

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUNDATION'S
BLACK MEN AND BOYS INITIATIVE
PRESENTS

BRING YOUR "A" GAME

DISCUSSION GUIDE

www.21cf.org/age

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FROM THE PRESIDENT OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUNDATION



OUR YOUTH ARE FULL OF POSSIBILITIES. They all have the potential to be lawyers, doctors, teachers, poets and yes, even president of the United States.

So why have so many of our Black men and boys missed this message? Why are the high school dropout and probable incarceration rates for this demographic astoundingly high? Seemingly, somewhere along the way they begin to believe the lie that they should not dream beyond their current circumstances.

Twenty-First Century Foundation (21CF), an endowed national Black public foundation, is at the forefront of changing this dynamic by building a framework for coalitions, collaborative efforts, and durable partnerships across all sectors of society to work together on the issues collectively identified as critical to change the paradigm for this population. Our approach is centered on cultivating strong Black civic leadership and combining it with sound advocacy and organizing infrastructures to achieve positive, long-term social change for young Black males.

This is why we are pleased to provide this guide for your use after viewing our film **BRING YOUR "A" GAME**. Our hope is that through these structured discussions, we will listen to each other, learn from each other, and begin to build bridges to a bright and promising future.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Erica Hunt". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Erica Hunt
President

MARIO VAN PEEBLES' LETTER TO ADULT AUDIENCES



SOMETHING HAPPENED—I'm not sure exactly when, or how—but at a certain point it seemed as if being ignorant had become hip. Not only was ignorance bliss but far more potent and subversive; it was cool. Acting ghetto had become “keeping it real.”

Not just Black America, but all of America seems stuck in a pop culture limbo where we all compete to set the bar at a new “low.” The stupider the TV show, (including news) the shorter the skirt, the raunchier the lyrics, the better. Politicians try to out “ghetto” or “white trash” each other, pandering to the perceived NASCAR dad non-intellectual, the Joe Six-Pack, Joe-the-Plummer and the hockey mom.

I'm not sure what the social blow back from America's race to the bottom will be, but for American Black boys it is devastating. They find themselves thrust unwillingly into the epicenter of fast food culture. Like walking rapping fashion barometers, where American Black youth go, global music and fashion seem to follow.

I was recently in Russia. White kids were walking around with their pants sagging with no idea of the gang culture it sprang from (prisoners are not allowed to wear belts). Our boys have become victims of the hype and they pay the heavy price. They are supposed to be hard, gangsta, hypersexual, violent, and ignorant, and when they don't fit the mold, they are accused of being soft sellouts trying to be white. Some say that many “gansta rappers” are the modern day Uncle Tom confirming for the world that we are as low as they suspected. Victims of our own mythology, Black filmmakers often portray the upwardly mobile brother or sister as the social climber losing his or her Black roots while the brother with the mop in his hands is keeping it real.

While in London a white associate told me how white boys in her son's school were ridiculing a Black Brit about not being a real Black boy because he didn't act like the thugs in the videos. I met a sista after a screening of my film, *Baadasssss!*, who said her son who

had been a straight-A student was now on the verge of failing because other Black kids were saying he was acting white. My own nephew was an A-student and a chess champion until he was about 13 years old, when he realized girls weren't checking for a guy on the Dean's list; they were looking for a baller on the thug list.

It's no longer just about trying to reach and teach the disadvantaged youth with limited opportunities. It's about trying to reach all the kids, including those who should know better. Our young men are dropping out in droves to be, as Kevin Powell puts it, "ball players, hustlers, and rappers." Forty-two percent of Black boys graduate from high school, unlike their white counterparts, of whom 75% graduate. In the information age where nerds become masters of the universe, we have been duped into going in the wrong direction. We have been hoodwinked into believing corporate success can only come at the expense of our Blackness. Our youth have become voluntary slaves marching towards prison to a hip-hop beat. They inherited the bravado of the Black Power Movement but without the political ideology to inform it. Freedom by any means necessary has been replaced by get rich by any means necessary.

With all the corporate bailouts, Americans are understandably not in a generous mood. With our highly visible and successful minority, including our new president (who is deeply committed to education), it might be easy for those not familiar with the facts to think Black folks have made it. The reality, unfortunately, could not be further from the truth. When America has a cold, Black folks have pneumonia. We are in a crisis and our Black boys are at the center of it. We are less than half of the high school graduating class and more than half of the prisons.

BRING YOUR "A" GAME is an insider town hall meeting in the C.G.I. realm. I wanted to pass the mike around to brothers from all walks of life not afraid to tell the hard truth to our youth. From brothers we all know, to brothers we should know, these men are not just giving book knowledge but hard-earned, lived-it life knowledge—about everything from basic survival skill sets to the schoolhouse-to-jailhouse dynamic. Each one of these men gave their time for free. Each one of them has brought their "A" Game in their own lives and now they are out to help our sons do the same.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mario Van Peebles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "V".

Mario Van Peebles, *Director*

LETTER FROM PRODUCER KAREN WILLIAMS



THE SEEDS FOR BRING YOUR "A" GAME were planted over five years ago during a walk from the train station to a destination in Brooklyn, NY during after-school hours. In just ten short minutes, I listened to loud litanies of profanity and vulgarity belt from the mouths of innocents; I witnessed an excessive number of young Black males hanging out at the corner bodegas; and I saw a young Black boy in handcuffs being escorted by policemen. At no point on this brief walk did I observe an adult male interact positively with a young Black male. I arrived at my destination resolved to rectify this negligence; and that commitment provided the fuel to manifest **BRING YOUR "A" GAME**.

This journey would not have been possible without my friend Mario Van Peebles responding to my call with a resounding 'yes' and lending his creative vision and support. Twenty-First Century Foundation took a tremendous leap of faith by venturing into the unknown territory of film production. Thanks to 21CF's Board of Directors and staff for their tireless efforts and to the generous funders that facilitated **BRING YOUR "A" GAME**.

My deepest thanks to the countless crew and individuals who displayed degrees of grace and kindness often not associated with the jaded realm of filmmaking. Special thanks to Scott Billups, whose genius transformed **BRING YOUR "A" GAME** into a spectacular virtual world; to Lillian Benson, whose commitment to rescuing our brothers was always present as she deftly navigated mountains of hurdles to decipher the story; and to Aubree Curtis and Gabe Kleinman, whose sage guidance and unbridled support helped soldier our vision into reality.

Finally, it is with great pride and gratitude that I acknowledge the generosity and brilliance of all of the men featured in our show. May their words and actions inspire new generations of "A" Gamers to emerge into prominence, resurrect our communities and bring us into collective greatness.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Karen Williams, *Producer*

INTRODUCTION

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUNDATION

(21CF) facilitates strategic giving for Black community change. Specifically, 21CF works with donors to invest in institutions and leaders that solve problems within Black communities nationally. Since its inception in 1971, 21CF has contributed millions of dollars to more than 500 nonprofit organizations. Grants provide seed capital to support new initiatives, to fill the gaps in vitally needed programs, and to advance community organizations to the next level of leadership and influence. In recent years, 21CF has taken a leadership role in promoting new models of Black philanthropy that support donors who want to develop the skills, commitment and imagination to address pressing issues impacting our communities.

