

THE AGENDA

*...a cooperative approach towards addressing critical issues among
Black Males in Philadelphia*



...in Education



...in Health



...in Economic Development



...in Criminal Justice



A Report on Four Critical Areas of Concern

*Produced by a consortium of African American Men from the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area
in conjunction with the Father's Day Rally Committee*

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A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

The Father's Day Rally Committee, Inc. (FDRC), wishes to acknowledge and thank the following individuals for their hard work and dedication as a part of an all-volunteer effort to produce this report. First, we are deeply indebted to the Chairs of the four committees for their energy and vision; they are:

- Gerald Wright, Education
- Dr. Reginald Banks, Health
- Aqil Sabur, Economic Development
- Leon King, Esq., Criminal Justice.

FDRC would also like to thank all of the members of the four committees for their time spent in meetings and dialogue for the purpose of developing a list of cogent recommendations. *Although all members were not able to participate at all times*, still, their recommendations and ideas have become the heart and soul of this living document, and will serve as the initial compass as we begin our journey together.

The work of these committees is now set before you, due in no small part to the editorial and writing efforts of a trio of gentlemen who led in the production of this document, namely:

- Linn Washington, Writing Supervision and Editing
- Len Trower, Writing, Proofing and Coordination
- Nick Taliaferro, Writing, Editing and Publication Design

We also offer our gratitude to Reverend Herb Lusk and to the staff and management of The View for their hospitality and event planning skills; our meeting together has been greatly enhanced by the comfort and attractiveness of the atmosphere offered by this fine facility.

Finally, a special thank you is extended to Dr. Reginald Banks, CEO of the Dunbar Community Counseling Services, for stepping up and providing us with the initial capital contribution that made it possible to move our Agenda forward in a practical and measurable way.

In closing, to all who have lent their support to help us realize our goals, we appreciate your partnership. To those who may have questions regarding our aims, goals and capacity to move forward with unity of purpose, we invite your sincere inquiries and solicit your support. And for those of you who may not have found a way to assist us in this effort, but who still resonate with our purposes and cause, we pray that providence will allow our paths to merge for the betterment of Black Men in particular, and the City of Philadelphia overall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bilal Qayyum,
President, Father's Day Rally Committee, Inc.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

On September 30, 2010, one hundred and ten Black men came together to begin a dialogue that ultimately led to the development of a ten-year agenda aimed at addressing the crisis facing Black Men in the City of Philadelphia. Men from all walks of life attended the meeting – including the Mayor, the District Attorney, the Chair of the School Reform Commission, leadership of the local NAACP, businessmen, community activists, religious leaders (from a variety of backgrounds), doctors, and educators, etc.

The gathering was convened under the auspices of the Father's Day Rally Committee (FDRC), a community-based organization long associated with addressing the needs of, and advocating on behalf of, Black Men and their familial concerns. Demonstrating a delicate balance of leadership and respectful deference, FDRC has assumed the role of serving as the facilitator of the ongoing dialogue that has been created by both the initial gathering, and the subsequent meetings of newly formed committees. FDRC also serves as the nexus for communication, and facilitates the coordination of activities for this grassroots endeavor.

Initially, this consortium undertook the task of articulating and defining the relevant issues that lie at the heart of the crises confronting Black Males in Philadelphia. Among the most pressing issues requiring immediate attention, we listed the following:

- **Rampant Joblessness and the need for Economic Development**
- **Educational Deprivation and Decline (48% dropout rate)**
- **Violence and the Impact of Gun Availability and Homicide (2400 Black Murders between 2000-2009)**
- **Ex-Offender Issues and the Disproportionate Impact on Black Males (approx 65% of all ex-offenders)**
- **The Erosion of the Black Family**

Though this list of concerns cannot be presumed to be comprehensive, this consortium, in conjunction with FDRC, determined to use it as a *starting point* for coordinated action. It was also recognized that there is no single solution, nor method, that will allow us to find an elusive "cure" for our collective ills. Instead it was concluded that we must work together over a wide spectrum of concerns in a coordinated fashion, synergizing our efforts in order to reach agreed upon goals and objectives.

The result of this gathering was an agreement to develop/produce an Agenda for action, along with a relevant plan of action-steps. Our resolve to form this Agenda is accompanied by an understanding that these issues are long-standing and *transgenerational*, hence we recognize that our efforts will require a long-term commitment connected to a passionate and patient pursuit of our agreed upon objectives. Because we all differ, we may all employ differing skills and tools in our working together; but we must be single in our agreement to work cooperatively in order to form, and execute, the Agenda that we develop.

