



# Stepping Up and Stepping Out:

Profiles of Philanthropy  
Responding to an American Crisis

A Report prepared for  
Association for Black Foundation Executives

Edited by:  
Frontline Solutions  
April 2008

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Emmett D. Carson CEO and president of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and Loren Harris, Ford Foundation Program Officer at the West Coast Funder's Convening.

**The Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE)** is the oldest of the over forty Council on Foundations affinity groups. ABFE was formed in 1971 and has grown to become a leader in the field of philanthropy and a champion for the interests of black communities. The mission of ABFE is to promote effective and responsive philanthropy in Black communities. The vision ABFE has for its members is that they are a catalyst for advancing philanthropic practices that build on a tradition of self-help, empowerment, and excellence to solve the challenges faced in Black communities. Thus the institution endeavors to accomplish three primary objectives:

- *To grow Black leadership and participation within organized philanthropy;*
- *To enhance the effectiveness of philanthropic leaders and institutions that fund and invest in Black communities; and*
- *To increase the allocation of philanthropic resources that address priority issues in Black communities.*

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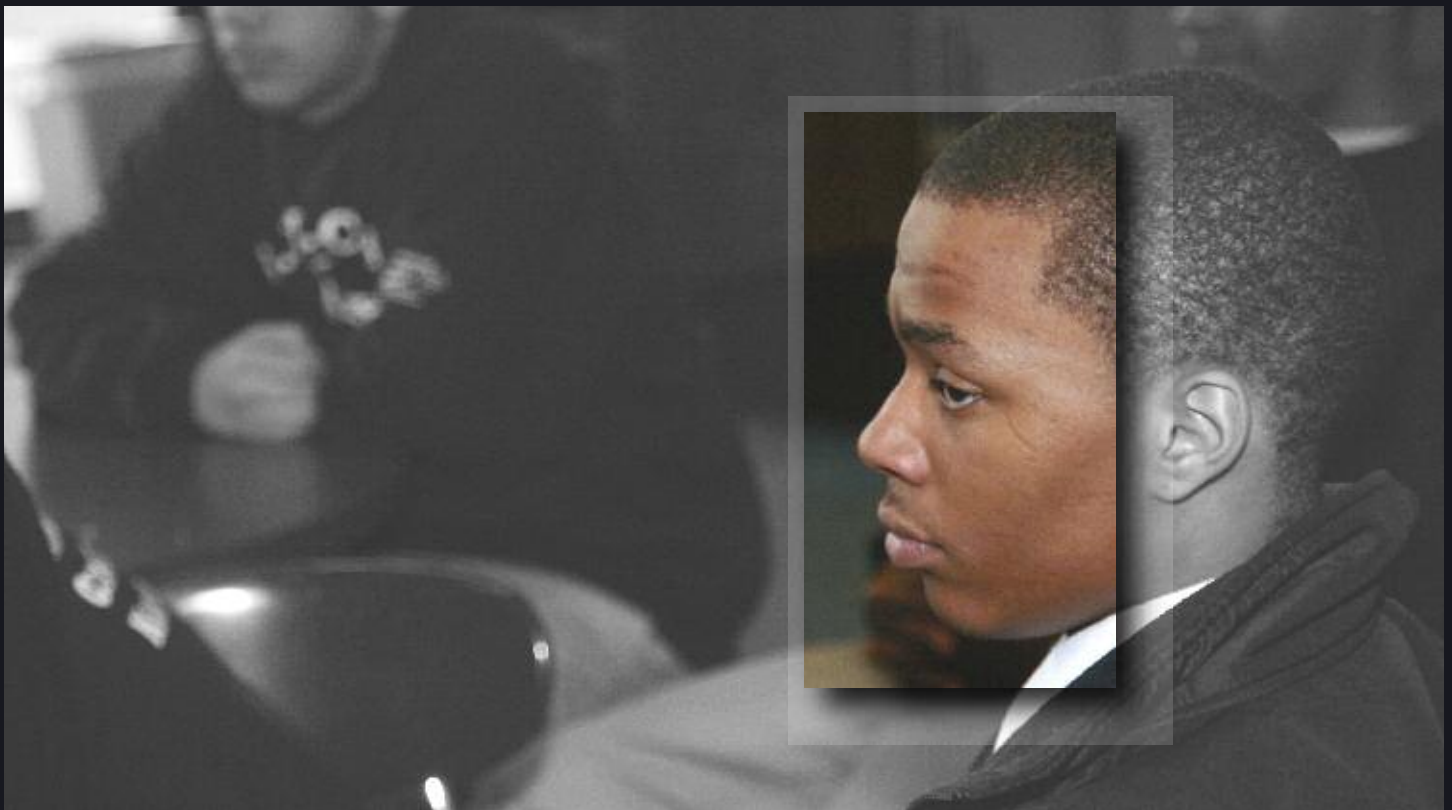
# Acknowledgments:

