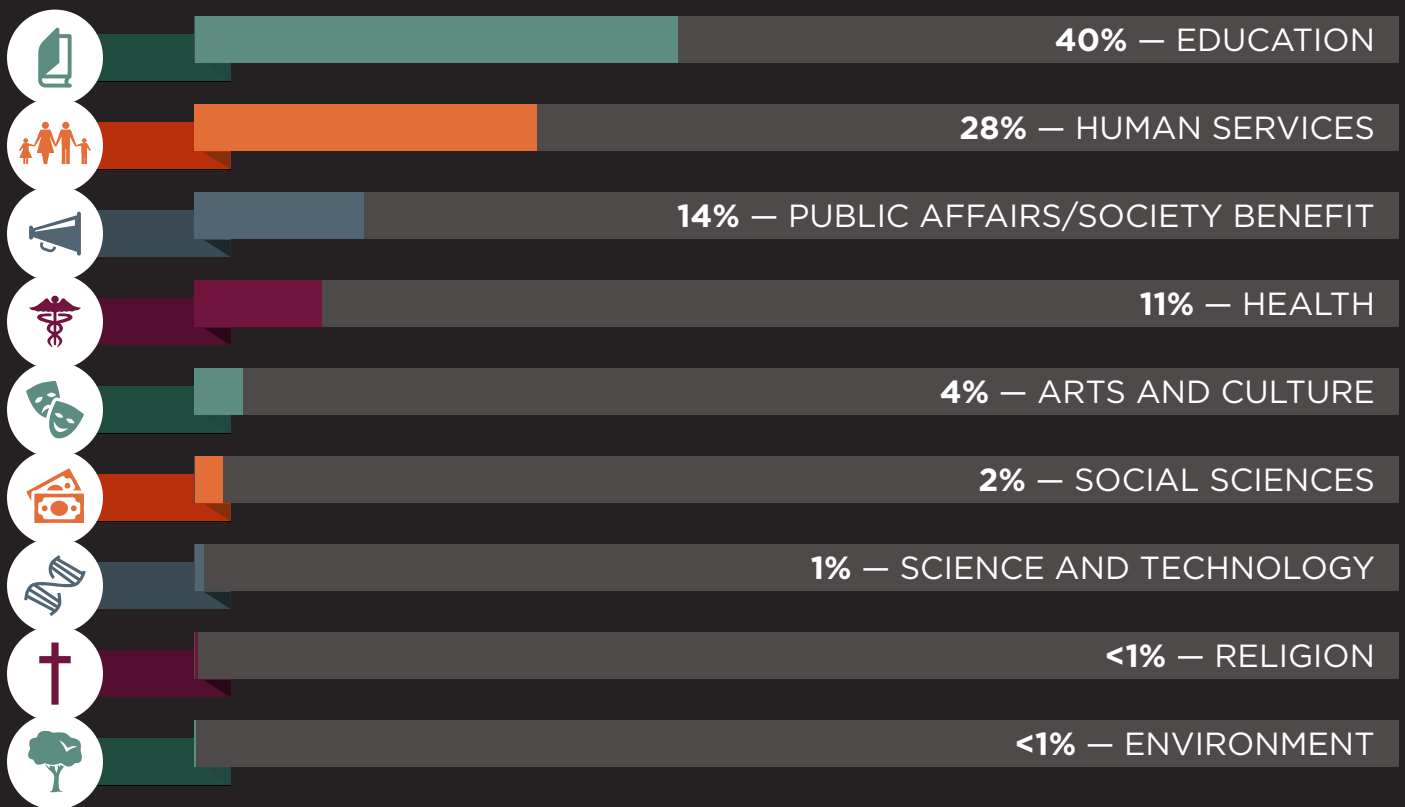
- Executives' Alliance
- ABFE's Leadership and Action Network



## FOUNDATION SUPPORT FOR BLACK MEN & BOYS, 2008-2011



## GRANTS FOR BLACK MEN & BOYS BY ISSUE AREA, 2008-2011




For detailed grants information on black men and boys, visit [bmafunders.org/funding-map](http://bmafunders.org/funding-map).

Foundation Center, 2014. Based on grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by a national sample of independent and family, corporate, community, and operating U.S. foundations. To avoid double counting of grant dollars, we exclude public charities. Figures represent only grants awarded to recipient organizations that could be identified as serving black males or grants whose descriptions specified black males. Thus, these figures do not reflect all giving benefiting black males. For more on Foundation Center data, see p. 16 of *Where Do We Go From Here? Philanthropic Support for Black Men and Boys*.



*“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”—African proverb*

On April 7, 2013, 26 foundation presidents gathered in Chicago in conjunction with the Council on Foundations annual meeting to discuss their institutional commitments to improving the life outcomes of boys and men of color. Following this historic and unprecedented meeting, the group released a joint statement of intent indicating a collective commitment by the foundations to “evaluate promising approaches, advocate for effective public policy and systems change, and invest in these young men as assets for America’s future.” A year later, the Alliance has grown to nearly 40 foundations and is refining its goals, outcomes, and structure to serve as a “big tent” for the long-term engagement of the philanthropic sector on these issues.

The work of the Executives’ Alliance is still taking shape, but interviewees were largely encouraged by the formation of the Alliance and excited by its potential. According to Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation, the Alliance “brings focus and synergy to this issue.” Key opportunities for the Alliance to advance this work include leveraging the voice of foundation presidents, committing to increased financial investments, and coordinating field-wide strategies. 

### LEVERAGING THE VOICE OF PRESIDENTS

Part of what made the April gathering historic was the collection of foundation presidents at the table. Tia Martinez, a consultant who helped bring the group together, states simply, “Presidential leadership matters. Having boards and presidents be both externally and internally supportive of the work changes this game.” At the same time, Trabian Shorters notes that foundation politics can be complicated, and that it is important to have institutions and boards that are willing to take the lead of their presidents. “The heads of each of these agencies [must] have enough political capital within their own institutions to steer it in a way that it would not otherwise go.”

To that end, multiple interviewees mentioned the importance of the “cover” the Alliance provides for presidents and leaders to engage in this work, giving presidents crucial support from their peers to advance the agenda at their own institutions.

### MAKING REAL INVESTMENTS

Gathering foundation presidents together to make a public commitment was a victory for the field. But Open Society Foundations’ Shawn Dove states pointedly, “I’m not satisfied with [just] the pledge. It’s going to be critically important how we transfer the pledge into investments.” Similarly, Walker says he is heartened by the initial engagement, but that the success of the Alliance rests on “a commitment by the presidents to deeply engage on this issue and sustain their level of enthusiasm—and match that enthusiasm with resources, both financial and human.”

A number of Alliance members have already pledged \$750,000 each over the next three years to support the infrastructure and operations of the My Brother’s Keeper initiative. Some noted that foundations should use the power of their brands to encourage investment outside of the philanthropic community.

### SETTING CONCRETE TARGETS AND COORDINATING STRATEGIES

Many assert that the Alliance must be concrete not only in its investments, but also in its goals. While acknowledging the difficulty of foundations with different missions and priorities to reach consensus, Bob Ross, president of the California Endowment and one of the conveners of the Alliance, suggests picking “three to five high-level national goals representing success on a comprehensive front.” To this end, Shorters suggests choosing an area of collaboration on a concrete and achievable goal. Shorters believes, “To have a win that’s a product of collaboration would get a whole lot more collaboration.”

While setting concrete targets and coordinating strategies is a major area of opportunity for the Alliance, Ray Colmenar explains that choosing the term “alliance” was deliberate and that a broad, shared vision is just as important. “It’s not a coalition. We’re not trying to get everyone to do one thing. An alliance supports members in multiple objectives, consistent with a shared vision.”



leaders across multiple sectors at its Innovation and Impact Forum for Black Male Achievement in October 2012 and co-hosted two media summits, Black Male Re-Imagined I and II, with the Knight Foundation, Ford Foundation, and American Values Institute, focused on transforming perceptions of black men and boys. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with support from Frontline Solutions, engages more than a dozen funders to host the annual Gathering of Leaders meeting, which is frequently cited as an important event, attracting social change leaders across the country whose work focuses on advancing the success of males of color. These convenings have provided a venue

for developing relationships and connecting disparate efforts as part of a national field.

One major task ahead for philanthropy is bringing the issue to a broader audience, “getting the message out in front of the non-choir,” as Rahsaan Harris, executive director of Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP), puts it. There is evidence of progress on this front, with a pre-conference on black male achievement at the 2014 Social Impact Exchange Symposium and featured programming on boys and men of color at the 2014 Council on Foundations annual conference.

## NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

“ [A key next step for the field is] everything that concerns the capacity of nonprofits’ institutional building and leadership pipeline. This will just be another foundation trend if [nonprofit] organizations aren’t strengthened and if leaders aren’t developed. ”

Tia Martinez, consultant, California Endowment

A wide range of nonprofit organizations are working in the area of black male achievement, representing an array of issue areas and approaches. Some have a population-based focus, be it black men and boys or boys and men of color. Others employ place-based strategies in neighborhoods with a high percentage of black residents. Still others focus on specific issues that disproportionately affect black males.

While there is no official “census” of this work, we can look at several data points to get a general sense of the nonprofit landscape. Based on Foundation Center data, between 2008 and 2011, foundations distributed larger grants (\$10,000 or more) to 424 unique organizations for work explicitly designated to support black males.<sup>4</sup> Including grants for boys and men of color, the number more than doubles to 860. Many of these organizations are based in New York City and the DC metro area. Most are educational institutions.

However, the Foundation Center database only includes nonprofit organizations receiving grants. There are many more organizations doing this work that do not receive support from foundations. When the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation issued a call for proposals for Forward Promise, its boys and men of color

initiative, the Foundation received more than 1,200 submissions from across the country, ultimately awarding grants to 10 nonprofit organizations.

The Institute for Black Male Achievement (IBMA), managed by PolicyLink and Root Cause, aims to resource and network all leaders and organizations working to improve the life outcomes of black men and boys (see sidebar on p. 55). Its membership also gives us insight into the scope of the nonprofit sector doing this work. As of April 2014, the IBMA included 1,680 organizations in its membership. Nonprofits are only part of the IBMA network, which invites membership from every sector. Nearly half of all IBMA members represent nonprofit organizations.<sup>5</sup>

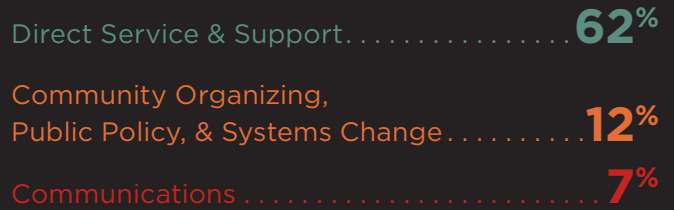
The IBMA advocates a black male achievement lens, but it is inclusive of individuals and organizations that may be working from different frames. According to IBMA membership survey data, completed by 435 nonprofits, only 13 percent indicated that their work is explicitly *and* exclusively focused on black males (see p. 21). Others embed their work with black males within the broader umbrella of black families or communities (59 percent), boys and men of color (63 percent), and/or families or communities of color (52 percent).

# IBMA NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS WORKING EXPLICITLY WITH BLACK MEN & BOYS<sup>1</sup>

**IBMA** The Institute for Black Male Achievement



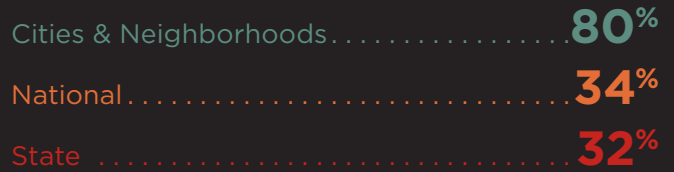
## MOST IBMA NONPROFITS WITH BLACK MALE FRAME ENGAGE IN DIRECT SERVICE ACTIVITIES.



## MOST OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS OR THEIR BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAMS HAVE BUDGETS UNDER \$1 MILLION.<sup>2</sup>



## THE VAST MAJORITY OF THESE NONPROFITS WORK IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Institute for Black Male Achievement, 2014. Unpublished data based on member survey responses as of April 2, 2014. Figures are based on the 252 unique nonprofit organizations indicating that their activities have an explicit black male frame.

<sup>2</sup> Budget reflects either the overall organization or a specific black male achievement program, department, or initiative within the organization.

<sup>3</sup> Organizations may have more than one geographic focus.

For IBMA nonprofits engaged in work explicitly focused on black men and boys (252 organizations), the vast majority (80 percent) work in local communities. New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Detroit, and Washington, DC were the most commonly cited locations. Roughly one-third have a state-wide focus (32 percent) and/or a national focus (34 percent).

Most IBMA nonprofits working explicitly with black males are engaged in direct service activities (62 percent), with much smaller percentages working in other areas such as community organizing, public policy and systems change, and communications.

Notably, most organizations or black male achievement-focused programs (65 percent) have smaller budgets under \$1 million; 52 percent have budgets below \$500,000. Only 6 percent indicated that their budgets are \$10 million or greater.

For the many nonprofit organizations involved in supporting black men and boys, the IBMA seeks to develop their capacity and connect them to a broader network, indeed a national movement, of black male achievement. For this to happen, fostering deep connections is essential, among individuals within shared practice areas, as well as across organizations and issues.

Alexis McGill Johnson, executive director of American Values Institute, observes, “We have to think about how we develop organizations to be more intersectional, to apply the fight across areas. We have to make the case for black men and boys and jobs, black men and boys and climate, black men and boys and reproductive rights.”

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“ We have to think about how we develop organizations to be more intersectional, to apply the fight across areas. We have to make the case for black men and boys and jobs, black men and boys and climate, black men and boys and reproductive rights. ”

Alexis McGill Johnson, executive director,  
American Values Institute

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One such area of opportunity is the work taking place around mass incarceration. Says Judith Browne Dianis, co-director of Advancement Project, “A lot of folks who are doing mass incarceration work are not necessarily operating in the world of black male achievement, even though their work is clearly related.”



