African American Men Project

Crossroads: Choosing a New Direction

Final Report

January 2002
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Recommendations</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Are These Men?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Has a Stake in Their Success?</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Can Young African American Men and Hennepin County Help Each Other Succeed?</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Scenario of Success</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Challenge</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The current social and economic situation of many young African American men does not stem from a single cause, but from a multitude of interrelated ones. Researcher George Galster, drawing and expanding on the earlier work of sociologist Gunnar Myrdahl, argues that social and economic inequality is the result of "a web of mutually-reinforcing connections that serve both as causes and effects." Galster suggests that seven interrelated elements—each one a different function of people, place and/or the labor market—systematically reinforce the barriers that face a black urban underclass.

As a result, no single initiative, cause or program can have the systemic impact needed to change the social and economic conditions for these men. This awareness of the need for an aligned and coordinated response—one involving multiple stakeholders and multiple strategies—undergirds the findings in this report.

This Final Report is designed to help policymakers, community leaders, African American men and other interested people better understand the social and economic forces which affect young African American men in Hennepin County. In addition, it:

- Recommends ways to improve the measurable outcomes, and the effectiveness of county programs, that serve young African American men.
- Identifies ways in which a variety of other stakeholders can positively influence the quality of life for these men.
- Recommends developing a system of mutual accountability for results, both for young African American men, and for the systems and organizations that serve them.

The inspiration for this project came from Hennepin County Commissioner Mark Stenglein, who observed that, in the midst of a thriving economy and a severe labor shortage, a large number of young African American men in North Minneapolis were unemployed. After a series of discussions, county commissioners decided to learn more about the status of young African American men in Hennepin County, and in 1999 Commissioners Mark Stenglein and Peter McLaughlin authored Hennepin County Board resolution 99-3-561, which resolved that

...the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners direct County Administration to conduct an in-depth study of African American males between the ages of 18 through 30. This study will examine demographics and other information such as participation in the labor force, educational programs, and community programs.

The board charged the Office of Planning and Development with developing a work plan to carry out the research, which involved:

- Developing a socioeconomic profile of young African American men in Hennepin County.
- Better understanding the social and economic forces which produce unfavorable outcomes for young

\[\text{Source: George Galster, The Metropolis in Black and White, CUPR Press (1992).}\]
African American men.
- Identifying programs (run both by
government and by nonprofits) that
serve young African American men,
and evaluating their outcomes.
- Delineating areas where the county
can influence the quality of life for
young African American men.
- Determining how well the county’s
current policies and resource
allocations address the issues this
group faces.
- Developing recommendations and/or
action steps that the Board of
Commissioners can use to create
better and more cost-effective
outcomes for this group—as well as
for other Hennepin County residents.

A Steering Committee of community,
academic and religious leaders was
created to guide and direct these efforts.
This Final Report is the collaborative work
of Hennepin County government staff;
project partners; academic researchers;
and the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee chose to study
seven interrelated domains of well-being
for young African American Men in
Hennepin County:
- housing
- family structure
- health
- education
- economic status
- community and civic involvement
- criminal justice involvement

The research and findings of this report
build upon and update those of the
Preliminary Report published in November
2000. This Final Report addresses many
issues and concerns that the Preliminary
Report did not. In addition, data from
the 2000 census have been incorporated
to update 1990 census data. These
changes provide a more complete and
accurate picture of the status of young
African American men in our county.

This report was prepared not only to
paint a clear portrait of young African
American men in Hennepin County, but to
serve as a catalyst for organized action.
The Steering Committee and research
partners share a sense of urgency to
move forward. This urgency stems from
a need to address the continuing violence
and hopelessness that pervade the
neighborhoods where many young African
American men live.

This sense of urgency exists not just for
young African American men, however,
but for all Hennepin County residents.
When young African American men do
poorly, they are not the only ones who
suffer; every person, family and business
in the county also pays a price in the
form of a continued labor shortfall,
limited economic development, reduced
tax revenues, higher crime, and higher
costs for social services, law enforcement
and county courts. These costs, totaling
hundreds of millions of dollars each year,
reduce the overall quality of life for
everyone in the county.
This report looks at who holds a stake in the success of these young men and suggests ways in which Hennepin County, the State of Minnesota, the City of Minneapolis, foundations, other nonprofits, businesses, and educational systems can improve their service, streamline processes, align programs and increase the value of what they do. More important, it suggests what concrete steps African American men and women can take to support their own success and self-determination, and to help build a healthy community for everyone who lives or works in Hennepin County.

Herman J. Milligan, Jr., Ph.D.
Steering Committee Chair

Gary L. Cunningham
Director, Office of Planning and Development

About the African American Men Project Research Compendium

The Office of Planning and Development has published, as a companion to this Final Report, a comprehensive Research Compendium. Available in both print and compact disc form, as well as online, this compendium contains over 30 essays on a wide range of issues relevant to African American men. These essays present the detailed research and findings from which this brief report was synthesized. The Research Compendium is intended to be consulted in tandem with this Final Report.

If you have not been supplied with a copy of the Research Compendium, you may access it online at www.co.hennepin.mn.us/opd/opd.htm
We are at a crossroads. At the beginning of 2002, Hennepin County faces four interrelated challenges, all of which impact everyone in our county:

- A growing long-term labor shortage
- A short-term economic recession
- A growing number of impoverished young men with few skills and little education—most of whom are African American
- Disjointed social service, educational and criminal justice systems, which have yielded limited results for these young men

All of these challenges limit the county's economic development, increase program costs, raise taxes (or reduce public services), and lower our overall quality of life. Furthermore, every one of us—every person, family and business in the county—pays a portion of this price, which runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

If we choose not to act, these situations are likely to worsen. However, if we are willing to think and act outside of our traditional models, we have the chance to improve many outcomes at once: employment, economic growth, social justice, safety and the quality of life for all citizens.

This report focuses on Hennepin County's young African American men, especially those who live in the five poorest communities in Minneapolis. Many of these men are in trouble—with money; with employment, with their families, with their health and with the criminal justice system. This trouble stems from a web of interrelated and mutually reinforcing causes. As a result, many of these men are unable to create much social, political, economic or human capital for themselves.

A wide range of individuals and organizations in Hennepin County have a direct stake in the success of these men. This echoes a simple but often-overlooked reality: what is good for young African American men is good for the county, and vice versa. (One obvious example: when the local economy thrives, the unemployment rate among this group drops dramatically; when the economy does poorly, these men are typically among the first to lose their jobs.)

What is good for young African American men is also good for families: fathers who are employed and financially stable are much more likely to get married, stay married and fulfill their roles as fathers.

