

August 2015 Edition

A Collection of Quarterly Editorials for ABFE Members



ABFE MAGAZINE

— A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities —



UMOJA

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Unity

in the Family and Community



FORWARD...

Umoja – Swahili for unity. A powerful concept that for me congers up images of our collective strength as a people. Our beauty and our resilience. Two institutions are central to unity: family and community. They are interconnected and the soul and breath of who we are. In essence, families do well when they live in communities that provide them with the supports they need to thrive (and not just survive!).

In this edition of ABFE Magazine, we highlight philanthropic investments in support of Black families and communities. You will hear about the work of the POISE Foundation which is on the cutting edge of innovative work to support Black families. We know that grantmaking must be done differently to support families holistically – POISE is setting the standard for philanthropy in this area. A huge thanks to Mark Lewis, Aliya Durham, and Karris Jackson from POISE for sharing your story.

Next, you will hear about the work of the African-American Leadership Forum or AALF. This effort, originally conceived by ABFE Board Chair Gary Cunningham during his tenure at the Northwest Area Foundation, has spawned activity in five cities in the Pacific Northwest to build strong Black communities. Our interviews with leaders in the AALF sites across the country shed light on their experiences to build and implement agendas for our people.

The news today is populated with stories of the daily stresses of our communities as well as the detrimental impact of external forces that influence our lives. The work of POISE and AALF are clear reminders that so many of us work hard every day to make our neighborhoods safe and prosperous. Their work exemplifies Unity in action and the role that philanthropy plays.

Umoja -- rejoice in our beauty and strength. Wishing you health and progress!

Susan Taylor Batten

“And we know that there are many who are interested in building on the principles and values that we stand for at ABFE — collective responsibility, self-preservation and building power in Black communities. “

Strengthening Black Families: Spotlight on the



The POISE Foundation received the 2015 Institutional Award from ABFE at the Annual Conference in Napa Valley, CA. This award is given annually to an organization to recognize its' leadership in effective and responsive philanthropy in Black communities. ABFE Magazine talked with several leaders of POISE to learn more about their ground-breaking work on Black families that has critical implications for changing the way philanthropy works for our community.

ABFE Magazine: Tell us about the Strengthening Black Families Initiative. How did this come about and why?



Mark Lewis, President and CEO, POISE Foundation: POISE Foundation took a deep look at the impact we were having as a small funder focused on several traditional areas of funding including education, children and youth, arts and culture, economic development and so on. Although these are all critical areas and need greater attention, we realized that small grants in these areas would never make the significant impact that the Black community needs to prosper. So the Foundation decided it had to go deep into the roots and source of our issues. We landed on the fact that our two most fundamental institutions have seen a significant decline over the last 50 years, our families and our sense of community. We also saw that most nonprofits and philanthropy are

servicing and funding issues around families but most don't dive into the work of strengthening the family as a unit and critical building block of our community. Accordingly, our board decided not only to structure our grantmaking around strengthening families, but we adapted our efforts around leadership and advocating for philanthropy and nonprofit service providers to adopt this view as well.

ABFE Magazine: How has the foundation had to change to carry out this work?



Aliya Durham, Vice President, Government and Foundation Relations, YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh, Board Member, POISE Foundation: The POISE Foundation board and staff recognized that, in order to advance the SBF initiative, we needed to rethink our grant-making strategy to reflect our core

values and convictions about the centrality of the Black family. As POISE planned for the strategic shift, we engaged the community in meaningful conversations that confirmed our collective priorities. The process served several purposes, from deepening our understanding about the complexity of issues facing families and increasing our awareness of efforts afoot, to raising our visibility with prospective grantees and donors. Under Mark's leadership, POISE also added board members and staff that demonstrated both commitment and capacity to advance our longer-term vision to facilitate and fund opportunities that will significantly enhance the quality of life for Black families in Pittsburgh.