Photo: Russell Hicks & Alex Peay, BMe Community



Photo: Advancement Project

## RESEARCH

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“ Black men are amongst the most studied species on the planet. Apparently, there are more studies of black men than there are of sharks. But for all that study, what’s left out is black men’s humanity. Their emotions. ”

Dori Maynard, president, Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education

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As Maynard provocatively notes, there is no shortage of research on black men and boys. Indeed, there are a number of university-based institutes with a research agenda that focuses on black males, including the UCLA Black Male Institute and the Morehouse Male Initiative (see map on p. 25 of major research centers). In addition to research produced by academia, nonprofits and think tanks also contribute to the research literature. Much of the existing research highlights the disparities between black males and other population groups, particularly within the realm of education and criminal justice.

Frustrated by “gloom-and-doom statistics” being the only story told, scholars like Shaun Harper and Ivory Toldson have contributed to the academic literature by studying factors that promote black male success. Reports like *Succeeding in the City* and *Breaking Barriers*, written by Harper and Toldson, respectively, challenge deficit-oriented representations of black males. As Harper says, this is a “commonsense approach. If we want to better understand how to improve success among young men of color, then we probably should study young men of color who have been successful and learn from their success.” Building this body of research is critical to directing the field toward assets-focused, community-based solutions.

Despite the efforts of Harper, Toldson, and others, our interviewees generally agreed that the field can benefit from greater engagement by the academic community. Loren Harris observes, “We have really smart folks in the academy who are not connected to the field in an everyday sort of way.”

“ If we want to better understand how to improve success among young men of color, then we probably should study young men of color who have been successful and learn from their success. ”

Shaun Harper, executive director, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education

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Academic engagement is vital in light of the prevailing discourse around black men and boys. Toldson, a former professor at Howard University who now serves as the deputy director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), describes some of his work as “policing how we talk about black male students.



# RESEARCH INSTITUTES WITH A FOCUS ON BLACK MEN & BOYS

## NATIONAL

Scholars Network on Black Masculinity

## ROBERT MORRIS UNIVERSITY

Uzuri Think Tank



## UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education



## ARCADIA UNIVERSITY

Black Male Development Symposium



## NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools



## University of California, Los Angeles

UCLA Black Male Institute



## UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

African-American Male Initiative



## LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS

Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy, New Orleans Fatherhood Consortium



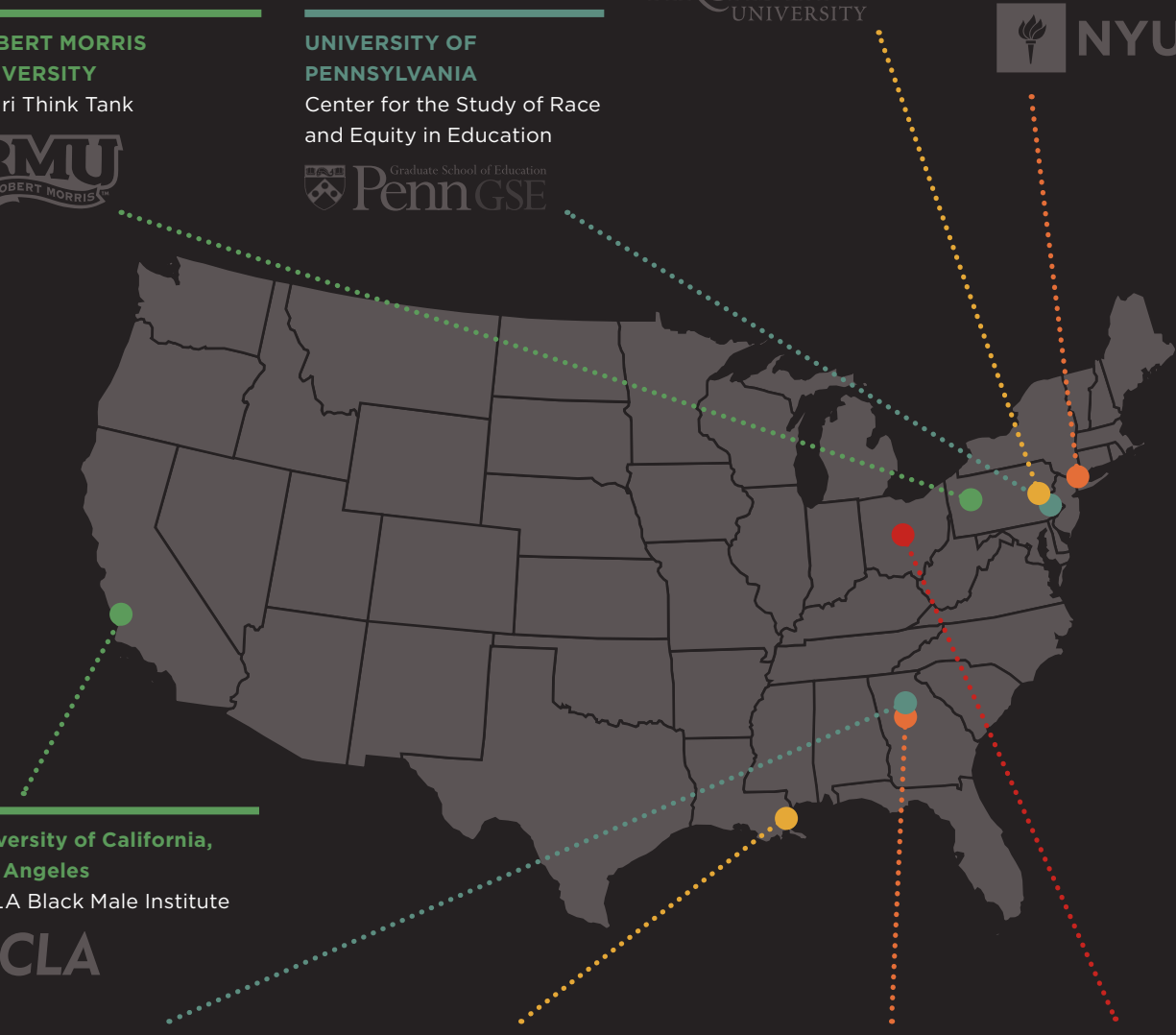
## MOREHOUSE COLLEGE

Morehouse Male Initiative



## OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity  
Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male





### THE SCHOLARS NETWORK ON BLACK MASCULINITY

gathers members of the academic community to reshape scholarly and public understanding of the lives of African-American men. The Network achieves this through workshops and conferences for its members, as well as public outreach and dissemination of research findings.

When people say things like, ‘The black man is a dying breed,’ those are things I’m very sensitive about and I’m constantly challenging that. Also the general misuse of statistics, like ‘There are more black men in prison than in college.’ I wrote a series of reports challenging that.”

Deeper scholarly engagement can also ensure that research gaps identified by the field are addressed. Some of these gaps include black male masculinity, sexual identity, and the development of emotional intelligence and softer skills.

Within the academy, the added challenge can be the perception of this area of research. According to Alford Young, Jr., “It’s still largely seen as a topic that people do when they can’t do the so-called real work in academic disciplines.” Young, who chairs the University of Michigan’s Department of Sociology, initiated the Scholars Network on Black Masculinity to connect academics around the country who are committed to scholarship that develops new visions of black men and masculinity.

In order for scholarly findings to impact programs and policies, it is important that this work be

translated for a broader audience. Young notes that working with practitioners and policymakers is “a very different animal from constructing a paper.” There are several efforts to bridge this gap. Rhonda Tsoi-a-Fatt Bryant of the Center for Law and Social Policy tapped the Scholars Network in 2012 and initiated the Partnership Circle, fostering conversations between researchers and policymakers with an interest in black men and boys. The goal of this group is to build relationships between the two so that strong research informs policy recommendations and that policymakers in need of specific research can readily access research partners.

Shaun Harper, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, regularly presents at black male summits on college campuses and national convenings on higher education. He has written translation pieces and consulted for college administrators to help inform institutional policies that promote black male academic success. In 2013, he was invited to speak at the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, where a 45-minute keynote address extended to a two-and-a-half-hour Q&A session, as legislators asked for advice about education policy issues in their respective states.



Photos: Urban Prep Academies

## GOVERNMENT

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“ I’m reaching out to some of America’s leading foundations and corporations on a new initiative to help more young men of color facing especially tough odds stay on track and reach their full potential. ”

Barack Obama, President of the United States, State of the Union, 2014

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**O**n February 27, 2014, President Obama declared his commitment to young men of color through the announcement of a major public-private partnership called My Brother’s Keeper (see sidebar on p. 29). The initiative engages the private sector and philanthropic community and places a strong emphasis on identifying and scaling strategies and approaches that work. While much attention has been focused on this initiative, there has also been growing engagement by state and, especially, local governments in recent years.

One notable effort to engage mayors and municipalities is Cities United, an initiative focused on reducing the violent deaths of black men and boys. A partnership among Casey Family Programs, Open Society Foundations, Mayor Michael Nutter of Philadelphia, and Mayor Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans, Cities United is led by the National League of Cities and currently engages 58 mayors across the country. According to Mayor Nutter, “Cities United helps mayors and city leaders focus on prevention rather than prosecution, intervention rather than incarceration, and provides data and tools to topple systemic barriers to opportunity facing African-American men and boys.”<sup>6</sup>

Through a separate but related initiative, the National League of Cities leads Cities for Black Male Achievement, a technical assistance

initiative supporting 11 cities promoting black male achievement in their communities. These cities have committed to raising the visibility of issues faced by black males, developing cross-sector partnerships, effectively utilizing data, and implementing comprehensive strategies and policies that include authentic engagement by young black men themselves. With assistance from the Institute for Black Male Achievement, the National League of Cities supports these communities through regular webinars, individual and peer group check-ins, and site visits.

“ City-level government is probably the most effective arm in engaging in meaningful ways. Mayors can play a unique role in driving a strategy in a city that can lead in a significant positive direction. ”

Leon Andrews, senior fellow, National League of Cities

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Leon Andrews, senior fellow with the National League of Cities, who oversees both efforts, believes, “City-level government is probably

the most effective arm in engaging in meaningful ways. Mayors can play a unique role in driving a strategy in a city that can lead in a significant positive direction.” In Philadelphia, for example, Mayor Nutter re-established the Mayor’s Commission on African-American Males and in February 2014 approved a series of concrete policy recommendations presented by the Commission.

The Young Men’s Initiative in New York City is often cited as an exemplar of how cities can take action. The initiative is one of the nation’s most comprehensive efforts to tackle the broad disparities slowing the advancement of black and Latino young men. This innovative

public-private partnership includes \$60 million in private investments from Open Society Foundations and Bloomberg Philanthropies and is also funded by an ongoing city tax levy that has been baselined into perpetuity. The initiative targets education, employment, health, and justice, with a focus on mentoring and a special emphasis on fatherhood. The City closely measures and evaluates the success of all program investments and policy and practice changes to ensure successes are learned from and taken to scale, while programs and policies facing challenges are revamped or discontinued.

Another local initiative with a specific focus on young black men is Oakland Unified School

## MY BROTHER’S KEEPER

In February 2014, President Obama launched My Brother’s Keeper, a national effort dedicated to creating opportunities for boys and young men of color. The White House initiative engages local and state governments, foundations, businesses, nonprofits, and faith communities, among others. Rather than creating a new government program, this initiative intends to build on existing successes, assessing critical indicators of life outcomes, examining the impact of federal policies, and promoting effective strategies and practices.

Foundations are significant partners in this effort. Annie E. Casey Foundation, Atlantic Philanthropies, Bloomberg Philanthropies, California Endowment, Ford Foundation, Kapor Center for Social Impact, Knight Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation have thus far committed to leveraging at least \$200 million over the next five years. Prominent members of the business community were also present at the launch of the initiative, including executives from American Express, McDonald’s, and Sam’s Club.

The initiative intends to address areas with the highest potential for impact at key moments in young men’s lives, including: early child development and school readiness, parenting and parent engagement, third grade literacy, educational opportunity and school discipline reform, interactions with the criminal justice system, ladders to jobs and economic opportunity, and healthy families and communities.

Addressing the need for this effort, President Obama stated in his announcement, “Fifty years after Dr. King talked about his dream for America’s children, the stubborn fact is that the life chances [for] the average black or brown child in this country lags behind by almost every measure and is worse for boys and young men.... And the worst part is we’ve become numb to these statistics.... We just assume this is an inevitable part of American life, instead of the outrage that it is.... But these statistics should break our hearts, and they should compel us to act.”

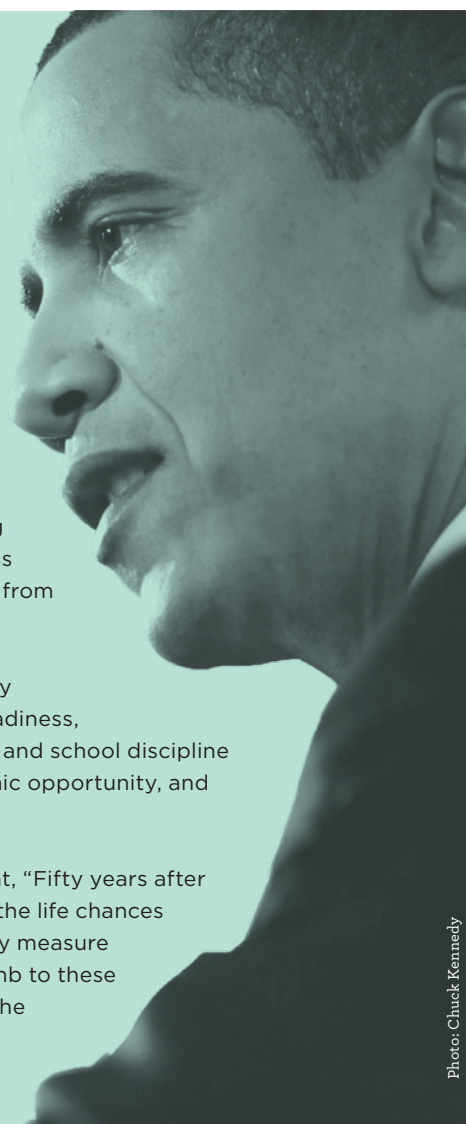


Photo: Chuck Kennedy



Cities United mayors gathered to watch President Obama's announcement of the My Brother's Keeper initiative.

