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INTRODUCTION

A Gathering of Leaders



"The work we're doing here has the potential to transform – if we can get to high-level infrastructure changes, it could be revolutionary"

(Unidentified, in the Debrief session)

On June 13th and 14th, **150** scholars, activists, policy-makers, funders, media-makers and practitioners came together in Philadelphia to develop new strategies and mobilize resources to confront the myriad challenges facing males of color. The gathering attracted participants working in Black, Latino, Native and Asian/Pacific Islander communities. From the outset, the conversation reflected the promise, challenges and tensions of work in this space. **Jane Lowe**, team director for the Vulnerable Populations portfolio at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) welcomed the conference participants, and outlined the goals and priorities of Forward Promise, the Foundation's multi-year commitment to improve the health, education and employment outcomes for males of color. She communicated her excitement about learning from the individuals in the room, and the commitment of her colleagues to an ongoing dialogue around the issues facing males of color. **Maisha Simmons**, RWJF's program officer leading the Forward Promise initiative, talked at length about her personal investment and professional commitment to moving the ball forward in this work. For her the issues facing males of color are not simply a professional area of focus, but a moral imperative. Conference facilitators **Marcus Littles** and **Micah Gilmer** of Frontline Solutions outlined the purpose of the gathering, and the potential benefit of working together through a complex set of issues. However, they also cautioned of the danger of a males of color space to demand a "one-size-fits-all" approach that erases the real historical, cultural and institutional differences between the various ethnic identities that comprise Americans of color.

This assembly of scholars, activists, policy-makers, practitioners, and grantmakers committed to addressing the challenges facing males of color featured senior leaders and respected experts. These participants came together not only to share their knowledge, but to learn from one another. Through Innovation and Impact Workshops, leaders in



fields from media advocacy to higher education presented the things they are learning from their work, and received feedback from their colleagues. Presentations used in these workshops were sent to all participants, and can be obtained by emailing admin@frontlinesol.com. These workshops were complemented by **Field-Building Sessions**, in which colleagues within a particular sector worked to define the challenges, opportunities, and agenda unique to their approach. Highlights from these sessions are included below. Lastly,

two dynamic plenary sessions helped provide some broad shared context for the more interactive working sessions. The opening panel featured analysis from on-the-ground practitioners providing culturally specific support across the country. On day two, we welcomed Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative and Dr. Howard Stevenson of University of Pennsylvania's School of Education. Some of their most moving insights are also included in this document.

Finally, this document seeks to capture some of meaningful exchanges between participants in hallways, over meals, or through social media. The images included in this document convey some of that interaction. The ongoing conversation on Twitter and other social media platforms tells a little more of that story. The conference's Twitter hashtag, #malesofcolor, had surprisingly not been used at all prior to the conference. At current count, there are more than 1,000 #malesofcolor Twitter references and that number is climbing. This is a conversation that will be continued, both formally and informally in the coming months. Each of the Field-Building Sessions produced concrete recommendations and unresolved questions, both of which are captured below.



Plenary Sessions

Opening Panel



Bringing a set of diverse frames and approaches to the social change table

Dr. Mark Anthony Neal of Duke University facilitated a thoughtful discourse, developing the panelists' conversation around their unique work concerning males of color. The panel's diversity in ethnic background, gender representation, and social approach to males of color work highlighted the complex, yet connective, nature of the challenges facing communities of color.

*The opening panel included **Seng So** of Khmer Girls In Action, **Daniel "Nane" Alejandrez** of Barrios Unidos, **B. Cole** of Brown Boi Project, and **Albert Pooley** of Native American Fatherhood & Families Association.*



Perceptions of Masculinity: The Axis of Race and Gender

- B. Cole described her lessons in the work with males of color as gender-focused.
- “The policing of gender is literally killing us. We live in a world, a society, built on hatred of feminism. We use gender as means of control, using women’s bodies.”
- She asserted that the interchange between race and gender encompasses all communities of color and influences the outlook of males within them.
- “In the Brown Boi Project we help males of color 35 years old and under, who are straight, gay, transgender, and bisexual. We don’t speak of manhood, but of masculinity.”
- Cole noted that, “gender has been systematically employed to control people of color.” Going forward, the development of effective solutions concerning males of color will depend on collective action from all sectors of the social change field.

“Because of the way gender works, men and boys are a reason why there are barriers for women advancing.”