ABFE Magazine: How do we get funding partners to the table to strengthen Black families? What are some of your emerging lessons-learned to engage investors in this work?



Karris Jackson, Vice President, Programs, POISE Foundation and ABFE Connecting Leaders Fellow Alumni: Our success in getting funding partners to the table is a result of our commitment to communicating our learnings and to sharing our work, and its results, in ways that advance practice, policy, research, and investments in Black families. When we first decided to invest in Black families, we grounded our work

in data and research and ensured evaluation was embedded in our Strengthening Black Families Program Strategy. An example of our commitment to sharing our findings with the philanthropic community is our recent publication,

Strengthening Black Families, A Case For Philanthropic Investment.

The paper provides the rationale for our shift to focusing on Black families, introduces our new Strengthening Black Families Program Strategy as a promising case example, and offers recommendations on how funders can invest in Black families. Resources, such as the above mentioned position paper, can serve as a starting point for dialogue with potential funding partners. While engaging funding partners in this work, we've learned several key lessons. We knew early on that it was important for us to create the cultural context for funders as to why investing in the Black family is critical to the sustainability of the Black community. We learned quickly that it was also important to demonstrate to funding partners how investments in strengthening Black families help them to fulfill their missions, achieve their visions and address their core issues. We also learned how important it is to communicate to funders that this work requires a long term investment. Funding community-based organizations to cultivate the strengths and assets of the Black family as a core institution is no easy feat. It can't happen with one grant. It will take a long-term investment of significant resources. Lastly, we learned that it's important to cultivate true partnerships with funders so they also become champions of the work. An example of this can be seen through our partnership with Highmark Corporation. In addition to providing funding to strengthen Black families, Highmark Corporation also partnered with us to do a press conference which included a senior member of the corporation providing remarks about the importance of investing in Black families. They also participated in a series of interviews with various media outlets and underwrote the cost of printing our recent publication. The best funder partnerships create more than just financial resources; they create additional voices to help champion the work. ♦

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VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY:

III Part Interview with The African-American Leadership Forum

Strengthening Black Communities:

At ABFE's 2012 Annual Conference, the opening plenary featured the work of the African-American Leadership Forum (AALF); an initiative started by the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAf) to build agendas for the African-American community in select cities in the Pacific Northwest – Des Moines, the Twin Cities, Portland, Tacoma and Seattle. ABFE Magazine sat down with leaders from these efforts to learn more about their progress and work to date.



Gary Cunningham, Trustee,
The Minneapolis Foundation
(and former VP of the Northwest Area Foundation)

ABFE Magazine: How did AALF come about? What were the specific goals of the NWAf?

Gary Cunningham: In 2008, NWAf hosted a series of meetings with key individuals across class, education, and gender lines in the African-American community in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The mission of NWAf is to support efforts by people, organizations, and communities in the foundation's region to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable prosperity. These conversations effectively gauged the will among African-American leaders to leverage opportunities and collectively address the challenges facing their community. It was the expectation, through this deliberative process, that they





would create a broad network of African-American leaders who engaged in intentional dialogue, shared planning and collective action and would develop a common agenda that improved the economic and social well-being of the African-American community. In the intervening four years, the AALF movement in the Twin Cities has grown exponentially, with more than one thousand members now. In addition, AALF has expanded to four other cities: Des Moines, Iowa; Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; and Tacoma, Washington. And as a consequence of this rapid growth and increasing visibility, other cities have become interested in adopting the AALF model. The five goals of AALF are to: 1) mobilize and support community-driven efforts to take ownership (individual, institutional and collective) and action on a common agenda to improve the economic and social well-being of the African-American community; 2) work with leaders to develop a holistic and shared plan that addresses the most critical issues affecting individual, family and community wealth and wellness of African-American people; 3) build capacity among community leaders for collective action and community problem solving; 4) identify and leverage the experience, credibility and influence of community leaders for collaborative efforts and sustainable community change; and 5) create opportunities for new partnerships and collaborative efforts.