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ABFE would also like to thank each of the institutions that are profiled in this publication. In particular, we would like to thank Darryl Lester of the Community Investment Network, Phillip Thomas of the Chicago Community Trust and Cassie Schwerner of the Schott Foundation for Public Education who each were gracious with their time and insights in the development of this publication. They took time from their very busy professional responsibilities to reflect and share their best thinking in order to advance the urgency of this work.

Thanks must also be extended to photographer Jamaica Woodyard Gilmer and Creative Director Rainey Scott for their artful eyes and vision.

Lastly, and most importantly, we would like to thank all of the member institutions that make ABFE a relevant and dynamic organization and resource to the broader field of philanthropy.





Background:



**On March 20th, 2006** the New York Times printed an article about the “plight” of African American males. The article presents a summation of several studies, which point to disturbing trends in levels of unemployment and poor education among African American men and boys. These studies suggest that in spite of the economic boom in this country at the turn of the century, high school dropout rates, incarceration rates, and unemployment rates among African American men and boys are still growing rapidly.

As this article filled the inboxes of social change advocates throughout the country, among those who read the article were numerous ABFE members. ABFE’s leadership, sensing the level of seriousness and opportunity of the moment, quickly convened an informal meeting of foundation staff who were interested in strategizing how philanthropy could respond. The convening was informal, advertised through word of mouth and took place in a spare room at the Council on Foundations Annual Conference in Pittsburgh just a month following the release of the article.

Over the next two years, a series of developments in the field of philanthropy helped influence the emergence of black males as an issue area/demographic to which more funders were paying attention. The Twenty-First Century Foundation began to emerge as a philanthropic voice for the importance of addressing the myriad of challenges facing black males in America. Ford Foundation commissioned a report, *Why We Can’t Wait: A Case for Philanthropic Action*, that would

begin scanning research institutions and academicians, policy initiatives, and community organizations in the United States that specifically target Black men and boys. The National Urban League themed their 2007 State of Black America Report on African American Males. Open Society Institute was one of several foundations that engaged in a planning process to explore the possibility of implementing a grantmaking program that seeks to enhance the life opportunities of black males.

As ABFE’s member institutions began to explore and ask questions as to how their grantmaking can impact black men and boys’ access to opportunities, ABFE’s staff and board began to develop institutional strategies that could serve its membership in this area. Thus, ABFE began to take an active role in supporting and creating venues for its members and the broader field of philanthropy to strategize and learn from one another about how to affect the life outcomes of black males. In April of 2007, ABFE in collaboration with Ford Foundation, Open Society Institute and Casey Family Programs convened a National Funders Dialogue on

Black Males. Subsequently, ABFE has been an active partner with Ford Foundation in the series of follow-up Regional Funder Dialogues on Black Males.

One of the clear challenges that many of the participants in the regional dialogues articulated was one of identifying best practices and funder case studies that demonstrate how grantmakers are administering investments that explicitly target improving the life outcomes of black males. As one foundation board member articulates it, “You can’t be what you can’t see.”