The central question posed by this report is, "How can young African American men and Hennepin County help each other succeed?" For years, there have been many mechanisms in place to benefit 18 to 30-year-old African American men; yet the outcomes for many of these men continue to be poor. For example:

- Forty-four percent are arrested each year.
- They are 27 times more likely to go to jail than young white men.
- Twenty-eight percent of these young men enrolled in the Minneapolis Public Schools graduate from high school in four years.
- They are twice as likely to die as young white men ages 18 to 30.
In part, this is because little has been done to align and coordinate the various systems, and to create a system for mutual accountability among key stakeholders.

Leadership is needed to create and sustain such coordinated efforts. Fortunately, potential leaders exist in abundance in a wide range of circles and groups: Hennepin County's African American community, its business community, its religious communities and a variety of other communities of interest.

There is much that Hennepin County government can and should do to support the mutual success of young African American men and other stakeholders. However, all crucial strategic planning, goal setting, methods, and measures of accountability must come from African American men and women.

In short, Hennepin County should:
• Establish new lines of communication.
• Encourage greater citizen engagement.
• Align and coordinate county services.
• Evaluate the efficacy of county programs, policies and procedures.
• Measure the specific, concrete results of what each county program does.
• Redesign systems and strategies to be more proactive, and to create greater value.

One example: instead of spending tens of millions of dollars per year incarcerating young men, the county and the City of Minneapolis can invest in preventive strategies as well as in law enforcement and criminal justice. Another example: the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County can focus their training and employment efforts on men as well as on women and children.

Everyone benefits when disadvantaged African American men (and poor or disadvantaged young men of all races) build their skills, get more education, become more involved with their children, hold steady jobs and/or build thriving businesses. This report sets a new direction for how individuals, groups and organizations can promote the greater good of these young men, and of everyone who lives or works in Hennepin County.
Recommendations

• Create an advisory board—tentatively called the African American Men Commission (AAMC)—to coordinate efforts to improve outcomes for 18 to 30-year-old African American men.

• Create a partnership to provide training and employment opportunities for young African American men, especially those with low skills, education and/or training.

• Support and strengthen efforts to keep African American boys in school. These efforts should include innovative after-school recreation programs that enrich students’ lives and keep them out of trouble.

• Assist young African American men in enrolling in and completing post-secondary educational programs.

• Coordinate adult and community education with job training programs.

• Develop and promote public policy to ensure that all African American males have access to health care. This includes guidance in completing the necessary forms for obtaining health care services.

• Coordinate health education initiatives to target young African American men.

• Initiate a public campaign to raise awareness of the important contributions African American males make as fathers, sons, siblings, husbands, uncles, grandfathers and boyfriends.

• Redefine public policy to recognize the importance of fathers in the family, as opposed to focusing only on mothers and children.

• Coordinate efforts focused on affordable housing to target 18 to 30-year-old African American men.

• Coordinate efforts to reduce the disproportionate involvement of minorities (particularly 18 to 30-year-old African American men) in the criminal justice system.

• Develop and coordinate programs (both philanthropic and faith-based) to engage young African American men in their communities.
Who Are These Men?

Rosa Parks did not wait for church leaders, social activists, politicians, or the President of the United States to do the right thing. She stood up, stepped forward, took the risk, and ignited a series of changes that touched the core of American society. It's time for the undiscovered Rosa Parkses—Black and White, male and female—to step up and start the next phase of racial progress...it's time to get moving.

—Joseph L. White and James H. Cones III, 
Black Man Emerging

It's never too late to wake up.

—Vance Opperman to a hotel ballroom full of civic leaders, May 2000

Now, maybe for the first time in our modern history, we need a strategy.

—Curt Johnson, former Chairman, Metropolitan Council
This report is a wake-up call.

Many of us—leaders and followers, businesses and nonprofits, families and government agencies, political and religious organizations, African Americans and whites, Asian Americans, Latinos and American Indians—have been asleep. We've closed our eyes to four interrelated challenges, all of which impact everyone in our county:

- **A growing long-term labor shortage.** This continuing and structural shortage has emerged from a combination of factors:
  1) the growing number of current and future retirees;
  2) the changing human resource needs of industry;
  3) a generally strong local economy, which has generated excess demand for labor; and
  4) the lack of well-coordinated public policy regarding the county's economic future. The labor shortage will limit the county's productivity, depress business growth and hurt our ability to compete in the new economy. This shortage is likely to grow over the next two decades².

- **A short-term economic recession.**
  Along with the national economy, Hennepin County's economy has softened considerably since late summer of 2001. This is of particular note here since, historically, the unemployment rate among African Americans—especially young African American men—rises or falls dramatically in response to economic conditions. During the recession of the early 1990s, for instance, African American unemployment in the Twin Cities metropolitan area rose from 10.5% in 1991 to 27.5% in 1992, then dropped sharply again, to 10.7% in 1995, when economic conditions improved³. The unemployment rate for young African American men—who are often the last to be hired and the first to be fired—was probably significantly higher in each year.

- **A growing number of impoverished young men with few skills and little education—most of whom are African American.** Few of these men are able to build careers, raise families or develop significant social, political, economic or human capital.

- **Disjointed social service, educational and criminal justice systems.** For years, government agencies and programs, and many

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² Source: "Help Wanted: More Opportunities Than People" by Gary Cunningham and Steve Keefe, 1998. This report, published by the Citizens League of Minnesota, can be accessed at www.citizensleague.net/studies/labor-shortage/report.htm

Our social service system has been successful in providing people with a safety net; but it has not done as well in encouraging self-determination.

Many young men and our disjointed service systems—have negative effects on everyone in Hennepin County: they limit economic development, increase program costs, raise taxes (or reduce public services) and lower our overall quality of life. Furthermore, every one of us—every person, family and business in the county—pays a portion of this price, which runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

Yet none of this is inevitable or unchangeable. In fact, Hennepin County now has a number of opportunities to improve this situation—including the unprecedented opportunity to address all of these challenges at once.

All of us, from individual citizens to businesses to government agencies, will be affected by the success or failure of the 11,000+ young African American men who live in Hennepin County, and more than double that number two decades from now. The converse is equally true: the decisions that governments, organizations and individuals make will affect these young men’s prospects for the future.

Of all African American men employed in the public sector in 1997, more than 27% were white-collar professionals. In comparison, only 24% of white men employed in the public sector were white-collar professionals.

All of these challenges—the labor shortage, the recession, the plight of
How Are Our Neighbors Faring?