The persistence of the crisis facing America's Black men and boys reflects a cycle of systemic disempowerment in five interconnected areas: education, employment, criminal justice, engaged fatherhood, and health. The marginalization of Black men and boys begins in the schools, where facilities and resources are substandard, dropout rates are high, and educational opportunities leading to decent jobs are limited. Marginal employment paying less than a living wage makes illegal activity within the underground economy an appealing alternative for too many young men and opens the door to the criminal justice system. Once incarcerated, these men find it difficult to fulfill their role as fathers and to re-engage successfully in society once their time has been served. Stress-related threats to mental and physical health are high, while access to health care is low. Powerful institutional and systemic forces in our society perpetuate this cycle of marginalization, desperation, disease, and despair.

Since 2004, 21CF's Black Men and Boys Initiative (BMB) has worked to break this cycle of disempowerment by raising the national visibility of the issues, expanding Black community leadership to address them, enlarging cooperation among current activists and new allies, and leveraging additional financial support for Black men and boys work.

21CF approaches Black men and boys' issues from both the bottom up and the top down: We catalyze and support local organizing and leadership development, comprehensive national movement building, and the development of linkages between community-based and national work. Three principal BMB activities reflect this strategy:

- 21CF's Black Men and Boys Fund provides grants and technical assistance to organizations and coalitions

Nationally, only 47% of Black boys graduate with their age group. In 21CF's focus cities and regions, the numbers paint a picture that is even grimmer: In Los Angeles, the rate is 45%, in Oakland 31%, in Chicago 30%, in New York 24%, and in Louisiana 38%. More than 70% of male high school dropouts are unemployed. Nearly one-third of Black males will be incarcerated at some point in their lives. There are more Black men in prison than there are enrolled in college.

in target cities to build capacity in their organizing, advocacy, and leadership development;

- Since 2005, 21CF has been incubating the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys, a national advocacy coalition and information clearinghouse dedicated to gathering the vision, energy, expertise, and experience of diverse local, regional, and national organizations into a movement to produce fundamental changes in policies and practices affecting America's Black men and boys, and;
- 21CF is using the power of modern media to spur national awareness of, community action on, and

support for, Black men and boys' issues through **BRING YOUR "A" GAME**, a state-of-the-art documentary film that features accomplished Black men from many fields telling their stories and encouraging Black youth to pursue an education and reach for a fulfilling life. A companion adult version is also available, entitled **FAIR GAME?**

BMB'S PROGRAM FOCUS AREAS INCLUDE:

EDUCATION: Identifies the educational challenges facing Black boys from birth through college including high dropout and suspension rates and low college participation

EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY: Identifies strategies to create new jobs, increase current living wages to meet basic quality-of-life standards, promote skill and professional development, and address barriers to accessing employment and legitimate income- and asset-building opportunities

CRIMINAL JUSTICE: Identifies efforts designed to change policies that facilitate the disproportionate imprisonment of Black men and boys, and that support the civil and human rights struggle of former prisoners as they re-enter communities

ENGAGED FATHERHOOD: Identifies efforts that promote rather than punish fathers seeking to be engaged and/or reunited with their families

HEALTH: Addresses the pressing issues of health, including the prevalence of life-threatening and chronic disease, untreated and under-diagnosed mental illness, violence, and the limited access to appropriate and sufficient health care

21CF's Black Men and Boys Initiative was launched in four pilot cities: Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Oakland. From these initial strategy sessions, a number of next steps for the initiative were identified, including identifying persons and groups who share a concern for and can help support Black men and boys programs; articulating public messages related to Black men and boys; and partnering with other organizations to help leverage grant-making that supports systemic change for Black men and boys. Today the Initiative has expanded to New Orleans and anticipates formally adding Atlanta by the end of 2009.

Now, 21CF enters into a comprehensive community engagement strategy to access previously untapped stakeholders. **BRING YOUR "A" GAME** is a unique tool to advance for the work of the Twenty-First Century Foundation's Black Men and Boys Initiative.



WANT TO HAVE A BRING YOUR "A" GAME EVENT?

CONSIDER A TOWN HALL MEETING FORMAT:

- Invocation (sensitive to all faiths)
- Stating the Occasion
- Screening of BRING YOUR "A" GAME
- Panel Discussion
- Panel can include adult and youth participants. Topics can include the three main messages in BRING YOUR "A" GAME: educational attainment, avoidance of the criminal justice system, and work ethic, or other issues of local importance
- Q&A
- "A" GAME Pledge
- Adjourn and Direct to Local Resource Organizations that are Present

THE FILM

TO CATALYZE A NATIONAL conversation on the plight of Black men and boys, 21CF has partnered with actor-director Mario Van Peebles and producer Karen Williams to create **BRING YOUR “A” GAME**—a documentary film that, in Van Peebles’ words, “sheds light on the resilience and influence of Black males.” Featuring Black male leaders in a variety of arenas, the film is the focus of a comprehensive community engagement effort.

BRING YOUR “A” GAME uses screenings and accompanying community discussions as a catalyst to transform the lives of urban youth. **BRING YOUR “A” GAME** offers a message of success, delivered by influential Black male cultural figures. Using a cinematic style influenced by popular culture and employing innovative technologies, the film details strategies that have improved the lives of Black men and boys. It underscores how essential educational achievement and high school graduation are to survival and success in today’s world.

In a recent interview, Van Peebles said, “I am honored to be partnering with the Twenty-First Century Foundation to make this film. It isn’t going to be nice, polite, or loved by everyone, but I hope it will be an honest, insider look at the culture of the community that needs it the most.”

INTERVIEWEES INCLUDE such Black male icons as Richard “Dick” Parsons, Chris Rock, Spike Lee, Dr. Cornel West, Ice Cube, Newark, New Jersey Mayor Cory Booker, Sean “Diddy” Combs, Kevin Liles, Lou Gossett Jr., Lupe Fiasco, Hill Harper, Damon Dash, Kevin Powell, Geoffrey Canada, Bruce Gordon and former NBA star Allan Houston, among others.

The film and accompanying activities target three principal audiences:



ADOLESCENT BLACK MALES—To enable them to recognize that a variety of life strategies and choices exist that can help them achieve their goals

CARING ADULTS—To increase their awareness of the challenges faced by a largely marginalized segment of our society facing an ongoing crisis, and share viable solutions and

INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE OF COLOR—To stimulate their involvement and investment in social action

TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION

of those who generally would pay little heed to traditional documentaries, we brought on board noted cinematographer and special effects expert Scott Billups (*Bend it like Beckham, Jurassic Park*) to employ innovative film technologies. The principals were filmed in color in front of a “green screen” and inserted into black-and-white animated backgrounds reflecting a variety of urban landscapes. The resulting look is designed to pique and sustain the interest of otherwise casual viewers and to engage them in productive discussion and work on the critical issues facing Black youth.

