
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:

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