

ABFE News and Updates
BLACK MEN AND BOYS INITIATIVE:

An update on what philanthropy is doing to improve life outcomes for Black men and boys.



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INTRO

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In 2006, a group of ABFE members informally gathered at our Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to discuss the alarming statistics facing Black men and boys. These statistics were not new to our members, or even to the greater field of philanthropy, but the sense of urgency and call to action from our members was loud and clear. That meeting specifically addressed how they, as a group of funders, could collectively frame how philanthropy can positively impact life outcomes for Black men and boys.

ABFE's directive, as a result of that meeting, was a clear call to respond to the concerns that our members had voiced in Pittsburgh. That year, ABFE initiated several conference calls and small meetings to begin to explore the problem and examine ways to advance the mandate. As a result, by 2007, ABFE, in collaboration with the **Open Society Institute** and the **Ford Foundation** organized a formal meeting of funders. Hosted by Seattle-based **Casey Family Programs**, **Funders' Dialogue on Black Men and Boys** took place at our annual conference in Seattle, Washington and included approximately 30 people representing philanthropic organizations and interests.

The Seattle gathering was used as an opportunity for foundation executives to foster new partnerships and collaborations that would produce more sustained, coordinated and effective responses from the philanthropic community in response to the ominous and disproportionate realities that confront many Black men and boys in the United States.

Notes recorded from that meeting reflect frustration

and even outrage at conditions of Black men and boys. Despite decades of philanthropic attention to this disenfranchised segment of America, impediments to progress in education, criminal justice, employment and a host of other social and economic barriers continue to loom. One participant demanded to know "Why, after decades of shouting through the rooftops are conditions the same if not worse for Black men and boys?" Another insisted, "Philanthropy as a field and Black people who work in philanthropy can and should be doing more."

Today ABFE, through its Black Men and Boys Initiative – launched as a result of the 2006 and 2007 meetings – is one of many leaders in the field who have influenced and participated in a broad movement to direct more philanthropic dollars to issues directly impacting Black men and boys.

In this special issue of **ABFE News and Updates**, we take a look at the field of philanthropy's investments and work around improving life outcomes for Black men and boys since the first meeting in 2006. For insight and perspective, we spoke with **Shawn Dove**, Campaign Manager, Campaign for Black Male Achievement, **Open Society Institute**; **Tina Gridiron Smith**, Program Officer, **Lumina Foundation for Education**; **George L. Garrow, Jr.**, Executive Director of **Concerned Black Men - National Organization**; and **Carmen A. Anderson**, Senior Program Officer, Endowments' Children, Youth & Families Program, **The Heinz Endowments**.



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Shawn Dove joined the Open Society Institute in May 2008 as manager of the Campaign for Black Male Achievement. He has more than two decades of leadership experience in youth development, education and community building.

Shawn served as one of the founding directors of New York City’s Beacon School movement in the early 1990s while working with the Harlem Children’s Zone. As creative communities director for the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts, he led a national initiative that partnered community schools of the arts and public housing communities in 20 U.S. cities.

As New York vice president for Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership he initiated a strategic response to the lack of African-American and Latino male mentors for New York City’s boys by creating a public awareness and recruitment initiative called The Male Mentoring Project. In 2006, Shawn founded Proud Poppa, a publication for African-American fathers and is a co-founder of Harlem Men Stand Up, an empowerment project that holds quarterly summits in Harlem. **Shawn Dove** received a BA in English from Wesleyan University and was a Charles H. Revson Fellow at Columbia University in 1993.

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Shawn Dove

**Campaign Manager, Campaign for Black Male Achievement
Open Society Institute, US Programs**

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When did the Open Society Institute’s *Campaign for Black Male Achievement (CBMA)* launch?

Dove

The *Campaign for Black Male Achievement* officially launched in 2008. But the seed for the campaign was planted in March 2006 when the *New York Times* published a story about the acute challenges and deepening plight of Black men and boys. That article ignited conversations internally at OSI among the staff and board, with the centerpiece question being: If we are a progressive, risk-taking, open society foundation, why are we not at the forefront of this issue?

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When did you join the Open Society Institute (OSI)?