B. Cole



TWEETS

from dovesoars:
#BMAFellow Cole of Brown Boi says we all own a piece of masculinity that we must share @RWJF_VP @mzsimmmons #forwardpromise

from xoDVF
RT@helping_change: **To reach a tipping point, we need more than just people of color engaged in this work #malesofcolor**

from MrDavidJohns:
@NewBlackMan is moderating a panel on masculinity and males of color @RWJF_VP panel #malesofcolor

from scholarsnetwork:
Right now @RWJF_VP and @helping_change’s Gathering of Leaders is occurring. Follow #malesofcolor for live-tweets!

from MrDavidJohns: **What are you doing that is innovative and pushing the movement forward? #malesofcolor #TeachThebabies**

from xoDVF
RT@helping_change: **Young people are the most discussed, least heard-from people in America #malesofcolor**



Fatherhood, Masculinity, and Native American Culture

- Albert Pooley echoed the call for community support and collective action in his work with Native American fathers and families. Fathers that recognize their role as critical to building strong families can later help to build strong and lasting culture.
- "Family is really the heart of who we are. When you walk away from your responsibilities as a father you destroy your family and you destroy your culture."
- The masculine identity that B. Cole offered is a critical piece to male self-identity. This is especially important to the experience of males of color in the family unit and in society.

"We teach our young boys that we must change the way our community engages itself, we teach our boys that we need our young women."

Seng So

Foundations of Racial and Gender Coalition

- Seng So, a leader who represents a unique initiative for Cambodian males within a program organized by women, commented that male self-identity influenced the space of women in many ways. "I carry a lot of privilege that helps me to get around in society that isn't available to young women."
- So emphasized the importance of empowering males of color to engage in their communities and recognize the need to support their women.



Males of Color in the Criminal Justice System Teaching Those on the Outside

- When Dr. Neal posed the question, "What have you all learned in your work that can help young men of color?" Daniel Alejandro discussed his work within the prison system and the desire of those men to make a difference from within the criminal justice system that can help young men on the outside make better choices.
- "Men in prison want to tell their stories, so maybe a young man on the outside can hear"

KEYNOTE

Dr. Howard Stevenson and Bryan Stevenson



What would we say to Trayvon Martin if he had come home? (Dr. Howard Stevenson)

- Core challenge is that society sees young black boys as men, but these boys lack the preparation for the challenges they will face in the world. "It's like we send our young males of color out into 14 degree weather without a shirt, and wonder why they get sick."
- We have to show that these children are not adults.
- "Our children need and deserve racial literacy in this so-called post-racial world." That is, it is important to teach children to have healthy comeback lines when they face racism. (What if Trayvon had come home? How would his parents explain what happened?)
- There is a sense that these young males of color are "expendable." More boys are expelled at the pre-school level than through the K-12 system.

TWEETS

from CanDoNgandu: **First up Stevenson brothers speak. So inspiring. The tears are welling up already. #malesofcolor**

from Urquilla: **Our children need and deserve a racial literacy in this so-called post-racial world. Dr Howard Stevenson**

from helping_change: **It's like we senk our young #malesofcolor out into 14 degree weather without a shirt, and wonder why they get sick, says Howard**

from CanDoNgandu: **"We do not have to leave our children alone in a world that is both visible and invisible in its hostilities." Dr. H Stevenson #malesofcolor**

from MrDavidJohns: **In the US we prioritize finality over fairness. Bryan Stevenson #malesofcolor**

from helping_change: **"We were low income, but upper class." You don't have to let your income level define you, says Bryan Stevenson #malesofcolor**

from royalpersian: **Segregation created bruises and scars and we haven't told the truth about this time – Bryan Stevenson**

from MrDavidJohns: **If we were more honest about our history we might think about and engage with one another differently. Bryan Stevenson #malesofcolor**

Recommendations for action (Dr. Howard Stevenson)

- Report the dynamic of the situation, not just the demographics of disparities.
- Recognize that there is diversity among boys of color, and build knowledge for all groups.
- Deal with racial stress, not just racism (it is often easily to see).
- Give our children the talk and the walk – you can't just teach them about history, you have to talk about profiling in their environments before it happens.

