

**Louisiana Council on the Success of Black Men and Boys  
Minutes for Wednesday, November 7, 2018**

**Council Members Present:** Sen. Wesley Bishop, Kenneth Burrell, Matt Butler, Rep. Ted James, Raymond Jetson, Dr. Walter Kimbrough, Victor Lashley, Judy Reese Morse, Rep. Barbara Norton, Terri Ricks, Rev. Eric Williams, Dr. Adren Wilson, and James Windom

**Council Members Absent:** Rev. Eric Alexander, Ryan Clark, Sen. Yvonne Colomb, Reginald Devold, Rep. Royce Duplessis, Rick Gallot, and Dr. Roland Mitchell

**Council Advisors Present:** Niiobli Armah, IV and Dr. Chaunda Mitchell

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:38 pm by Chair Ted James.

**Introductions**

Council Members and Council Advisors were asked to introduce themselves. There was a quorum present with thirteen out of twenty-one Council Members present.

**Opening Remarks**

Chair James thanked Council Members and guests who participated in the reception at the Governor's Mansion. He reaffirmed the importance of the work and the Governor's commitment to the work of the Council. Chair James stated that the Council will work to develop a ten-year strategy over the next twelve months to engage in its work.

**Statement of Purpose**

Chair James introduced the CSBMB Statement of Purpose and solicited feedback from Council Members. The following feedback was provided:

Raymond Jetson proposed using an asset based perspective to highlight the assets, strengths, and many positives of Black boys and men across the state and across the country. In addition to transforming experiences and outcomes, we should also be concerned about the narratives surrounding Black boys and men. In many instances the narratives become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Judy Reese Morse noted that the Statement of Purpose was strong but would like to see language that incorporated not only transforming the lives of Black men and boys but also engaging Black men and boys as well so that we are not only working on their behalf but also working with them and through them to incorporate their vision of themselves, their families and their communities.

Representative Barbara Norton suggested incorporating educational tools that provide an opportunity to learn something new that Black men and boys can take with them as they continue to move forward.

James Windom offered the efficacy of mentoring for reintegrating incarcerated individuals. It enhances the probability of that person not reoffending but it also increases the likelihood of restructuring and supporting the family during reunification.

Chair James thanked everyone for providing feedback. He suggested including the feedback provided into a revised Statement of Purpose to bring back to the Council for adoption at the next meeting. Dr. Adren Wilson noted that the staff will work with individual Council Members who offered feedback to clarify language.

### **National Best Practices for Black Male Success**

Chair James introduced Niiobli Armah IV with Bloomberg Associates. He is the My Brother's Keeper Initiative Team Lead and will serve as the Strategic Advisor/Moderator for the CSBMB.

Niiobli started by thanking Chair James, Dr. Wilson, and Dr. Mitchell for continuing the work started over a decade ago while still in Louisiana. Niiobli began with an overview of Bloomberg Associates, a consulting firm started by Mayor Michael Bloomberg when he left City Hall. Bloomberg Associates is housed in his philanthropy. Mayor Bloomberg felt he made a lot of advances but also acknowledges challenges made during his tenure as mayor. As a result, Bloomberg Associates is a forty person consulting team that works domestically and internationally with local government. Niiobli's work domestically is to working with communities who have taken on the challenge of working to systemically change persisting narratives around Black men and boys.

Niiobli gave an overview of national organizations that have done this work. He highlighted that the Council does not have to do this work alone and that the work around Black men and boys is not new. There is decades worth of learning and evidence of what works and what doesn't work. He noted that the organizations highlighted are all different. No one organization is doing the same thing. The list is not exhaustive but is representative of the work being done around the nation.

- **The Aspen Opportunity Youth Forum** is a workforce development program led by youth. It is one of the largest youth organizing movements in the country. Their mantra is *"nothing for us, without us."*
- **BMe Community** is an organization focused on narrative change.
- **Bloomberg Associates** works on systems and policy change in local government.
- **Campaign for Black Male Achievement** and the work of Shawn Dove.
- **Cities United** has active projects in Baton Rouge focused on violence reduction.
- The **Executive Alliance for Boys and Men of Color** is a group of foundations nationally who have dedicated to putting dollars into this work.
- **My Brother's Keeper Alliance** work. MBK is important to understand who was doing the work before MBK was established during the Obama Administration. Non-profit organizations were doing community manhood development and cultural programs and academia doing research for years. Before 2014 there were only a few governments that had taken this work on. One place was New York City started in 2011. Oakland is another city that has an Office of African American Male Achievement in its school

district. MBK gave government a charge of about what government and local government can do differently.

- The **National League of Cities** has the Real Initiative focused on race and equity
- **Policy Link** and the work of Marc Philpart

Niiobli challenged the Council to find out not reinvent the wheel. The Council should find out who in the state is working with these national partners and connect with those individuals. Niiobli transitioned to discussing programs that work.