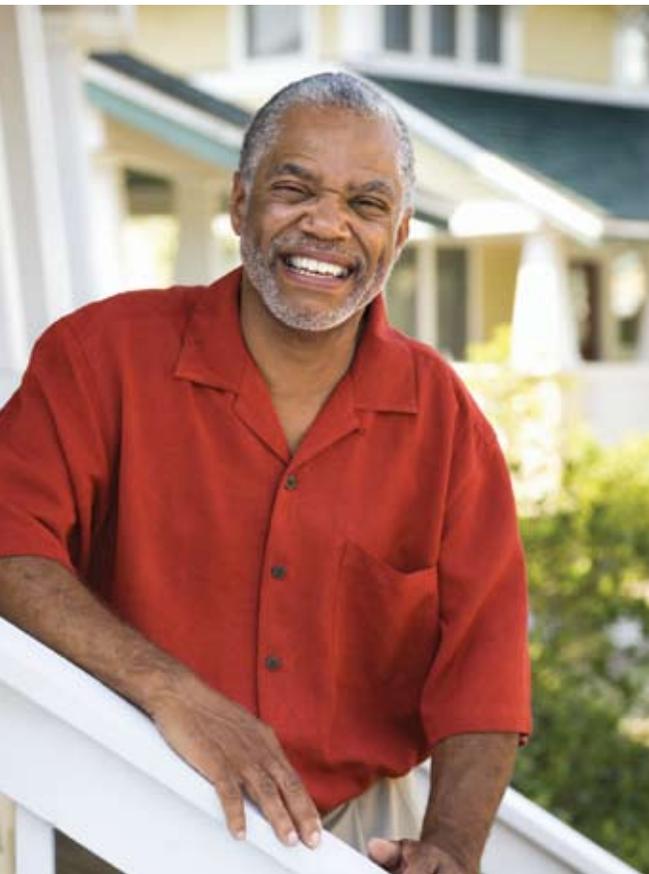
HOW TO USE BRING YOUR “A” GAME

BRING YOUR “A” GAME is a media tool—a helpful instrument to bring to light myriad issues facing young Black males in America, and largely, throughout the world. Consider this from the Center for Social Media:

- Probably at no time in history has access to, and proficiency with, media and information technologies been more important in the public mind, nor more critical to policymaking.
- Nor at any time in the recent past have the nation’s press, media, and information sectors been the object of as much intense public concern or scrutiny with a growing recognition of their unmatched importance in the conduct of our daily lives and democratic institutions.

- Never before have the once separate worlds of news, stored knowledge, and products of the mass media and entertainment industries converged locally, nationally, and globally, with even greater convergence certain to take place in the years ahead.

ZICF urges community groups, faith-based organizations, schools, policymakers, and funders to use **BRING YOUR “A” GAME** to discuss not only the challenges that affect Black America, but to use it as the basis for conversations about solutions. How can each of us and our institutions, be the change agent to increase outcomes related to educational attainment, alternatives to the criminal justice system, and developing a successful work ethic?



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS can also employ **BRING YOUR “A” GAME** to inspire their own media stories:

- Develop short vignettes of “A”-Gamers in your community—Black men who are beating the odds and living productive lives
- Create a talk-back space on your website to allow young people to share their experiences as they bring their “A” GAME
- Reach out to local media broadcasters to showcase profiles of young and older Black males who are involved in transforming community
- Create your own local radio programming, such as BlogTalkRadio
- Schedule a brown-bag lunch or staff retreat to screen **BRING YOUR “A” GAME** and discuss its application to your own work
- Convene a cross-section of service providers, community organizers, policy advocates, businesspersons, and others to create public policy platforms or coordinated services.
- Gather local organizations that have similar goals to stimulate meaningful conversations about cooperation and collaboration.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION prompts are designed to aid your facilitated conversations about **BRING YOUR “A” GAME** and its key messages. As you plan for your group’s experience, keep in mind that this may provide an optimum opportunity to prepare young people with strategies to lead effective dialogue.

GENERAL

- What are your general reflections on **BRING YOUR “A” GAME**? What do you think the filmmakers were trying to get across? Were they successful in their goals?
- What are your thoughts on using a media tool to convey the key messages in **BRING YOUR “A” GAME**?
- Which content in the film most resonated with you? Why?

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IS A KEY TO SUCCESS

- **BRING YOUR “A” GAME** comes from the perspective that education is a key component to achieving life success. What are your thoughts on this hypothesis? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- In the opening segment of **BRING YOUR “A” GAME**, Mario Van Peebles says, “...about 75% of white kids graduate with their high school class. For Asian kids, the number goes up a little bit, to 77% percent. For African-American kids, the number goes down to 50%. That’s right, we have a 50% drop-out rate, and it’s mostly young brothers.” Were you aware of this statistic? What are the statistics in your community? What does it feel like they are? What are the societal implications of this fact?
- Compare and contrast these two statements:
 - ✧ Sean “Diddy” Combs—*“A lot of cats that come up to me and say that they’re thinking about dropping out of high school; getting in the rap game, I just plead with them to not make that mistake. It’s not as easy as you think it is.”*

AND

- ✧ Mario Van Peebles—*“Think about an office building with a lot of doors and you’ve got all these students going in these doors and coming out the other side as doctors, lawyers, school teachers, anything you want.*

“Now, imagine there’s only two doors to that same building and one says ‘rapper’ and one says ‘ballplayer’ and now you’ve got all of us, all the brothers, running for those two doors.

“So, imagine everyone else is shooting at a really big target and we’re shooting at a really narrow target, and our target has a timeline. If we don’t get through the doors by the time we’re 30, it’s ‘game over.’”

- Early in the film, Ice Cube makes this statement, *“In these young years, when you’re thinking about ‘what do I want to do with my life?’ get knowledge. Get smarter. The earlier you drop out, the quicker you’re on your way to failure.”* What does Ice Cube mean? Do you agree

Resources

HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES YOU CAN ACCESS TO HELP TRAIN YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE PEER FACILITATORS:

CO-FACILITATION WITH YOUTH: Ways to Involve Youth in Program Leadership
www.uua.org/documents/jaegerjesse/050801_youth-co-facilitation.pdf

PEER RESOURCES
www.peer.ca/peerprograms.html

PEER HELPING BROCHURE
www.peer.ca/broch.html

YOUTH HELPING YOUTH: A HANDBOOK FOR TRAINING PEER FACILITATORS by Robert D. Myrick, Tom Erney; Publisher: Educational Media Corporation, January 2004

or disagree with his assertion? Is this statement more or less true for Black youth?

- Here's another hard-hitting statement. Twenty-First Century Foundation's Rev. John Vaughn says, *"If you do not have a good education, you will not get a good job. If you do not get a good job, you are fast-tracked into prison. For-profit prisons are beginning to project the number of prisons they will build in 20 years based on third- and fourth-grade reading scores."* Discuss with your facilitator the connection between, as Mario Van Peebles says, *"the school house and the jail house."* What other knowledge do you have about the connection between education and incarceration?
- Consider this quotation from Rev. Eugene Williams, *"You will not be hopeless if you continue on with your education. We're not just talking about school. School teaches you skills. Education teaches you what to do with those skills."* Are Black men and boys affected by a sense of hopelessness? What is the antidote to this condition? What role do societal institutions have in the area of educational attainment for Black men and boys?
- Share your reactions to these quotes from Kevin Powell and Spike Lee:
 - ✧ Kevin Powell—*"It's not corny to be educated. Come on, when did it become OK for us to say it's corny to have an education?"*
 - ✧ Spike Lee—*"Young, bright African-American kids who speak correct English are ridiculed for acting White."*

AVOIDANCE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

EXERCISE FOR YOUTH EDUCATION

On a piece of paper, catalogue the number of men in your life that have reached their desired level of educational attainment, be it high school, college, trade school, etc. To your knowledge, what is their level of life satisfaction based on their education?

On the flip side, write down the men whose lives may have been improved had they attained additional education.

Discuss these results with your group facilitator.

EXERCISE FOR YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY

Research the number of prisons in your community. How many are private corporations?

Do these institutions provide local jobs?

What is the ethnic breakdown of the men and women incarcerated in these facilities? Do you believe that there are policies or societal practices that have influenced the makeup of the prisons on your community?

Discuss with your facilitator the implications of privatized prisons in your area.