Challenge of identity (Bryan Stevenson)

- We need to deal with challenges and disconnections in identity and ideas of self-worth.
- It is important to understand institutions which developed the identity: slavery, terrorism (living in fear), Jim Crow and segregation, mass incarceration (1/5 of black males involved in the criminal justice system).
- Disenfranchisement of felons creates a new class of untouchables who cannot vote or in some states even get public benefits (and many of these are women with children).



"Keep your eyes on the prize, and hold on!"

Bryan Stevenson



"People must believe that they are more than the worst thing they have ever done."

Bryan Stevenson

Importance of relationships (Bryan Stevenson)

- Understand the importance and transformative power of healthy relationships.
- Example of a relationship with a client, a death row inmate that helped him get through the final month – and the irony that more people asked him what they could do to help him in the last hours of his life than in his first 19 years.

Understanding and engaging with these threats (Bryan Stevenson)

- We need to understand that the criminal justice system is a monster that "operates to consume those who are not rich or smart enough to avoid it."
- Need to create a hope dynamic – we cannot provide hope if we do not ourselves have hope. This a challenge of body and mind (so we need to be "brave, brave, brave").



FIELD-BUILDING SESSIONS

The field-building sessions offered a place for academics, media-makers, policymakers, practitioners, and funders to come together with colleagues, or engage with a different group, through the course of the conference. In sessions totaling three hours, participants worked towards four objectives: first, to gain a clear understanding of the landscape of the males of color field for their sector; second, to pursue a deeper analysis of what partnerships look like in communities; third, to consider ideas and innovations for moving their work forward; finally, to share clear examples of tools and resources that enable field leaders to strengthen practice and impact. In the following pages, the core conversations and lessons learned are summarized for each session. In addition, key takeaways are highlighted, as well as questions and tensions that remained unresolved at the end of the session.



ACADEMIA

Field-Building Sessions

Facilitated by Deirdre Royster of New York University

Headlines

Recommendations:

- Focus on success and encourage others to move away from a deficit-focused approach.
- Use effective language and relationships to help put relevant research in the hands of the media, policy-makers, and the public.
- Continue to find ways to increase respect for community research and activism within the academy.

Unresolved Questions:

- Although all sectors frequently talk about the diversity of experiences of Black males, they frequently neglect the experiences of Black males in rural communities. Rural communities are frequently left out of the conversation, or simply paid lip service.
- All sectors need to move from simply generating data to reaching solutions and models.

What is Academia?

People in the room saw the academy as a site for three things:

1. Academia as a site of opportunity and access
2. Academia as a site of production and research
3. Academia as a site for resistance, social change, and justice

1. What are some of the approaches you find useful that focus on access to education for males of color, and challenge the old ideas and assumptions about the lack of males in education?

Focus on Success

- Ivory Toldson of Howard University: "Working on minority groups is almost always focused on a deficit-issue. We need to start looking for and evaluating success."
- There is a need to redefine the missions, goals, and objectives for the philanthropic and nonprofit worlds to feel comfortable talking about success, and not think that it is a conflict with funding agencies.
- Shaun Harper: "We need to teach journalists how they are also deficit-focused, and how they might modify that. They help reinforce conversations about lack."

Academics and the Media: Creating a shared language

- Academics need to figure out the best language to reach a general public that may not have the language you have – shared language, not jargon.
- Academics should make themselves available as a resource when it is not topical to their specific project; you may serve as an expert on another topic. They need to know how to build a relationship with journalists and be more aware of deadlines.

2. What types of things can we do better?

Translating Academic Research for General Public and Policymakers

- Ivory Toldson: "There is a distinction between what academics think is good research, and what the media thinks is good research."
- We need to translate research for policy and media audiences. Maybe this is possible through workshops or coaching.
- Jorge Ruiz de Velasco: "A researcher should have a relationship with practitioners and policy-makers, with information going upstream and downstream."



from *Pundit_AcadEMIC*: **We need more researchers of color involved in shaping policies and informing the debate(s). #malesofcolor**

from *PPeriod*: **How do we help #malesofcolor obtain an academic identity while retaining their cultural identity, showing them those 2 aren't oppositional?**



from *Studology101*
RT@MrDavidJohns: **Data and conversations about #malesofcolor must be asset based, not focused on deficits and disparities.**

from *dyeeta RT@Ngongang*: **The scary notion that black and brown humanity is expendable" confirmed far too often #malesofcolor praying 1 day that changes**

Youth Need Successful Black Males as Invested Mentors

- Deryck Toles: “We need to have more males as role models. We need more males as volunteers in our communities, as engaged fathers. Teens are barely seeing males who have college degrees in their lives.”