ABFE Magazine: AALF is funding in cities where the Black population is quite low...lower than the national average. Talk about the need of African-American communities in these cities.

Gary Cunningham: The AALF formed in the cities within the footprint of NAAF. These cities happen to have the lowest Black populations in the country. The populations of African-Americans range from 20% in Minneapolis/St. Paul and Des Moines to 6-7% in Seattle and Portland. The issues are the same for Black people no matter where we are or how big or small the populations. Poverty, unemployment, racial, economic and social isolation, health, housing, targeted in the criminal justice and policing systems are all proportionally the same for Black people no matter what cities we live in America. If one looks at the census data, we are at the bottom of the well on every economic, educational and health outcomes in all cities in the country. Yet, we built the wealth of this nation. The only group that is faring worst in America are Native Americans.

ABFE Magazine: What are the most strategic roles that foundations can play in supporting Black communities and initiatives like AALF?

Gary Cunningham: The goal of the AALF project from the NAAF perspective was to follow the lead of the community to define the solutions for themselves on their own terms. Not to develop theories of change and then test them on communities. The Foundation's goal was to take an approach which was universal in its applications (leadership development), yet targeted in its design and implementation (the Black community). Philanthropy has the capabilities and responsibility to challenge the systems of racialized poverty. A few specific strategies include grant making, research, and cross-sector collaborations, as well as designing leadership models that maximize results using a social-justice and equity lens. In 2006 Peter Frumkin wrote, "As an agent of change, philanthropy brings with it considerable resources and, even more important, a level of freedom from both the public opinion and the bottom line that limits the ability of government and business to play this role". So situated, philanthropy can provide the long-term support and resources to be the catalyst of change to help the Black community help itself. To paraphrase, James Brown, "We don't want nobody to give us nothing, open up the door, and we will get it ourselves."



ABFE

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The Foundation's region consists of the eight states once served by James J. Hill's Great Northern Railway – Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa – and the 75 tribal governments that share the same geography.

ABFE Magazine: What is the vision for the AALF in your site? What are you trying to accomplish?



Lisa Stephany, Consultant, Des Moines African-American Leadership Forum:

The Des Moines African-American Leadership Forum is uniting African-Americans in Des Moines with a goal of moving forward toward a thriving

community. A thriving African-American community will have a unique and clear voice in the community; work together collaboratively; actively support and recognize the strengths and opportunities within the community; leverage capital, technology and media resources; work with others in the community; build capacity; and advocate for positive images of African-Americans. Through public forums, small group work and advocacy, AALF is moving forward to advance the African-American community faster; utilize partnerships and collaborations; utilize and involve up-and-coming leaders in the com-



munity; implement a joint blueprint of objectives; develop a plan to sustain the work of the Forum for the long term; and establish a presence and voice in the Des Moines community.



Jeffrey Hassan Executive Director, AALF– Twin Cities (AALF-TC): The vision for AALF Twin Cities is three-fold: to train and develop the next generation of leaders for the African-American community; to facilitate the crafting of an United Urban

Agenda for the Twin Cities African-American community; and to be the convening and networking agent in the Twin Cities African-American community that identifies best practices in health, education and economic development; identifies who is engaging in those best practices and getting results; and connecting the African-American community with those resources.



Lakeitha Elliott, Program Manager, Portland African-American Leadership Forum (PAALF): Our vision at PAALF is to be an inclusive space in which anyone from the Black community recognizes a space in which systemic, policy-level change is

meant to benefit all of the community, especially those who are the most disenfranchised. We are trying to implement a model in which committees (Education, Housing, Economic Development, Research Institute, Civic Engagement and Leadership Development, and Health) are designed to not only convene but to also build the capacity of its members/attendees.