- An oft-repeated statistic is, as Mario Van Peebles says, *"There are more Black men in lockdown in prison than there are in college."* He goes on to say, *"That's a fact. One out of three Black men is going to end up in prison. That is a fact. You understand what I'm saying? They're ready for you."* How meaningful is this quotation to you? In your community, does the reality reflect what's said here? How does this impact your community and the Black men available to contribute to and support Black boys?
- Ernest Austin of the Ex-Offender Action Network says, *"You're not the only one doing time. When you have children, your children are doing time. Their mom can only do so much, and when she's at work, and you're away in prison, I mean, the streets is gone raise them."* In your experience, what is the impact on families when a loved one is incarcerated?
- The Fortune Society's Glenn Martin says, *"They allow companies to come in and use the labor, cheap labor. Cause when you're in prison, people in prison get paid like \$15 every two weeks. So if you're sitting there thinking you can't have a regular minimum-wage job out here in the street, think about that for a minute."* Did you know this? Is this a persuasive argument to stay away from crime and out of the criminal justice system?
- Martin goes further and says, *"It's simple. Education is the one way to counteract all this prison stuff. How did they end up in prison in the first place? Because we have a lack of education in the communities that we come from."*
- Dr. Sampson Davis of The Three Doctors shares his

personal testimony: *“The situation I went through, with the whole robbery thing, changed my life. It made me realize how close I came to spending the rest of my life in prison. Had I not been 17½, had I been 18, I would have been an adult and the whole story would have been written differently. When I got out, I came home and I told my boys from my hood that I was going to college, they were like, ‘get out of here. No one from Dayton Street goes to college.’”* With your facilitator, discuss some likely scenarios for Davis had he not turned his life around. In what ways does the American justice system criminalize very young people?

DEVELOP A POSITIVE WORK ETHIC

BRING YOUR “A” GAME defines a positive work ethic as the following components:

- Be on time
 - Work hard
 - Dress for success
 - Be accepting
 - Learn everything
 - Be dependable
- Spike Lee says, *“With the proliferation of all these reality shows, which I think has done a tremendous, tremendous harm to the work ethic of young America. These young people see these shows and think that the hand of God will come down and anoint you as the next one and you’ll be an overnight sensation—big lie.”* Why does Lee say that the messages in reality shows are a big lie? Do you believe that most young people can be an “overnight sensation”?
 - What are your thoughts about Sean “Diddy” Combs’

EXERCISE FOR YOUTH WORK ETHIC

Do you agree with these components of a positive work ethic? What else should be added when discussing work ethic? Make your own work ethic list.

Take a look at the “A” GAME Pledge (last page of this guide). If you agree with its premise, complete and email or fax to Agame@21cf.org or 404.758.1293.



comment, “With success, comes a lot of sacrifice. That means less hanging out on the corner, less smoking blunts, less drinking those 40s, less partying.”?

- Mario Van Peebles says, “So the more you try to go forward in life, the more you’re going to want to put yourself with other people who are trying to go forward—positive people.” Is this statement true? What’s wrong with trying to go it alone? Are associations with others really the strategy to success? Why or why not?
- Reflect and remark on these statements from Kevin Powell and Mayor Cory Booker:
 - ✧ Kevin Powell—“Your work skills and your education will determine how much you’re going to make in your life. If you don’t have a high school diploma or a GED, you’re not going to make a lot of money. You’re gonna be a minimum-wage cat.”
 - ✧ Mayor Cory Booker—“The difference today between somebody who doesn’t graduate from high school and someone who actually goes to college—the earnings over a lifetime are well over \$1 million.”



ADDITIONAL NOTABLE QUOTABLES AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Commander Gregory Black says, *“For a lot of us, the military is a great way to escape some of the environments that we grew up in the inner city. The greatest thing the military offers is an equal playing field. The downside of joining the military is, we are at war right now and it’s a very dangerous war.”* What are your thoughts about Black’s statement? Do you feel the military is a strategy for your success? For Black men and boys? Why or why not?
- Geoffrey Canada: *“I think a lot of the decisions we make would be better if we valued the relationships with our children—if we understood that if I take this chance, that two-year old child of mine is going to be without their father for four years. Every little boy, every little girl I know wants their daddy with them.”*
- Ice Cube: *“You gotta pimp the system, you can’t let the system pimp you. The system wants you to drop out. The system wants you to be a criminal because they can make money from you in the penitentiary.”*
- Mario Van Peebles: *“Why were African Americans brought to America? You know the answer. We weren’t brought here to run for president. We weren’t brought here to be lawyers or doctors or even ballplayers. We were brought here to be slaves. That’s right, that’s the truth. We were brought here as cheap labor to work the cotton fields.”*
“Now, flash forward 400 years. Cheap labor’s being outsourced to foreign countries, so they don’t need us the same way.”
“If you get arrested, if they put you in prison, you’re cheap labor again. You’re a modern day slave.”
- Lupe Fiasco: *“Change isn’t going to come through speakers. It’s not going to come through a TV screen. It has to come from you. It has to come out of you. All our work is meaningless if you don’t stand up and take action.”*

TAKE ACTION

FOR ORGANIZATIONS:

- Identify local or national partners to teach adult participants how to use leverage their own financial resources–(getting more funding for working with black men and boys, identify job opportunities, connect to existing organizations)
- Create local resource directories to link in caring adults with Black youth in need of support
- Engage member organizations of the 2025 BMB Campaign for help in putting together a policy platform; identify institutional systems and policies that need to change to allow Black men and boys to achieve success
- Convene other local organizations to start talking about ways to collectively increase your impact on these issues
- Convene some of your local funders and engage them in conversation about impacting Black men and boys

FOR ADULTS:

- Inspire adults to volunteer for local or national partner organizations (mentors, lead programs, local advocacy and organizing)
- Identify nascent groups of black men that have been gathering and get those groups organized
- Find strategies to shift the paradigm for black boys regarding excellence
- Give to 2ICF or community-based organizations doing work for Black men and boys

FOR YOUTH:

- Take the **“A” GAME** Pledge
- Find incentives to stay in school
- Engage in **“A” GAME** talkback on 2ICF’s viral portals, i.e., MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter

BRING YOUR "A" GAME PLEDGE

Date _____

I, _____, pledge to bring my **"A" GAME** by staying in school, staying out of the criminal justice system, and developing a good work ethic. Further, I will encourage others to do the same.

My **"A" GAME** Plan is: _____

Name

Age

Email

City, State

COMPLETE YOUR "A" GAME PLEDGE ONLINE AT WWW.21CF.ORG/AGAME OR EMAIL YOUR PLEDGE TO AGAME@21CF.ORG!

“A”-GAMERS IN THE FILM

MARIO VAN PEEBLES ACTOR/DIRECTOR

Mario Van Peebles believes there are three loves in your life: What you do, who you do it with, and what you leave behind. With his reality show, Mario's Green House, Mario gets to team up with his kids and his filmmaker father Melvin Van Peebles. The show chronicles the Van Peebles family's often-humorous attempts to raise their eco-consciousness as they go green in Hollywood.

With **BRING YOUR “A” GAME**, Van Peebles encourages young brothers to resist the pop culture of anti-intellectualism and educate themselves beyond conventional academics. His documentary, *FAIR GAME?* explores such topics as the prison industrial complex as a form of modern day slavery, and eco-apartheid.

A graduate of Columbia University with a B.A. in Economics and recipient of an honorary doctorate from Hofstra University, Van Peebles worked for two years for New York's Department of Environmental Protection before moving to Hollywood to act, write, and direct.