3. What roles can we in academia play in struggle for improving the lives of males of color alongside our sector peers?

“Male” Initiatives & the Implications for Males of Color

- We need to understand the full implications of things like getting rid of race-consciousness in admissions, and how it affects males in particular.

Valuing Community Research and Activism within the Academy

- Academia does not necessarily value, or grant tenure, to scholars who do research on males of color, engage in research outside of the academy, or who work to influence policy.
- “How do we find ways to credentialize this type of research to make the academy value it?”
- This would enable many scholars of color to do the research they desire without undermining their careers, and would help narrow the gap between practitioners and academics.

Understanding Cultural Strengths, Marginality, and Masculinity

- Diedre Royster: “Marginality is connected with destructive masculinity. So how do various racial/ethnic groups experience this marginality differently? It’s important to learn about the cultural strengths of different folks, learning how they survived, and how they use these strengths to engage in and understand resistance.”
- Foundations should fund this type of research so we can learn about cultural strengths, and see culture as a resource for healthy masculinity, adulthood, humanity-centered interventions, research, and strategies.
- Brett: “We need to recover our histories and teach males of color who they are. This would help build an emotional connection to their history and build up a sense of worth. Then we can have a conversation about what our roles are as men and as boys in our communities.”

Moving Past Data, Finding Solutions

- We need to focus on solutions. Some of these issues we currently have, like the academy not valuing this type of research, will probably change in upcoming years. But what models and solutions are we prepared with for when our moment comes?
- We need funding for spaces that allow superintendents, principals, government officials, funders, and researchers to come together and figure out solutions and models for our problems. We need to stop having the academy set off into a corner.

POLICY & GOVERNMENT

Field-Building Session

Facilitated by Rhonda Bryant of the Center for Law and Social Policy

Headlines

Recommendations:

- Assess the local and federal policies that are being utilized to advance the work of males of color.
- Seek out wider scopes of research – data that tell both positive and negative stories.
- Need for balance between local initiatives and media advocated to influence policy change.
- Focus the discussion on asset-based initiatives rather than on deficits.

Unresolved Questions:

- Top-down vs. bottom-up policy-making strategies: Which are more effective?
- How do we confront racial, political, and generational barriers that are persistent against males of color?
- How do we foster authentic relationships between policy-makers and the communities they influence?

“What are we facing?”

Before beginning the session, the participants agreed that the following were current policy-relevant barriers affecting policy towards males of color:

- Prevalence of racism in the governing system.
- Political leadership.
- A growing need for more individuals to take on this pressing challenge.
- A disconnect between youth-serving systems.
- A lack of public funding flowing to lower-income communities.
- Access of data that is uneven and use of that data is not maximized.

“What are we doing now, both at the local and federal level?”

At the local level unique perspectives were introduced, such as:

- Randell McShepard (Policy Bridge): Mayors are using part of their agenda to impact youth of color by targeting teacher performance in reaching males of color as part of education reform.
- Melanie Hartzog: The city of New York is not only focusing on graduation rates of males of color, but also seeks to achieve graduation rates that are equal to or greater than those of Caucasian males.

At the national level everyone agreed that:

- Commissions have been formed.
- National policy organizations have reached directly into communities in order to provide the authority to change policy.

“Top Down” or “Bottom Up”: Which is it?

Discussion in the room opened up and became lively when it revolved around the intricacies of policy making.

- “Top-Down”:
 - o David Johns (Impact-DC): there needs to be more males of color sitting in positions of federal power.
 - o One activist in Philadelphia elaborated: “Government can only do what the people want and there is a great schism between males of color and accomplished men.”
- “Bottom-Up”:
 - o Loren Harris (Frontline Solutions): “How do we engage community in policy work in an *authentic* way?”
 - o Harris: Policy-makers need to spend quality time in the community to develop trust, so they have a clear understanding of the challenges within the community they represent.



What do outside sectors such as philanthropy need to know about policy and government to be effective partners?

- Alan Khazei (Boston Foundation): “Funders need to fund the different parts of the advocacy process: not just the advocates, but also the research organizations.”
- The philanthropy sector needs to provide incentives for organizations to work with each other, not against each other.

Looking Forward: “Conversations about males of color must be asset-based, not focused on deficits and disparities.”