District's Office of African American Male Achievement, created in Fall 2010. Led by Chris Chatmon, the Office strives to ensure that the district's black male students are college and career ready. In addition to developing new programs, Chatmon seeks a transformation of the ecosystem of the school district and the broader community to one that he describes as a "conspiracy of care" for black males.

At the state level, California's Alliance for Boys and Men of Color has had enormous success in building support for policy changes and was identified by interviewees as a model for future work. A coalition of community organizations, foundations, youth leaders, and systems leaders, the Alliance has worked in partnership with the Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color in California to enact laws that improve the health and opportunities of young men of color. A series of 2013 policy victories included the Campus Safety bill (AB 549), encouraging school districts to integrate alternatives to law enforcement into school safety decision-making processes,

and "Ban the Box" (AB 218), forbidding state and local agencies from asking job applicants to disclose criminal convictions on the initial employment application.

Elsewhere, there are exciting developments taking place on the policy front, both locally and nationally. Attorney General Eric Holder has called for criminal justice reforms, shifting the country's tough-on-crime policies and reducing mandatory minimum guidelines. In addition, the Departments of Justice and Education have issued new guidance to schools to avoid and redress racial discrimination in disciplinary policies. Similarly, local school districts, cities, and states are implementing changes that dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline by ending "zero tolerance" practices and implementing alternatives like restorative justice.

These efforts are a promising start, but many interviewees stated that greater engagement by the public sector is still needed.

# BLACK MALE ACHIEVEMENT ACTIVITIES IN GOVERNMENT

## CALIFORNIA

Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color

## OAKLAND

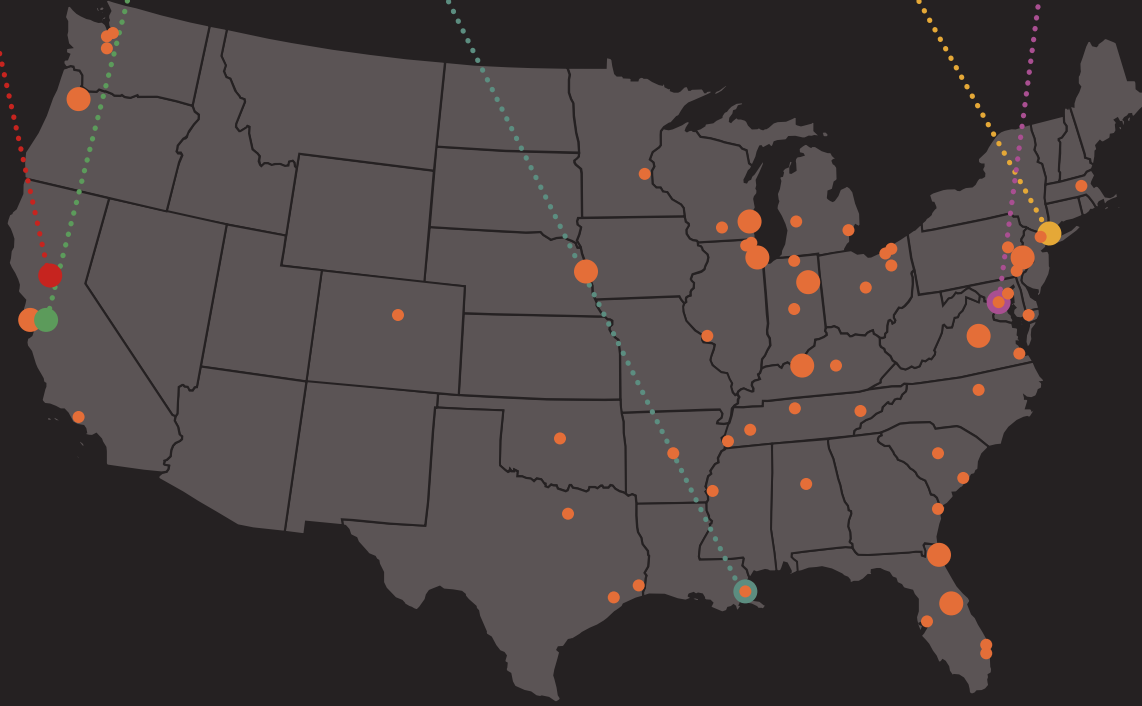
Office of African American Male Achievement, Oakland Unified School District

## NEW YORK CITY

Young Men's Initiative

## FEDERAL

- My Brother's Keeper
- White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans
- White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- Congressional Black Caucus
- Congressional Caucus on Black Men and Boys



## NEW ORLEANS

NOLA for LIFE

## CITIES UNITED

- Akron, OH
- Allentown, PA
- Auburn, WA
- Baltimore, MD
- Beaumont, TX
- Birmingham, AL
- Brooklyn Park, MN
- Charleston, SC
- Charlottesville, VA\*
- Chester, PA
- Chicago, IL\*
- Cleveland, OH
- Columbia, SC
- Columbus, OH
- Dallas, TX

- Denver, CO
- Durham, NC
- Evanston, IL
- Fort Wayne, IN\*
- Grand Rapids, MI
- Greenville, MS
- Hampton, VA
- Houston, TX
- Indianapolis, IN
- Jackson, TN
- Jacksonville, FL\*
- Knoxville, TN
- Las Vegas, NV
- Los Angeles, CA
- Lexington, KY
- Little Rock, AR

- Louisville, KY\*
- Madison, WI
- Memphis, TN
- Milwaukee, WI\*
- Nashville, TN
- New Orleans, LA
- Newton, MA
- North Chicago, IL
- Oakland, CA\*
- Oklahoma City, OK
- Omaha, NE\*
- Orlando, FL\*
- Paterson, NJ
- Philadelphia, PA\*
- Portland, OR\*
- Riviera Beach, FL

- Salisbury, MD
- Savannah, GA
- Seattle, WA
- Shaker Heights, OH
- South Bend, IN
- Southfield, MI
- Tacoma, WA
- Tampa, FL
- University City, MO
- Washington, DC
- West Palm Beach, FL

\* Also affiliated with the Cities for Black Male Achievement technical assistance initiative

# CORPORATE, FAITH, AND OTHER SECTORS

“ This is an all-hands-on-deck issue. Everyone has to be diligent, and anyone with an interest in the broader, long-term stability of our nation must see this as an essential issue. ”

John Grant, CEO, 100 Black Men of Atlanta

Among our interviewees, there was universal agreement that the field needs engagement from all segments of society. “When we say ‘the field of black male achievement,’ we’re still talking somewhat narrowly about two major sets of players: nonprofits and philanthropy,” according to Greg Hodge, a youth development policy advocate and consultant working with several organizations in the field. “There is a lot of space for other folks to get involved.” Bridging this space requires messaging and strategies to engage sectors that may not immediately see a role for themselves in this work.

## CORPORATE SECTOR

Perhaps the sector identified as most critical to engage is the corporate sector. In 2006, a group of lawyers from Sullivan & Cromwell and a handful of other New York City legal firms launched an initiative called Pipeline Crisis|Promoting Winning Strategies. The goals were to convene and engage the legal and financial services community, given their concerns about recruiting and retaining diverse workforces, especially African-American males. After several well-attended and high-profile events, the group decided to focus on five areas: early childhood and preschool, public school education, criminal justice, employment and economic development, and high-potential youth. Although the group made some progress

and continues to work, the financial collapse of 2008 curtailed its momentum.

“ When we say ‘the field of black male achievement,’ we’re still talking somewhat narrowly about two major sets of players: nonprofits and philanthropy. There is a lot of space for other folks to get involved. ”

Greg Hodge, youth development policy advocate and consultant

Roger Blissett, managing director at RBC Capital Markets and a member of the Pipeline Crisis|Promoting Winning Strategies leadership team, believes that despite the group’s struggles, it remains critical to engage the corporate community. He recommends a pragmatic narrative, since the corporate community tends to focus on the bottom line. That narrative includes the nation’s changing demographics and the importance of ensuring that men of color have opportunities for education and employment that allow them to contribute economically to society. “It’s jeopardizing our



competitive standing in the world economy. These are going to be the workers of tomorrow. To keep ourselves competitive, we need to access the creativity of everyone in the United States.” Since the corporate sector also has to consider the satisfaction of consumers, of which African Americans make up a growing segment, Blissett notes that consumers also play a role in demanding action from companies whose products they consume.

“ These are going to be the workers of tomorrow. To keep ourselves competitive, we need to access the creativity of everyone in the United States. ”

Roger Blissett, managing director, RBC Capital Markets

Businesses can be engaged by extending jobs and scholarships to young people. Leaders within companies play a role in ensuring diversity and inclusion. John Rogers, CEO and chairman of Ariel Investments, helped begin the annual Black Corporate Directors Conference, providing camaraderie and support to African Americans sitting on corporate boards to address civil rights issues. “If we’re not pushing,” he states, “nothing will change.”<sup>7</sup>

## FAITH COMMUNITY

Many interviewees also view the faith community as an untapped resource that can be more deeply engaged in the field. Marc Philpart of PolicyLink laments, “Faith leaders have a critical role to play; there are so many of them who want to do this work, and I think we just fell down on being as inclusive as we could be.” In the summer of 2013, Frontline Solutions, with funding from the Open Society

Foundations, brought together Christian and Muslim faith leaders to discuss opportunities for engagement. To date, however, there are few partnerships between philanthropic and faith organizations. Frontline Solutions’ Micah Gilmer acknowledges that partnering with faith institutions tends to require intensive, relational work, but it is an effort that has the potential to yield substantial benefits.

The PICO National Network’s Lifelines to Healing campaign is one example of engagement by the faith community. The campaign brings together more than 300 congregations across the country to stop community violence and end mass incarceration, two issues that disproportionately affect boys and men of color. In partnership with local congregations, the campaign has successfully advocated for changes in policy and practice in communities across the country. Another example is the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, which engages progressive African-American faith leaders and their congregations in social justice issues.

## OTHER COMMUNITIES

In addition to the corporate sector and the faith community, interviewees identified a range of other constituencies that could be more deeply involved in the field. Celebrities, for instance, have the potential to attract enormous attention to the issues facing black men and boys. The actor Jesse Williams has done this both as an executive producer of the video art project Question Bridge, which explores black male identity in America, and also as a supporter of the California Endowment’s Sons and Brothers campaign. The California Community Foundation involved actor Larenz Tate in its BLOOM initiative, and former basketball player Magic Johnson has pledged his support to the White House initiative My Brother’s Keeper.

Interviewees also mentioned opportunities for greater engagement from national organizations, particularly civil rights organizations, including

## SUPPORTING BLACK MEN & BOYS: ALL HANDS ON DECK

To improve life outcomes for black men and boys, it will take the collective commitment of the philanthropic, nonprofit, government, and corporate sectors, working alongside established mainstream organizations and upstart grassroots organizations. And there is a role for everyone as individuals to contribute—women, young people, global communities, and black men themselves.





Photo: Echoing Green

the NAACP, the Urban League, and the Children’s Defense Fund. Although all of these organizations are active in some way, there remain opportunities to tap the reputation and histories of these organizations more deeply. Likewise, historically black colleges and universities were seen by some as a resource not fully utilized by the field.

Many argued for more partnerships and intersections with “mainstream” organizations and professional associations working in the arenas of education, criminal justice, and employment, given their natural connections to work with black men and boys and their broader reach. Several interviewees also highlighted the importance of strong female voices in the movement and of being clear that a focus on black males does not exclude women.

Loren Harris, former program officer for Ford Foundation, and Darren Walker, Ford Foundation’s current president, both noted that their international experiences convince them that there are important connections to be made between support for black males domestically and the work happening internationally within the diaspora.

To that end, Amaha Kassa, Echoing Green’s Black Male Achievement fellow, began an organization, African Communities Together, to empower Africans both in America and on the African continent to increase the diaspora’s social, economic, and political power.



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## PART II

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# STRENGTHENING THE FIELD

IN THIS SECTION OF THE REPORT, WE LIFT UP RECURRING THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM OUR INTERVIEWS WITH FIELD LEADERS ABOUT WHAT IS NEEDED TO STRENGTHEN THE FIELD MOVING FORWARD. RECOMMENDATIONS FOCUSED ON MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES, ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING, PARTNERSHIP AND NETWORK BUILDING, AND NEW APPROACHES TO PHILANTHROPIC ENGAGEMENT. IN EACH SECTION, WE HIGHLIGHT RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS ADVANCE THEIR WORK.

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## CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

“Black men are the least cuddly people in our society,” states Joe Jones, president and CEO of Baltimore’s Center for Urban Families. Jones’ comment speaks to the stereotypical perceptions of black men and boys held by the larger public and reinforced by mainstream media. Indeed, research by The Opportunity Agenda shows media depictions of African-American men and boys tend to be distorted. Black males are overrepresented in media depictions of poverty, crime, and violence and underrepresented as fathers, workers, users of technology, and problem solvers.<sup>8</sup> Trabian Shorters, founder of BMe, observes, “In the public theater, black males are cast as detrimental to America’s future—a threat that must be dealt with lest it ruin things for all of us. That infectious lie must stop being told.”

A major component of improving life outcomes for black men and boys, then, is changing the narrative to one that lifts them up as assets in society. Indeed, several foundations—the California Endowment, Heinz Endowments, and Open Society Foundations among them—have prioritized shifting perceptions as a core part of their strategy for supporting black men and boys. The Heinz Endowments’ African American Men and Boys initiative, for example, has conducted an audit of local Pittsburgh news reporting and has funded documentaries that challenge common media images of black males.