“It's called ‘show business’ not ‘show arts.’ I needed the business savvy to turn what I love into a career,” says Van Peebles. After three years of saving and sleeping on a kitchen floor, Van Peebles got his first break acting in *Heartbreak Ridge* opposite Clint Eastwood. He took that money and funded his first short film. Soon after he was directing episodic TV including his own series for NBC produced by Stephen J. Cannell called *Sonny Spoon*. His theatrical directing debut was the urban gangster hit *New Jack City*, which became Warner Brothers' most profitable movie of 1991. Van Peebles followed up with his multi-cultural western, *Posse*.

Van Peebles then directed and produced *Panther*, while his father wrote and produced it. *Panther* is the story of the Black Panther Party's rise to power. The film became a political classic, earning both controversy and awards including the Lacarno Film Festival's Silver Leopard award.

Baadasssss!, Van Peebles' odyssey about the making of his father's groundbreaking film *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* was one of Ebert and Ropert's ten best movies of the year for 2004.

Mario portrayed political icon Malcolm X alongside Will Smith in Michael Mann's *Ali* and occasionally directs and acts in shows like *Damages* and *Law and Order*.

ERNEST AUSTIN EX-OFFENDERS ACTION NETWORK

Ernest Austin is the founder and lead organizer for the Ex-Offender Action Network (EAN), an organization of ex-offenders working to restore the rights and responsibilities of the formerly incarcerated. EAN provides HIV/AIDS training, job placement services, and peer support for persons who are trying to successfully reintegrate from prison into society.

DAVID BANKS FOUNDING PRINCIPAL, EAGLE ACADEMY FOR YOUNG MEN

David Banks, founder of Eagle Academy in New York, has been featured in *Time Magazine* and *Newsweek* for his achievements in the education of young people. Before Eagle Academy, Banks founded and served as principal for seven years at the Bronx School for Law, Government and Justice. Eagle Academy for Young Men prepares students to join the ranks of future leaders in and across society – leaders committed to excellence in character, commitment to community and family, and scholastic achievement.

REV. DR. MICHAEL BECKWITH

AGAPE INTERNATIONAL SPIRITUAL CENTER

Dr. Michael Beckwith's life is a living testament to building spiritual community. In the 1970s he began an inward journey into the teachings of East and West, and today teaches universal truth principles found in the New Thought–Ancient Wisdom tradition of spirituality. Gifted with a vision of a trans-denominational spiritual community, in 1986 he founded the Agape International Spiritual Center upon his faith in that original vision.

GREGORY BLACK RETIRED NAVAL COMMANDER

CDR (Ret.) Black is a 21-year veteran of the U.S. Navy, where he served as a Navy Diving Officer and Surface Warfare Officer. A native of Owensboro, Kentucky, Black was an All-State football player and attended Eastern Kentucky University on a football scholarship. After college he entered the Navy and became the third Black diving officer in Navy history. Since his military retirement in 2001, he has taught Navy High School, NJROTC, and published a newsmagazine for Blacks in the military.

MAYOR CORY BOOKER NEWARK, NJ

Cory Anthony Booker is the current mayor of Newark, New Jersey. He is a Democratic politician and former Newark Councilman and community activist who ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 2002 against longtime incumbent Sharpe James. Booker ran again in 2006 and won a sweeping victory against Ronald Rice to become the 36th mayor of Newark. Booker earned a B.A. in political science in 1991 and an M.A. in sociology the following year at Stanford University. He obtained a J.D. from Yale Law School in 1997.

GEOFFREY CANADA

PRESIDENT AND CEO, THE HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE

Geoffrey Canada is a social activist and the author of *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America*. Since 1990, Canada has been president and CEO of the Harlem Children's Zone in New York, an organization whose goal is to increase high school and college graduation rates among students in Harlem.

SEAN "DIDDY" COMBS CEO, BAD BOY ENTERTAINMENT

Sean Combs is a record producer, rapper, actor, men's fashion designer, entrepreneur and dancer. He has won three Grammy Awards and two MTV Video Music Awards, and his clothing line earned a Council of Fashion Designers of America award. His business interests under the umbrella of Bad Boy Entertainment Worldwide include Bad Boy Records, the clothing lines Sean John and Sean by Sean Combs, a movie production company, and two restaurants.

DAMON DASH CEO, DAMON DASH INDUSTRIES

Damon Dash is a label executive and the former CEO and co-founder of Roc-A-Fella Records with Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter. Since the sale of Roc-A-Fella Records to Def Jam, Damon started the Damon Dash Music Group. Dash stays very active as an actor, movie director, music producer and CEO.

DR. SAMPSON DAVIS

PHYSICIAN (THE THREE DOCTORS)

Born as the fifth of six children in one of New Jersey's poorest cities, Dr. Sampson Davis grew up surrounded by fragmented families, crime, and drugs. While attending University High School in Newark, Dr. Davis met Dr. Rameck Hunt and Dr. George Jenkins, two fellow students who, together, drastically altered the course of one another's lives. Dr. Davis received his bachelor's degree from Seton Hall University, his medical degree from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and completed his residency in Emergency Medicine at the same hospital in which he was born, Newark Beth Israel Medical Center.

LUPE FIASCO HIP-HOP ARTIST

Lupe Fiasco (born Wasalu Muhammad Jaco) has blazed his own path to critical acclaim. Influenced initially by gangsta rap, Fiasco gradually grew leery of such negative messages, gravitating toward the dazzling lyricism of the likes of Nas and Jay-Z. In 2004, Fiasco signed with Atlantic Records and began recording his debut, *Lupe Fiasco's Food & Liquor*. Released to extensive critical lauding and media embrace in September of 2006, this album (executive-produced by good friend, and one-time mentor, Jay-Z) set the stage for a career that promises longevity.

JAMIE FOXX ACTOR/MUSICIAN

Jamie Foxx is an Academy Award winning actor, stand-up comedian, and singer. For his work in the film *Ray*, Foxx won the Academy Award and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Award for Best Actor. He has also won a Golden Globe Award for Best Actor in a musical/comedy and has been nominated for several Grammy Awards.

BRUCE GORDON CORPORATE EXECUTIVE

Bruce Gordon has had extensive experience in both corporate and nonprofit sectors. He was most recently president and CEO of the NAACP. Prior to that post, Gordon was President, Retail Markets Group for Verizon Communications and Group President for Bell Atlantic's Enterprise business unit.

LOUIS GOSSETT, JR. ACTOR

Academy Award-winner Louis Gossett, Jr. played briefly with the New York Knicks before becoming an actor. His first film was 1961's *A Raisin in the Sun* with Sidney Poitier. Since his film debut, Gossett has starred in film productions such as *The Deep*, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, *Jaws 3-D*, *Enemy Mine*, the *Iron Eagle* series, *Toy Soldiers* and *The Punisher*.

HILL HARPER ACTOR

Hill Harper, an accomplished film, television and stage actor, stars in the hit CBS drama series, *CSI: NY*. Harper is an author and established the MANifest Your Destiny (MYD) foundation, a non-profit youth organization. MYD's mission is to empower, encourage, and inspire young males to be successful.

ALLAN HOUSTON RETIRED NBA ATHLETE

Allan Houston was drafted by the Detroit Pistons in 1993. In 1996, he signed with the Knicks and played there until 2005. During his tenure with the Knicks, Houston helped the team reach the 1999 NBA Finals. Houston was selected to the All-Star team in 2000 and 2001.