Two portraits of 18 to 30-year-old African American men in Hennepin County reveal two contradictory sets of experiences:

One portrait shows that most Hennepin County residents are doing well or reasonably well, including many young African American men:

- The percentage of African American men employed in the private sector who are white-collar professionals has grown significantly, from 33% in 1990 to 39% in 2000.
- Of all African American men employed in the public sector in 1997, more than 27% were white-collar professionals. In comparison, only 24% of white men employed in the public sector were white-collar professionals.
- One highly-visible sign of the growing number of young African American professionals is First Friday gatherings. On the first Friday of every month, 400-600 of these young men and women come together at a Minneapolis hotel or meeting hall to network, compare notes and offer each other advice and support.
- In December 2001, 17% of Minneapolis Fire Department firefighters (80 out of 470) were African American; 66 of these firefighters (14%) were 18 to 30-year-old African American men.
- In the 1999-2000 school year, 977 young African American men from Hennepin County were enrolled in a Minnesota State college or university.
- Four black fraternities had Twin Cities branches in December 2001; over 300 men (undergraduates, graduates and alumni) in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area were active members.

Yet a very different portrait hangs just beside this one. For a large percentage of Hennepin County’s young African American men, life is difficult. This is especially true for the young men who live in the five poorest communities in Minneapolis: Camden, Central, Near North, Phillips and Powderhorn. Many of these men are in trouble—with money, with employment, with their families, with their health, with their safety and/or with the criminal justice system. Two examples: while 18 to 30-year-old African American men make up only 1% of the county’s total population, they represent 36% of its murder victims and nearly a fifth of all people booked in Hennepin County’s Adult Detention Center.

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4 Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: EEO-1 Data Set, 2000. This is the latest year for which figures are available.
5 Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: EEO-4 Data Set, 1997. This is the latest year for which figures are available.
6 Source: Brett Buckner, regular First Friday attendee.
7 Source: Burt Osborne, Assistant City Attorney.
9 Source: James Burroughs, Executive Committee Member, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.
10 Source: Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.
11 Source: Hennepin County Adult Detention Center.
These difficulties are not unique to young African American men, of course. Eighteen to 30-year-old men from these five communities, regardless of their race or ethnicity, are much more likely to be poor, to have health problems, to be unemployed, to be arrested or to go to jail than their counterparts living elsewhere in Hennepin County.

Nevertheless, the prevalence of these poor outcomes among many young African American men is cause for serious concern—and the primary reason for this report.

How Is Hennepin County Faring?

A similar set of portraits—one of prosperity, another of hardship—can be painted of Hennepin County as a whole. As of this writing, countywide unemployment remains low in comparison to most of the United States; per capita earnings are comparatively high; and, as Hennepin County’s 2000 Community Indicators report demonstrates, our overall economic, social, community and environmental health remain solid. While the economic slowdown of 2001-02 has certainly affected Hennepin County, our economy continues to do well in comparison with the rest of the United States.

At the same time, however, a shadow is falling across our success. Hennepin County and the Twin Cities metro area are not keeping up with competing regions. In 1999, Forbes magazine rated the Twin Cities the 25th best place in America to build a business; in 2001, that ranking had dropped to 50th\(^\text{13}\). Recently the StarTribune ran a long series of articles, “Compete or Retreat,” which detailed the Twin Cities’ failure to keep up with economic and technological trends. “Minnesota is not a major player in the new economy,” observed David Kidwell, Dean of the University of Minnesota’s Carlson School of Management, in one of these pieces. “There are cracks in the wall...we may have begun a slow ride downward\(^\text{14}\)”

Fortunately, neither the circumstances of our young African American men nor the shortcomings in our ability to compete as a county are immutable. Furthermore, because the two are intertwined, we have the opportunity to address both at once through coordinated and well-considered action.

It is likely that if Hennepin County (or other key stakeholders) choose not to act, both situations will worsen. However, if we are willing to think and act outside of our

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\(^\text{12}\) Access at www.co.hennepin.mn.us/opd/opd.htm
\(^\text{13}\) Source: www.forbes.com/tool/toolbox/bestplaces
Imagine for a few minutes that you’re a young African American man living in Hennepin County. Here’s a likely snapshot of your life and your chances of experiencing a variety of challenges:

- You live in one of the city’s five (out of 11) poorest and most unsafe communities (49% of Hennepin County’s 18 to 30-year-old African American men live here). These are the communities with the lowest property values, the highest percentage of homes in substandard condition, and the most crime. Eighty percent of all African American children in Minneapolis live in these five communities.
- You were raised by a single mother (47%).
- You did not finish high school in four years (72%). (For African American women, this rate is 61%; for white men, 15%; and for white women, 9%.)
- You did not finish high school at all (48%), and were three times as likely to have been suspended from school as a white male.

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**Source:** Woods & Poole Economics, 2000 Data Pamphlet.

**Sources:** U.S. Census 2000, Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis.

**Source:** U.S. Census 2000. Forty-seven percent of all African American children in Hennepin County were raised in female-headed single-parent families. According to the 1960 census, 77% of all non-white families in Hennepin County included married couples; blacks made up 71% of the 1960 non-white population. In 2000 only 45% of black families included married couples.

**Source:** Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, “2000 High School Completion Study.” This figure is for Hennepin County public school students from the class of 2000.

**Ibid.** Forty-eight percent of Hennepin County’s male African American students had dropped out of school. It is possible, however, that some of these did—or will—compete their education later.

**Source:** Minneapolis Public Schools... In 1998-9, the latest year for which figures are available, 42% of all male African American students were suspended at least once. Compare this with 14% of white male students and 11% of male Asian students.
• You are not employed (7.8%)\textsuperscript{22} or, if you are employed in the private sector, you have a low-skill or unskilled job (56%)\textsuperscript{23}. Put another way, your chances of having a good job (or running a successful business) are 36%.
• In any given year, you have a 44% chance of being arrested and booked in the Hennepin County Adult Detention Center at least once, most likely for a minor offense. Over a three-year period your chance of arrest is considerably higher. If you are arrested and charged with a crime, you will likely be arrested and charged a second time within the next two years (57%)\textsuperscript{24}.
• If you live in one of the five poorest Minneapolis communities, it’s likely that you have been the victim of at least one serious crime—or will be within the next ten years\textsuperscript{25}.
• Your chance of owning your own home (17%) is less than half that of white people your age\textsuperscript{26}.
• You are twice as likely to die before your 24th birthday, and 2.5 times as likely to die between the ages of 25-


\textsuperscript{24} In 2000, roughly 4,900 18 to 30-year-old African American men with Hennepin County addresses were booked in the Hennepin County Adult Detention Center. This number represents 44% of the 11,157 18 to 30-year-old African American men reported by the 2000 Census to be living in Hennepin County. Source: Hennepin County Adult Detention Center Subject in Process (SIP) data files. From July 1999 to July 2001, 57% of the 18 to 30-year-old African American men who were charged with a crime were re-arrested and charged at least one other time within those two years. Cases not disposed in that interval were not considered as either initial or repeat offenses. Recidivism offenses include all misdemeanors and felonies, but not traffic violations (unless a court hearing was demanded). Cases may include some non-Hennepin County residents. Source: Fourth Judicial District disposition files.