- There needs to be more research and hard data available.
- A greater balance must exist between media advocates and local grassroots stakeholders for bringing about policy change.
- Work still needs to be done in policy change, but with time and courage the challenge will seem conquerable.

PRACTITIONER

Field-Building Session

Facilitated by Melissa Johnson of the NAACP

Headlines

Recommendations:

- Focus on growing the pipeline of young social change leaders.
- Build networks between organizations that do similar work to share best practices, and benefit from the aid and advice of social change colleagues.
- Reframe localized initiatives to identify themselves and their work as part of a larger movement.
- Strengthen intercommunication between practitioners, philanthropists, and policy-makers.

Unresolved Questions:

- How do we sustain passion and motivation for this work despite limited resources and demand for time and energy?
- How do we access policy-making arenas that are dominated by decision-makers who are misinformed and disconnected from communities of color?
- How do we balance loyalty to the voices of our own community/organization while informing policy in an "objective" way?

"Answering the wrong question, right." What role should practitioners play?

- The room addressed a fundamental worry: are we answering the right question through the work that we do? While practitioners are the pioneers of the field and those developing community-specific solutions, how do they help to address the embedded structural issues that affect our society?
- Without addressing these "root causes," many community-specific solutions are limited to "treating symptoms." This in no way detracts from the work of practitioners, which is vitally important to communities. Rather, it begs the question: what role should practitioners play in advocacy and informing policy?

Voice, Power, and the Practitioner's Seat at the Table

- Fifty years ago, conversations about social change movements would be led by those doing work on the front lines – the modern-day practitioners. Today, however, the conversation is dominated by policy analysts, funders, academics, etc.
- This top-down approach to policy-making is a huge concern, if those defining the movement aren't connected to communities on the ground and don't have an accurate perception of ground-level problems. One participant cited a trip he made to a meeting convened at the White House where the majority of philanthropists attending "didn't know what the hell was going on."
- Practitioners often aren't even invited to the table or must take initiative themselves in order to attend.

More Tweets...

from CanDoNgandu: **Policy group is equally rowdy today, but talking with a spirit of hope that is infectious. #malesofcolor #laughsallaround**

from helping_change: **Need to delegitimize the idea that young #malesofcolor are not children. That means challenging the media on false objectivity.**

from mzsimmmons: **Nothing less than bold and dramatic will change outcomes for these young men. Dr. Ross #malesofcolor**

from rshabazz: **Are we not angry enough to address the crisis facing black and brown males #malesofcolor**

from MrDavidJohns: **Too many of our #malesofcolor suffer from a life of hopelessness. Too few think they will live to grow old, remain free.**

from Janis4President RT@MrDavidJohns: **Prioritize relationships. They can be transformative to people at risk. #malesofcolor**

from helping_change: **Today will be about field-building, and setting the agenda for what we have to do in the #malesofcolor space**



Possible ways to reach solutions

- Break down “silos” separating different groups in the sector (i.e. practitioners, funders, policy-makers, etc.) and facilitate listening and discussion between these groups.
- Build networks and connections among organizations doing similar work – should this be a responsibility of funders who have a more birds-eye view of the landscape and already maintain relationships with a multitude of practitioners?
 - These networks should share best practices, effective models, resources, etc
- Opening the policy arena back up to practitioners, and conversely acknowledging each practitioner’s duty to recognize the policy implications of his or her work.
 - Additionally, how can practitioners navigate their duty to fairly and accurately inform broader policy while also wearing the hat of their own organization and needing to pitch their idea to funders as “the” solution?

Inter-Generational Work, Youth Leadership, and the Future of the Field

- Fostering conversations between generations is crucial to sustaining a movement. A large part of this is mentorship, but more broadly these inter-generational relationships are what energize the field.
- A consistent – and hopeful – theme that reoccurred throughout both days of the conference was the concept of youth leadership. All major social movements have been led by youth in some way and it is crucial to recognize this. Looking around the room and seeing the number of leaders still in their twenties was a testament to this.