### ASSETS-BASED FRAMING

Shorters describes assets-based framing as a fundamental shift in approaching this work, one with wide-ranging implications. Assets-based framing is about opportunity, rather than crisis, he contends. Describing crisis frames as

“old and tired,” Shorters argues that an assets frame “lets you imagine and literally turn on the part of your mind that’s creative.” That frame was essential to the development of BMe, an organization that aims to foster caring and prosperous communities by recognizing and supporting the work of engaged black men in those communities. Says Shorters, BMe “doesn’t start with a problem we want to fix but with a vision we want to build towards.”

As foundations and their nonprofit partners develop their strategies and programs, these nuances matter because of the larger shifts in perception that can result. Despite the difficult life circumstances many black males face due to lack of opportunity and structural racism, Bob Ross, president of the California Endowment, says we as a society ultimately need to believe that “black males are needed for our future rather than [being] throwaway and disposable.”

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“In the public theater, black males are cast as detrimental to America’s future... That infectious lie must stop being told.”

Trabian Shorters, founder, BMe

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### MEDIA TRAINING AND OUTREACH

To advance an assets-based frame, more attention needs to be paid to engaging journalists, who play a large role in influencing how the general public views black males. At the forefront of this effort is the Maynard



**QUESTION BRIDGE: BLACK MALES** uses video to capture the reflections of black men about their identities. Since the project's inception, more than 1,500 men have participated across geographic, economic, generational, educational, and social boundaries. The project invites the public to explore and engage via multiple live and virtual platforms, including an interactive website, a mobile app, gallery kiosks, live events and dialogues, and a Question Bridge Curriculum for high schools.

Institute for Journalism Education, which is creating a framework to help journalists develop accurate, balanced, and humanizing stories about black males.

The Institute's president, Dori Maynard, says that even well-meaning journalists who want to cover issues of disparity with sensitivity can present stories in ways that immediately lose their audience. She suggests leading with a story of success or finding an area of commonality, rather than the stark disparity, to engage an audience more effectively. Alexis McGill Johnson, executive director of the American Values Institute, agrees and states that such stories "help bring black men and boys into the fold of the national community, so that we care about them [and] we see our fate as linked to theirs."

To this end, those working in the field of black male achievement must be trained to communicate their message effectively. Terms such as "targeted universalism," "social determinants," or even "resilience" pervade the field and do not resonate with journalists trying to tell a compelling story. Efforts to support the field in its communication efforts are emerging and include a messaging memo released by The Opportunity Agenda. The memo lifts up ways to change media coverage and public perceptions of black males.

With the increasing prevalence of multimedia and digital platforms, Maynard and others describe the media world as ripe for disruption, one that provides an opportune moment for

creating new paradigms for engagement. Potent examples of using media creatively to project more complete and humanizing portrayals of black men include Question Bridge: Black Males, a transmedia project to represent and redefine black male identity, and the *Washington Post's* multimedia feature called BrotherSpeak (see sidebar on p. 40).

### IMPLICIT BIAS

Closely related to changing the narrative is the issue of implicit bias and how we as a society process and understand race and racism. As McGill Johnson puts it, "However many young black men you educate and help build out their life opportunities, those opportunities diminish every time they walk down the street, because there are so many micro-aggressions against them. If we really want to change their lives, we have to change perception."

The underlying issues of discrimination and racism that contribute to negative perceptions of black males, however, are difficult to tackle. As Rahsaan Harris states, the biggest challenge is "using language that doesn't get people to shut the door in your face." Many of our interviewees believe the growing body of research on implicit bias can help catalyze more meaningful conversations, because it allows individuals to understand the unconscious and subconscious ways in which race, color, and gender influence perceptions and behaviors. Across sectors, such as law enforcement, media, and education, organizations report that an understanding of implicit bias gives people a way to discuss the complicated and difficult experiences with race without feeling

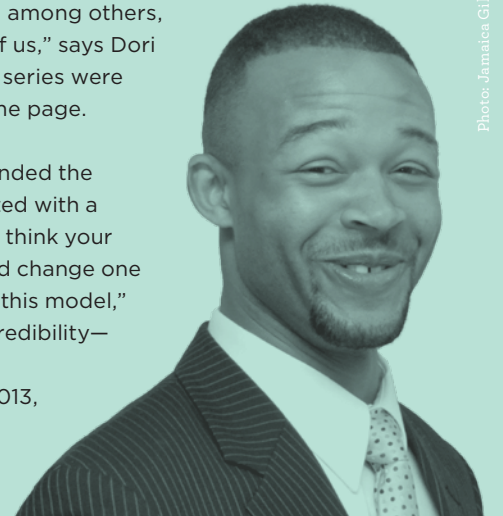
## BROTHER | SPEAK

The Maynard Institute for Journalism Education has been working for nearly 40 years to change media narratives about diverse populations. In late 2012 and early 2013, the Institute collaborated with the *Washington Post* on a particularly successful project, BrotherSpeak: a three-part video series “telling the inner lives of black men through the eyes of black men.”

Photo: Jamaica Gilmer & Frontline Solutions, LLC

BrotherSpeak featured the voices of black male activists, artists, and students, among others, around three themes: fear, love, and dreams. “They’re words that apply to all of us,” says Dori Maynard, “but are rarely applied to black men in the media.”<sup>10</sup> Videos from the series were featured on the *Washington Post* website, even spending some time on its home page.

But the impact of the project extended beyond the videos. A Twitter chat expanded the conversation to more than 14 million feeds. The hashtag #brotherspeak resonated with a wide audience that shared responses to questions like, “As a black man, do you think your dreams are different than those of other men? Other people?” and, “If you could change one thing about the media depiction of black men, what would it be?” “We created this model,” explains Maynard, “that married the best of traditional media—its gravitas, its credibility—with the best of social media—its ability to reach out and create community.”<sup>11</sup> The hashtag continues to appear on Twitter since the chats began in January 2013, and the video series remains a powerful piece of media portraying black men honestly—with emotions, depth, and their own voices.



defensive. Indeed, Advancement Project, the Association of Black Foundation Executives, and the Oakland Unified School District’s African American Male Achievement program all report using research on implicit bias in their outreach with colleagues and constituents.

### MARKET RESEARCH

Changing large-scale public opinion is no easy task, but a couple of interviewees noted that it is in fact possible. Joshua DuBois, a media pundit and former White House advisor, says, “It’s a slow process, but it is one that is very much doable. The negative frames do exist. They are dominant, but that’s not the end of the story.”

As an example of a successful large-scale shift in public opinion, in 1996, polling data showed that nearly 70 percent of Americans opposed same-sex marriage; by 2013, a majority of Americans supported same-sex marriage.<sup>9</sup> This change has been attributed to years of organizing and a coordinated, strategic communications effort by the LGBTQ community.

“ What are the messages that will enable the broader community to say, ‘That’s not good for America. That’s not good for me’? ”

Emmett Carson, president and CEO, Silicon Valley Community Foundation

One of the lessons to be learned from the work of the LGBTQ community is the importance of testing which messages resonate with the general public (“marriage equality”) and which do not. Advancement Project, in its work on school discipline, regularly holds focus groups and conducts polling to determine what messages will shift public opinion, help mobilize communities, and advance organizing efforts to change harsh discipline policies.



Emmett Carson, president and CEO of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, believes this type of communications and marketing research needs to be done more widely in the field. The right messaging, he says, should make people understand why it is in their own

self-interest to oppose policies that negatively affect African-American males. Carson asks, “What are the messages that will enable the broader community to say, ‘That’s not good for America. That’s not good for me?’”

## RESOURCES



### **Being Black Is Not a Risk Factor**

*National Black Child Development Institute*

Report challenges the prevailing discourse about black children by lifting up their strengths and assets.



### **Black Male Re-Imagined I Black Male Re-Imagined II**

*American Values Institute, Ford Foundation, Knight Foundation, Open Society Foundations*

Two summits of artists, media influencers, foundation executives, and advocacy organizations address what it takes to transform negative perceptions of black males.



### **Messaging Memo: Changing Media Coverage and Public Perceptions of African-American Men & Boys**

*The Opportunity Agenda*

Tool provides messaging advice for changing perceptions of African-American males.



### **Opportunity for Black Men and Boys: Public Opinion, Media Depictions, and Media Consumption**

*The Opportunity Agenda*

Report presents findings from three studies: literature review on media images of black males, public opinion research review, and media consumption trends among black men.



### **Portrayal and Perception: Two Audits of News Media Reporting on African American Men and Boys**

*Heinz Endowments*

Report’s findings highlight a media scene in Pittsburgh that underrepresents black males, especially in terms of their positive achievements.



### **Transforming Perception: Black Men and Boys**

Executive summary presents findings from social psychology and neuroscience to explain how emotions about race shape behaviors and biases.

For additional resources, visit: [bmafunders.org/beloved-community](https://bmafunders.org/beloved-community)

# LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL PLATFORMS

“Everyone involved in the field should have an active social media presence and leverage that as much as possible,” declares former White House advisor Joshua DuBois. Indeed, almost all of our interviewees expressed enthusiasm about opportunities to use social media and digital platforms in creative and powerful ways to advance the field of black male achievement. At the same time, even the most active users of social media strike a note of caution, asserting that social media and digital platforms are simply tools in the toolbox and that old-fashioned grassroots organizing and strategy must accompany social media to be effective.

## EDUCATING AND ORGANIZING

Many see online platforms as an important tool for educating the field and the general public, as well as organizing for action. For example, the shooting of Trayvon Martin received relatively little attention when it occurred. However, on-the-ground advocacy and organizing efforts brought it to national news, leading to the creation of a Change.org petition. The number of petition signatures surged when a Change.org employee reached out via Twitter to targeted celebrities, asking them to share the petition with their fans. The online petition created a way for millions of citizens to sustain the story and take action. In fact, connecting the story to a specific action may have increased the rate of people sharing the story online, keeping it front and center in an otherwise fickle news cycle.<sup>12</sup>

Race-specific and activist media like ColorOfChange and Black Youth Project also played an important role. They mobilized pressure in the George Zimmerman case,

framing and interpreting the unfolding story in ways that influenced public opinion and perhaps traditional journalism. These organizations are often cited as exemplars of how the Internet can be used to amplify political organizing.

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“Everyone involved in the field should have an active social media presence and leverage that as much as possible.”

Joshua DuBois, former White House advisor

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## COLLABORATION AND CONNECTION

Between Google Hangouts and Twitter chats, social media and digital platforms have the power to connect people and catalyze collaboration. The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans has been especially effective in using Twitter chats to elevate issues around education and black male achievement. Shawn Dove of Open Society Foundations describes Twitter as a “digital underground railroad.” Reflecting on a recent Twitter chat, Dove notes there was “lots of discussion, sharing of ideas, and connecting in real time. As a result of that one-hour Twitter chat, I can guarantee that there are two people who didn’t know each other at 11:59 AM that by 12:50 PM were connected, and that something’s going to happen through [that] connection.”

Technology as a tool for collaboration was also apparent in the Black Male Achievement Startup Weekend, a hackathon held in Oakland, CA in February 2014. Built on the question, “Could an

app have saved Trayvon’s life?” the hackathon brought together 40 African-American teenagers who spent two frenetic days alongside engineers and business professionals to design, code, and pitch their apps and business plans before a panel of judges. Their ideas ranged from an app that makes it easy to text close family and friends when an individual is feeling unsafe to a social network for students of color attending private schools.

As one of the largest foundations in the United States, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has been recognized as a philanthropic trailblazer in its use of social media. When the Foundation launched its Forward Promise initiative, it did something unusual for philanthropy: It used social media to solicit ideas

for ways to support young men of color. This “call for ideas” generated more than 500 responses, engaging many who might not have otherwise been connected to the Foundation. While the call was a major success, program officer Maisha Simmons acknowledges that the Foundation is still assessing ways to respond effectively. “We used new-school ways to reach out, but we had an old-school way of cataloguing” the ideas that came in.

## COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

DuBois observes that new media and traditional media can work hand-in-hand by creating a virtuous cycle in which Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social networks can help promote and spark discussion about

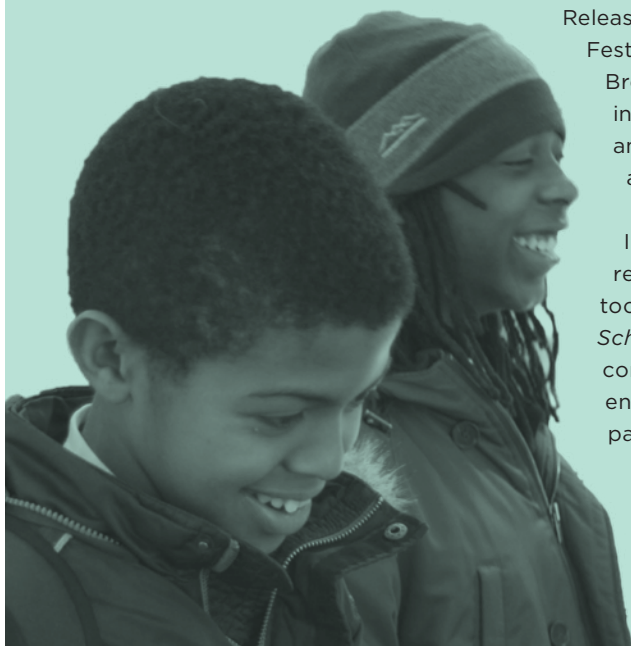
With the release of their documentary, *American Promise*, Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson, middle-class African-American parents in Brooklyn, NY, have coupled film with other offline and online communication strategies to generate public dialogue about perceptions of black boys. For 13 years, they filmed their son, Idris, and his best friend, Seun, as they attended Dalton, a prestigious private school. The couple sought initially to document the experience of attending an independent school but quickly realized the experience of the two boys lifted up complicated issues related to race and class. In an NPR interview, Stephenson says she made *American Promise* to address implicit assumptions about black boys—“around their ability to learn, around expectations and impressions of them being, perhaps, a little more dangerous than others.”<sup>13</sup>

## AMERICAN PROMISE

Released in 2013, the film won critical acclaim at the Sundance Film Festival and later aired on the PBS series *POV*. While Stephenson and Brewster have made appearances around the country and even internationally at the United Nations in Geneva to promote the film and ignite discussions about supporting black boys, they have also advanced the conversation through other creative means as well.