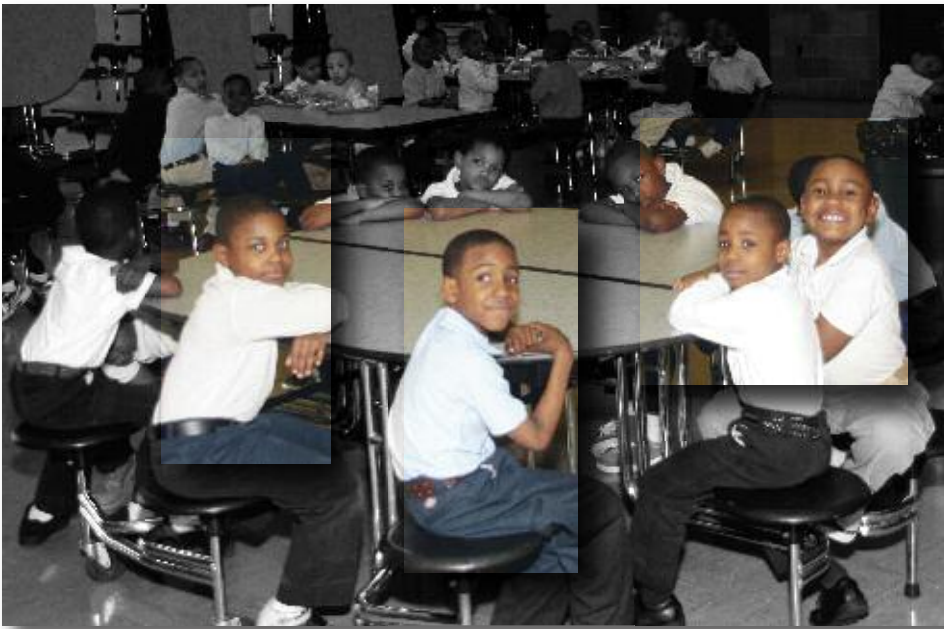
Stepping Up and Stepping Out endeavors to lift up some examples for the foundation community to “see” — through profiling philanthropic organizations that are making investments with a specific intent to create opportunities for black males in their respective communities. This publication seeks to highlight just three philanthropic bodies that are tangibly “stepping up and stepping out” to support an emerging field, challenge the public discourse and respond to an American crisis.



# Introduction:







In the series of regional funder dialogues conducted by Frontline Solutions in early 2008, one of the challenges that funders repeatedly identified as a barrier to investing in black males work is that some of their colleagues as well as other funders with whom they have engaged have “black male fatigue”. This “fatigue” refers to a contention that black males have long been the focus of programs, interventions and strategies to little or no avail. This is a fascinating and important perspective considering that the counterargument oft used to make a case for investing in strategies to improve the life outcomes of black males is that they previously have not received sufficient investment or attention. This is the schizophrenic contextual landscape within which philanthropic institutions live, operate and determine priority issues and populations.

Issues of race and gender, disparity, structural inequity and their relationship to an American ideal are perhaps no more politic now than they have been at any time in the last 40 years. One prominent racial

justice funder and former legal advocate and practitioner brings up the point that issues of race are increasingly under attack in this country. The overarching assertion is that issues of race and equity in no way role off the tongue in the public discourse of this country. Indeed, for philanthropy to respond to an American crisis comprised of black males performing lower in educational attainment at the secondary and post-secondary levels; having significantly higher incarceration rates; higher incidences of HIV and AIDS; and higher unemployment rates than their white and female counterparts - is not without risk.

Funders that are engaged in grantmaking that target improving the life outcomes of black males are standing on ground scattered with political landmines, interpersonal suitcases and a historical precedent in this country all of which can serve as institutional deterrents. Yet despite all of this, there has been a groundswell of philanthropic explorations and some examples of funder activity in investing in initiatives seeking to