As currently conceived, our Agenda will address the following areas:

- **Education**
- **Health**
- **Economic Development**
- **Criminal Justice**

We recognize that we are at the beginning of an endeavor that will require vigilant monitoring, reviewing and revising; *accordingly it is our plan to solicit further input through a series of meetings held in communities across Philadelphia*. Through these engagements it is our hope that an ongoing community dialogue will be established that will allow for us to hear, and share, the concerns and ideas from our various communities. Ideally, the best suggestions and initiatives will become incorporated into our collaborative effort.

Finally, it is our intention to be bold and creative as we work together to address the issues that we determine to be crucial. We also acknowledge that priorities and objectives may change, along with methods and strategies, and we are prepared to adjust as needed with flexibility and humility. But there is one point upon which we will neither reverse nor retire, and that is the matter of Unity. We are resolved to work together, collectively and energetically, to accomplish our ultimate aims.

T H E W O R K O F T H E C O M M I T T E E S

The Process

At the initial gathering of this collaborative effort attendees were asked to self-appoint themselves to four respective Committees. Thereafter, under the leadership and direction of the aforementioned Chairs, these committees met at times and locations convenient to themselves in order to discuss, research and clarify the issues cognate to their particular subjects.

These Committees were charged with the task of reporting back to the general consortium after a designated period. Their reports were to include the following:

- a) Mission Statement - a galvanizing statement that would serve to indicate the the general concern of the Committee that would serve to focus the efforts of the collaborative
- b) Recommendations - brief narratives that may provide a working agenda for our future efforts, and that may also allow us to engage civic leaders and/or elected officials who may wield influence in the areas of concern
- c) Action Steps - definitive and measurable activities that would yield measurable and definable results; these would serve as an objective steps that would allow us to measure our effect and progress

The Reports

Each Committee submitted a report through their Chairman that responded to the original mandate given to each. These reports - all produced and assembled by the efforts of men who were volunteering the time and efforts - varied in length, tone, format, etc. It was then determined that a basic format should be developed that would allow for a synopsis of the Committee Reports in a standard, cogent form, for purposes of this document.

However, it was also determined that the original work of these Committees, as submitted by way of the Reports offered through the respective Chairmen, be made available for review and publication via a website dedicated for that purpose. Accordingly, the full report of each of the Committees can be read in-full online (via the FDRC website).

Disclaimers

While the work of the Committees is laudable and substantial, we still feel compelled to offer the following disclaimers:

- All Committee members did not attend all meetings, hence the Reports are not the result of full unanimity.
- It should not be assumed that all members agreed fully with all of the findings/recommendations of their Reports.
- In keeping with unity implicit within this collaboration, Reports are considered to be a part of the overall efforts of the collaboration, not simply the work of the independent Committees that produced them.

THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Challenge:

The crisis of education in America is catastrophic for black males from low levels of classroom achievement to high dropout rates to dwindling numbers of black males in college. Problems with education drive problems related to the three other elements of this reports: criminal justice, economics and health. We need new and renewed efforts.

The Mission:

We seek to foster recommendations that direct families, communities and institutions to assure the educational and vocational wellbeing of Black males, and to advance strategies to immerse Black males in relevant academic, artistic, athletic, cultural and technological opportunities.

Recommendation No. 1:

- Provide strategic and necessary support for Black male children and youth in educational settings.
 - ✓ **Action Step No. 1:** Create student success centers in an undetermined number of schools.
 - ✓ **Action Step No. 2:** Establish family engagement centers for parental guidance and problem-resolution.
 - ✓ **Action Step No. 3:** Critique and align disciplinary policies and practices to enhance Black male educational mission, i.e., in-school suspension versus out-of-school suspension, zero-tolerance policy, etc.

Recommendation No. 2:

- **Enhance parent and community engagement.**
 - ✓ **Action Step No. 1:** Reduce communication and cultural barriers between parents, teachers and school administrators.

Recommendation No. 3:

- Develop more culturally sensitive approaches to mental and behavioral health.
 - ✓ **Action Step No. 1:** Promote hiring more Black male counselors and support staff who are sensitive to and capable of effectively interacting in a productive way with Black male students.

THE HEALTH COMMITTEE REPORT

The Challenge:

Health is an essential quality-of-life element that rarely gets the attention it requires in the black community and society at large. Issues related to psychological well-being compound the impact of the five diseases known to affect black men the most: hypertension, cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes and cancer. There is a need for increasing awareness about the state of the physical and psychological health of the African American male -- the abandoned minority -- and constructively engage this neglected population.

Mission:

Increase awareness of the state of the physical and psychological health of the African American male -- the abandoned minority -- and constructively engage this neglected population.