Dove

I joined OSI specifically for the CBMA initiative. Up to that point, my career had been on the community-building, education, grant-seeking side. Before joining Open Society, I was serving as director of a youth ministry in New Jersey and publishing a newspaper called *Proud Poppa* targeting African-American fathers. A number of people in my network suggested I toss my hat in the ring. I had never worked in philanthropy before then.

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Why did OSI choose to create a distinct, targeted campaign rather than fold the issues of Black men and boys into one of its other programs?

Dove

There was conversation at the staff and board level as to why we should create a targeted-initiative. OSI was already invested in criminal justice work. The counter-argument was to invest on the front end of the prison pipeline and prevent Black men and boys from being exposed to prison. That argument was supported by OSI Board Member **Lani Guinier**, who had just published a book called *The Miner's Canary*, which suggested that the plight of black men and boys in American was indicative of greater threat to democracy for all American citizens. Professor Guinier and other board members stood tall on the argument that this was a golden opportunity for OSI to invest on the front end of the prison pipeline.

Dove

CBMA is a new investment strategy in a recent surge in investments that was led by the Ford and 21st Century Foundations in the middle of last decade. One thing that has helped to inform my leadership is looking at an investment made 15-years-ago by the Kellogg Foundation. That investment was made after the *Million Man March*, and it created the Village Foundation. Ten years later, many of those organizations which focused on strengthening the infrastructure of the field and sustaining the work are not around, which has a lot to do with organization and leadership development. CBMA plans to fill the gap and address the need by creating an *Organizational Leadership and Sustainability Institute*.

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What was the initial amount dedicated and for how long?

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How would you characterize the movement?

Dove

The initial amount dedicated to the campaign was \$15 million for three years. That was in 2008. Today, Mr. Soros and the board of U.S. Programs have recognized the need to significantly scale-up resources for the campaign over the next five years. A year ago we realized it was a mistake to put a three-year commitment on a generational issue. OSI was able to step in at a critical time in the field when support around initiatives and advocacy for Black men and boys was facing a potential gap in resources. We want to make sure that the problems confronting Black men and boys continue to get the targeted attention they need.

Dove

Again, it is a young movement and CBMA is the latest iteration of that movement. The Ford Foundation, the Lumina Foundation, The Skillman Foundation and the 21st Century Foundation are all doing work around Black men and boys. There is a new sense of momentum, but cautious momentum. Will this work be sustained, particularly on the advocacy side? What needs to happen is a building of bridges between advocacy, direct service practitioners, academic research and philanthropy. We have a moment in the philanthropic and political landscape to sustain this work. The wide-lens is a community-building strategy which includes strengthening community institutions, family, the faith community, schools and businesses. The work CBMA is doing is just a drop in the bucket. It can't happen without partnerships between government, grantees, advocacy and philanthropy.

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In the field of the philanthropy, there is already multicultural programming that includes Black men and boys. Why is there a need for targeted-programming for Black men and boys?

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How has ABFE's work in the field helped the field of philanthropy's *Black men and Boys Agenda*?

Dove

It is not an *either/or*, but *both/and* strategy to address the crisis facing Black men and boys. Data proves that if we don't focus exclusively on life outcomes for Black men and boys, then they get lost. For instance, we have seen education reform and improvement, but not for Black men and boys.

Dove

ABFE has a critical role in philanthropy as well as in direct-services, policy, advocacy and government. ABFE is an unapologetic voice for Black communities and makes it clear in its mission. That is a necessary role in philanthropy. Through communication, education and the organization of the philanthropic community, ABFE is filling a void in work around Black men and boys and ABFE has been stirring the pot by going to the leadership pipeline, from senior to the board level of foundations.

ABFE

There is a movement in the field around Black men and boys. How has that movement helped OSI's CBMA work around Black men and Boys?

ABFE What have been the risks and challenges with CBMA, both internally and externally?

Dove It is a challenge not to have tunnel-vision and become siloed and limited in perspective. To overcome that challenge we partner with other strategies and issues in the field that may not have a core focus on Black men and boys, but still bring value to the work. There is also the challenge of sustaining this work. We are thrilled by the commitment to scale-up, but we hope it extends to other institutions who invest in Black men and boys.

ABFE What should philanthropy be doing more of around Black men and Boys?