DR. RAMECK HUNT PHYSICIAN (THE THREE DOCTORS)

Dr. Rameck Hunt was born like many other young men in Newark, New Jersey where the neighborhood either makes you or breaks you. Dr. Hunt loves telling his story and wholeheartedly accepts his chosen position as a role model. Dr. Hunt received his bachelor of science degree from Seton Hall University, his doctor of medicine degree from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School; he completed a residency in internal medicine at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Dr. Hunt is a board certified internist at University Medical Center at Princeton and Assistant Professor of Medicine at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

ICE CUBE RAPPER/ACTOR

Born O'Shea Jackson, Ice Cube is a rapper, actor, screenwriter, and producer. He began his career as a founding member of the rap group N.W.A, and later launched a successful solo career in music and film. In 1992, he married Kimberly Woodruff, with whom he has four children. From the mid-1990s onwards, Cube focused primarily on acting. He remains one of the most visible West Coast rappers, having helped originate gangsta rap.

DR. GEORGE JENKINS

DENTIST (THE THREE DOCTORS)

As a young boy growing up in Newark, New Jersey, Dr. George Jenkins had a powerful advantage over many of his peers—he had a dream. That dream was to become a dentist. Determined to get to dental school, Dr. Jenkins stayed focused on success while attending University High School. Dr. Jenkins received his degrees at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and today proudly serves as Assistant Professor of the Clinical Dentistry Section of Adult Dentistry at Columbia University.

VAN JONES SPECIAL ADVISOR FOR GREEN JOBS, ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION AT THE WHITE HOUSE COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Van Jones is the Special Advisor for Green Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation at the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). He is the founder of Green For All, a national organization that promotes an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty. He is also the co-founder of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and Color of Change, two highly innovative social justice organizations. A 1993 Yale Law School graduate, Jones is the author of the 2008 New York Times best-seller, *The Green Collar Economy*.

SPIKE LEE DIRECTOR

As a writer-director, actor, producer, author and educator, Spike Lee has revolutionized the role of Black talent in cinema. Spike Lee first established his unique perspective in 1986 with the independently financed *She's Gotta Have It*. Recent critical and box office successes have included such films as *The 25th Hour*, *Inside Man*, *The Original Kings of Comedy*, *When the Levees Broke*, and *Summer of Sam*. Spike Lee's timely 1989 film, *Do the Right Thing*, garnered an

Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay and Best Film and Director awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. Ever moving into new areas, Spike Lee has combined his extensive creative experience into yet another venture: partnering with DDB Needham, he has created Spike/DDB—a full service advertising agency—that will concentrate on the urban/ethnic market.

KEVIN LILES WARNER MUSIC GROUP

Kevin Liles' meteoric rise from intern at Def Jam Records to executive vice president of Warner Music Group—the largest independent music content company in the world—is legendary in the music industry. His career was launched in 1986 when, together with his rap group Numarx, he wrote the multi-platinum, award-winning single *Girl You Know It's True*, performed by Milli Vanilli. From an unpaid internship in 1991, Liles soared through the ranks to become president of Def Jam Music Group in 1998. As president he oversaw the creation of the brands Def Jam South, Def Soul, Def Soul Classics, Roc-a-Fella and Murder Inc. Under his stewardship, Def Jam grew into one of the most influential record labels in the world just as the rest of the music industry was facing a protracted slump.

GLENN MARTIN FORTUNE SOCIETY

Glenn E. Martin is the associate vice president of policy and advocacy at The Fortune Society, Inc. In this role, Mr. Martin is responsible for developing and advancing Fortune's criminal justice policy advocacy agenda. Mr. Martin works to create partnerships with other advocates and policymakers to identify and implement criminal justice policy reform initiatives to remove practical and statutory roadblocks facing people who are working to reintegrate into society. During his career, Mr. Martin has assisted thousands of clients who have criminal records, histories of alcohol and drug dependence and HIV/AIDS.

RICHARD PARSONS CHAIRMAN, CITIGROUP

Richard Parsons is the chairman of Citigroup and the former chairman and CEO of Time Warner. Parsons served an internship at the New York State Legislature, at which time he was invited to work as a lawyer for the staff of the then New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller. When Rockefeller was appointed Vice President of the United States, in 1974, Parsons followed him to Washington D.C., where he worked directly with President Gerald

Ford. In 1977, Parsons returned to New York and became a partner after only two years at the Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler law firm. In 1991, Parsons was invited to join Time Warner's board; he subsequently became president of the company in 1995, where he helped negotiate the company's merger with America Online in 2000, creating a \$165-billion media conglomerate.

KEVIN POWELL COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

Kevin Powell is widely considered to be one of America's most important voices in these early years of the 21st century. Powell is a political activist, poet, journalist, essayist, hip-hop historian, public speaker, entrepreneur and, most recently, a Democratic candidate for Congress in Brooklyn, New York. A product of extreme poverty, welfare, fatherlessness, and a single-mother-led household, he is a native of Jersey City, New Jersey and was educated at New Jersey's Rutgers University. Kevin Powell is a longtime resident of Brooklyn, New York, and it is from his base in New York City that he has published nine books, including his recent essay titled, "Someday We'll All Be Free."

CHRIS ROCK ACTOR/COMEDIAN

Emmy and Grammy Award-winning Chris Rock has been hailed internationally as one of stand-up comedy's heavyweights. Rock is a comedian, actor, screenwriter, television producer, film producer and director. He was voted by Comedy Central as the fifth greatest stand-up comedian of all time.

KENNY RUSHING CEO, HOUSE HUSTLING ENTERPRISES

Born in Des Moines, Iowa, Kenny Rushing grew up with a single mother. At the age of 14, Kenny found himself a desperate young man from the projects who would do anything to help his family. The streets beckoned and he soon became a drug kingpin. The dream collapsed, of course, and Kenny was arrested, convicted and sent to prison where he remained for seven years. Today, six years removed from incarceration, Rushing is a successful real estate mogul, civic leader and devoted philanthropist. He is also a dynamic visionary with a plan to help a generation.

RUSSELL SIMMONS CO-FOUNDER, DEF JAM RECORDS

Russell Simmons grew up in the Hollis area of Queens, New York, and spent some of his teen years as a street hustler. He later enrolled at CCNY-Harlem to study sociology, and in 1978, he began using his spare time to promote early hip-hop block parties and club shows around Harlem and Queens. By 1979, he'd formed his own Rush Productions company. In 1982, he took on his younger brother Joseph's group as clients, christening them Run-D.M.C. and helping to guide their meteoric rise to stardom over the next few years. In 1984 Simmons and Ric Rubin formed Def Jam Records. Over the next few years, Def Jam grew into one of the most popular and creatively vital labels in hip-hop history. Simmons continued to branch out into other business ventures: In 1992, he launched Phat Farm, a successful men's clothing line which later spawned a female companion, Baby Phat. In 1999, Simmons sold the remainder of his 40 percent share of Def Jam to Universal Music Group for a reported \$100 million, staying on as a nominal chairman.

AMAR'E STOUDEMIRE

CENTER-FORWARD, PHOENIX SUNS

Amar'e Stoudemire did not start playing organized basketball until he was 14. Stoudemire's father died when he was twelve, and his mother was in and out of prison during that time also. As a result, he attended six different high schools before graduating from Cypress Creek High School in Orlando, Florida. Stoudemire played only two years of high school-level basketball, but in those two years he was named the MVP of the Nike summer league. He committed to play at the University of Memphis, but never attended the school. Stoudemire won the NBA Rookie of the Year Award in 2003, made three appearances in NBA All-Star Games, and won the Bronze Medal with the United States men's national basketball team at the 2004 Olympic Games.