\textsuperscript{25} In 2000, one serious crime was committed for about every 10 (9.75/100) people living in these five communities. (Serious crime is defined as murder/manslaughter, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, larceny, burglary, motor vehicle theft and arson.) In that same year, one serious violent crime (murder/manslaughter, rape, robbery or aggravated assault) was committed for every 50 people living in these communities (2.02/100). Source: City of Minneapolis Police Department, CODEFOR Unit. Data are for 2000.

\textsuperscript{26} Seventeen percent of 15 to 34-year-old African American householders owned their homes, compared to 44% of white 15 to 34-year-old householders. Source: U.S. Census 2000.
Thought Byte
Hennepin County's
Young African American Men

In a group of 100 of these men, about...

• 17 own their own homes
• 47 were raised by single mothers
• 49 live in one of Minneapolis's five poorest and most unsafe communities
• 28 finished high school in four years
• 42 were suspended from school at least once
• 52 eventually finished high school
• 44 were arrested and booked in the past year
• 9 attended, or currently attend, a Minnesota State college or university

44, as a white man your age.\(^{27}\)

• If you do die before you turn 45, your most likely cause of death is murder, followed by AIDS and heart disease.\(^{28}\)
• You will live seven fewer years than your white counterparts.\(^{29}\)

• As a child, you were at least twice as likely to have been enrolled in special education as a girl of any race, and significantly more likely than a white boy your age.\(^{30}\)

\(^{27}\) Source: Minnesota Department of Health, Office of Minority Health, "Populations of Color in Minnesota Health Status Report." Spring 1997. A more recent study covering 1990-9, also from the Minnesota Department of Health, concludes that African American men in Minnesota are 2.5 times as likely to die from prostate cancer, and almost twice as likely to die from lung cancer, as white non-Hispanic men.

\(^{28}\) Ibid.


\(^{30}\) 22% of all African American boys in the Minneapolis Public Schools were enrolled in special education in December 2000, compared with 17% of white boys, 11% of African American girls and 9% of white girls. Of those special education students who were identified as having emotional or behavioral problems, 55% were African American boys. Source: Minneapolis Public Schools: Research, Evaluation and Assessment Unit. July 17, 2001.
Put simply, these circumstances do not support your ability to create much social, political, economic or human capital. (Your social capital is the collective value of the social relationships and networks in which you participate; your political capital is your ability to use these networks and relationships, and your skills and experience, to support—or create—political and social change; economic capital is money, assets, credit and the ability to attract investment dollars. Your human capital is the aggregate value of what you can offer society, including your education, training, skills, etc.)

Like anyone, your relationships and networks are likely to be largely with your co-workers and the people in your neighborhood and community. Thus, if you live in a poor community, and work at a low-skilled job, you are likely to have accumulated far less of all four types of capital than a white-collar professional living in a prosperous neighborhood.

Furthermore, if you participate actively in the Negative Cash Flow System—^the underground economy based largely on commerce in illegal products and services (drugs, prostitution, etc.)—your net social and political capital may be less than zero, because your social networks may be largely made up of people who remove value from society rather than add to it. In short, what you do costs everyone in Hennepin County money.

The statistics tell a second story, however: if you could change any of your basic demographic factors—age, race, gender or location—then your chances for a healthy and successful life would improve dramatically. Predictably, 18 to 30-year old white males (and males of all other racial and ethnic groups except American Indians) generally experience better outcomes. But you are also likely to be doing significantly better if you are African American and:

- **Female.** In 2000, 12,726 African American men ages 18 to 30 were booked for crimes in the Hennepin County Adult Detention Center, while 2,276 African American women in that age group were—a ratio of 5.6 to one.

An identical ratio exists for young African Americans convicted of crimes and sent to the county workhouse (in 2000, 2,059 men vs. 369 women). Furthermore, African American women live about 7.5 years longer than their male counterparts.

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32 Source: Hennepin County Adult Detention Center.
33 Source: Hennepin County Adult Corrections Facility, 2000 Annual Report.
• **Older.** An African American man age 25 or older is twice as likely as a younger man to have attended college\textsuperscript{35}; an African American man age 35 or older is 2.5 times as likely as a younger man to own his own home\textsuperscript{36}.

• **Living outside the five poorest, highest-crime Minneapolis communities.** If you live elsewhere in Minneapolis, your chances of being the victim of a serious crime are cut in half (from 10% to 5% per year)\textsuperscript{37}. In addition, you are more likely to have grown up in a two-parent household (25% of African American children who live in the five poorest communities reside with married parents; elsewhere in Minneapolis the number is 34\%\textsuperscript{38}). Furthermore, you are much less likely to receive—and, presumably, to need—social service assistance from the county (e.g., MFIP, child care assistance, food stamps, etc.). The maps that follow show this dramatically.

If you live in suburban Hennepin County rather than Minneapolis, you are likely to do better still. Here are some of the ways in which your life might be different:

• You would probably be a high school graduate. (In Hennepin County, 56% of suburban African American males graduate high school in four years, but only 23% of those living in Minneapolis do\textsuperscript{39}.)

• You would be far less likely to be the victim of a serious crime. (There is a 4% chance per resident per year in the suburbs, but a 10% chance in the five poorest Minneapolis communities\textsuperscript{40}.)

• You would be more likely to have been raised in a two-parent home. (This is true of 40% of African American children in the suburbs, but only 27\% in Minneapolis\textsuperscript{41}.)

\textsuperscript{35} Source: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Of male African American students enrolled in Minnesota state colleges and universities in 1999-2000, 5\% were ages 15-19; 27\% were 20-24; 37\% were 25-34; 20\% were 33-44; and 8\% were over 44. This group of schools includes all Minnesota State University campuses (e.g., Mankato State, Bemidji State, Metropolitan State, etc.) and all the public community and technical colleges in the state; it does not include any branches of the University of Minnesota.

\textsuperscript{36} Source: U.S. Census 2000. Home ownership rates are provided by race and age, but not by gender. Age categories for home ownership are 15-24, 25-34, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, 75-84 and 85 and older. No distinction is made between homes owned by individuals and those owned by couples.

\textsuperscript{37} Source: City of Minneapolis Police Department, CODEFOR Unit. Data are for 2000.

\textsuperscript{38} Source: U.S. Census 2000.

\textsuperscript{39} Source: Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, "2000 High School Completion Study." Data are for African American male students from the class of 2000.

\textsuperscript{40} Sources: City of Minneapolis Police Department, CODEFOR Unit, and the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Data are for 2000.