Dove We need to have more honest, frank discussion about how race and gender issues impact what is happening in education, our communities and workplace, and that this is an issue that will not go away until philanthropy responds. Also, invest in the promotion of best practices of what works. Philanthropy should take a look at what philanthropic leaders like **Tina Gridiron Smith**, with the Lumina Foundation and **Tonya Allen**, at the Skillman Foundation are doing to advocate within their own institutions. Philanthropy should take a look at the impact they are having as a result of taking risks. This is an issue that will not only improve Black men and boys, but it will help America. For instance, if you are improving the educational experience of Black men and boys, then you are improving the experience for all children. There will be better qualified educators teaching, and more resources for that happen to go to that school. That is a good thing for all.

ABFE What are your measurements of success for CBMA?

Dove We have four measurements of success for CBMA: (1) we are keeping alive the issue of the crisis facing Black men and boys in America; (2) we are leveraging philanthropic dollars that improve life outcomes for Black men and boys; (3) we are strengthening infrastructure, organizational and leadership development; (4) we are no longer a three-year initiative; rather, we have a generational commitment to sustain the work we are doing.

ABFE Is the work CBMA has been doing influencing policy?

Dove The Campaign has helped to fuel existing policy-advocacy momentum, particularly in the field of responsible fatherhood. Our support of the National Fatherhood Leadership Group, Center for Urban Families, and the Center for Research on Fathers, Children and Family Well-being has helped to impact increased federal resources for comprehensive fatherhood programs, such as the White House’s proposed Fatherhood, Marriage and Healthy Families Innovation Fund. The Campaign is also seeking to strengthen the capacity of groups to maximize federal funding opportunities such as the Promise Neighborhoods, Transitional Jobs and the reauthorization of the Workforce Reinvestment Act.



Tina Gridiron Smith
 Senior Program Officer
 Lumina Foundation for Education in Indianapolis, IN

ABFE
 What are the strategies that are working in your work around Black men and boys? What are the successes and challenges? How can philanthropy be more effective in improving life outcomes for Black men and boys?

Smith
 Lumina Foundation has invested in several education projects that are promising models of what is working in the field to increase the higher education success of Black males. The models are mainly programmatic interventions that provide comprehensive support services for students and set high expectations for African American students' achievement. The Students of African American Brotherhood, led by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe and a research project at the University of Pennsylvania led by Dr. Shaun Harper are two noteworthy models. Even with growing data on the effectiveness of these types of programs, there are still challenges with making the case to focus exclusively on the unique and acute circumstances facing Black males in education. The data and evidence is clear that Black males face extraordinary challenges in education, employment and health, and yet too often the tendency in philanthropy is to group the needs of African-American males with those of other low-income boys and ethnicities. The resolution should not be an "either/or" but a "both/and" approach that recognizes and addresses the unique experiences of each group. It is important to engage in targeted-philanthropy to increase the educational success of Black males because, to date, a more general approach focusing on all low-income students or all ethnic populations has not produced a proportional growth in the success of Black males. Equally as important, a focus on African-American males is important for improving the strength of our democracy, economy, civic participation and community engagement. Our national success depends on our ability to increase the number of individuals with a high quality credential or degree. We need an educated public, not just for some, but for all. No member of our greater population is expendable as we strive to remain an active global partner in the years to come. Given current trends, we cannot accept the increasing mass incarceration of African-American males. Something must be done to increase the educational success of Black boys. Failure to act is unacceptable.

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It has been exciting to be a part of Lumina's continued support for African American males. However, with the realities of limited resources and multiple Foundation projects, it has been essential that I diligently seek opportunities to highlight the needs and challenges facing Black Males within our planning conversations. I manage the internal challenges at our foundation by keeping up with the ever-changing interests within the foundation, and by serving as an advocate for the acute needs of Black males. The challenge of limited resources is one we manage every day. When there are so many educational challenges facing so many different populations, how can we allocate the resources needed to make a difference in the lives of African-American males, while still providing support to other interests? Learning to effectively address all issues given our limited resources is a daunting and on-going challenge.

Philanthropy can't bury its head in the sand when it comes to funding exclusively work around Black males. There is a sense of urgency. When you see the number of men who are incarcerated as opposed to the low numbers of African males enrolling in college and even the lower numbers of Black males that ultimately graduate that portends poorly for our communities and our democracy. The road to economic success and global participation requires a rich educated community that must include Black males.