In collaboration with writer Hillary Beard, they developed resources for parents, educators, and students, including a toolkit called *Promises Kept: Raising Black Boys to Succeed in School and in Life*. The American Promise team has also provoked conversation by sponsoring several Twitter chats and by encouraging “Promise Club” meetups throughout the country so parents can support one another.

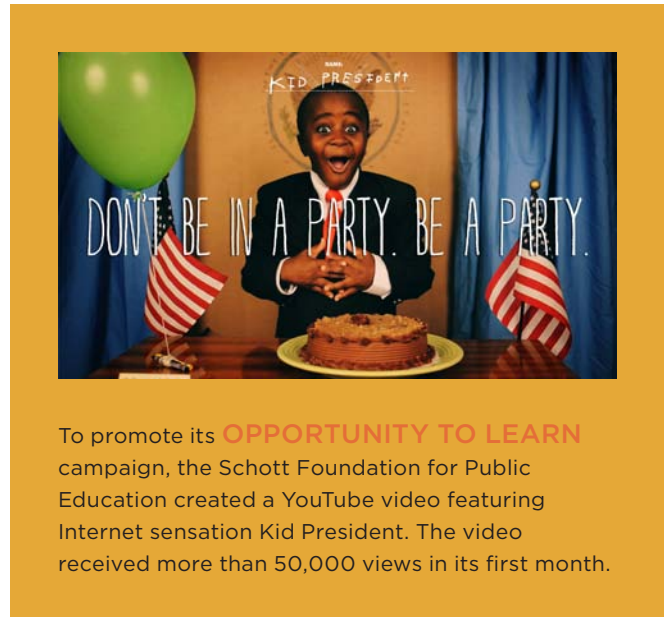
Through the power of documentary filmmaking and an arsenal of accompanying tools, Stephenson and Brewster are driving important conversations about perceptions and opportunities among audiences that might not otherwise be reached.



traditional media content, giving it a longer shelf life and potentially reaching larger and more diverse audiences.

While social media can help expand the reach of traditional media, the shifting media landscape requires rethinking the mode of communication itself and figuring out creative, accessible ways of telling a story. John Jackson of the Schott Foundation for Public Education observes, “I don’t think publishing 50- to 60-page reports is going to continue to be effective, especially in a larger society that speaks in 140 characters or less.”

With that realization, in recent years, the Schott Foundation has moved beyond traditional research reports and has used infographics to share the results of their research and advocacy work. For example, the Foundation’s Color of School Closure infographic, which highlights the disproportionate impact of school closings on minority and low-income students, quickly



generated interest on Facebook and Twitter, reaching more than 800,000 people. Similarly, a Foundation-produced video with Internet star Kid President posted on YouTube garnered 50,000 views within a month of its release.

To promote its **OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN** campaign, the Schott Foundation for Public Education created a YouTube video featuring Internet sensation Kid President. The video received more than 50,000 views in its first month.

## RESOURCES



### ColorOfChange

Organization engages in lobbying and public education to strengthen the political voice of black Americans, effectively using social media to rally its members and the public around campaigns.



### Harnessing Collaborative Technologies

#### GrantCraft

Interactive tool finder helps funders work together better by allowing for exploration of collaborative technologies.

For additional resources, visit: [bmafunders.org/beloved-community](http://bmafunders.org/beloved-community)



Photo: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## INCREASE THE EVIDENCE BASE

**A**cross the board, funders and practitioners alike acknowledge the need for a better understanding of what is working—and not working—in the field. Such knowledge is crucial for developing approaches that can achieve desired outcomes, develop standards, leverage additional funding, and be taken to scale for greater impact. Bob Ross, president of the California Endowment, summarizes, “There are far more well-intentioned, opinion-laden anecdotes of effectiveness than there are evidence-laden proven practices.”

A handful of organizations represented by our interviewees—Black Family Development, Inc., Harlem Children’s Zone, Los Angeles Brotherhood Crusade, and United Way of New York City among them—describe data collection and data-based decision making as a core part of their work. The United Way of New York City, for example, has a research arm responsible for evaluating the organization’s work and recommending course corrections.

Most interviewees, though, recognize their organizations could be doing a better job of documenting and evaluating their work. Shawn Dove of Open Society Foundations acknowledges, “The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation waded into this with evaluation at the front end. That’s something we didn’t do and so we’re backtracking to figure out how best to do that.”

### BE EXPLICIT ABOUT GOALS

To advance evidence-based practice, it is critical to be clear about the desired goals and outcomes. For example, all too often programmatic goals and desired outcomes do

not match up with available resources. Making choices about what to prioritize, whether it is a subject area, geographic area, or population group, or some combination of these, is key. This targeted approach helps set the work up for success rather than failure. Likewise, for programs with a broader focus on boys and men of color, it is important to be explicit within that frame about what works for whom and how cultural nuances might influence the intervention or its impacts.

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“ There are far more well-intentioned, opinion-laden anecdotes of effectiveness than there are evidence-laden proven practices. ”

Bob Ross, president, California Endowment

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### DISAGGREGATE DATA

Measuring goals and outcomes requires good data, and for the work of black male achievement, disaggregated data are essential. Geoffrey Canada of Harlem Children’s Zone explains that while boys in their programs are doing better than their peers nationally, the girls they work with tend to do better. The agency is bolstering its efforts among the lower grades with the goal of keeping boys engaged over the long term through sports and other programs.

As multilevel and ecosystemic approaches take shape, a challenge can be measuring community- and systems-level outcomes versus individual-level goals. Here, too,

disaggregated data are critical, as experience by education advocates demonstrates. Data by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights highlight the disparities faced by black male public school students in suspensions and expulsions. Advocates have used this knowledge to drive systemic reforms in school disciplinary policies. Data by race and gender are needed for all issues affecting black men and boys, including the foster care system and probation, in order to begin conversations that can change systems.

### FOCUS ON EVALUATING INTERVENTIONS

Many interviewees cited the need for more research, particularly around interventions. Micah Gilmer of Frontline Solutions specializes in applied research and observes, "We're not at a place where we're able to say from a causal standpoint, these activities are the best ways to do it." There are many promising practices that need more evaluation to be identified as evidence-based best practices.

BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) is nationally recognized for its rigorous program evaluation and serves as a model for other organizations. All its evaluation activities are

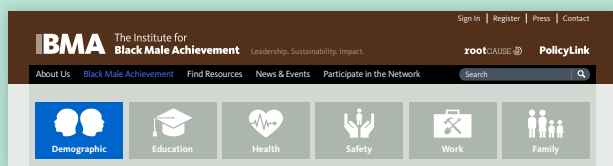
guided by an external, interdisciplinary advisory board, and BELL issues annual evaluation reports for its programs. The Urban Institute completed a two-year randomized study of BELL's summer program and found statistically significant evidence of its impact on children's reading achievement and parental involvement. BELL was chosen to be a part of the Social Impact Exchange's S&I 100 Index, the first broad index of U.S. nonprofits with proof of their results.

Interviewees cited specific areas where more evaluation is needed, including rites of passage programs, as well as mentoring programs, particularly as they relate to youth outcomes. Joe Jones, who works on fatherhood issues, cites the need to better understand how participation in a fatherhood program directly impacts child development. Understanding the impact of these programs and the factors that contribute to their success is important for practitioners and funders alike, as the field seeks to scale up the work for greater impact.

### CREATE A SHARED FRAMEWORK

Beyond program-level goals and outcomes, many interviewees advocated for a shared field-

## TOOLS FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS AND MEASURING IMPACT



other tools, cutting across issue areas, to assess program progress and measure impact. But a major issue is ensuring that protocols are culturally relevant. To that end, BMAfunders.org has created an outcomes toolkit that focuses on measures that have been used reliably and effectively with black males in previous research.

In Spring 2014, IBMA launched another key resource, the Black Male Achievement Life Outcomes Dashboard, a central location for practitioners to obtain indicators that track opportunity for black males. The Dashboard will help IBMA members assess how black males are faring nationally and locally, choose measures that best correspond with their goals, and adopt promising policies and practices. The Dashboard includes 16 demographic, education, health, safety, economic, and family indicators and will focus initially on 17 cities, including New York City, Los Angeles, and Detroit.


wide framework. Building a common framework with a targeted set of outcomes can advance the field by helping to shape language, strategy, and marketing and communication efforts. To this end, the IBMA has built the Black Male Achievement Life Outcomes Dashboard to track a focused set of measures in order to assess progress in improving the life outcomes of black men and boys (see sidebar on p. 47).


The California Endowment has also taken initial steps toward creating a developmental framework for its work, based on research, which it believes could be a starting point for field-wide conversations. Ray Colmenar of the California Endowment suggests that “if the field can map themselves onto this framework, it could be a helpful tool to organize ourselves and


the field to do the work. This sort of mapping can help you get to the next level of strategy.” Used thoughtfully, a shared framework can minimize duplication of effort and maximize impact by encouraging foundations and their nonprofit partners to think about their work in a coordinated, strategic, field-level manner.


ABFE is also advancing this effort, working with Mark McDaniel, a scholar based at the University of North Carolina, to identify measures of progress and indicators of success. Susan Taylor Batten, president and CEO of ABFE, hopes McDaniel’s efforts can help articulate and document “what we collectively mean by progress and success” across foundation initiatives supporting black men and boys.

## RESOURCES

 **Accelerating Results for Black Males: Resource Guides for Promise Neighborhoods**  
Guides help communities promote black male achievement, with a particular focus on data and results.

 **BMA Life Outcomes Dashboard**  
*Institute for Black Male Achievement*  
Dashboard tracks life outcome measures to provide the field a unifying reference for assessing progress at local and national levels.

 **Outcomes Toolkit**  
*BMAfunders.org*  
Online collection of tools includes datasets, survey instruments, and interview protocols that have been used with black males to measure outcomes and benchmark progress.

 **TRASI: Tools and Resources for Assessing Social Impact**  
*Foundation Center*  
Online database contains over 150 ready-to-use tools to measure the impact of social programs and investments.

For additional resources, visit: [bmafunders.org/beloved-community](https://bmafunders.org/beloved-community)





Photo: Urban Prep Academies

# INVEST IN HOLISTIC, PREVENTATIVE, AND SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS

The leaders we spoke with recognize that the challenges facing black men are systemic in nature and call for systemic solutions. At the same time, much of the existing work focuses on individual-level or single-issue interventions that do not take into account the larger, interconnected context of black men's lives. Likewise, many direct service organizations focus on supporting black men and boys as they face the consequences of policies that have resulted in poor educational outcomes or disproportionate rates of incarceration.

While such interventions are critical and necessary, several interviewees expressed a desire to see greater investments in organizations that help tackle root causes, rather than symptoms. This includes investing in programs that offer holistic services, given the interconnectedness of issues like education, workforce development, and family preservation. Similarly, greater attention needs to be paid to prevention and early intervention approaches that can enhance life opportunities for black males, as well as policy solutions that can change the structures that limit opportunities for African-American men.

## HOLISTIC APPROACHES

"You don't improve fatherhood without there being good job prospects. You probably don't improve the employment issue without some schooling involved. Everything is linked to everything," says University of Michigan professor Alford Young, Jr. The interdependence of these outcomes underscores the need for programs that support black men in multiple dimensions of their lives.

The success of Harlem Children's Zone—which focuses on individuals and on the entire community and provides a wide range of resources, services, and support to families—is frequently cited as a model to emulate. President and CEO Geoffrey Canada cautions that it took nearly 10 years and a huge investment to build out its model. He advocates for taking initiatives like his to scale but also stresses the need to think carefully about how to leverage the return on investment. Rather than trying to start new programs, Canada believes that funders should buttress existing programs with a strong track record by adding resources for a specific emphasis on black men and boys.

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“ You don't improve fatherhood without there being good job prospects. You probably don't improve the employment issue without some schooling involved. Everything is linked to everything. ”

Alford Young, Jr., professor, University of Michigan

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## PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Coupled with holistic approaches, early intervention and prevention models are also crucial investments as the field works toward more positive life outcomes for black males. Emmett Carson, president and CEO of the Silicon Valley Foundation, states, "Life is a progressive trail. It's hard to catch somebody up if they start out behind." Citing medical research

that 85 percent of learning pathways are created in the first five years of life, Carson advocates for a focus on early child development and systematically looking at key intervention points.

Indeed, the California Endowment and Annie E. Casey Foundation's focus on grade-level reading (one that is also adopted by My Brother's Keeper) is predicated on the notion that an investment in early childhood education can improve the probability of positive life outcomes. As Canada points out, in the end, public and private investments in holistic, preventative, and early intervention approaches are "a lot less expensive than the alternative, which are jails and prisons."

## POLICY

In the past year, advocates have achieved policy victories that will increase opportunities

for black men and boys. In January 2014, the Departments of Education and Justice jointly released guidelines encouraging school districts to end punitive disciplinary practices. Efforts by the Dignity in Schools Campaign and Advancement Project, among others, have led to local and statewide policy changes that reduce suspensions and arrests in schools and implement positive approaches to discipline.

While these accomplishments were applauded, several interviewees criticized the overall lack of policy advocacy efforts within the field of black male achievement. Judith Browne Dianis of Advancement Project observes that it is important to address the roots of the challenges faced by black men. "There are not a lot of people in the [field] that are necessarily doing systems change. To have lasting impact on a large scale, there must be more focus on eliminating the structures and policies that act

## MARYLAND HOUSE BILL 333, COUPLES ADVANCING TOGETHER PILOT PROGRAM

Joe Jones of the Center for Urban Families knows what it takes to vault direct service work into a systemic solution through policy change. He helped develop the Maryland bill "Couples Advancing Together," which transforms how state agencies address couples in committed relationships. For years, Jones observed low-income couples with children falling into a pattern of poverty and family breakup. He believed the public sector was complicit in facilitating this outcome given the structure of the state benefits system, which focused almost exclusively on mother and child, interacting with the father only to collect child support.