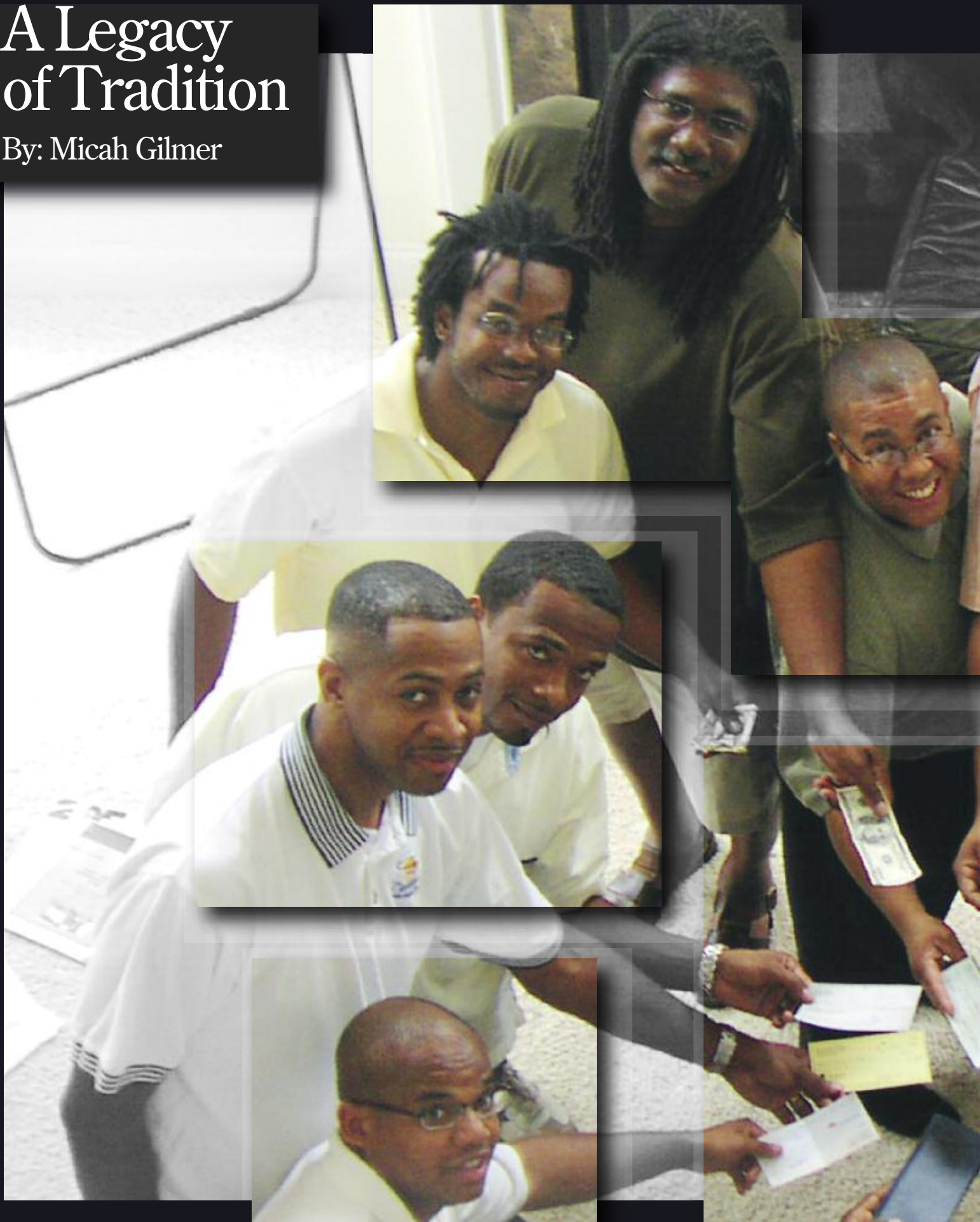
make opportunity more accessible to black men and boys. These philanthropic institutions have demonstrated a necessary resolve, intelligence and even some courage by taking on this work as an institutional priority.

This publication seeks to lift up three examples of funders that have stepped up to the significant task of seeking to improve the life chances and opportunities of black males; and in doing so have stepped out on the proverbial limb. The objective of presenting a more in-depth analysis of the grantmaking that these funders have engaged in is to provide insights, examples and strategies that will be a resource to other foundations as they explore, consider and strategize around how philanthropy goes about addressing the disparate life outcomes experienced by black men and boys in America.

Stepping Up and Stepping Out profiles a diverse set of funders, ranging from an issue-specific foundation that funds in Massachusetts and New York (Schott Foundation for Public Education) to one of the largest community foundations in the country (Chicago Community Trust) to a local giving circle in Durham, North Carolina comprised of sixteen African American men committed to investing their own financial resources in supporting programs for black males. The three funders profiled are engaged in grantmaking that directly target improving the life outcomes of black males, however each institution is distinct in its philanthropic phenotype and goes about investing in this demographic in different ways.

# A Legacy of Tradition

By: Micah Gilmer







# A Legacy of Tradition

By: Micah Gilmer

**A Legacy of Tradition** (A LOT) is a black males-focused giving circle based in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Triangle in North Carolina. A LOT represents a model that can fill key gaps in the philanthropic response to the issues facing black men and boys. By engaging as donors black men who likely would not otherwise be involved in institutional philanthropy, the giving circle helps develop philanthropic leadership among those who have not chosen career paths within organized giving.