\textsuperscript{41} Source: U.S. Census 2000.
You would not, however, be any more likely to own your own home: home ownership rates among African Americans are virtually identical in Minneapolis and in suburban Hennepin County.\footnote{The disparities between Minneapolis and its suburbs are not the result of natural forces. They arose during the 1940s and 1950s as by-products of both legal and de facto segregation. This segregation continued well into the 1960s and 1970s—both legally, through white flight, restrictive covenants, mortgage redlining, exclusionary zoning, and federal housing and transportation policy—and illegally, through the real estate practice of steering white home buyers toward white neighborhoods and black home buyers toward black (i.e., generally poor) ones. There is some evidence that this last practice continued well into the 1990s, and may still be with us. As suburban sprawl grew, and many whites and middle-class blacks moved from Minneapolis to the suburbs, poverty became more and more concentrated in the city’s five poorest communities. This flight of many middle-class people of all races to the suburbs has helped to deepen the very disparities that these people hoped to leave behind. For a detailed treatment of this subject on a national level, see Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton’s book American Apartheid (Harvard University Press. 1994).}

Indeed, simply moving to a suburb is no automatic ticket to success. As the map on page 28 demonstrates, a new center of poverty—and of high use of county social services—is developing in the near-northwest suburbs, especially Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center and Crystal.

Your Counterparts in Other American Cities

No matter where you live in Hennepin County, you’re probably doing about as well as your counterparts in many other large American cities and counties. This is the conclusion of a study commissioned for this report\footnote{This study, "How African American Men Are Faring in 11 U.S. Cities," is included in the Research Compendium published simultaneously with this report. Data used in this study were drawn from a variety of sources: "1998 Current Population Survey," U.S. Department of Education Common Core of Data, National Center for Education Studies (1998 data), 1999 local area unemployment statistics, "Corrections Populations in 1996" and the National Vital Statistics System.} and conducted by the University of Minnesota’s Institute on Race and Poverty. For this study, researchers collected demographic, socioeconomic and educational summary data from the mid- and late 1990s for 11 metro areas (and, in some cases, the states in which these cities are located):

- Atlanta
- Baltimore
- Cleveland
- Denver
- Miami
- Minneapolis
- Phoenix
- Portland (OR)
- St. Louis
- San Diego
- Seattle

The study looked at how you and other African Americans are faring according to a variety of measures: school dropout rates by race and gender; performance of eighth graders in writing and basic math, by race; unemployment by race;
Hennepin County Adult Services Department clients (1999), Children and Family Services Department clients (1999), and Economic Assistance Department Public Assistance clients (December 1999; does not include clients receiving only child support services). Clients were not unduplicated between departments.

Sources: Hennepin County Children, Family and Adult Services Department; Economic Assistance Department.
Density of Hennepin County social service clients* per square mile, 1999

- 0 - 299
- 300 - 899
- 900 - 2099
- 2100 - 4499
- 4500 - 9177

- Cities
- Highways
- Water areas

*Hennepin County Adult Services Department clients (1999), Children and Family Services Department clients (1999), and Economic Assistance Department Public Assistance clients (December 1999; does not include clients receiving only child support services). Clients were not unduplicated between departments.

Sources: Hennepin County Children, Family and Adult Services Department; Economic Assistance Department.
Incarceration rates by race and gender; and death rates by race and ethnicity\textsuperscript{44}.

This study concluded:
\begin{itemize}
  \item In every area studied, outcomes and conditions for African Americans were significantly poorer than those for whites.
  \item The conditions and outcomes for Hennepin County African Americans were about average for the 11 metro areas examined.
\end{itemize}

Nevertheless, the study revealed two large disparities that directly affect your life. The first was between African Americans and whites \textbf{within the state of Minnesota}. As an African American male living in Minnesota, you are 27 times more likely to be in jail than your white counterparts\textsuperscript{45}. You are also 68\% more likely to die in the year to come\textsuperscript{46}.

The second is the result of comparing the black/white disparities \textbf{within each metropolitan area}. Of the 11 metropolitan areas studied, the disparities between African Americans and whites were by far the greatest in the Minneapolis metro area.

\textbf{Your situation, relative to whites}, is poorer in Minneapolis than anywhere else studied. The black/white death rate ratio, the black/white incarceration rate ratio, and the black/white school dropout rate ratio (1.25:1)\textsuperscript{47} were all greater in Minneapolis than in any of the ten other areas studied. In addition, the black/white ratio of eighth grade writing skills test scores was second lowest (.69:1)\textsuperscript{48}.

\textsuperscript{44} Office of Planning and Development staff also examined relevant data from three other sources: 1) "Metropolitan Racial and Ethnic Change—Census 2000," a 2001 study produced by the Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research; 2) 1988-95 data on Minnesota and the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Statistics (this data appeared in the African American Men Project Preliminary Report); and 3) 1990-97 data on Hennepin County from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (which also appeared in the African American Men Project Preliminary Report).

\textsuperscript{45} Incarceration rates for adult males in Minnesota in 1996 were 156 per 100,000 whites, 4,169 per 100,000 African Americans. Source: "Corrections Populations in 1996." Statistics are for the latest year for which sufficient data are available.

\textsuperscript{46} Death rates in Minnesota in 1995-7 were 401.1 for non-Hispanic whites, 675.7 for blacks. Source: National Vital Statistics System. Statistics are for the latest years for which sufficient data are available.

\textsuperscript{47} Source: Department of Education Common Core of Data, 1997 data. School districts for only six of the 11 cities studied were compared: Minneapolis, Cleveland, Portland, St. Louis, San Diego, and Atlanta City/Fulton County.

\textsuperscript{48} Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 1998 data. It should also be noted that, among all 11 major American metropolitan areas, there is not one in which young African American men are doing as well (or even nearly as well) as their white counterparts.
The Minneapolis area was the seventh most racially segregated in this group. A separate study found that the Minneapolis metro was the tenth most segregated metropolitan region in the entire United States. In short, you live in a county that has a reputation for being progressive, but whose residents, to a large degree, live in segregated neighborhoods.

Some years ago, in your tenth grade American History class, you were told to write a paper on the Kerner Commission report, which was published in the wake of the riots that swept through the United States in 1967. One sentence from that report still sticks in your mind: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." It seems clear to you that, in 2001, this arrangement continues.

Your Predecessors

In 1967, the Minneapolis City Council issued its own report on African Americans, poverty, segregation and discrimination. Surprisingly—or, to you as a young African American man, perhaps not—the older report sounded many of the same notes that this new one does. It observed, for instance, that the high rate of African American unemployment was not a specialized concern, but was harmful to the economic interests of every power group (most notably business), and represented a "continued waste of human talents and their markets."