In a talk before business and civic leaders, Jones argued against this approach, suggesting that the state alter its policies to help couples strengthen their relationship and find family-friendly employment that supported them as a unit. His proposal piqued legislator Sandy Rosenberg's interest. Together, they crafted a bill that Rosenberg introduced to the Maryland General Assembly in January 2012. The process was not without its setbacks: The bill was quickly rejected the first time around. But when Rosenberg reintroduced it in 2013, it made its way to the desk of Governor Martin O'Malley, who signed it into law.

With funding for evaluation from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a pilot collaboration between the Center for Urban Families and the Maryland Department of Human Resources is rolling out Couples Advancing Together in three Maryland communities. The passage of this bill has profound implications, having the potential to galvanize similar action in other states and ultimately impact thousands of families as the practice becomes institutionalized.

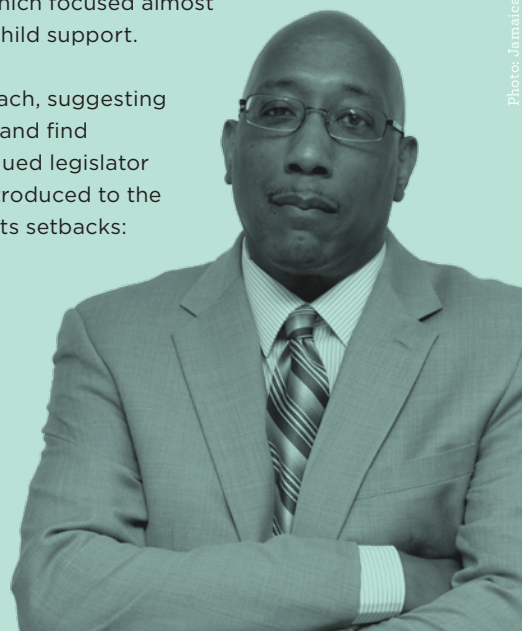


Photo: Jamaica Gilmer & Frontline Solutions, LLC

as barriers to opportunity.” Indeed, the IBMA member survey finds that while members do engage in systems change-related activities, such as policy advocacy (27 percent) and community organizing (37 percent), only 14 percent focus on one of these as their *primary* activity.<sup>14</sup>

Yet, the disparities between public and private funding underscore the need for systems-level change. “Philanthropy spends \$1 billion on education, compared to \$600 billion at the federal, state, or local level,” notes the Schott Foundation’s John Jackson. “So if the policies that are in place are not advantageous to black males and males of color, we’re out-resourced trying to build the public and political will to change the tide.” The Foundation regularly engages elected officials in its education work

to promote district- and state-level change. This type of outreach with elected leaders to change policies and practices can have broad-reaching and long-lasting effects.

As an outgrowth of its direct service work and trainings, Black Family Development, Inc. in Detroit has been working with community-based organizations, school districts, the courts, and the police department to review practices and policies to ensure that black boys are fairly and appropriately treated. Similarly, the Center for Urban Families in Baltimore backed into policy work and organizing efforts as a part of its direct service work with families. In 2013, the Center played a critical role in passing state legislation that creates supports for family preservation (see sidebar on p. 51).

## RESOURCES



### Advancement Project

Civil rights organization works nationally to strengthen social movements and achieve high-impact policy change, including dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline for young men of color.



### Advocacy Funding: The Philanthropy of Changing Minds

*GrantCraft*

Guide offers resources and strategies for advocacy funders on topics such as working with grantees who lobby, building a case, cultivating a constituency, and preparing for opposition.



### Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Research and policy organization focuses on policies to improve the lives of low-income people. Its work includes improving outcomes for young black men, as well as young men of color.



### City Leadership to Promote Black Male Achievement

*National League of Cities*

Municipal action guide presents strategies for reducing the disparities between black males and their peers.



### Mayor’s Commission on African-American Males: Recommendations Report

*City of Philadelphia, Mayor’s Commission on African-American Males*

Report presents a series of policy recommendations to improve conditions for Philadelphia’s African-American men and boys.



### We Dream a World: The 2025 Vision for Black Men and Boys

*2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys*

Report lays out a comprehensive policy agenda for addressing the problems that hinder black males.

For additional resources, visit: [bmafunders.org/beloved-community](https://bmafunders.org/beloved-community)

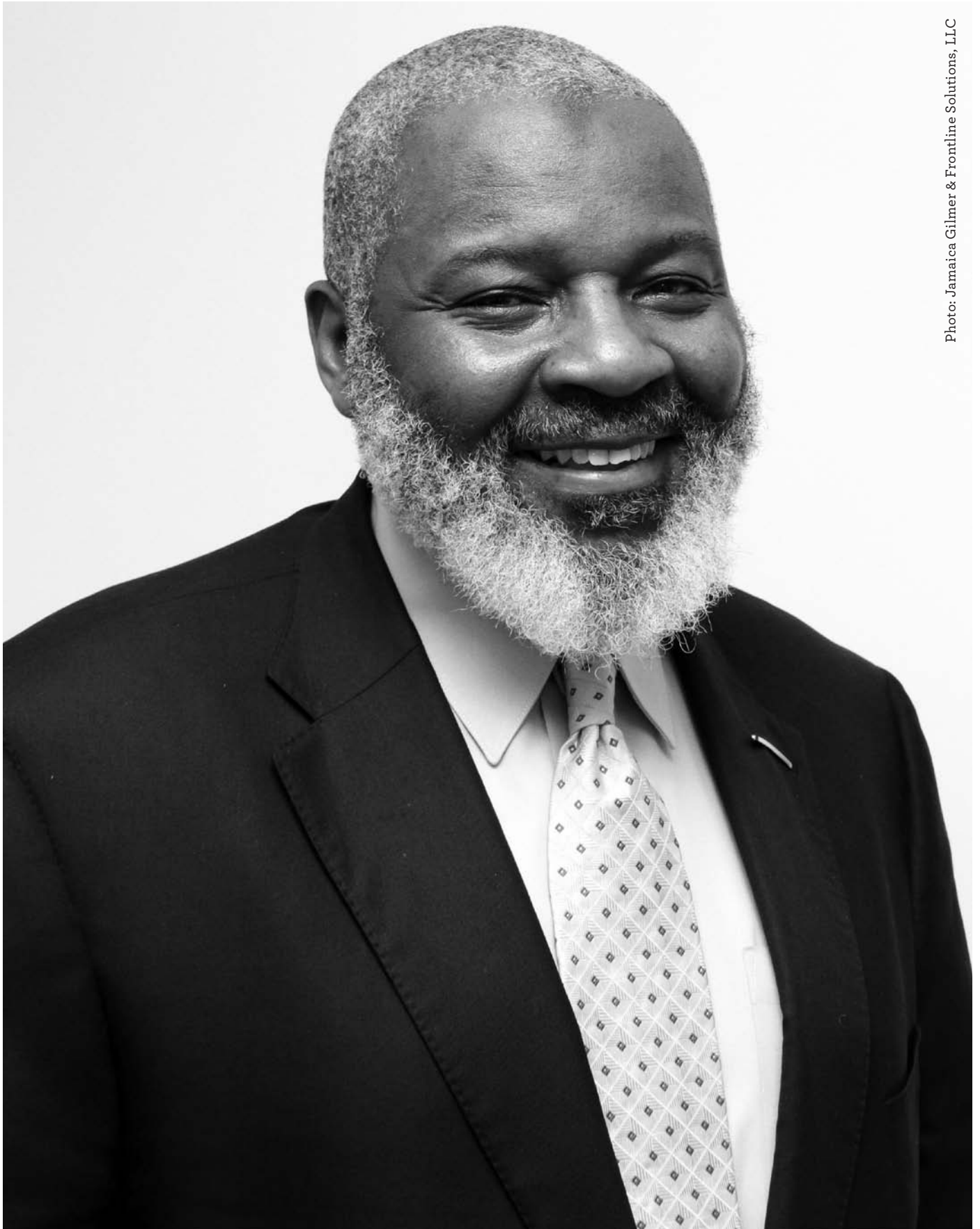


Photo: Jamaica Gilmer & Frontline Solutions, LLC

## INVEST IN ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

**H**istorically, programs focused on serving African-American males have struggled. In 1995, the Urban Institute described 51 “promising” or “effective programs.” Ten years later, three-quarters were no longer focused on black males. The 2008 Ford Foundation report *Why We Can’t Wait* describes the normative state for many practitioners as “operating in crisis mode.” The authors conclude, “The life cycles and capacity of organizations that serve African-American men and boys are significant issues that the philanthropic community must address.”<sup>15</sup> Six years later, nonprofit capacity continues to be a major concern for the field.

One prominent effort to invest in organizational development and capacity building is the Institute for Black Male Achievement, co-led by Root Cause and PolicyLink. The IBMA seeks to ensure the growth, sustainability, and impact of leaders and organizations that are improving life outcomes for black men and boys (see sidebar on p. 55). According to the IBMA, the top capacity areas that IBMA organizations prioritize for support are: 1) financial sustainability; 2) performance measurement and impact; and 3) strategy.

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

In his role overseeing Echoing Green’s Black Male Achievement Fellows, Decker Ngongang supports social entrepreneurs to launch and sustain black male achievement-focused ventures. Ngongang does this by identifying strategies to support both the personal and professional growth of these social entrepreneurs. He may ask about their business plans or how they articulate impact, or he may seek to help them identify a mentor or push

them to take a day off. For the many small and mid-sized nonprofit organizations engaged in this work, developing fundamental skills and positive life strategies is crucial.


“By 2020, I see the IBMA as an institution that has over 20,000 members, leaders, and organizations that are connected to this work...I see the IBMA continuing to reinforce and drive those intangible feelings of hope and anticipation and translate those into outcomes on a local and national basis.”

Shawn Dove, campaign manager,  
Open Society Foundations

To this end, the IBMA offers a host of opportunities and knowledge tools to address the questions Ngongang articulates. The Capacity Building and Sustainability Center offers everything from online resources to webinars to the Organizational and Leadership Capacity Assessment, which helps members identify their strengths and areas for improvement and generates a capacity-building action plan with steps and recommended resources to strengthen the improvement areas.

In July 2013, it selected seven leaders for its Social Innovation Accelerator, as a way to provide direct capacity-building support and



“The Institute for Black Male Achievement has the potential to be the key catalytic engine for the black male achievement movement,” declares Shawn Dove of the Open Society Foundations. “There is a sense of excitement and expectation that hasn’t existed for a long time when you talk about black male achievement in this country.” 

Created in 2012, funded by nine foundations, and co-led by Root Cause and PolicyLink, the IBMA is a national network of more than 2,500 members representing 1,680 organizations working to improve the life outcomes for black men and boys through systemic change. Members are working on a significant scale, directly serving more than 600,000 individuals per year and mobilizing millions more through advocacy. Marc Philpart, associate director of PolicyLink, describes the IBMA as “the country’s brightest and most talented individuals and organizations addressing the most pernicious social problems of our day.”

The IBMA works to tackle longstanding systemic barriers to black male achievement by supporting organizations and leaders to build capacity, forge connections, and advance policy change. Andrew Wolk, founder and CEO of Root Cause, states that the IBMA was “built to be around for decades, because the problem that we’re trying to tackle will take decades for inroads to actually be made.”

With the overarching goal of backing the creation of a robust movement for black male achievement, the IBMA offers various knowledge tools to support the countless number of networks, organizations, and leaders working to achieve equity for black men and boys. Some examples include providing capacity-building service grants, building a black male achievement life outcomes dashboard, managing five communities of practice, creating an online resource library, and launching the Social Innovation Accelerator, which works with a select group of leaders to surface innovative models for the black male achievement field.

“By 2020, I see the IBMA as an institution that has over 20,000 members, leaders, and organizations that are connected to this work,” predicts Dove. “I see the IBMA continuing to reinforce and drive those intangible feelings of hope and anticipation and translate those into outcomes on a local and national basis.”



Photo: The Eagle Academy Foundation

also to showcase and spread what works in the field. In March 2014, the IBMA launched a grant opportunity for up to 20 organizations to access capacity-building services, funded through a grant pool it aims to grow over time.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Successful programs invest considerable time and effort in professional development. Khary Lazarre-White of Brotherhood Sister Sol describes the intensive training of the organization’s staff and their ongoing education through brown bags and workshops as crucial to youth outcomes. Geoffrey Canada notes that

Harlem Children’s Zone makes a conscious effort to employ black men throughout its programs. The visibility of positive role models, he believes, makes a difference for program participants.

At the same time, scholar Jawanza Kunjufu and others note that upwards of 80 percent of elementary school teachers are white females. Regardless of how successfully the minority leadership pipeline develops, these numbers will not shift dramatically in the near future. Thus, in education and other fields, a critical piece of professional development is cultural competence, or as Chris Chatmon of the Oakland Unified School District says, changing

“the behavior and the expectations and –isms within adults in the system.”

Cultural competence training includes not only awareness and sensitivity related to race and ethnicity, but also an understanding of how race intersects with gender, sexuality, and other identities. Joe Jones, for example, notes that service providers who want to work effectively with black males need to deconstruct notions of masculinity and understand the ways in which help-seeking behavior is influenced by ideas of what it means to be a “man.”

### FUNDRAISING AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Nonprofit leaders working with black men and boys agree that there are rarely enough resources to deal with the size of the challenges. As Lazarre-White states, “Everybody I know is

struggling.” Indeed, respondents to the IBMA member survey identified financial sustainability as their most important need by far.

The nonprofit sector commonly cites diversified funding as a core requirement for financial sustainability. While philanthropy is supporting and catalyzing much of the work related to black male achievement, sustainability of programs and organizations depends on a mix of private contributions, government grants, and fees for services. For example, in an effort to expand revenue streams beyond philanthropy, COSEBOC, a national network of school leaders serving boys and young men of color, is in the process of developing a menu of fee-for-service products. However, many nonprofits do not have development staff or fundraising capacity to diversify their funding and achieve financial stability.

## RESOURCES



### GrantSpace

*Foundation Center*

Website offers information and resources to equip nonprofits with the know-how for securing funding and operating effective organizations.