A Multi-Racial Movement and Allies in the Field

- Multi-racial organizing introduces a new dimension of power to a movement. The question becomes, how do we leverage this strength while still recognizing and honoring the culture- and race-specific issues that define each group?
- Minh Nguyen (Vietnames American Young Leaders Association) offered his organization as an example of a movement that began with Vietnamese-American youth and has expanded to other males of color.
- It is important to recognize ourselves as part of a larger movement. Ellen Somekawa (Asian Americans United) shared a powerful story of her group's sit-in protest, which garnered limited support from supposed community allies, and those in positions of power declined to voice their support publicly. Among those that did attend, however, some of the most powerful voices were non-Asian-Americans – those who looked different from the rest of the movement.

Sustaining Passion

- A constant struggle in the movement is the idea of sustaining passion. In a field that is consistently under-resourced and fueled by passion, how do we invest in leaders to continue to drive the field forward?
- The work that we do is inherently difficult and battering, and yet still sustains itself. Being aware of this uphill battle, it becomes important to recognize the assets that the field has to offer.
- There needs to be a focus on growing – both deepening and broadening – the pipeline of leaders within the social change sphere.
- Methods of doing this include building community forums and arenas for discussion, creating positive and empowering cultures that grant ownership to youth, etc.



MEDIA MAKERS

Field-Building Session

Facilitated by Robert Perez of Fenton Communications

Headlines

Recommendations:

- Present stories that challenge perceptions and catch people off-guard.
- Produce bite-sized, easily sharable forms of media that can be transferred across platforms and by different groups.
- Continue to convene and find ways to collaborate through mediums like Twitter, Townhall, Facebook, and similar forums.

Unresolved Questions:

- Who takes responsibility for coordinating the group and space?
- What are the hot topics that everyone can comment on, be interested in, and prove to be accessible to all audiences?
- How does an organization like PBS (with an audience of 60 year-old white men) present stories on males of color and still engage their audience?
- How do you talk about race without talking about race (because no one wants to talk about race)?

Addressing our assumptions about media

- The media encompasses anything and everything that can be consumed with our senses of sight and sound that ultimately influence our beliefs and values, assumptions, and interactions with self and others.
- When considering the role media plays in regards to males of color, the group discussed the importance of the frame – that is, the idea space we create to present an issue (e.g., the frame of a picture) that ultimately establishes and reinforces information, ideas, etc.



- Perez asserts that “facts alone do not frame;” it is also history, culture, and experience.
- In recent years, our understanding of what encompasses “media” has transformed and expanded. Thus, our first task was to discuss our assumptions about media and create a working definition that can be applied and challenged through our work. Though small in size, the diversity of this group was astounding, a reality expressed through our expansive definition of media: films, social media, news, music, blogs, books, video games, magazines, the Internet, entertainment, photos, art, radio, advertisements, etc.

“Best practices” and media strategies for the future

For the remainder of the workshop, the group discussed experiences, failures, successes, and best practices utilizing media to further the mission of their organizations and tell the stories of males of color.

- Group-wide consensus:
 - We need more stories that complicate, that catch us “off guard” – one participant was caught off guard by a group of black men wearing their baggy jeans and praying before eating their meal in a restaurant)
 - We need more stories that challenge the perceptions of young men of color from broader society
 - We need bite-sized, easily sharable forms of media that can be transferred across
- Use digital media to respond to current issues (i.e. Black Public Media’s “Ask a Muslim” project)
- Create platforms for expression. Studology 101 has created a platform for the LGBTQ community to (1) engage in more conversations (2) showcase the talent from within the community (3) create brands that links a physical symbol with an emotional idea [t-shirts, sunglasses, etc.]
- Create more transactions and collaboration. The great thing about media is that we can give and we can take. We can share and consume each other’s media content.
- Make it relevant and accessible to multiple audiences regardless of faith, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.
- Create content that has a long shelf-life – that can be used over and over again



More Tweets...

from helping_change: **In media makers: Hearing about awesome social media work that @Studology101 does among #lgbtq youth**

from rperezzz: **Joining more than 150 #philanthropy, #media & #nonprofit leaders in #Philadelphia to improve life chances of young #malesofcolor @RWJF_VP**

from LFieldsCruz: **#malesofcolor @BLKPublicMedia Amazing discussions, great connections. Day 1 conf. was a success! great job @RSWJ @Frontlinesolutions**

from EricainPhilly: **We need to promote positive images vs negative framing. #malesofcolor**

from Nikki_BelieveIT: **Sometimes you have to tap your friend/colleague and tell him or her the truth... the whole truth #malesofcolor**





What stories have been told?