Tina Gridiron Smith serves as a Senior Program Officer for Lumina Foundation for Education in Indianapolis, IN. In this position she actively seeks to remove the postsecondary access and success barriers facing students of color, low-income students, and other underserved student populations. Her current grant portfolio includes over 50 projects designed to improve the postsecondary preparation, access and attainment of all students, with a specific emphasis on highlighting the models of success at minority-serving institutions, improving the policy and practice of developmental education and increasing the postsecondary success of Latino students, African American males and other underserved populations. As a California native, **Tina's** career has included positions at the University of California, Berkeley; California State University, Chico; California State University, San Luis Obispo; and Stanford University. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley and two master's degrees from Stanford University.



George L. Garrow, Jr.
 Executive Director
 Concerned Black Men – National Organization

ABFE As a service provider and key advocate, please share your insight on philanthropy’s strategies and response to improving life outcomes for Black men and boys.

Garrow Over the past several years, there has been significant discussion as to what the philanthropic community’s response should be to the life challenges facing Black men and boys. Many practitioners have encouraged our national and community foundations to work more collaboratively with those of us doing the work, to ensure wise investments over the long haul. We want philanthropy to help us “build the field” of practice. By building the field, I mean investing collaboratively in a strategy that builds the capacity of organizations doing this work in key areas: policy and advocacy, direct service (local impact) and research and evaluation. If national philanthropy is serious about reversing the negative life outcomes of African-American males, it must join us as a true partner and make significant investments in a way that will target the many issues facing Black males.

Right now, the philanthropic community is doing what it usually does in making funding decisions with this population: picking the “flavor-of-the-week” – a program or internal strategy favored by staff or board members that might tangentially engage issues around Black men and boys, without seriously considering what really works on the ground. Foundations do this to place their own unique stamp on the field. In a few years there’ll be another flavor-of-the-week, and the process will begin all over again. Meanwhile, the statistics continue to go south for our boys and men. Why? Because you generally don’t get sustained positive results by funding the flavor-of-the-week. Simply put, management is too afraid to tell its board that the “pet rock” funding strategy is not working.

Over the years, we’ve learned something very important at Concerned Black Men. National philanthropy is not eager to accept the challenge of reducing and reversing the major negative social indicators that define the lives of many disadvantaged Black males. If you look at this nation’s major social and health indicators, Black males are either at or

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near the bottom of that well. Yet the funding community believes that, for example, because it funds afterschool programs for disadvantaged kids, it is already providing funding for Black boys. Understand this: if you want to significantly increase the high school graduation rate in America, it’s not going to happen unless you develop specific interventions targeting achievement and school attachment for Black boys. Unfortunately, low Black male achievement disproportionately impacts these national statistics. Therefore, if you don’t want to fund interventions specific to young Black males, then you don’t want to increase the national high school graduation rate. Save your money and put it elsewhere. It’s a simple strategy: if you want to solve problem X, you must focus on problem X...that’s where your firepower and energy must be placed. The funding community is far more conservative than it ought to be in these issues. An aggressive approach from philanthropy --- one that is focused on the core of the problem --- is needed.

George L. Garrow, Jr. is the Executive Director of Concerned Black Men – National Organization. Concerned Black Men (CBM) was founded in 1975 when several Philadelphia police officers sponsored social events for kids at risk to gang violence. CBM’s vision was to fill the void of positive Black male role models in many communities by providing mentors and programs that affirmed the care and discipline that all youth need, while providing opportunities for academic and career enrichment. **George** and other committed members of the National Organization have assisted African-American men in 32 U. S. cities to mentor, tutor and provide various enrichment programs to thousands of children of all ages. Under his leadership, the National Organization has developed “best practice” programs -- sustainable, high quality, school-based youth initiatives, after-school tutoring and teen pregnancy programs, as well as parent literacy and self-improvement projects. **George** received his law degree from the University of Virginia Law School and an A.B. degree from Dartmouth College.



Carmen A. Anderson
 Senior Program Officer, Endowments' Children, Youth & Families Program
 The Heinz Endowments

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What are the strategies that are working in your work around Black men and boys in Pittsburgh? What are the successes and challenges? The concept of using media audits to gauge coverage of Black men and boys seems to be gaining interest in philanthropy. What does Heinz hope to glean from the media audit it commissioned and how will that information be used to improve life outcomes from Black men and boys?