You might see yourself in the words of an anonymous African American man quoted in the report: "We need jobs, sure, but we need to be trained for them. To me this means that some of these employers have to be willing to train....Many of us don't have the skills, but we can learn." You might also feel that after 35 years, little has changed. For example, some of the report's cautions, predictions and warnings included:

- "The present (AFDC) program is conducive to breaking families and to the promotion of illegitimacy...Present practices encourage generation after generation of dependency."
- "Unless minority people are dispersed throughout the entire metropolitan area, we will always have racial problems....If this is not done, Minneapolis will become a minority core city."

"If the present agencies are not effective, they should be restructured..."

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49 Source: "Examining the Relationship Between Housing, Education, and Persistent Segregation," a report issued by the Institute on Race and Poverty. Access this report at www1.umn.edu/irp/publications/final1.htm
51 p. 20.
52 p. 30.
53 p. 31.
• "Most of what has been done to date has failed because the primary concern has been the 'success' of the program, rather than the success of the people who were to be served."

• "Proliferation of public agencies in this field at this time will only confuse the issues more, and restrict communication further. If the present agencies are not effective, they should be restructured to that end."

At the heart of the City Council's report was this observation: "the problem and hence the solution excludes no one."

This was true 35 years ago; it remains true today. You are also aware that your own future depends, in part, on the ability of your fellow Hennepin County residents to accept and embrace this simple but essential concept.

What Concerns You Most?

As a young African American man, some of the things you hope for in your life probably include:

• A stronger sense of community among African American men
• A better understanding of your own cultural heritage
• More and better job opportunities
• Job skill training
• More mentoring opportunities
• More (or resumed) education
• More affordable, livable housing
• A strong sense of self-determination
• If you are a father, more support for your fathering (better child care, more opportunities for building parenting skills, etc.)

\textsuperscript{54} p. 38.
\textsuperscript{55} p. 27.
\textsuperscript{56} p. 38.
\textsuperscript{57} The description in this section is based on the contributions of seven psychologists and other professionals who work regularly with young African American men. It is intended to outline some of the experiences that many young African American men in Hennepin County commonly (but not inevitably or unvaryingly) share. On April 30, 2001, many of these psychologists took part in "Black Man Emerging," a roundtable discussion on African American men and boys in Hennepin County sponsored by the African American Men Project. Dr. Joseph White, co-author of the book \textit{Black Man Emerging} (Freeman, 1999) and Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of California, Irvine, moderated the roundtable. Participants included Dr. William Allen (a psychologist specializing in family therapy, males and family life, and cultural competency training), Dr. Rose M. Brewer (Morse Alumni Distinguished Teaching Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Minnesota's African American & African Studies Department), Dr. BraVada Garrett-Akinsanya (a psychologist who specializes in child and family development, children’s mental health and cultural competency), Paul Norman (a program manager for the Mental Health Case Management Group of Children, Family and Adult Services who focuses on identity, self-esteem, and combined chemical/mental health issues among African American adolescents and young men) and Ted Thompson (a psychologist who specializes in working with African American boys and young men). Several weeks after the roundtable, OPD staff further interviewed Ted Thompson, who spoke on the subject in more depth and detail. In addition, Dr. Rose M. Brewer prepared an essay on the African American family, "Family Complexities: African American Men and Black Family Structure" and Dr. Vanessa J. McKendall contributed a study, "Speaking From Experience: African American Men in Hennepin County," based on interviews with focus groups made up of young African American men. Both of these investigations appear in the Research Compendium published in connection with this report.
You believe in taking responsibility for your life and are proud to be African American. Nevertheless, at times you may feel some (or even all) of the following:

- Alienated, unable to find a place within society
- Unsafe, threatened and uncertain about whom to trust and whom not to
- A sense of transience and instability
- Focused on protection and survival, rather than on engagement, growth and prosperity
- Estranged from any religion or spiritual tradition
- Unaware of what society’s steps to manhood are
- Confused about what constitutes strength and what constitutes weakness
- Angry
- Resentful about having to cope with racism
- Inferior—i.e., too black, too dumb and/or too poor
- Without hope

In addition, if you were raised without at least one involved, caring parent (or other adult), your flexibility, creativity and school achievement may have suffered. As an adult, this may also continue to negatively affect your employment and/or how you raise your own child(ren).

If you did not have such a caring person in your life, you may have had to grow up without some or all of these essential support structures:

- A strong family structure with clear standards
- A healthy attachment to your family
- A strong male role model within your family
- A sense of security and protection
- A social safety net
- Acceptance
- Affiliation with others
- Promotion and appreciation by adults within your community
- Mentoring from adult men
- Expectations that you will succeed in life
- Support and motivation for going to school, taking it seriously, working reasonably hard and graduating high school
- Strong values that promote confidence and self-esteem
- A sense of hope
- A sense of uniqueness

The more of these that you had as a child, the more resilient you are likely to be, and the more you will be able to thrive, even in the face of danger, racism and uncertainty. If you were fortunate enough to have grown up with many of these support structures, this does not mean that the feelings listed earlier will be unknown to you. However, you are likely to have the emotional competencies, self-regulation and adaptive abilities to take positive action in spite of (or, sometimes, because of) them.58

Regardless of what kind of parenting you received, if you grew up without a father—or a strong and stable male

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presence in your household—then you are likely to feel a void in your life. If you lacked such a positive male role model growing up, you may frequently be unsure what to do, what decision to make or what course to set. After all, when you ask yourself the question, "What would my father do now?", often the only answer you have is, "I don’t know."

If you are a father yourself, you face a paradox. Although you probably do not live with your child’s mother, you may want to help support a family, play the role of father and be a breadwinner. Yet you may feel inadequate to the task. This may be because of limited training or education; a lack of jobs for which you qualify that pay enough to support a family; a lack of confidence; and/or a general sense of alienation.

In response to these feelings, you may seek more education or job training—or you may give up, avoiding most or all of a father’s role, perhaps even avoiding your child and his or her mother. If you go down this path, however, you may be helping to create an environment for your child that produces the same kind of troubles you had to face growing up.

How Does the World Look to You?

In two research projects conducted for the African American Men Project, interviewers assembled several focus groups of young African American men and asked them questions about themselves and their plans, families, identities, goals, successes and lives in general.

Based on comments from these focus groups, here are some of the things that, as a young African American man, you might say about yourself, your life and the world.

You see yourself as strong, yet you also struggle with feelings of inferiority:

- I grew up with a lot of fear of white folks and other black folks. I didn’t know which one to trust. I really don’t trust anybody. I started believing in stereotypes myself.

You often feel angry and displaced, and resentful of having to cope with racism:

- Being African American...I have to go the extra distance to prove myself and to show that I’m a well-rounded individual—to be successful.
- Being an African American man in society today means that...so many things have been brought down upon us....I have to basically overlook little things that are set up as obstacles to

keep me down and look towards the bright side...be more optimistic and work towards the future.