Victoria Woodards, President and Chief Executive Officer, Tacoma Urban League and Tacoma African-American Leadership Forum (TAALF):

Our goal is to create a collaborative action agenda for reducing poverty and building sustainable

prosperity thereby creating the preferred community we envision for generations to come. However, we realize in order to create that agenda we must learn, cre-

ate and sustain relationships within and outside of our organization. As a community we have created the following guiding principles: relationships do matter; assume good intentions; we are all qualified; this (AALF) is a safe space; practice shared leadership; and act as both students and stewards.



Vaughnetta J. Barton, AALF-Seattle: AALF-Seattle's mission is to identify, create and promote community-based solutions to strengthen families, youth and children in the Black community of Greater

Seattle. Given that 6.2% of the Greater Seattle's population is of African heritage, it is our vision that AALF-Seattle will serve as a convener that promotes opportunities that strengthen our personal and economic power as a people. Our 2015 work plan is focused on collaborating with other Black organizations to make a greater impact in Greater Seattle. Through collaborations we see Black individuals, organizations, and businesses supporting each other and speaking with a collective voice.

ABFE Magazine: How has the AALF contributed to strengthening the Black community in your city? What are some of your major accomplishments?

Lisa Stephany: Since 2010, AALF in Des Moines has been working in the areas of criminal justice, economic development, education, families, health and leadership development to provide a voice for African-Americans and advocate for positive change. Examples of our work include Summer in the City, a summer program that began in 2011 to address issues affecting the African-American community, specifically the Urban Core. The first summer programming included a series of public forums that addressed a safe and healthy summer in the Urban Core neighbor-

hoods of Des Moines in response to a number of dangerous activities leading up to the summer. In 2014 and 2015, summer programming has taken a new twist and focused on providing activities for youth during the early evening hours over the ten weeks in the summer. Another example of our impact and work is the African-American Leadership Academy that began in 2013 as a way to develop the next generation of leaders for our community and beyond. Designed to be more than a collection of in-service programming, the Leadership Academy takes the unique perspective of the African-American community and addresses leadership from a variety of perspectives including politics, education, the media, criminal justice and the law, and both non-profit and for profit business. This training helps support community transformation in Des Moines through mentoring and active community-building while developing and encouraging emerging Black leaders in their commitment to improving the community. In addition, Public Forums have been a part of the African-American Leadership Forum since our beginnings in 2010. Our Criminal Justice forum focused on voter's rights and responsibilities with a focus on ex-offender voting rights and led to a Lunch and Learn with reps from the Governor's office and a boost in membership to our Criminal Justice Work Group. Our Education Forum highlighted the benefits of African-Americans and people of color running for election on the Des Moines Public School Board; this led to several African-Americans running for election, an African-American Educators Reception and several projects in support of tutoring and mentoring for African-American youth.

Jeffrey Hassan: Examples of our work in the Twin Cities includes our Josie R. Johnson Leadership Academy (JRJLA) which is funded by The Minneapolis Foundation and Bush Foundation. The Academy, named after the civil rights icon and first African-American regent to the University Of Minnesota Board Of Regents, is training and developing the next generation of leaders for the Twin Cities African-American community. The first cohort of 23 Fellows of the JRJLA include emerging inter-generational leaders who are being mentored by African-American leaders like former Minneapolis Mayor

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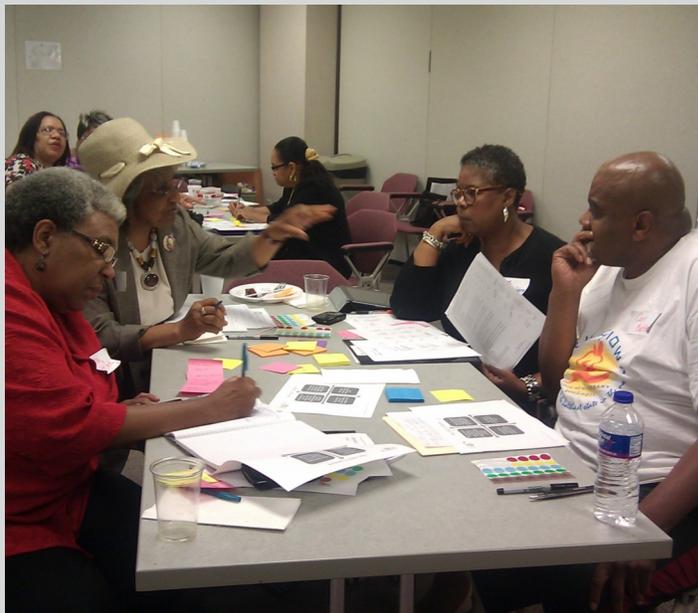
More Information Coming Soon @ ABFE.org