Likewise, the targeted grants the giving circle makes are informed by intense and personal connections to community of an intimacy not possible for larger institutions. Lastly, the giving circle model is easily replicable, as it requires primarily an investment of will and time among a group of individuals who are already passionate about seeing positive life outcomes for black men and boys.

## The Development of a Black Males Giving Circle

The birth of A LOT was possible because of the confluence of some basic philanthropic know-how, personal passion, and networks of indi-



viduals. In February 2006, Darryl Lester, director of the Community Investment Network and several close associates expressed a desire to “do something” about the crisis facing many African American males. That small group tapped into their friend and barber Tim MacIntosh. Tim utilized his extensive list of clients to pull together a room of over 50 men in the Triangle. The room ranged from individuals with high profiles to everyday folks passionate about working with black men and boys.

Over the course of the next year, the group whittled down to 16 African American men committed to investing their own financial resources in supporting programs for

black males. The group agreed on a \$350 contribution for each member, and conducted their first grant-making cycle in 2007. The group made grants to 4 community organizations in the Triangle area: Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Durham, The Exodus Foundation (for transitioning from incarceration), Hip-Hop Haven of Raleigh (for a program where black men read to black boys), and the Durham Nativity School (photos below).

While these grants have been able to have direct impact on black males in the Triangle area, the giving circle’s members assert that those contributions are only the beginning of the circle’s benefits. The communal atmosphere, in encouraging the engagement of the time, talent and treasure of members, provides support to the black males in the giving circle, as well as the organizations they grant to. Members attend donor events at their host, the Triangle Community Foundation, learning more about institutional philanthropy, and helping shape conversations among donors. Likewise, giving circle meetings often include group readings and activities designed to expand understanding and inform a robust analysis of the issues facing black males.

Several giving circle members are leaders of non-profit organizations. These leaders choose to invest their own personal resources in the





circle, funds that could go to supporting their own organization. But giving circle members find that the sort of exposure and training they get as a part of circle enhances their ability to lead civil society. One circle member put it this way: “As a leader of a grassroots organization, I needed to find out what

the circle can transform the power inequities inherent in much of institutional philanthropy. “One of our primary goals is develop in our members the identity of a giver,” a person who believes he or she has valuable resources to contribute to community.

was happening on the other side... learning about the “supply side” has helped me do the work I do better.” Additionally, giving circle member Darryl Lester, who provides support to the group through the Community Investment Network, sees the way

Giving circles comprised primarily of middle-income individuals, and informed by a sharp race analysis are developing across the country, including the American South. This model, in its simplicity and cost-effectiveness, is ripe for replication. Black males-focused giving circles represent an opportunity for institutional philanthropy and everyday folks to come together to address the crisis facing African American men and boys.

*For more information about starting a giving circle in your area, contact Darryl Lester [dlester@thecommunityinvestment.org](mailto:dlester@thecommunityinvestment.org)*





# The Chicago Community Trust

By: Marcus Littles



**Chicago, Illinois** is in many ways similar to many of the other regions in this country. The “crisis” facing many African American males is a reality that black men and boys in Chicago are familiar with firsthand. Chicago is unique in how civil society has organized to implement a set of strategies to influence public policy, infiltrate the public discourse and create venues to develop cross-sectoral and collaborative interventions that target improving the life outcomes of black males in the Chicago metropolitan region. Possibly like no other major metropolitan region in this country, Chicago exemplifies the engagement of each leg of the “three-legged stool” of policymakers, community-based practitioners, and the academy. The groundswell of initiatives in Chicago aimed explicitly at improving life outcomes of Black males include:

- The 21st Century Foundation provided start-up funds for a coalition of youth and community organizing groups in Chicago who have initiated a local campaign to improve life outcomes of black males by 2025.
- The United Way of Greater Chicago has a funding initiative that specifically targets organizations serving African American males.
- The Joint Center for Political Studies has a Dellums Commission advisory group specifically for Chicago.

- The Center for Race, Politics and Culture at the University of Chicago has been a nationally recognized research institute that has produced and disseminated data on black male achievement, role within the black family and fatherhood.
- The Governor of Illinois has commissioned a task force on the state of the black male in Illinois.