- In order to tell the stories of males of color in the best, most true and most resounding ways, we must consider how these stories have been told in the past.
- Some of the common themes include: (1) the reality that all young men make mistakes but young men of color are treated more severely (2) once race comes up, people don't want to talk about it any more.

How do we stay connected?

The group discussed ways to keep our group connected and collaborating outside of the walls of this convening. Ideas for future collaboration include: creating a Facebook group, continue using the #malesofcolor hashtag on Twitter, convene on a Twitter Townhall, create a collection of content that pertains to males of color and can be freely shared with various organizations (Fenton Communications, Black Public Media, Studology 101, etc.)

FENTON | communications



LAGRANT
COMMUNICATIONS



PHILANTHROPY

Field-Building Session

Facilitated by Marcus Littles of Frontline Solutions

Headlines

Recommendations:

- Build the field by developing cross-learning and creating more spaces for organizations and networks doing this work to come together.
- Engage more funders in the importance of funding males of color work explicitly – not just taking part in affinity groups for funders of color.
- Philanthropy has the power and positioning to not merely organize itself, but to create venues and execute strategies to mobilize other sectors such as government, academia, media, and practitioners to improve life outcomes of males of color.
- There is a void of coordinated sector leadership in philanthropy to build the sector's infrastructure to carry an agenda to effectively improve life outcomes of males of color.

Unresolved Questions:

- How does the field continue to strengthen its infrastructure? Who is leading the sector?
- How does the sector support more investment in Native communities and Asian communities?
- What is the glue that holds together the various philanthropic efforts to strengthen philanthropy's impact in the males of color field?

A need to understand and strengthen the infrastructure of the philanthropy sector

- Robert Phillips: "This is a structural issue trying to be put into a programmatic frame."
- This field-building session focused a lot on the sector's infrastructure and capacity. Many participants contended that the infrastructure of philanthropy is currently ill equipped to effectively advance a males of color agenda.
- The majority agreed that there needs to be significant work done to engage board members, an important segment of the philanthropy sector.



- "We need to change males of color from a targeted approach into a universal strategy."
- Although there is significant work to be done to strengthen the sector's infrastructure, we also must acknowledge and build upon the notable progress in the sector over the last five years – national foundations' investments in males of color, affinity groups mobilizing members about Males of Color, etc.

Challenges of engaging openly with the issue of race

- Robert Ross: "Philanthropy tends to worship at the hands of innovation. But this is about power. Are we capable of doing something bold in something as huge as race? We are not. How do we manage the tension in this area in philanthropy?"
- Anthony Simmons: "Not everyone has the ability to talk about race...even if you are black."
- In order to get philanthropy to work for males of color, those who are pushing behind it have to be able to have the conversation about race and understand it. A major inference was whether a program or foundation could stand and be efficient in Black males work if there are few or no Black staff members .
- Funders should be able to say "they support Black males" or Native males or Latino and Asian-Pacific Islander males without any shame—be open about who is being targeted. We need to know what we mean when we say "we fund males in color." Acknowledge difference across identity lines.

What are the supports that the philanthropic sector needs for Males of Color work?

- Distinct and organized leadership. Who will be leading the work in this field?
- Goals? What is our plan? What are realistic outcomes, what exactly are we trying to achieve?
- Knowledge transfer of effective strategies with different identity groups in different contexts
- How do we keep the momentum we have obtained?

Proposals for how the field could advance

- Provide a centralized information clearing house, condensed and collected in one space.
- Provide different models about range of best practices.
- Consider a consortium of technical support, training and technical assistance specifically for foundations.
- Need a pool of resources that would support both institutions and scholars—that would help build the field.

The need for a universal strategy: Trauma as a frame

- Robert Ross: "There is no national strategy to save our sons. There is no one in charge or any plan to save our colored people. What we need to do, what we must do is look for the tie that bonds LGBT, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian populations and Blacks. My guess is the issue of trauma. Trauma is the thing that links. There is not one race in this country or universally that hasn't been traumatized at some point by Whites."
- Robert Ross is taking a three-month leave to research males of color. He brought up this idea that set the rest of the session into a continuum of ideas to make philanthropy add greater value for work related to males of color.

Next Steps:

- We need real faces to our narratives.
- Create a web portal with essays, discussion, and news that combines the different work that we're doing into one easy accessible place.
- We need a "share space" ...a time and area where we convene face to face.
- How are we advocates for philanthropy and this issue?
- Take advantage of venues and resources that continue to educate funders about race, racism, and structural inequity.