You are eager to learn from a mentor, but not just anyone:
- We need someone we can relate to rather than somebody (who) has never been in your shoes trying to tell you how to live your life and what you should have done. I want to hear from someone who did it and became successful.

Family is of great importance to you:
- I think that families (are) like the main course of the meal for the black community. If you have a strong family, you can establish your children to be better, even if you’re poor...
- (Focus on) basically two things—memory and family—and everything else falls into place.

Perhaps more important still, you want your fellow African American men to find ways to support each other:
- As black people, we’ve got it a little harder...(but) we can open doors. One black person gets in and opens doors for a lot of black people.
- As a whole, black folks, black men, we need...to start loving ourselves....We’ll learn how to love our families and take care of our families because that’s the biggest problem. We are not with our families; we are in jail or on the streets.
- I have to catch myself and remember there is nothing I can really do about it, but just to keep continuing building myself. Then, once I get so far, to help build the next man...Just kind of share that I’ve walked the same path and try to hand some tools down to him and help build up his world....I know I can’t change the world. All I can do is help it.

You feel that simply because you are young, male and African American, you are often viewed as an outsider. Because young African American men (and young men of all races) commit a large proportion of Hennepin County’s crimes, some people view you as a criminal or potential criminal. No matter how law-abiding you may be, when you walk down the street at night, you sometimes see fear in people’s eyes; some cross the street to avoid you. Because, in general, young African American men have high unemployment, little education, few salable skills and a high rate of drug convictions, some employers assume that you are an underskilled or unreliable worker—even though you may be a first-rate bookkeeper, cook or photographer.

On the one hand, you understand that some of these people are responding to generalities that are real, and perhaps
based on their personal experience. On the other, you know how much more difficult these responses make your life. In particular, they hurt your ability to compete in the job market—not only with whites and Asian Americans, but with African American women, older African American men and young black men who recently emigrated from Africa.  

This is complicated by the attitudes of some young African American men you know. These men see themselves as outsiders; some even seem to take comfort in this role. When you tell these men about your dreams of raising a family and building a lucrative and satisfying career, a few of them laugh at you and accuse you of wanting to be white.

This is especially true when you talk about your plans for earning a college degree, and perhaps even a master’s degree. Many of your heroes—from W.E.B. DuBois to Malcolm X—clearly stressed the importance of education. Yet many of your acquaintances think you’re turning your back on your heritage simply for wanting to learn, build skills and increase your human capital. And you desperately want to avoid the downward spiral that has claimed the lives and ambitions of many people you know: a lack of education and training, drugs, street life, minor crimes, arrest, conviction, jail and the near-impossibility of getting a job and a place to rent afterward.

Sometimes you feel as if you’re stuck in a no-man’s-land, accepted neither by the mainstream culture nor the people who feel they have no place in it.

Glenn C. Loury discusses this effect, which he calls “biased social cognition,” in a paper, “Racial Justice: The Superficial Morality of Color-Blindness in the United States,” which was adapted from his book The Anatomy of Racial Inequality (Harvard University Press, 2001). Through the process of biased social cognition, people who make generalizations about a certain group—generalizations that may in fact be statistically valid—may act so as to influence the group being generalized about, often in ways that reinforce the generalization. In one of Loury’s examples, cab drivers know that young black men are more likely to rob them than whites, black women or older black men; thus some cab drivers will not pick up young black men at night. As a result, many lawful young black men—who know from experience that cabs are less likely stop for them after dark—find other means of transportation. But robbers are much less deterred by a long wait than men who just want to get home. As a result, a still higher proportion of young black men whom cab drivers stop for will be robbers. Thus, cab drivers’ own decisions tend to increase their risk—and, in turn, validate and reinforce their reluctance to stop for young black men after dark. Brent Staples has also written eloquently—and more personally—on this topic in his widely published essay “Black Men and Public Space.”
Who Has a Stake in Their Success?

Communities cannot be rebuilt by focusing on their needs, problems, and deficiencies. Rather, community building starts with the process of locating the assets, skills and capacities of residents, citizens, associations, and local institutions.

Development must start from within. The process must respect local structures, support local visions and invest in local productive capacities.

—John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight,
*Building Communities From the Inside Out*

We will work to create communities grounded in cooperation, industry, self-reliance, and prosperity. We know this quest to be a cultural mission, as we reexamine and strengthen our ancient African sensibilities, and as we grow, develop, and inform our American experience. We envision this mission as one of reclamation—reclamation of the common good and our common culture, as well as reclamation of the neighborhoods and institutions which nurture our families.

—from the Vision Statement of the National Task Force on African-American Men and Boys
The question here—“Who has a stake in the success of young African American men?”—can also be posed in a less delicate way: who should care about the success of young African American men?

The answer is simple and straightforward: any person or organization whose well-being is affected by the success or failure of these men. These include:

- businesses, nonprofits and government organizations that are having trouble finding qualified employees
- businesses considering relocating to Hennepin County
- investors seeking new business opportunities and a healthy local economy
- wives, partners and potential partners of young African American men—especially those who hope to raise families
- children of these men, who need economically and emotionally stable fathers
- co-workers of these men, whose productivity (and, in some cases, whose success) is intertwined with theirs
- parents, siblings and other relatives of these men, who want to see them thrive
- children throughout Hennepin County, who can benefit from successful role models who are young, male and African American
- religious communities and congregations, which can be strengthened by men who are raising stable families
- social service agencies, which want their time and effort to show results
- foundations, which need their investments in Hennepin County to have a positive impact
- county commissioners, mayors and members of city councils, who want to make wise, beneficial and cost-effective investments of public money
- Hennepin County taxpayers, who pay for county social services, courts, police and other services
- the generation of young African American boys and girls to come, who will be formed and guided by the actions of these young men
- any resident of Hennepin County who wants both social justice and a high quality of life for everyone
- anyone who can benefit from a thriving business community and a strong local economy—in short, all of us

Asking the Right Question

As John McKnight points out, “There is no greater power than the right to define the question. From that right flows a set of necessary answers. If the servicer can effectively assert the right to define the appropriate question, he has the right to determine the need of his neighbor rather than to meet his neighbor’s need.”\(^6^1\)

Traditionally, many government agencies and nonprofits have defined the circumstances of young African American men as a dilemma to be resolved or eradicated. Yet there is a problem

inherent in this approach. When social service providers, program managers, other professionals and even everyday citizens frame the situation in this way, we may adopt a skewed perspective:

- **We may start to view some young African American men as the problem.** We may start to see these men as dysfunctional people who need to be fixed by others wiser than they are—i.e., professionals on the payrolls of nonprofits and the county. This marginalizes and disempowers the young men. (Indeed, many of our county’s young African American men have internalized just such a view of themselves—and, as a result, have given up on themselves and on life.) In addition, it encourages our institutions to build their own power bases rather than to support individual empowerment and civic engagement.