The philanthropic sector has played a galvanizing role in empowering researchers, the grassroots community and the public sector to individually and collectively address the set of complex challenges that are impeding black males in Chicago from access to positive life outcomes. The Chicago Community Trust (CCT) has been a foundation that has provided local leadership among funders in the region. For more than 92 years, the Trust has been a foundation seeking to address the Chicago metropolitan regions most pressing challenges and support the most promising opportunities.

### **History of CCT’s interest in Black Males Work**

In 2006, the Trust’s Board assigned the foundation staff to engage in a process of identifying issue areas, populations, etc. that the organization was currently not funding. The objective was to prioritize issue areas that cut across the Trust’s grantmaking focus areas, which foundation staff and Board members determined to warrant a special initia-

tive. After a narrowing and prioritization process, CCT identified two areas: a) immigration and immigrant populations, and b) African American males.

As a newly hired Senior Program Officer at the Trust, Phil Thomas was assigned the responsibility of proposing next steps going forward for the organization in developing a cross-portfolio grantmaking initiative focused on improving life outcomes of black males in Chicago. Thomas began the Trust’s exploration initially by researching current ongoing philanthropic initiatives, connecting with national philanthropic leaders and identifying local grassroots and civil society activity around issues of Black males disparity. Phil Thomas connected the Trust with Loren Harris, Program Officer at the Ford Foundation, who had recently commissioned *Why We Can’t Wait: A Case for Philanthropic Action to Improve the Life Outcomes of Black Males*. Thomas also reached out to John Vaughn, Program Director at the Twenty-first Century Foundation, who was responsible for a Black Men and Boys Fund, which had identified Chicago as one of its target cities and was funding the Chicago 2025 Campaign, made of a local coalition of community advocates organizing to influence policies to create more access to opportunity for black males. As a result, the Trust became a part of a small working group of foundation

# The Chicago Community Trust

Continued...

staff persons throughout the country who began to think together about how to respond to the disparate life outcomes of black men and boys. The Chicago Community Trust also decided to make one of the initial investments in the Chicago 2025 Campaign.

## Building a Grantmaking Initiative

The Chicago Community Trust Board made a commitment to strategically allocate organization resources and influence to positively impact black males in Chicago. This profile attempts to highlight the process and thinking that the organization is currently engaged in to determine the best strategic grantmaking approach. Although the Trust is still engaged in the planning and learning phases of its initiative, its process provides invaluable insight and is instructive to how foundations can approach black males work. CCT has engaged in three connected components of their current information gathering and planning phase, which can be described in terms that serve as helpful tips and reminders to other foundations approaching this work:

**A. Get in the Game** – The Trust has been very intentional in its learning process in order to best inform a grantmaking program that is projected to begin in 2009. CCT

has become engaged locally and nationally in black males work. Chicago Community Trust has a representative on the advisory committee for the United Way of Greater

Chicago's Black Males Initiative; participates in the Chicago Del-lums Commission Advisory Group; has been in conversation with the Governor of Illinois about being a part of their Task Force on the Status of the Black Male; hosted a national meeting of the 2025 Campaign; co-convened a Midwest Funders Dialogue on Black Males with the Skillman Foundation in Detroit, Michigan; and convened a Chicago funders meeting on how philanthropy can support positive life outcomes of African American males. The Trust has been thorough and committed to a process of learning, engaging colleagues and soliciting input and analysis from community actors. Their high level of engagement and intentionality about connecting to a community of learning has and will continue to serve their ability to apply a sharp and informed analysis to their grantmaking in this area.

**B. Build a Table** – As the foundation has benefited from the few, yet invaluable venues tailored for funders to network, learn and exchange ideas about how philanthropy can most strategically engage in black males work, it occurred to them that local practitioners, policymakers, advocates, faith leaders, public officials and researchers also would benefit from a “table”. Additionally, as the Trust is

looking to frame their grantmaking in a way that crosses the necessarily myopic boundaries of its foundation issue areas, it recognizes the importance of venues where multiple sectors engaged in a variety of relevant issue areas can learn, challenge and support one another, as well as inform CCT's analysis. Therefore, the Chicago Community Trust is supporting a series of three community convenings of Chicago activists, faith leaders, funders, policymakers, researchers and institutional leaders over the course of a year. These convenings are meant to construct a table for exchange, mobilization and strategy among public, private, non-profit and philanthropic actors committed to affecting change in life outcomes of African American males in Chicago. This is an important strategy that the Trust is employing, because it recognizes both the importance of supporting venues for cross-sectoral thinking and collaboration and the necessity of being intentional about allowing on the ground knowledge and experience help inform grantmaking strategy.