Anderson

It has not been particularly difficult to focus on African-American men and boys as opposed to men and boys of color. Pittsburgh is largely a Black and White community. We have a small Asian community, and a small but growing Hispanic population. We have made grants to address some of their emerging needs, but our region is still primarily Black and White. From a historical context and current conditions, the needs and opportunities are unique for Black men and boys in many ways. We cannot ignore the impact of historical injustice. When you look at quality-of-life data, census data or any other source of information, there is no segment of our community that is fairing as poorly as Black men and boys. Unfortunately, the data shows that Pittsburgh's Black community compares unfavorably, even in comparison to other Black communities in similarly sized cities. This sobering statistical research, along with requests from community leaders and members of our board of directors to seek solutions to some of the daunting challenges, prompted us to carefully consider how we might make a difference. After much deliberation, we crafted a strategic approach to work with the African-American community to improve outcomes for African-American men and boys in three targeted areas. Our work is underway, and from the start, we have been involving the community in the form of an advisory group for advice on strategies and in

helping us make grants that are going to bring strong results. We also intend to use the advisory group to help us evaluate each phase of the initiative so that we can make adjustments as necessary in the process. Our resources are finite. It is important to be disciplined about concentrating on only a few priorities, and limiting how much we try to accomplish in each phase.

While the data, and more importantly, the loss of life to violence signaled a call to action, it was important to us that our work not be based on identifying deficits and making grants to close them. Our approach is to look for solutions from the communities' assets and from the men and boys who lead healthy, productive lives as opposed to focusing on the negatives. A lot of the solution has to come from the community. There will need to be, at some point, an advocacy agenda that addresses structural barriers that will require broader input, but community engagement will remain critical. Initially we engaged the community by asking them for input and direction on priorities. From that point we established the advisory group of community representatives for on-going engagement. Much of the work we implement is directed from the community. For instance, a communications strategy was not on our initial priority list it was members of the community who stated that it was very important and suggested a communications agenda.

Our communications plan has been devised to compliment our overall goals, promote greater community understanding of the issues and help mobilize residents of the Pittsburgh region to take action. We conducted a media audit to gather independent data about the local media's framing of stories about African-American men and boys as opposed to relying on anecdotal assessments and summaries. The intent is to determine what frames/stories exist about the target population, how the stories affect, influence or impact them, and what can be done to develop new frames/stories that change the way men and boys view themselves and others. Hopefully, based on the findings, the local media will be receptive to recommendations that address negative images and portrayals. This is a new approach for us,

but it is important because it is consistent with being responsive to community input. It has the potential to significantly address an area of great concern. While we have an internal team leading this work, it is essential to our ability to make significant progress that it be owned by the Endowments as a whole and, ultimately, by the community that is at the center of this effort.

Carmen A. Anderson. is a senior officer with the Endowments' Children, Youth & Families Program at The Heinz Endowments. Her focus is advancing the program's primary emphases: targeting the critical needs of children in the first eight years of life, addressing the special needs of adolescent youth and strengthening families as a means to promoting healthy development among children. **Carmen's** work includes identifying innovative programs to strengthen parents' skills in child rearing and supporting their children's health. She examines ways to provide financial education for parents and adolescents. **Carmen** also assists in the Endowments' development of strategies to make inclusion and diversity a defining element of the region. **Carmen** has a master's degree in mental health, a bachelor's degree in mass and interpersonal communications, and certificates in nonprofit management, business administration and victim services. She has received the U.S. Department of Human Services Commissioners Award for outstanding service in the field.

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ABFE News and Updates

ABFE News and Updates is a quarterly publication that reaches our membership of grantmakers in philanthropy as well as practitioners in the field who are working to improve socio-economic conditions in Black communities. For questions or comments please contact Sharon Toomer at stoomer@abfe.org or 646.230.0307.

In 2011 ABFE will celebrate 40 years of promoting effective and responsive philanthropy in Black communities. Come join us in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on April 9th and 10th, 2011 and help us celebrate this milestone occasion.

ABFE is promoting effective and responsive philanthropy in Black communities.

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