### Institute for Black Male Achievement, Capacity Building and Sustainability Center

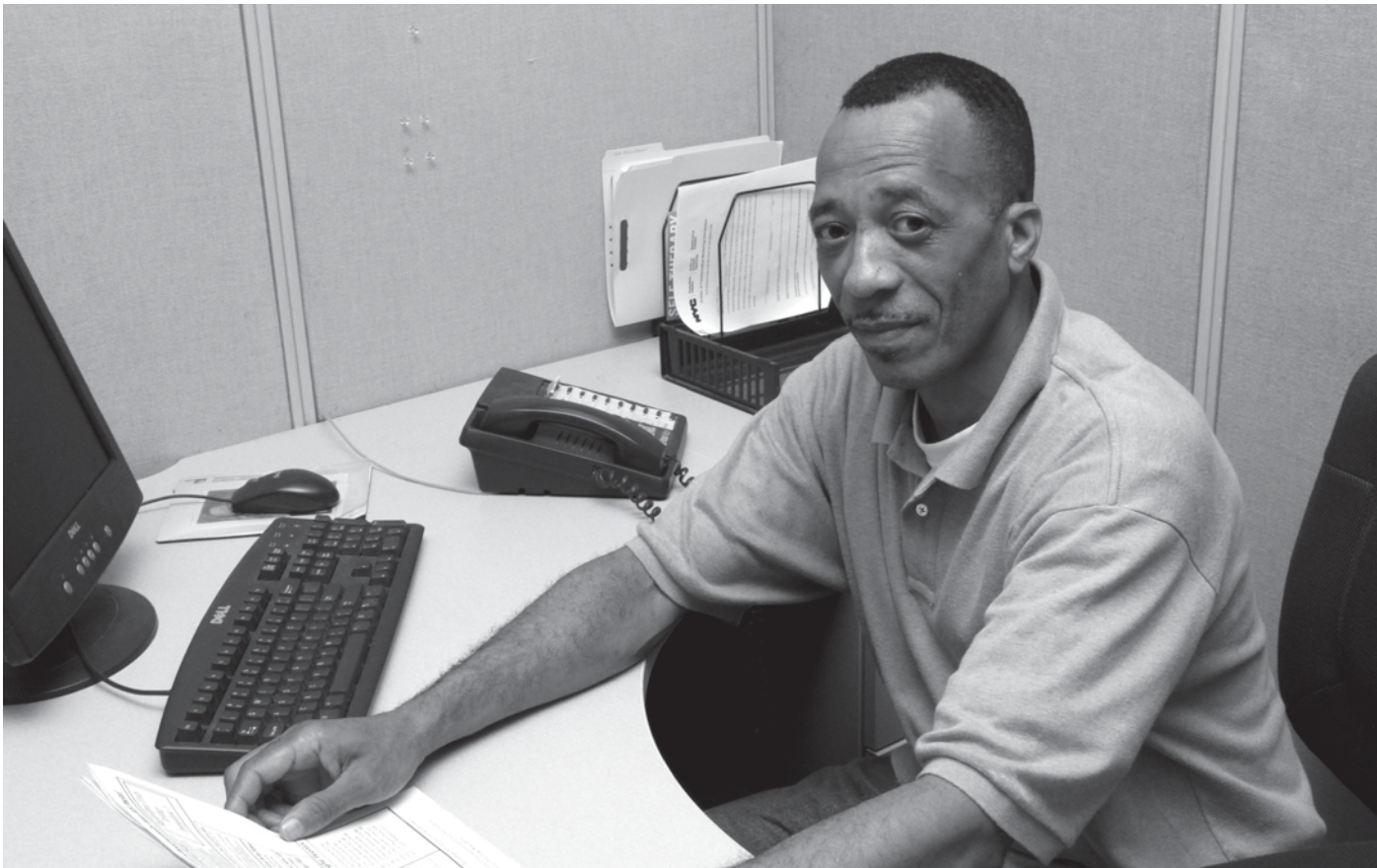
National membership network provides capacity-building resources to strengthen organizations serving black men and boys. Its Organizational and Leadership Capacity Assessment helps members identify strengths and areas for improvement.

For additional resources, visit: [bmafunders.org/beloved-community](https://bmafunders.org/beloved-community)





Photos: Jamaica Gilmer & Frontline Solutions, LLC



## BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS

A variety of formal and informal networks, collaboratives, and partnerships exist in the field, spanning and bridging different sectors. These networks have the potential to help move forward complicated and ambitious agendas and contribute to sustainability. While such networks are critical for coordination and larger impact, there is a lingering sense that existing networks are fragile.

Several black male-focused networks have dissolved over the past years, demonstrating how tenuous these groups can be. The Black Male Donor Collaborative, for example, was a promising partnership of corporate donors and foundations committed to improving the academic achievement of black males in New York City. The Collaborative ultimately folded when the economic recession, as well as changes in leadership, caused corporate partners to pull back. Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families' Healthy Men, Healthy Communities initiative is another example of a network that faded away due to a lack of clear goals and leadership.

Key elements of strong networks include financial support specifically for the network, clearly identified purpose and mission, staffing support, and trusted leadership and facilitation. As Marc Philpart, who helps build and nurture networks as part of his work at PolicyLink, states, "Facilitation is incredibly important; networks don't just form on their own. You have to have someone actively curating and cultivating that group and trying to focus on building community."

### COORDINATING AND SYNCHRONIZING THE WORK

As the number of organizations working in the field of black male achievement in some shape or form grows, it is increasingly important to coordinate what Root Cause's Andrew Wolk describes as a growing and crowded field. Though networks are not yet operating optimally, they have the potential to minimize duplication of effort and maximize field-level impact.

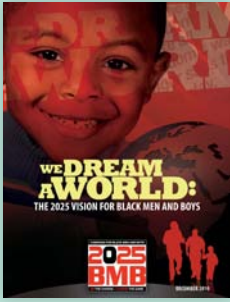
COSEBOC is a national network of school leaders serving boys and young men of color. Its membership represents 600 schools educating 300,000 students, and the network plays a critical role in information sharing and learning. For example, COSEBOC sends out research on promising practices to its members, provides standards-based professional development, and offers networking opportunities, such as its annual Gathering of Leaders.

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“ We need to find synergies across the playing field. If we don't connect the dots, then it will be one more example of an opportunity missed, reinventing the wheel, or wasting time. ”

Ron Walker, executive director, COSEBOC

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## 2025 NETWORK FOR BLACK MEN AND BOYS

A boy born in 2007 will be 18 years old by the year 2025. How do we ensure that his life and opportunities are significantly different from what black males currently experience? This was the question posed by the 2025 Network for Black Men and Boys, a national collaboration of several organizations and individuals formed in 2006. The answer was framed in a comprehensive policy platform, *We Dream a World*, written by Rhonda Tsoi-a-Fatt Bryant of CLASP. The report served as a roadmap for the nascent work of black male achievement and guided several foundations as they began considering portfolios focused on black males.

Though heralded as an extremely important, pioneering effort, the Network has been plagued by challenges. Initially, it was housed at the Twenty-First Century Foundation, but the Foundation's merger with the Tides Foundation in 2012 deprived the already under-resourced network of key supports. Other foundations have supported specific projects, but investment in the infrastructure of the Network itself has been minimal. The Network's work continues as participating organizations ante up volunteer time and staff resources. Most recently, the Network hosted a series of webinars on gun violence.

Despite its struggles, Marcus Littles of Frontline Solutions describes the individuals from the 2025 Network as the backbone of local efforts currently taking place in cities across the country. "The current national infrastructure of black male achievement rests on the shoulders of 2025," he states. Still, the experiences of 2025 as a network hold lessons for the field today. Littles observes that robust networks require investment in infrastructure and strategy as well as organic leadership that is, to some degree, independent of funders.

In an effort to promote better coordination, the Institute for Black Male Achievement provides infrastructure and support for five communities of practice. They are the Responsible Fatherhood Roundtable, the Promise Neighborhoods Institute, the California Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, and the National League of Cities, which encompasses two technical assistance initiatives: Cities for Black Male Achievement and Cities United.

These communities of practice are a space for participants with a commitment to black male achievement to share knowledge and align their respective activities toward common goals. The IBMA coordinates this dialogue in a formal manner, more so than what might occur in ad hoc meetings or through chance encounters at conferences. By scheduling regular meetings, offering a clearer mission and sense of purpose, and staffing work groups, these communities of practice are able to strategize collaboratively and share their learnings with one another to make their work more effective.

## LEVERAGING RESOURCES ACROSS SECTORS

In addition to coordinating efforts, networks and partnerships can break down silos and contribute to sustaining the work by helping to leverage resources across sectors. States Ron Walker, executive director of COSEBOC, "We need to find synergies across the playing field. If we don't connect the dots, then it will be one more example of an opportunity missed, reinventing the wheel, or wasting time."

Decker Ngongang, who oversees the Echoing Green Black Male Achievement Fellowship, sees informal partnerships beginning to form among Echoing Green Fellows and members of the field of black male achievement. He believes these connections will ultimately contribute to the sustainability of the work by "diffusing access to resources in wider and deeper ways that allow for the most impactful and efficient tools to get to everyone without implied gatekeepers." By making these links, Ngongang believes the field can better manage risk: "If foundation X stopped giving to organization Y tomorrow, the

intellectual and social capital isn't cut off. The movement doesn't die with one organization."

### BRIDGING LOCAL AND NATIONAL WORK

Much of the attention, particularly from national foundations, has focused on major urban centers or national organizations. One area of opportunity for networks is to help bridge local and national work. Greg Hodge, a longtime consultant and youth development policy advocate, observes, "There are so many interesting possibilities when you elevate something to a national conversation, but then there's got to be some resources that begin to

flow at the local level to really implement some of those ideas."

Just as the national infrastructure can catalyze local capacity, the regional work can also inform the national conversation. Chris Chatmon, who leads Oakland Unified School District's Office of African American Male Achievement, notes, "There are experts and tacticians of African-American male achievement in every neighborhood, in every school. Sometimes we don't do a good enough job looking at the brilliance of the folks who are actually doing the work in every city."

## RESOURCES



### Brotherhood of Elders Network

Intergenerational Bay Area network instills cultural pride and identity and serves as community thought partners and advocates.



### Catalyzing Networks for Social Change

*Monitor Institute, Grantmakers for Effective Organizations*

Guide assists grantmakers in using networks to build and boost the impact of their philanthropy.



### A Gathering of Leaders 2013: Postscript

Report highlights recommendations and lessons learned from a three-day convening of social change leaders working to improve opportunities for males of color.



### Institute for Black Male Achievement, Communities of Practice

Collaborative infrastructure supports networks of leaders to connect, share knowledge, and align their activities toward shared goals.



### Leadership and Action Network, Association for Black Foundation Executives

Group of program officers and foundation leaders meets quarterly to discuss best practices and ways to sustain the work.



### Scholars Network on Black Masculinity

Association of academics committed to reshaping understandings of the lives of African-American men.

For additional resources, visit: [bmafunders.org/beloved-community](http://bmafunders.org/beloved-community)



Photo: Urban Prep Academies

## RETHINK PHILANTHROPY

Currently, much of the work focused on black male achievement is funded by philanthropy. Yet as Rahsaan Harris states, “Philanthropy is for innovation, soft leadership, and creating a spark”; it cannot single-handedly move an issue forward. Loren Harris adds, “This field has been particularly and acutely subject to waves of waning philanthropic interest.” Taking the fatherhood field as an example, Joe Jones notes that funders have come and gone over the years, with Annie E. Casey Foundation being one of the only foundations to make a consistent commitment over the years. Jones states simply, “One foundation in no way can sustain a field.”

Given the nature of philanthropic funding in black male achievement, there is consensus that other forms of support must be tapped. At the same time, there are also things that can be done differently within traditional philanthropy to support organizations more effectively.

“ We have to find ways to ‘hard wire’ a race and gender lens into all investments. ”

Susan Taylor Batten, president and CEO, ABFE

### LONGER FUNDING COMMITMENTS AND GENERAL SUPPORT FUNDING

One of the primary challenges of philanthropic funding is that it tends to be based on short grantmaking cycles, even though foundation presidents like Emmett Carson recognize the work as “a long-haul effort” that requires a long-term vision. Open Society Foundations’

Campaign for Black Male Achievement began in 2008 as a three-year initiative, but the Foundation staked its commitment by lifting the term limit and increasing funding. In 2013, the California Endowment announced its Sons and Brothers initiative as a seven-year endeavor, unusual in the world of philanthropy.

Past initiatives have faded out as foundation strategies shifted. To avoid this, the Skillman Foundation made the decision to view its work with black and brown boys as an integral part of its overall strategy. “Our goal was not to do something highly specialized around this that would start and go away,” explains Skillman Foundation CEO Tonya Allen. “Rather, we wanted to make sure that it was embedded in our grantmaking for the long haul.”

Susan Taylor Batten, CEO of ABFE, characterizes such efforts as transformational philanthropy. “Ultimately, we have to find ways to ‘hard wire’ a race and gender lens into all investments rather than setting up special projects that are time-limited. The latter is important, but one of our goals is to change the sector so investments in black male achievement are not dependent on a particular leader.”

In addition, many espouse the need for more general support funding. According to Foundation Center research, 87 percent of grant dollars for black males supports specific programs, while only 11 percent is directed for general operating support. Sheena Wright of the United Way of New York City describes this as a “recipe for disaster.” She adds that to thrive, organizations in the field must be “fiscally healthy, have the right technology and infrastructure, and [be able to invest in] human capital to move from stability to strength to sustainability.”

## PERMANENT ENDOWED FUNDING

Loren Harris, who led the Ford Foundation’s work on black men and boys, advocates for permanent funds dedicated to black male achievement in order to ensure that “there are resources to support all the work at every level at which it needs to be done. This has to happen over time; it’s not going to happen in three-to-five-year interventions. Patient funding over time is what’s needed.” Many agree that such funds would help the field sustain its work beyond “flavor-of-the-month” philanthropic investments.