**C. Follow the Leader** – As the Trust did its research of local activity, progress and institutional leadership around this population, it identified several institutions that were organized, engaged and/or with a strong track record and interest in black males work in Chicago. Therefore, the foundation made several grants prior to having constructed its longer-term grantmaking strategy.



The grants made thus far include:

**A. Center for Race, Politics and Culture at the University of Chicago** – to do a local and national scan of philanthropic, advocacy, practitioner and research focused on black males. The Trust invested in this research to inform the foundation of the lay of the land.

**B. Intergovernmental Committee (Race and Policy Institute at the University of Illinois)** – to continue a working group of county and municipal government personnel and community service providers to identify service and funding gaps pertaining to African American males.

**C. 2025 Chicago** – to convene annual town hall meeting that mobilizes grassroots organizations, elected officials and activists to develop community solutions, raise public awareness and influence

public discourse and perceptions of black males in Chicago

CCT has been intentional to engage in some “strategically sporadic”, yet targeted grantmaking as it is undergoing its planning process, in order to support the existing local groundswell of momentum around this work. This strategy recognizes the need to both empower and support new leaders and new energy, while also supporting existing leaders and focused activities.

# Youth rally for jobs



A 400-crowd capacity listens tentatively to youth issues.

**CHICAGO**—Community-based organizations, KOCO (Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization) and MAGIC (Metropolitan Area Group for Igniting Civilization) joined together with a myriad of city-based organizations to host a city-wide youth employment rally at Kennicott Park on July 27. Over 400 individuals attended the rally representing youth from the community and organizations. The rally was in-

tended to draw attention to the growing issues of unemployment and its negative effects among young people. Also in attendance were elected officials: Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, State Representative Marlow Colvin and representatives from Alderman Barbara Flynn-Currie's office. The youth gave testimonies of their struggles with unemployment, as well as statistics and factual data further exposing the problem.



Youth display various signs during the Youth Employment Campaign Rally in Chicago on July 27.

The campaign began about six months earlier when youth began to notice a dramatic decline in employment opportunities. After much research, they realized that this decline was due to decreased funding for youth employment. Research showed that nearly 40,000 jobs were available to youth in the mid-1980s, whereas about 13,000 jobs were available in the nearly 38,000 young people who applied last summer. Youth also observed

the correlation between unemployment and youth delinquency, high crime rates, teenage pregnancy and drug activity. They decided that this issue was serious enough to include their families, communities and political officials in order to make a substantial change. In preparation for the rally, they made phone calls to political officials such as Senator Kwame Baugh, State Rep. Barbara Flynn-Currie and Alderman Anetha

Trotman. The youth also reached out to local employers in the community, such as Michele Obama (University of Chicago alumna), Fran Bell (YMCA) on 67th and Stony Island, Rev. Bishop Hunter (Episcopal Church of God) and the Nation of Islam. They also contacted local groups to determine if food to make the rally a huge success.

—Renee Pitter and  
Kenny Taylor

# Schott Foundation for Public Education

By: Ryan Bowers





**The Schott Foundation** for Public Education's mission is to develop and strengthen a broad-based and representative movement to achieve fully resourced pre K-12 public education. Founded in Cambridge in 1991, Schott has since developed an analysis and body of grantmaking that specifically supports the educational achievement of black males. This profile chronicles several efforts by the Schott Foundation that specifically target black male students: the State Report Cards on the Education of Black Male Students; the Awards in Excellence of Education of African American Males; the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color; the Teachers as Leaders initiative; and the Massachusetts Commission on the Social Status of Black Males.