View 2015 Annual Conference Highlights:

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Sharon Sayles Belton, Ramsey County Commissioner Toni Carter, NdCAD Executive Director Gevonee Ford, former Minneapolis Public Schools Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson, Northside Achievement Zone CEO Sondra Samuels, General Mills Senior V.P. Kim Nelson, Camphor United Methodist Church Pastor Gloria Roach Thomas, and many, many others. Another major body of work is our new leadership initiative - Crafting a United Urban Agenda, that brings together established cross-sector leaders in the African-American community from government & politics, faith & religion, business & philanthropy and community action to determine agenda issues around which the community can unite.



Those issues include establishing early learning scholarships for low income children, creating more effective and culturally competent teachers, increasing entrepreneurship, asset and wealth creation, and addressing issues of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed mental health care. These leaders will engage in a series of three quarterly retreats to develop priorities and a strategy plan for addressing these issues. In addition to these efforts, every year since 2012, AALF's Health Workgroup has hosted BARAZA – an African-American Healing Conference at St. Paul College, which has attracted over 300 Afri-

can-American women each year, registered through churches and community agencies and we were able to publish the seminal *Crisis in Our Community; Closing the 5 Gaps of Academic Achievement*, which established an entirely new lexicon in the educational landscape around the 5 Gaps, which include: Preparation, Time, Teaching, Leadership and the now famous “Belief Gap.”

Lakeitha Elliott: PAALF has successfully launched and implemented the PAALF People's Plan which is designed to be a continuation of our anti-gentrification campaign. Other major accomplishments for us include the allocation by the City of Portland of an additional \$20M to go towards affordable housing. In addition we are pleased to report the successful graduation of two African-American Leadership Academy (AALA) cohorts, with the third one going through now. The AALA is designed to train emerging leaders within Oregon to become transformative Black leaders. Through this 12-month training program emerging leaders are cultivated for pipeline opportunities that are reflected in both internal, within the Black community, and external, mainstream, leadership position placements. This could take the shape of serving on advisory committees, board of director positions, as well as key employment opportunities.



Victoria Woodards: TAALF has allowed us to convene a broad base of community leaders, outside of the established organizations and groups, to engage in open and honest dialogue about how we create transformative leadership in our community. In addition to small group meetings, 15-30 attendees, we have convened a large group meeting with over 150 attendees to provide feedback and input on our guiding principles for this work.

Vaughnetta J. Barton: As a member of the AALF network, AALF-Seattle has created a new "conversation" around regional collaboration, specifically with AALF-Tacoma and AALF-Portland, located in the Pacific Northwest. We are grateful for the AALF members across the U.S. who traveled to Seattle in December 2014. This strategy session allowed us to connect with colleagues who have established a number of



programs and collaborations since its inception in 2009. Since 2009, AALF-Seattle has focused on programs and its infrastructure. With a focus on African-American male students, AALF-Seattle is proud to have partnered with Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute to feature the film, American Promise. In November 2013, more than 200 parents, community members, educators, and future teachers participated in a group discussion regarding education and the importance of parent-engagement. Recognizing the changing demographics in Seattle, AALF-Seattle was instrumental in facilitating several