REV. JOHN H. VAUGHN PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUNDATION

Rev. John H. Vaughn served as executive director of the Peace Development Fund, in Amherst, Massachusetts before joining 21CF. He has held the position of Minister for Education and Social Justice at the Riverside Church, in New York City as well as Director for Community Development at the Community Training and Assistance Center, in Boston, Massachusetts; Executive Director of East Harlem Interfaith, in New York City; and Assistant

Minister of Hamilton United Methodist Church, in San Francisco, California. Vaughn, a graduate of Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, holds a M.Div. from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California and is an ordained minister within the American Baptist Churches.

DR. CORNEL WEST PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Dr. Cornel West is the Class of 1943 University Professor of Religion at Princeton University. One of America's most gifted and provocative public intellectuals, Dr. West has won numerous awards including the American Book Award, and has received more than 20 honorary degrees. He received his B.A. from Harvard University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Princeton University. Dr. West's writing, speaking, and teaching weaves together the American traditions of the Baptist Church, transcendentalism, socialism, and pragmatism. His best-selling book, *Race Matters*, changed the course of America's dialogue on race, justice and democracy.

TIM'M WEST SPOKEN WORD ARTIST

Tim'm West is an author, poet, and hip-hop activist who has been artistically nurtured in New York City, the Bay Area, and most recently Washington, D.C. Tim'm completed his B.A. at Duke University, received an M.A. in Liberal Studies/Philosophy from the Graduate Faculty at The New School for Social Research in 1998, and in January of 2002 received an M.A. in Modern Thought and Literature from Stanford University. Most recently, Tim'm has been hosting the "Front Porch" series, a Spoken Word/Hip-Hop/Soul showcase that has been held in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Oakland, Brooklyn, Atlanta, and at various colleges and universities. He continues to teach, perform, and raise consciousness and looks forward to developing a community of progressive artists and intellectuals in Houston, Texas where he now resides.

REV. EUGENE WILLIAMS CEO AND
NATIONAL DIRECTOR, REGIONAL CONGREGATIONS
AND NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS.

Rev. Eugene Williams is a Baptist minister, nationally recognized as a leader in the faith-based organizing movement and for his leadership in community development. Concerned with making the connections between theology and community development and revitalization meaningful to a broad cross section of people, Williams has become an accomplished and popular lecturer.

He is founding editor of Organizing Magazine, the only national publication dedicated to the topic of community revitalization through faith-based organizing.

SAUL WILLIAMS ACTOR/ SPOKEN WORD ARTIST

First establishing himself as an influential poet, and then as an award-winning screenwriter/actor, Saul Williams then went on to establish himself as an MC. His approach to MCing, though, wasn't exactly in line with the traditional school of hip-hop. His rhymes weren't really rhymes but rather his poetry was delivered in a frenzied spoken word manner that was more rhythmic than alliterative. His first major recording was collaboration with KRS-One, "Ocean Within," which appeared on the soundtrack to Slam, the award-winning film he not only co-wrote but also starred in.

REV. ALFONSO WYATT FUND FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK; CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUNDATION

Rev. Alfonso Wyatt, vice president and project director of the Jericho Faith-Based Technical Assistance Project, has worked with three generations of young people as an educator, counselor, program developer, administrator, mentor and advocate. He has created innovative programs that respond to the needs of young people in foster care, group homes, public schools, community-based organizations, detention facilities and the broader faith community. He is the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Twenty-First Century Foundation.



BRING YOUR “A” GAME NATIONAL PARTNERS

2025 CAMPAIGN FOR BLACK MEN AND BOYS

(WWW.2025BMB.ORG) Incubated by 21CF since 2005, the 2025 Campaign is a national coalition and information clearinghouse dedicated to channeling the vision, energy, expertise, and experience of hundreds of diverse local, regional, and national leaders and organizations into a movement to bring about comprehensive, fundamental changes in policies and practices affecting the lives and futures of America’s Black men and boys. The 2025 Campaign focuses on building and advancing an agenda for change in five interconnected areas: education; employment and wealth; fatherhood and families; justice, rights and responsibilities; and health.

ALPHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY, INC.

(WWW.APA1906.NET) Since its founding on December 4, 1906, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. has supplied voice and vision to the struggle of African-Americans and people of color around the world. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. develops leaders, promotes brotherhood and academic excellence, while providing service and advocacy for our communities.

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS (WWW.BBBS.ORG)

is the oldest and largest youth mentoring organization in the United States. For more than 100 years, the organization has provided professionally supported one-to-one long-term relationships between 6- to 18-year-old youth and adults who offer them friendship and serve as role models. Affiliates throughout the country provide community- and school-based mentoring and such specialized programs as mentoring for children of prisoners.

CONCERNED BLACK MEN (CBM)

(WWW.CBMNATIONAL.ORG) was founded in 1975 when several Philadelphia police officers sponsored social events for kids at risk for 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. While the vision of CBM’s founding members has expanded to include children and their parents nationwide, the philosophy of men offering themselves as positive role models to children has remained CBM’s mission for more than 30 years.

NATIONAL CARES MENTORING MOVEMENT

(WWW.CARESMENTORING.COM). Founded in 2006 as Essence Cares, this fast-growing resource network is creating a mentoring campaign that links millions of caring adults in communities across the country to mentoring opportunities with Black youth, and to reshape public policy to strengthen schools’ ability to equip youth with positive values and critical academic, economic, and social skills. Partnering with 21CF in this effort are such national leaders as One Hundred Black Men, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Schott Foundation for Public Education, and *Essence* Magazine.

NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE (WWW.NUL.ORG)

Established in 1910, this is the nation’s oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. Headquartered in New York City, the organization boasts more than 100 local affiliates in 35 states and the District of Columbia, providing services to more than 2,000,000 people through its programs, advocacy, and research.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

BOYS INTO MEN: RAISING OUR AFRICAN AMERICAN TEENAGE SONS

by Nancy Boyd-Franklin, Ph.D., and A. J. Franklin, Ph.D.,
with Pamela Toussaint
Publisher: Dutton/Plume

BREAKING THE CHAINS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SLAVERY

by Na'im Akbar
Publisher: Mind Productions & Associates

THE FAITH FACTOR: THE KEY TO BLACK EMPOWERMENT

by Keith Augustus Burton
Publisher: Life Heritage Ministries

FORTY MILLION DOLLAR SLAVES

by William C. Rhoden
Publisher: Random House

I WILL WEAR NO CHAIN!: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

by Christopher B. Booker
Publisher: Praeger Publishers

KILL THEM BEFORE THEY GROW: MISDIAGNOSIS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN BOYS IN AMERICAN CLASSROOMS

by Michael Porter
Publisher: African American Images

LEARNING WHILE BLACK: CREATING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN

by Janice E. Hale
Publisher: The Johns Hopkins University Press

LETTERS TO A YOUNG BROTHER: MANIFEST YOUR DESTINY

by Hill Harper
Publisher: Gotham

LETTERS TO YOUNG BLACK MEN: ADVICE AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR A DIFFICULT JOURNEY

by Daniel Whyte III
Publisher: Torch Legacy Publications

LOCKSTEP AND DANCE: IMAGES OF BLACK MEN IN POPULAR CULTURE (Margaret Walker Alexander

Series in African American Studies)
by Linda G. Tucker
Publisher: University Press of Mississippi