- **Becoming A Man (BAM)** is a program that is in Chicago that combines cognitive behavior therapy where young men who are in schools can work with full-time counselors and with their peers. BAM provides social support and wrap around services in schools during the day in-line with the cognitive behavior therapy model of immediately interrupting the cycle of deviance. BAM is a non-profit that contracts with schools. Early evidence suggests that their participants are fifty percent less likely to be arrested for a crime. This suggests a model for in school intervention and ensuring that young men stay on the right path.
- **NYC Men Teach.** The city of New has a deliberate effort to recruit Black male teachers. The evidence says that there is a correlation with learning outcomes and having someone that you see every day that you identify with. They have exceeded their goal of 1000 people with not only having Black male teachers but also providing support for that they participate in as well. Small cohorts with wrap around services for people doing the intervention but also those who benefit from it are successful.
- **Cure Violence** focuses on violence interruption. It is important because it has credentialed people who were previously involved in violence in a profession. The violence interrupters are credentialed, paid staff who come out of the situations they are going back to stop it. The term credible messenger is used to describe those that are being hired with lived experience.
- **ARCHES** is a peer based model mentoring program based in New York city. It uses a survey instrument to determine factors that helped youth get through school and graduate. Those factors are used in training to equip youth with the tools needed to be successful.

Niiobli then transitioned to place based work.

- New York is the only place in the nation with a state wide effort that includes funding for young men and boys of color. There is a \$20 million appropriation from the legislature to do this work. Those funds go to the State Board of Education who goes through school districts to grant the funds to non-profits to provide wrap around services in the schools.
- California and Georgia are also organizing around these efforts
- People are doing work in pockets. No one is doing work to scale in this country. No one is reaching over 1,000 people. People are doing amazing work in one community or one community but work is not working around the same table
- Houston is doing commendable work. It is the only place in the country with eight full-time staff people in the Health Department to work with Black boys and men of color. They are working off of school feeder patterns.

- The city of Boston has programs based in the Mayor’s Office. A lot of their work is based with young juveniles who have had involvement in the criminal justice system. Their intervention involves jobs, training, and services to ensure they stay on the right path.

Niiobli closed with considerations that highlight what makes effective programs or what causes them to leave.

- Governance-if no one checks in on the issue, it leaves. Governance provides accountability
- Data Disaggregation-data must be disaggregated by race, age, gender, and geography to understand the young people who need services.
- Training and Capacity-we cannot assume that everyone who says they love Black men and boys have been trained on the cues to engage with them.
- Planning and Implementation-it is important to start and pilot rapid prototypes. What are the areas that can be implemented in 120 days?
- Policy and Systems changed-we have to change the policies that trap people. What are the systems that we will make behave differently?

Victor Lashley asked about the observation at the national level on the difference between Black males versus the distinction of Black boys and males as two separate populations. Niiobli stated that most of the work is happening between the ages of 16 to 24. Victor asked that the Council further define the difference between the two populations moving forward.

Matt Butler inquired into the commonality of the highlighted programs. Niiobli offered that full-time staff and training as the commonality.

Representative Barbara Norton asked about outreach to parents about consent, criteria, and parental involvement. Niiobli responded saying that most programs are not based off parental consent but rather reform initiatives where youth have been identified. There has not been a lot of work on parental involvement and how to get parents involved in the solution.

Judy Reese Morse offered that Cease Fire existed in the city of New Orleans. The current mayor has shifted to Cure Violence.

### **Local Best Practices for Black Male Success**

Chair James introduced Raymond Jetson, Chief Executive Catalyst of MetroMorphosis, a nonprofit whose mission is to transform urban communities from within.

Raymond Jetson thanked Chair James for his leadership, the Council members serving and those who were in attendance. Raymond discussed the work of the Urban Congress on African American Males in Baton Rouge. It is a small slice of the work going on the work around the state.

- Systemic devaluation of African American males-it does not happen by accident. There are systemic structures in place. If the systems and structures don’t change then the outcomes don’t change. The Urban Congress is a system is a system response concerned with the narratives, experiences, and outcomes of African American males. The Urban

Congress believes that there must be different stories told, different narratives embraced about African American men and build upon assets.