"healing conversations" amongst long-time Black residents and newer Black community members. (It was recently reported that King County, Washington is the whitest large county in the US.) However, AALF-Seattle's largest investment to date is the State of Black Washingtonians study which was commissioned in concert with Centerstone, a nonprofit organization, and Washington State Commission on African-American Affairs, a public-sector entity. Specific to AALF-Seattle, we now have data that speaks to the strengths and barriers facing Black residents in Washington State. This study will allow AALF-Seattle to engage community members, business, and policy-makers around issues that are backed by research. The State of Black Washingtonians study also informs AALF-Seattle's 2015 work plan and decision-making. With a focus on collaboration, in June 2015, AALF-Seattle co-presented at Festival Sundiata, a weekend-long extravaganza showcasing Black merchants, talents, and history to thousands. Launched in 1980, Festival Sundiata draws hundreds of attendees and takes place at Seattle Center, which shares a campus with the nationally recognized Seattle Space Needle.

See: <http://www.festivalsundiata.org/>



ABFE Magazine: What were the specific contributions of the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAf) in making this happen? How would you describe the unique role that foundations can play in building agendas for the Black community?

Lisa Stephany: NWAf was a major force in establishing the AALF in Des Moines helping to lay the groundwork for what has now become a foundation in advancing the African-American community in our area. With substantial investments over that past several years, the NWAf has been a catalyst in bringing new supporters to the table including the American Heart Association, Headwaters Foundation and the Greater Des Moines Community Foundation. The Foundation's support has also provided credibility to the work of AALF to local funders like the United Way of Central Iowa, The Tomorrow Plan, and the Polk County Board of Supervisors.

Jeffrey Hassan: NWAf can take credit with starting the AALF movement, at all of its various sites. Without NWAf, it is safe to say there would not be a Forum. Because of the charitable nature of the work that AALF is doing, foun-

dations play the critical role in movements such as AALF.

Lakeitha Elliott: In addition to NWAf, we have had the benefit of funding from several groups. The Meyer Memorial Trust has supported our Leadership Academy as well as provided critical dollars for capacity building. The Northwest Health Foundation invested in our People's Plan and the Collins Foundation is also supporting our Leadership Academy.

Victoria Woodards: Our partnership with NWAf created several opportunities. As the last adopted AALF site, we were able to create learning partnerships with other cities who were doing the same kind of work and learn best practices and pitfalls to avoid. With dedicated funding, we were able to hire professional facilitators who led us through the process of creating our framework and hosting our group meetings. Building trust and engaging the African-American community in a way that is sustainable takes time and resources. In most cases, foundations want to invest in measurable data-driven outcomes. Establishing relationships and building trust cannot be measured in the same way we evaluate programs.

Vaughnetta J. Barton: Start-up funds from NWAf has provided guidelines for sustainability. As a group of volunteers, we leveraged resources to attract a graduate student to serve as our administrator. In time we have established a grantwriting program and continue to explore streams of revenue, such as workshop fees and other fee-for-service revenue. In the spirit of collaboration, AALF-Seattle sees foundations playing a key role as partners---as investors. While Black community members continue to work to improve the quality of life and level of success for the community, solutions to the challenges facing the Black community are tied to systemic issues. Foundations can play a role by serving as a liaison between the community and other philanthropic institutions. Foundations, as community investors, are valuable if they are willing to invest in solutions as an ally versus a master. To see long-term changes, policy changes are needed---systemic changes are needed. ♦

Which Pathway do you choose?



Transformational Leadership Services



ABFE is a membership-based philanthropic organization that advocates for responsive and transformative investments in Black communities. Partnering with foundations, nonprofits and individuals, ABFE provides its members with professional development and technical assistance resources that further the philanthropic sector's connection and responsiveness to issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. Established in 1971 as the Association of Black Foundation Executives, the organization was credited with many of philanthropy's early gains in diversity. It since has evolved into an influential network. In 2013, the organization shed its descriptor and adopted the simpler ABFE (ab-fee) to better reflect its broadening membership. For more information, visit www.abfe.org.

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