MAKES ME WANNA HOLLER

by Nathan McCall
Publisher: Vintage Press

MOTIVATING AND PREPARING BLACK YOUTH FOR SUCCESS

by Jawanza Kunjufu
Publisher: African American Images

THE SHAME OF THE NATION: THE RESTORATION OF APARTHEID SCHOOLING IN AMERICA

by Jonathan Kozol
Publisher: Three Rivers Press

SOUND THE TRUMPET! MESSAGES TO EMPOWER AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN

by Darryl D. Sims
Publisher: Judson Press

WHAT BLACK MEN SHOULD DO NOW: 100 SIMPLE TRUTHS, IDEAS, AND CONCEPTS

by K. Thomas Oglesby (Author), Tavis Smiley (Foreword)
Publisher: Kensington

WHY ARE SO MANY BLACK MEN IN PRISON?

by Demico Boothe
Publisher: Full Surface Publishing

“YO, LITTLE BROTHER...” : BASIC RULES OF SURVIVAL FOR YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

by Anthony Davis
Publisher: African American Images

YOUNG, GIFTED, AND BLACK: PROMOTING HIGH ACHIEVEMENT AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

by Theresa Perry (Contributor), Asa Hilliard III (Contributor), Claude Steele
Publisher: Beacon Press

REPORTS AND ARTICLES

BLACK MALE: WHY THE MID SOUTH CANNOT AFFORD TO IGNORE THE DISPARITIES FACING ITS BLACK MEN AND BOYS

Foundation for the Mid-South
www.fndmidsouth.org/Documents/Black_Male_web.pdf

BREAKING BARRIERS: PLOTTING THE PATH TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR SCHOOL-AGE AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES

Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
www.cbcfinc.org/pdf/breaking_barriers.pdf

COMMUNITY RETURNS: INVESTING IN BLACK MEN AND BOYS

Twenty-First Century Foundation
www.21cf.org/pdf/ExecutiveSummary.pdf

GIVEN HALF A CHANCE: THE SCHOTT 50 STATE REPORT ON PUBLIC EDUCATION AND BLACK MALES

Schott Foundation
www.blackboysreport.org

GREATNESS IS AN ENDLESS JOURNEY: A SYSTEMATIC RESPONSE TO SAVING AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE AND REBUILDING THE VILLAGE

Changemakers.net
www.changemakers.net/en-us/node/3572

MOMENTUM: SUSTAINING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE LIFE OUTCOMES AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES

Ford Foundation
21cf.sslpowered.com/downloads/Momentum_Report.pdf

NATIONAL OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN CAMPAIGN

Schott Foundation
www.schottfoundation.org/otl/schott-otl-deck.pdf

WHY WE CAN'T WAIT: A CASE FOR PHILANTHROPIC ACTION: OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING LIFE OUTCOMES FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

Ford Foundation
www.21cf.org/downloads/wwcw/wwcw-FinalReport.067.pdf

YOUNG MEN OF COLOR IN THE MEDIA: IMAGES AND IMPACTS

The Dellums Commission
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
Health Policy Institute
2025bmb.org/pdf/justice/menofcolor_media.pdf

WEBSITES

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUNDATION

www.21cf.org

BLACK MALE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT FORUM

<http://bmcef.com>

BLACK MALE INITIATIVE

City University of New York
<http://web.cuny.edu/academics/oaa/initiatives/bmi.html>

BLACK MAN'S THINK TANK

www.bmtt.org

BLACK MEN IN AMERICA: PROVIDING ROLE MODELS FOR YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICANS

NPR with Ellis Cose
www.npr.org/programs/wesun/features/2002/cose/index.html

FLORIDA COUNCIL ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF BLACK MEN AND BOYS

www.cssbmb.com

THE MOREHOUSE MALE INITIATIVE

<http://www.morehouse.edu/facstaff/bmarks/bmi.html#>

THE STATE OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE

<http://www.iamsaam.org/about/nationalsaam.php>

ABOUT TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FOUNDATION

SINCE ITS FOUNSING by economist Robert S. Browne in 1971 as a small public foundation, 21CF has worked with donors to invest in institutions and leaders committed to addressing the persistence of poverty and inequity in America's Black community. Black people confront injustice in every major area, including education, engaged parenting, health, workforce/employment, and criminal justice. The theory of change 21CF has developed to guide its programming rests on the premise that correcting these socioeconomic disparities requires a long-term commitment to building the organized power of people, money, and media to address the root causes of current problems. We work in partnership with other funders to develop the capacity of the nonprofit sector to have more than a short-term or individualized impact and to build a larger strategic force for change. We provide community based organizations with grants and technical assistance to build capacity, power and resilience. We seed local, regional, and national coalitions that link efforts across issues and connect place-based initiatives with larger campaigns. Finally, we identify and invest in new tools for communication and cooperation that enable diverse activists and supporters to combine their strengths to create a movement that can be sustained for the many years that may be required for true change to take hold.

As one of the few endowed African American foundations in the United States, 21CF has developed a range of giving vehicles through which donors can support leaders and institutions that are working to solve problems locally and nationally. We are particularly committed to expanding support and leadership by Black donors. We seek to represent, and to build in others, responsible stewardship, responsive grantmaking, and results-oriented partnerships.

Twenty-First Century Foundation identifies Black communities and populations where the needs are particularly acute and encourages focused, strategic giving to address these needs. Our programs aim for national scope and local impact. We are currently focusing on building Black leadership and nonprofit capacity in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Oakland, and the Louisiana/Mississippi Gulf Coast through two strategic initiatives: the Black Men and Boys Initiative, which identifies, highlights, and supports strategies that build leadership, educational opportunity, health, and economic stability for America's Black men and boys; and the Gulf Coast Organizing, Advocacy, and Leadership (GOAL) Initiative (formerly Hurricane Katrina Initiative), which supports work that helps the Gulf Coast's Black and other low-income communities of color recover from the devastation of the storms, particularly the hurricanes of 2005, and make their voices heard in equitable plans for rebuilding the region.

ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

From its inception, 21CF has become a nationally recognized expert on the needs of the Black community and has served as a vehicle for individual and institutional giving that has had a powerful impact nationally and in targeted cities and regions. Our growth in revenue, grantmaking, programming, donor engagement, and internal capacity has been especially pronounced since 2004, as the following highlights illustrate:

- From 2006 through 2008, 21CF's grantmaking totaled \$5,529,349, which represents 338 grants.
- 21CF has awarded grants to more than 600 Black community-based organizations, including 81 in 2008.
- 21CF grew from 80 individual donors and foundation

partners in 2004 to 881 in 2007, and from nine donor-advised funds to 19.

- Major foundations and donor collaboratives have made substantial, sustained commitments to 21CF's work in the post-Katrina Gulf Coast. The Kellogg Foundation in 2008 made a \$1 million, three-year commitment to our Gulf Coast work. Gulf South Allied Funders, a collaboration among networks of progressive individual donors, has raised \$3.8 million since 2006 for our post-Katrina work and in 2008 began planning to launch a new campaign to raise \$10 million over the next five years for this cause.

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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Twenty-First Century Foundation presents

BRING YOUR "A" GAME

An MVP Films Production of a film by Mario Van Peebles

Producers: **MARIO VAN PEEBLES** and **KAREN WILLIAMS**

Co-Producer: **SCOTT BILLUPS**

Associate Producer: **JACKIE STOLFI**

Director of Photography: **SCOTT BILLUPS**

Editor: **LILLIAN BENSON, A.E.C.**

Music: **SAM RETZER AND TIM BOLAND**

Director: **MARIO VAN PEEBLES**

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