## BEYOND TRADITIONAL PHILANTHROPY

Stephen DeBerry, founder of Bronze Investments, argues that endowed funding is not the only model. Foundations in the United States are required to spend only 5 percent of their financial capital; the remaining 95 percent is invested to preserve and grow that capital. DeBerry notes, “We ignore the 95 percent of assets flowing in the philanthropic economy that we could be tapping. It would give philanthropy 20 times more dollar resources to do its work.”

DeBerry raises the concern that these investments are usually managed by those with little understanding of the social issues that foundations tackle. For example, a foundation might support black male achievement through its grantmaking, but if its investment portfolio supports private prison companies, then that foundation is impeding its mission.

Moreover, grants may not be the right type or only source of funding for some organizations. Observes Decker Ngongang of Echoing Green, “Tight timeframes from grant funding make it harder to collaborate and create impact around your theory of change.” Trabian Shorters goes further, describing foundation funding as “blood money based on the story of our demise. If you don’t tell the story of our demise you don’t get the money. That all by itself is a problem. But here’s the rub. If you tell the story of our demise for too long, you won’t get the money because you’re ineffective. It’s a lose/lose proposition. Conversely, if you were to focus on helping people grow their assets, everyone benefits and there’s always reason to invest in greater growth.”

As an impact investor, DeBerry invests in institutions and products that align social impact with strong financial returns. “We only talk about the work from a grant perspective; we’d make a lot more progress if we also had conversations about funding for-profit companies that drive mission.” He cites examples like LendUp, an alternative to payday lending, offering short-term loans with lower interest rates and the opportunity for individuals to build credit as they pay back their loans.

Philanthropic advisors who work with high-net-worth individuals are a constituency to target in order to help move dollars to social enterprises and local organizations. In addition, other nontraditional philanthropic models, such as giving circles and benefit corporations, can help promote the sustainability of the work.

## RESOURCES



### Grantmaking With a Racial Equity Lens

*GrantCraft*

Report explores how a racial equity lens can increase a foundation’s effectiveness.



### The Impacts of Giving Together: Giving Circles as a Civic Engagement Strategy

Report examines black male-focused giving circles as a tool for catalyzing civic engagement.

For additional resources, visit: [bmafunders.org/beloved-community](https://bmafunders.org/beloved-community)

# BUILD LEADERSHIP AT THE GRASSTOPS AND THE GRASSROOTS

Many interviewees noted that leadership, from the grassroots and the grasstops, is crucial to strengthening the field of black male achievement. “What’s needed is bold, courageous leadership,” asserts Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation, “because it’s going to require a degree of willingness to speak the hard truth, which makes some people uncomfortable.”

“What’s needed is bold, courageous leadership.”

Darren Walker, president, Ford Foundation

## GRASSTOPS

The Executives’ Alliance to Expand Opportunities for Boys and Men of Color represents a highly visible and prominent collection of philanthropic leaders. One of the most valuable roles this group can play is to use the presidents’ personal as well as organizational brands to bring attention to this issue. While this includes using their influence to get the attention of media and of public officials, it also includes making the case to board members and trustees and those that ultimately control the purse strings. Shawn Dove states pointedly, “The conversation around race and gender that is not happening on the trustee level is somewhat embarrassing. We hope the Alliance can shift that conversation.”

Similarly, the importance of high-ranking public officials directly engaging in this work cannot be overstated. Certainly, the support of the President of the United States has brought the

issue before new audiences and has drawn additional supporters. Municipal officials can also make a significant impact. The leadership of Tony Smith, former superintendent of Oakland Unified School District, played a significant role in the school board’s unanimous vote to create the district’s Office for African American Male Achievement. Former mayor Michael Bloomberg launched the Young Men’s Initiative, a \$127 million public-private partnership dedicated to improving the life outcomes of New York City’s young black and Latino men. And Mayors Michael Nutter and Mitch Landrieu have played a large role in elevating Cities United to a national scale. “Bloomberg, Nutter, and Landrieu really championing this cause and framing it not only around public safety but also around opportunity, I think, is important,” says EPIP’s Rahsaan Harris.

Notes Greg Hodge, it is also critical for the unusual suspects to speak up. Hodge observes, “Frankly, I think it’s been helpful for white men in leadership to hear somebody like George Soros say that this is a key issue. If a white person says it then it’s going to have much more credibility than if a black or brown man, or a woman says it, still. We act like that’s not true, but it’s still true.” Asked how to draw key partners to this work, Alan Jenkins replies simply, “If George Soros invites them, they’ll come.”

## GRASSROOTS

At the same time that those in power must use their position to advocate and garner support for solutions, the field needs to build a more robust leadership pipeline and cultivate a new cohort of leaders at the local level. David Banks of the Eagle Academy Foundation, among



others, sees a place for engaging successful black men. “Successful black men should be champions for this work. Right now we’re relying on George Soros and Mike Bloomberg to come to the aid of black boys.” Hodge notes that these new leaders might not be nonprofit executives. They could be artists, union shop stewards, or leaders that come from other unconventional backgrounds.

“It’s vital that black people understand that the cavalry is not coming to save the day. We can’t wait, we must stop waiting, for iconic leaders to come in and save the day. We are them.”

Shawn Dove, campaign manager,  
Open Society Foundations

Organizations like the California Endowment, Black Families Development, Inc., Advancement Project, and the League of Young Voters Education Fund incorporate a community and youth organizing approach. They have a deliberate focus on developing the leadership skills of community members, especially youth of color, to ensure they have a voice in their communities. Biko Baker, executive director of the League of Young Voters Education Fund, describes the potential of youth: “There are some kids out here who are extremely talented, who could innovate and change the game if a foundation or two supported their growth as executives.”

As Shawn Dove summarizes, “It’s vital that black people understand that the cavalry is not coming to save the day. We can’t wait, we must stop waiting, for iconic leaders to come in and save the day. We are them. That’s why efforts like BMe that recognize and galvanize hometown heroes and local leaders are truly important. That work on the ground, block by block, person by person, is important to complement the broader systems change work that’s needed.”

## RESOURCES



### 30 Leaders in the Fight for Black Men

*Newsweek/The Daily Beast*

List profiles activists, politicians, and writers, among others, working to change the future for African-American men.



### Dream Defenders

Organization is directed by black and brown youth who confront systemic inequality by building their collective power.



### Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy

Network of foundation professionals and social entrepreneurs develops emerging leaders committed to building an equitable society.



### League of Young Voters Education Fund

National organization utilizes grassroots organizing to empower youth from low-income communities and communities of color to participate in the democratic process.

For additional resources, visit: [bmafunders.org/beloved-community](https://bmafunders.org/beloved-community)



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## CONCLUSION

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# WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

“ WE AIM TO CONTINUE LEARNING FROM OUR MISTAKES, TO PROPAGATE SUCCESSFUL MODELS, AND TO CONTINUE FOR YEARS TO COME TO HELP EXPAND THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AND BOYS CAN REALIZE THEIR TRUE POTENTIAL, SO THAT THEY CAN BECOME FULL PARTNERS IN AN OPEN SOCIETY FOR WHICH THEIR VOICE IS ESSENTIAL. ”

**GEORGE SOROS**

*IN WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?*

*PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT FOR BLACK MEN AND BOYS*

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**R**electing on his investment in the Campaign for Black Male Achievement, George Soros underscores the long-term commitment required by philanthropy (and others) to reverse hundreds of years of systematic racism and discrimination that have resulted in African-American males occupying the lowest rung of nearly every major indicator of well-being. He also highlights what success ultimately looks like.

Indeed, this report documents the herculean efforts of philanthropists, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, among others, to increase opportunities for black men and boys. We also outline the critical ways in which this work needs to be strengthened in the coming years: by changing the narrative, embracing the power of new technologies, increasing the evidence base, prioritizing holistic and systemic solutions, investing in organizational capacity, building strong partnerships, rethinking traditional approaches to philanthropy, and embracing bold and courageous leadership.

As our report highlights, there is much work to be done. But there are also indelible signs of success. Success looks like the 100 percent college acceptance rate—for five years running—at Urban Prep Academies, a network of all-boys public schools that serves students from economically disadvantaged households. Success looks like BMe, a group of more than 7,000 black men and their friends of all races and genders who build community together and who provided services to more than 130,000 neighbors in 2013 alone. Success looks like the launch of the Institute for Black

Male Achievement, which boasts more than 2,500 members contributing to black male achievement. Success looks like the Young Men's Initiative in New York City, an unprecedented public-private partnership that works comprehensively across city agencies to reduce disparities faced by young men of color. Success looks like leading foundation presidents coming together to form an alliance, and success looks like the President of the United States stepping out to pledge support to transform the life outcomes of black and Latino young men.

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“ Success looks like the President of the United States stepping out to pledge support to transform the life outcomes of black and Latino young men. ”

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The collective impact of these initiatives (and so many others in the field) will get us closer to the Beloved Community Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned, one which recognizes the value and humanity of every individual. This community encompasses the full and active participation of every member of a democratic society and is based upon justice, equal opportunity, and love. This vision is not wishful thinking; it is attainable through the efforts of committed individuals, dedicated organizations, and partnership and collaboration. So where do we go from here? Let's build the Beloved Community, together.

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# AFTERWORD



**T**he barriers to success that black men face have been in plain sight for decades, so it is particularly heartening to see a movement taking shape

that is specifically crafted to address these challenges and change the odds for one of the most disenfranchised populations in America.

I was on the Board of Trustees of the Open Society Foundations when the idea of a black male achievement campaign first came up, and while it was obvious that something needed to be done, we immediately found ourselves facing a philosophical dilemma: Was it right to target just one group when there are others that also need help?

In a country where cultural and racial relations are as complicated as the United States, people are understandably hesitant to publicly announce that they are going to help one group while seemingly ignoring all the others. But we concluded that tailoring an approach that targets a group that has a common history and a resulting common set of challenges is absolutely the right approach. Black men in America—while obviously being individuals—have had a unique historical experience. After decades of slavery, they faced institutional racism and daily indignities, Jim Crow and segregation, public lynchings and disenfranchisement, and a contemporary toxic culture on the street and in the media that glorifies self-destructive behavior.

If we are going to reverse the achievement gap and what the Children’s Defense Fund calls the “Cradle to Prison Pipeline” for black boys and men, we need to take into consideration the insidious context of their situation. At the Open

Society Foundations, we came to believe that the success of this targeted approach would inspire other efforts aimed at other specific populations.

As the Campaign For Black Male Achievement (CBMA) has taken shape, we’ve only seen how necessary and overdue it has been. It has begun to catch on around the country, gaining traction as other parallel efforts have emerged. While there is certainly a lot of day-to-day work still to be done on the front lines, the narrative and national dialogue have begun to change. Ignorance and fear are giving way to empathy and intelligent action.

We have a president that has given the imprimatur of the White House to the idea that racism will not be sanctioned or ignored by our society. In the aftermath of the Trayvon Martin shooting, President Obama’s empathetic responses allowed an honest, open, and clear-eyed public discussion of race relations and the stubbornness of racism.

As the CBMA has emerged, it has been joined by promising initiatives both national and local. At the federal level, President Obama announced the “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative. The Cities United anti-violence partnership is national in scope, while individual cities, such as New York City and Baltimore, have also created robust programs to boost black and Latino male achievement.

As we move forward, I hope some of the successes that I’ve learned about can serve as examples. First is the need for black boys to be surrounded by older, black role models. Every day these boys need to see law-abiding, college-educated men making a good life for themselves through hard, honest work. That’s been a critical

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missing element in many communities for these young people. Filling this vacuum, gangs have acted as surrogate families and role models, giving a false promise to scared boys about protecting themselves and navigating life.

Second, young men need jobs and a legal way to earn some money. A teenager who looks around and sees no hope of earning honest money is understandably going to be tempted by the bustling illegal activity that he sees every day on the street in many devastated communities. Instead of simply condemning these kids to the dead end of the criminal justice system, we need to proactively provide them with real and positive alternatives before they drift into antisocial behavior.

The great challenge that lies ahead is taking what we know works and bringing it to scale. Unfortunately, saving a dozen boys, while deserving applause, does not reverse the massive crisis we are facing. We need to go places where there are terrific things happening

on the ground and bring additional resources to bear so organizations can go deeper and expand—that's how we will get the most bang for the buck.

The destructive forces at work within the black community have been festering for decades—it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that the way out will take time. We are moving in the right direction, but we need to keep in mind that our commitment must be for the long haul. We need to scale up our successes and view any failure as a wake-up call to try Plans B, C, or Z.

This country has an unparalleled history of creating economic opportunity—the American dream. But there has been a systematic and singular denial of the means of achieving this dream for black males. The degree to which we commit to tackle these obstacles will lead to the American dream truly becoming available to all.

**Geoffrey Canada**

President and CEO, Harlem Children's Zone

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## CREDITS

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\* Some of these individuals are pictured on p. 66.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>2</sup> *A Gathering of Leaders: Postscript*. Frontline Solutions, 2013, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Bernholz, Lucy, Stephanie Linden Seale, and Tony Wang. *Building to Last: Field Building as Philanthropic Strategy*. Blueprint Research + Design, 2009, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Foundation Center, 2014. This does not include smaller grants (under \$10,000) or the complete giving of smaller foundations, so at best these figures are a baseline.

<sup>5</sup> Institute for Black Male Achievement. Unpublished data, as of April 2, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> National League of Cities press release. "U.S. Mayors Convene to Stop the Violence Against African American Men and Boys," February 26, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Rogers, John. "Roger Blissett & John Rogers: Investing in Black Males." Presented at Innovation & Impact Forum for Black Male Achievement, New York, NY, October 3, 2012.

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<sup>12</sup> Graeff, Erhardt. "Mapping the Trayvon Martin Media Controversy." MIT Center for Civic Media, February 12, 2014.

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<sup>15</sup> Littles, Marcus, Ryan Bowers, and Micah Gilmer. *Why We Can't Wait*. Frontline Solutions, 2008, 9.

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