Recommendation No. 1:

- Establish Citywide Information Campaign

- ✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Employ flyers, religious institutions, peer specialists, websites and complementary institutions to disseminate information regarding the status of Black male physical and mental health.

Recommendation No. 2:

- Establish Citywide Educational and Health-Enhancing Events

- ✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Establish workshops, group activities, lectures, community health fairs, and one-stop health-enhancing resources

Recommendation No. 3:

- Ongoing Research Project

- ✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Establish an ongoing research project involving Black male mental and physical health professionals to investigate the most current and effective findings in assessing and treating mental and physical maladies disproportionately or uniquely affecting African American males.

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

The Challenge:

Economic self-sufficiency is the foundational element for any and all improvements for black males in particular and the black community in general. Achieving that self-sufficiency requires correcting many major misconceptions including the notion that economic development is derived principally from the public sector. Achieving that self-sufficiency requires providing credible alternatives for black men currently engaged in the black market economy. Achieving economic self-sufficiency requires increasing awareness of the state of the low level of Black male entrepreneurship and its negative effect on wealth creation in the Black community. Achieving this goal requires effectively altering this entrepreneurship gap by confronting and correcting educational and market impediments. Achieving self-sufficiency also requires concerted efforts to support business corridors and business development initiatives in the black community.

The Mission:

Increase awareness of the state of the low level of Black male entrepreneurship and its negative effect on wealth creation in the Black community, and to effectively alter this situation by confronting educational and market impediments.

Recommendation No. 1:

- Networking

- ✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Establish a demonstration project to teach Black males the art and science of effective networking with people and organizations.

Recommendation No. 2:

- Mentoring & Trust Building

- ✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

For neglected Black male youth, create entrepreneurial mentoring programs coordinated with civic, corporate and educational institutions, as well as with other Black male entrepreneurs.

Recommendation No. 3:

- Education

- ✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Work with the Community College of Philadelphia and the School District of Philadelphia in developing a formal curriculum for entrepreneurial training.

Recommendation No. 4:

- Accelerated Cash Flow Concept

- ✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Engage private and public sector institutions in establishing an accelerated payment process (2 – 3 weeks) for paying vendors with gross receipts less than \$1M, with the intention of spurring a more entrepreneur-friendly environment citywide.

Recommendation No. 5:

- A Non-Traditional Financing Source

- ✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Investigate private sources for investment in the establishment of a non-traditional financing source for Black male entrepreneurship; also develop a business plan of this model for presentation.

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Challenge:

The criminal justice system in Philadelphia is failing from fairness for black men to providing safety for community residents to consuming over one-third of the City's \$3-billion annual budget with few positive results. Changes required in all facets of Philadelphia's criminal justice system can begin with policy/programmatic changes in the \$249-million prison system. Savings from changes in prison policy/programs must be invested in initiatives for black men and communities citywide. Reinvest one-third of the projected budget for the local prison system in projects to reduce reliance on pre- and post-trial detention; to create neighborhood-based partnerships to establish economic opportunities for ex-offenders and to restore neighborhoods; and, to increase efficiency and fairness of the courts, the District Attorney's Office, the behavioral health system and the City of Philadelphia's police department. With judges being a critical component in all phases of the criminal justice system the creation of community review committee for candidates seeking election to the judiciary or judges seeking retention is essential.

The Mission:

In a word, Criminal Justice Reinvestment. Reinvest one-third of the projected budget for the local prison system in projects to reduce reliance on pre- and post-trial detention; to create neighborhood-based partnerships to establish economic opportunities for ex-offenders and to restore neighborhoods; and, to increase efficiency and fairness of the courts, the District Attorney's Office, the behavioral health system and the City of Philadelphia's police department.

Recommendation No. 1:

- Short Term

- ✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Establish a mechanism to educate the public concerning the rehabilitative nature of incarceration and related issues; the struggles and issues faced by the police department in fighting crime; and the function of the Criminal Justice Advisory Board.

- ✓ **Action Step No. 2:**

Establish a Community Juridical Review Committee - for the purpose of providing objective evaluations for individuals seeking Judicial positions or retention (Judges); the Committee would establish benchmarks and provide a review of the candidate's positions as they resonate with the Agenda.

Recommendation No. 2:

▪ Medium Term

✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Implement community-based roundtables to coordinate employment, treatment, and education for ex-offenders, complete with review protocols.

Recommendation No. 3:

▪ Long Term

✓ **Action Step No. 1:**

Institutionalize a system-wide analysis and planning function within city and country government to formulate accurate, long range and budgetary criminal justice goals, and monitor, measure and modify programs and strategies as needed.