



Roundtable on the Black Family

Executive Review

A product of M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust's partnership with Black Parent Initiative

June 17, 2011, Concordia University, Portland, OR

Executive Summary:

Black Parent Initiative (BPI) worked in partnership with M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust to host a roundtable conversation regarding the critical issues and challenges facing Black families. The Black Family Roundtable educated policy leaders, government agencies, and non-profit organizations on practical solutions that, when implemented, will address the critical issues and challenges facing Black families. National panelists analyzed a few reoccurring themes:

- *Black families face multi-level challenges.* Families living in poverty grapple with a lack of affordable and decent housing, less access to health-related resources, low wages and employment opportunities and are often exposed to higher levels of crime.
- *Many of the barriers that Black families endure are systemic.* Various systems, such as, the criminal justice, child welfare, health care, employment, and education, often provide unequal treatment and opportunities to Black families due to historical elements and institutional racism.
- *Current systems create obstacles preventing the empowerment of Black parents and Black families.* Systems are outdated, inequitable, and ineffective due to lack of cultural understanding, reductionism, and racism that impacts individuals and institutional structures. The new approach needs to be more holistic, inclusive, and culturally competent to fully and comprehensively address the needs of all people.
- *The best teachers are parents.* Families can be coached, trained and supported to create an environment and opportunities that gives their children the tools to be successful. Behaviors are learned and the most influential learning environment is the home. Parents often model behaviors that they have learned, as well. New parenting skills can be introduced through training and coaching modalities.
- *Families and community are an integral part of creating change.* Systems do not change themselves and people cannot depend on system administrators and schools to make changes.
- *Black men and fathers need to be included in all aspects of their child, family and community.* Fathers play a vital role (whether black, white or Asian) in the development of children in the nuclear family. Regardless of gender, children need both parents to provide examples of positive leadership and positive relationships.
- *Education is vital for the survival of the Black family.* What research effectively supports the notion that educational achievement increases job opportunities, and decreases crime, recidivism, and teenage pregnancy?

Panelists:

Phillip Jackson

Phillip Jackson is the founder and executive director of the Black Star Project, an organization that works toward the elimination of the racial academic achievement gap. He advocates for community involvement in education and the importance of parental development to ensure that children are properly educated. His presentation encouraged parents to become involved in their child's education and schools, to become receptive to parental involvement.

<http://blackstarproject.org/action/>

Dr. Johnny Parker

Johnny Parker, Ph.D. is a certified Christian counselor and leadership coach. He discussed best practices for organizations and programs seeking to serve parents and their families. He emphasized that parents must model integrity and character, empower their children, and take on the role of "cheerleader," "coach", and advocate.

<http://www.johnnyparker.com/>

Dr. Andraé Brown

Andraé Brown, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at Lewis and Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling, co-director of Affinity Counseling Group (New Jersey), and a board member for the Council on Contemporary Families. Dr. Brown's key message was that strategies for social justice and social intervention are most successful when people are kept with their family. These strategies include three components: critical consciousness, accountability, and empowerment.

<http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org/>

Dr. Stephanie Irby Coard

Stephanie Irby Coard, Ph.D. is currently a tenured associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G). Dr. Coard highlighted the significance of resilience as a dynamic, multidimensional, bi-directional intersection between children and their environments.

<http://www.uncg.edu/hdf/facultystaff/Coard/coard.html>

Dr. John Sowers.

John Sowers, D.Min. is the President of The Mentoring Project, a movement changing the lives of fatherless boys through mentoring. His message emphasized the problems associated with children growing up in a fatherless home. He challenged churches to love kids, model Christ with integrity and sincerity, and coach kids through wisdom and encouragement.

<http://thementoringproject.org/>

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu

Jawanza Kunjufu, Ph.D. has dedicated his career to addressing the ills afflicting Black culture in the United States, working primarily as an educational consultant and author but more recently

expanding into video and film production. He is the founder of African American Images. His message stressed refuting misconceptions through evidentiary statistics, the positive effects of summer academies, and reducing the recidivism rate through insuring job opportunities, teaching history and culture, and initiating a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

<http://www.africanamericanimages.com/>

Participants Included:

Bill Baney ~ Portland State University
Jay Barber ~ Warner Pacific University – Retired President
Johnell Bell ~ BPI – Co-founder
Joe Bergen ~ Friends of the Children – Program Director
Eileen Brady ~ Candidate for Portland City Mayor
Jerry Burns ~ DHS
Angela Cause ~ DHS
Andrea Cook ~ Warner Pacific University – President
Kathy Coombes ~ BPI
Debbie Ellis ~ Oregon PIRC
Amanda Fritz ~ City of Portland – City Commissioner
Karen Gray ~ Parkrose Public School
David Greenberg ~ Planned Parenthood – President, CEO
Charlie Hales ~ City of Portland – City Commissioner
Warren Jimenez ~ City of Portland – Mayor Adams, Chief of Staff
Crystal Marion ~ BPI
Mary Louis McClintock ~ Oregon Community Foundation
Charles McGee ~ BPI – President, CEO
Teisha Parchment ~ BPI
Lorenzo Poe ~ Portland Public Schools
Meghan Pollard
Lord Reese ~ City of Portland – Education Strategies
Loretta Smith ~ Multnomah County – Commissioner

Key Websites:

<http://www.thebpi.org/>

<http://www.murdock-trust.org/>

http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2010/08/lack_of_two-parent_homes_still.html

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/06/15/obamas-fathers-day-speech_n_107220.html

http://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/docs/20_02_ExecSummary.pdf

http://www.city-journal.org/2011/21_1_1_teen-pregnancy.html

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the biggest hurdle black families face today? What makes this “hurdle” challenging to overcome? How can we overcome this hurdle?

2. What issues and subsequent solutions are being demonstrated in other minority groups that we might learn from and would address challenges facing this specific group?
3. Within our communities who can have an influential role in developing quality parents?
How can we encourage these individuals or groups to assert such influence?