- The process to create the Urban Congress began with research and then collaborating with partner organizations with conversations around the data. On MLK Day of 2016 there was a public announcement to create a planning team for an initial convening. On April 16, 2016, a general convening was held with more than 250 people across the community to share their thoughts from an aspirational and remedial perspective. Questions asked during the convening were: What is the greatest hope for Black boys and men? What are the most pressing challenges that need to be remediated?
- The Convening found 126 statements in the report about aspirations and remediation. The Urban Congress then engaged in goal setting and workgroup establishment.
- The Urban Congress addressed issues of structures, leadership, and strategic support. MetroMorphosis serves as the strategic support for the Urban Congress on African American Males.
- The seven goals of the Urban Congress on African American Males that span across the life spectrum are: leaderships skills/family, mentoring and community service; utilization and access to health care; number of Black boys entering kindergarten ready to learn; growing the high school and college graduation rates of African-American males; cultivating generational wealth by expanding business ownership; workforce. development and credentials; and cultivating decarceration versus mass incarceration.
- Each goal has a workgroup that meets monthly and works toward outcomes.
- There is a formula that is necessary for change: 1) community members, 2) organizational partners, and 3) key results.
- The Urban Congress asks “Is it a moment or movement?” Moments don’t change situations, movements do. The only changes that have happened in our communities have been the result of movements. The Urban Congress understands the work as movement building.
- The Urban Congress has held two evidence-based trainings on mentoring Black boys and men. More than 700 people have been trained by Mentor, a national entity out of Washington, DC.
- The Urban Congress has partnered with the East Baton Rouge Parish School System and piloted an Early Warning System in two high schools to identify triggers that are consistent with Black boys not graduating. The ABCs (absenteeism, multiple behavior referrals, and failure of core subjects) are used to identify triggers and provide interventions.
- Recently completed an assessment of the one hundred prerelease curriculum that the Department of Corrections has for individuals who are coming back into their communities. The Urban Congress will provide a report of that assessment to the Department of Corrections and make the information available to those working in the reentry community.
- Have implemented Barbershop Talks where conversations are hosted around issues related to the Urban Congress in barbershops across into the community. The program has evolved into the Hair and Health Initiative to work with barbers to provide screenings in their barbershops.
- The next steps involve three critical areas: 1) decentralization-the majority of the work now happens in monthly workgroup meetings but also in local churches, higher

education, and a correctional facility, 2) thought leadership-begin to give voice to the work of the Urban Congress and others who are doing this work as well as speak in ways that change the narrative about Black boys and men, and 3) education-what have we learned that might be of value to others and other communities.

### **Pathways Discussion**

Dr. Adren Wilson gave a broad overview of the framework of the Pathways of how to do this work. The goal is to be able to create a vision and be able to measure success. Over the next six, eight, or twelve months be able to develop measures and strategies to start implementation in a second term of Governor Edwards to do incredible, meaningful work regardless of who comes after.

Dr. Chaunda Mitchell provided greater detail on the seven Pathways to the Council and solicited feedback. The seven Pathways are: 1) higher education, 2) reentry/reintegration, 3) workforce development, 4) identity/self-image; 5) K-12 mentorship/academic supports; 6) civic & community responsibility, and 7) wealth literacy.

Dr. Wilson added that the Pathways are a way to engage a number of stakeholders as the work cannot be done with a twenty-one member Council. In addition to a chair and/or co-chair from the Council there can be solicitation of the best thinkers in Louisiana and nationally to help the Council think about the best strategies that we can measure and move the needle for the next ten years.

During the discussion, Attorney Terri Ricks noted the overrepresentation of Black children and particularly Black boys in the foster care system. She asked that the Council not miss this critical component and the opportunity for any federal resources that may be available. It was noted that the topic could fit into the reentry/reintegration category.

Judy Reese Morse asked if narrative change should be made a Pathway. Although the narrative piece weaves into each pathway, she noted its importance and the need to speak directly to what the narrative is, what we think it out to be, and who should be collaborative partners. She also noted that having Narrative Change as its own pathway may provide an opportunity to explore where it might lead the Council.

Victor Lashley discussed adding wellness and health outcomes for children that could be added to an existing Pathway or be separated into its own Pathway.

Niiobli Armah suggested a framework for each Pathway to keep for consistency.

Raymond Jetson emphasized not only Primary Health but Behavioral Health as a critical area for consideration as a vital Pathway.

Chair James suggested that the Council incorporate the feedback provided into an updated version of the Pathways for the Council to review.

Chair James moved to a discussion about meeting dates. He noted that he would like the Council to meet at least one more time before the end of the year to finalize the Statement of Purpose, finalize the Pathways, and assign leaders for the Pathways at the next meeting. A Doodle Poll for the meeting will be sent via email.

Dr. Wilson noted that after the next meeting most of the work will happen in the Pathways to ensure that the work is meaningful.

### **Vice-Chair Election**

Senator Wesley Bishop moved to nominate Attorney Terri Ricks for Vice-Chair of the CSBMB. The motion was seconded by Dr. Walter Kimbrough. The motion carried unanimously. Newly elected Vice-Chair Ricks discussed the meaningfulness of the Council and her service on the Council based on her husband, son, and daughter. In addition she discussed the role of family and the work needed to ensure that every Black boy can fully participate in and lead a family.

Representative Norton asked that the meeting be no longer than one hour or one hour and a half.

### **Public Comment**

During Public Comment Cleve Dunn, Jr. asked the Council to look beyond economics as just solely having a job but to look at business ownership, trades, etc. as options to incorporate back into schools.

### **Acknowledgement of Guests**

Chair James recognized members of the Governor's staff including Alicia Williams, Erin Monroe Wesley, Shauna Sanford. Other recognized guests include Alfreda Tillman Bester, Assistant Secretary to the Department of Children and Family Services; Taryn Branson, Program Consultant in the Governor's Office; Jolan Jolivet, Community Specialist in the Governor's Office; Brace "Trey" Godfrey III, Executive Director of 100 Black Men of Baton Rouge; Marcus Williams with CSRS, Eugene Collins, and Luke St. John McKnight.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 7:08 pm.