Schott began its work with African American males in 2003 with the establishing of its Black Boys Initiative, which focuses on public education. Through host-

ing workshops and conferences with practitioners, educational leaders and academics, and releasing articles in major newspapers and journals, Schott made a significant contribution to the national discussion on black males and public school. One particular report, *A Positive Future for Black Boys – Building The Movement*, chronicled a summit of educational leaders convened by Schott who we brought together to discuss what it would take to create and sustain a genuine social movement to support African American males in public education. The findings and recommendations from the report have much to contribute to foundations and practitioners from across all sectors who are or who plan to engage in work supporting African American males. As with any movement building approach, most of Schott's work on behalf of Black boys has occurred through collaborative endeavors. Schott, through the direction of Lynson Beaulieu, has joined the 21st

Century Foundation's 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys. Schott has also jointly launched a number of other initiatives that span the range of public and private partnerships.

Perhaps Schott's most well known research effort is its state by state analysis of black male high school achievement. In 2007, Schott released *Public Education and Black Male Students: The State Report Card*, which was the second of two reports examining black male educational achievement on a national scale. Rosa Smith, Schott's President from 2001-2007, spearheaded the creation of the report cards around an analytical tool called the Schott Education Inequity Index (SEII). The purpose of SEII is to compare the high school graduation and dropout rates of black, white and Hispanic male students. By examining the states and school districts that serve the largest numbers and highest proportions of the nation's young black males the SEII



# Schott Foundation for Public Education

By: Ryan Bowers

successfully casts light on those jurisdictions with the highest and lowest Index scores. In addition to graduation data, the state report cards examine various school discipline policies, special education placement guidelines, and other factors that significantly impact the educational attainment of black boys.

Since 2005, Schott has also held the Schott Awards for Excellence in the Education of African-American Male Students, which in 2007 consisted of \$10,000 grants to schools that successfully closed the achievement gaps in graduation rates for their Black male students. The Awards have complimented the state report cards by showcasing states, districts and schools that serve as a model for positive change on behalf of Black male youth.

Another way Schott has contributed to the movement to support black males has been through its role as a convener and grantmaker. In 2007, Schott awarded \$10,000 in support to Atlas Learning Communities for documenting a meeting supporting leaders of single sex schools that serve African American males. Ron Walker, Atlas' Associate Director, worked closely with Schott's Gerald Harris to lead the June 2007 meeting, which enabled principals from a number of single sex schools to share approaches and lessons learned to support boys of color.



The energy and ideas that developed from that meeting gave birth to the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC), which represents thirty-two organizations that support the educational attainment of boys of color ([www.sforboc.org](http://www.sforboc.org)). COSEBOC does not advocate for or against single gender schools, although many of its members are single sex educational institutions. As the coalition's co-leader, Ron Walker, explained "COSEBOC's work is guided by the simple question—what does stellar educational opportunity look like for boys of color?"

That same year, in September of 2007, the Schott Foundation, in junction with The Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, the City University of New York's (CUNY) Black Male Initiative, and the New York City Department of Education. Teachers as Leaders Initiative, which seeks to develop models for recruiting and supporting African American male teachers, as well as expand public policy leadership opportunities for new black male teachers. The initiative was recognized by the William J. Clinton Foundation as a Clinton Global Initiative. The initial phase of the Teachers as Leaders will span 2-3 years, beginning with New York City.

Lastly, Schott has worked closely with the public sector in regards to its work with Black males, keeping in step with the foundation's other efforts to engage state and local government in New York and Massachusetts. On February 13, 2008, Schott President Dr. John H. Jackson testified before the Massachusetts Legislature's Joint Committee on Children and Families regarding Senate Bill 2182, which establishes a permanent state commission of the social status of black males. During his testimony, Dr. Jackson noted the economic and social costs associated with the state's current rate of black males dropping out of school and incarceration. Jackson made several recommendations to include in the scope of work of the Commission, including monitoring the level of opportunity and performance in Black male serving schools; creating a system to monitor the placement of Black males in special education; gifted or advanced placement programs, as well as school discipline policies; and a developing a strategy to retain black teachers.

“What does stellar  
educational opportunity  
look like for boys  
of color?”



## Conclusion:

ABFE is committed to increasing

*“the allocation of philanthropic resources that address priority issues in Black communities.”*

The disparate life outcomes of black males in this country is an American crisis. ABFE will continue to seek to provide venues for the field of philanthropy to network, learn and develop strategies so that funders will have access to tools that help them to effectively

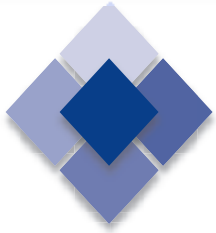
**“Step Up And Step Out”.**







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