CONCLUSION

The notes above capture a small fraction of the dynamic tensions and emerging opportunities discussed at length over the course of the convening. While these conversations happened largely between individuals functioning in a similar sector or field, several important cross-sector themes emerged that must be confronted to move this work forward.

Infrastructure vs. Immediate Impact

Participants in the philanthropy session articulated the challenge of balancing demands for immediate results with the real need to invest in the under-resourced infrastructure of programs and advocacy institutions focused on males of color. As Robert Phillips of the Sierra Health Foundation put it, “this is a structural issue trying to be put into a programmatic frame.” Given the relatively short attention span of philanthropy on a given issue, leaders are faced with deciding between making an immediate impact through program grants and long-term investments in infrastructure through capacity building, advocacy and seeding. Though the program grants often have the clearest short-term outcomes, these strategies, by impacting a relatively small portion of all males, are necessarily limited in creating wholesale change.

The field-building sessions on academia presented a similar tension. Several scholars articulated their feeling that mainstream research on males of color simply pathologizes their experience, harping only on negative cultural norms and social outcomes. Even as they “swim against the stream” and avoid the path of least resistance in their research, they also work in institutions that, as Shaun Harper and others have documented, are woefully incapable of successfully educating their male students. Administrators in attendance talked at length about the challenges of engaging in initiatives that target a fraction of their student body during the current climate of financial austerity. Faculty members who may be the only “black or brown face” in a department talked about the additional constraints placed on their time by mentoring and supporting students of color. . Scholars struggle daily with balancing the immediate impact of their commitment to teaching and mentoring with the long-term investment of impactful research.

Lastly, media makers articulated a desire for an ongoing space in which to collaborate and share ideas, and unanswered questions about how to continue moving that work forward. Who will coordinate this space going forward? And, equally important, what institutions will invest in the infrastructure of media making and advocacy?

New Voices to Influence Public Policy

Participants in the practitioners dialogue asserted that policy-makers are increasingly less inclusive of those working directly with males in discussions about government strategies. “There used to be a time,” argued Dr. Wade Nobles, “when we were invited to the table... now we have to invite ourselves.”

Likewise, those directly engaged in policy advocacy articulate the need for authentic engagement with “on-the-ground” experts in addition to those most connected to policy debate and formulation. Academics also articulated the need for translational research that builds upon the work of less accessible scholarly research to create “actionable” policy recommendations and approaches that can influence federal, state and local policy.

Policy makers and advocates articulated the disconnect between investment in policy research and advocacy at the federal level and work targeting state and local government action. While there is a need for increased presence on the national stage, local policies that often have an equal or greater impact on the lived experiences of individuals must not be overlooked.

Cultural Specificity and Disproportionate Resource

An issue confronted throughout the course of the convening was the tension inherent in a “males of color” space that is often dominated by Black and to a lesser extent Latino-led organizations. During the practitioners session, Ellen Somekawa from Asian American United pointed to her group’s challenges in gaining community allies around complicated issues of inter-racial violence in a local high school. Nane Alejandrez gave a first-hand account of the ways in which prisons are “hate factories” where ethnic groups are taught to loathe and fear one another.

Likewise, Albert Pooley and Seng So both pointed to the need of a table that included more individuals and institutions from the Native and Asian-Pacific Islander communities. Multiple participants also reference the relative lack of infrastructure in these communities. As such, those confronting the challenges facing Native and API males face the real possibility of being “drowned out” by those working with Black and Latino males. Moving this work forward means continuing investment in spaces for gathering across the spectrum of males of color, but it must also mean creating dedicated spaces for under-represented groups to have conversations about the issues and challenges specific to their communities.

The Long Road Ahead

Given the wide disparities experienced by males of color from Black, Latino, Native and low-income Asian-Pacific Islander communities, the road toward any sort of identifiable success is necessarily a long one. As the lessons of this document indicate, real progress necessitates short-term “wins” from high-impact programs and targeted advocacy, but it also requires long-term investments in the infrastructure of the field. These investments include meetings like “A Gathering of Leaders,” but they must also include institutional support for organizations to serve as connectors between folks who can learn from one another across geographic, identity and sector boundaries. While the road ahead remains a long one, it appears to be much clearer than a few short years ago.