- **We may look at young African American men in isolation.** Like members of all other demographic groups, young African American men constantly interact with a variety of people, groups and organizations. Their lives, like the lives of virtually all people, are organized around relationships and connections. Often we do not acknowledge these relationships or build upon them. Instead, we institute programs or rules that encourage or create isolation in many young men’s lives.

- **We may isolate everyone else as well.** Isolation cuts both ways. If we separate out young African American men, we fail to look at how other people and groups in Hennepin County stand to benefit from the success of these men—and how they will suffer if these men do not do well. At the same time, we may ignore what these people and organizations can do to encourage and support the success of these men.

- **We may see the entire situation as a deficit.** The needs of Hennepin County in general, and of young African American men in particular, thus start to become a sickness needing to be healed, a deficiency that must be made up for. Our conceptual map of the situation then gets drawn around needs, problems and limitations.

- **Everyone expects the county—or some other organization—to “do something.”** Instead of acting to build and strengthen relationships, associations and organizations, many people throughout the county withdraw, then demand that the county magically make things better.

None of these approaches, assumptions or institutional arrangements has gotten us very far. The trend line for young African American men in Hennepin County remains essentially unchanged.

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62 In The Careless Society, John McKnight argues that this approach naturally leads to ever-escalating needs, problems and dependency—and, ultimately, to the atrophy of productive relationships, associations, organizations and communities.
In fact, these ways of viewing the situation have only served to reinforce the poverty, limited human capital, crime and recurrent incarceration that ultimately lower the quality of life for everyone in Hennepin County.

This needs to be stated loudly and clearly to everyone with a stake in the success of young African American men—and it needs to be said so loudly and clearly and forcefully that people, at last, begin to wake up.

*We need to do things differently.*
How Can
African American Men
and Hennepin County
Help Each Other Succeed?

Communities can be shaped by choice, or they can be shaped by chance. We can keep on accepting the kind of communities we get, or we can insist on getting the kind of communities we want.
—Richard Moe and Carter Wilkie, Changing Places

Communities that want to reduce poverty must own the process, the strategies, and the vision, or it won’t work. Community members must be engaged, and leadership must come from within....We’ve learned that it takes time for communities to come together, develop a broad view of inclusion, and create truth and understanding. Despite the time they take, these early steps to build engagement and ownership are necessary....

For communities to prosper they must have or develop competitive advantage....Communities must create cultures that promote economic opportunity and increase community capacity.
—from the 2001 Annual Report of the Northwest Area Foundation
We must begin asking the right question of ourselves. For far too long, the question public officials have asked themselves has been, "How can we help the poor, or single mothers, or seniors, or first-time offenders or first-time home buyers?" The very framing of issues in this manner defines the citizen as someone who is deficient or flawed, and the program or organization as the primary vehicle through which that flaw or deficiency can be corrected.

It is not that people in poverty, or single mothers, or first-time home-buyers or young African American men do not need help or cannot benefit from it. It is that asking the question in this way limits both the range of possible answers and the types of potential relationships among the parties involved.

Let us therefore not ask the question, "How can Hennepin County help young African American men?" All the answers to this question put the county in a superior position, and young men in an inferior one. This is not helpful to African American men or the county, and it emphasizes these men's perceived position as outsiders. They become defined as too weak or marginalized to act on their own behalf, and too unskilled or stunted to bear the normal human burden of personal responsibility. Thus, rather than being encouraged to act, they are acted upon by the county.

In contrast, any potentially-valuable question must be built around personal and collective responsibility, proactivity and mutual assistance. Therefore, let us instead ask the question, "How can young African American men and Hennepin County help each other succeed?" Any answer to this question presents the county and this group of citizens as partners and co-creators. Each party thus is seen as having assets and skills to bring to the relationship, rather than one party having needs to be filled by the other.

Furthermore, in asking this question, Hennepin County naturally aligns its efforts on behalf of young African American men—and, indeed, all disadvantaged men. This alignment is not merely welcome, but necessary. (The county is now working to integrate its services, to redefine how it interacts with communities and to empower residents to help define solutions.)

This question also acknowledges the need for young African American men, like all men and women, to accept the necessary and unavoidable challenge of individual responsibility.

Also, in this question "help" is not defined as the alleviation of some deficiency or the removal of a barrier. Rather, it is positive support toward an equally positive end. The situation is now defined in win-win terms: what is good for young African American men is good for the county. This has, in fact, always been the case. (One example: when the local economy thrives, the unemployment rate among this group drops dramatically.)

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Help is not defined as the alleviation of some deficiency or the removal of a barrier. Rather, it is positive support toward an equally positive end. The situation is thus defined in win-win terms.

In particular, what is good for these young men is good for families. A father who is employed and economically stable is much more likely to get married, stay married and provide for his children than one who is poor or unemployed. Indeed, one of the most effective ways to raise the standard of living for a single-parent family is to add a working father or stepfather to it.

This win-win statement can (and should) be enlarged to include all young men who live in poverty—and, indeed, anyone who wishes to share in Hennepin County’s prosperity but has been unable to do so.

Seizing the Time

We must also stop waiting for someone else to do something.

“We” in this case means all of the many stakeholders in Hennepin County—the business and nonprofit communities, religious organizations, neighborhoods, families, whites, African Americans and members of other racial and ethnic groups. For years, the whole range of stakeholders has agreed that the success of young African American men is a good and desirable thing. But no one has stepped forward to lead the way.

We already have many worthwhile mechanisms ready and waiting which can ultimately benefit many or all Hennepin County stakeholders. Most of them can particularly benefit young African American men (or young men of all races who live in poverty, or all residents of Minneapolis’s five poorest communities). Some of these include:

- **Empowerment Zone money.** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has committed about $19 million to the City of Minneapolis for a variety of projects that benefit residents and businesses, plus another $54 million in tax credit certificates issued to Minnesota businesses. This 10-year initiative focuses on revitalizing large portions of Minneapolis’s five poorest communities, plus other “economically- distressed” parts of the city.

- **Northwest Area Foundation money.** The NWAF has refocused its efforts around one goal: reducing poverty in the northwestern United
States and Upper Midwest. It has made a 10-year, $150 million commitment to this mission. Recently it gave $3 million to The Minneapolis Foundation for initiatives within Minneapolis. According to The Minneapolis Foundation, use of this money "will grow out of an inclusive process involving private, public and voluntary organizations as well as community members who have traditionally participated in community decisions."  

- **Brother Achievement**\(^{65}\). In 2001, in partnership with the Center for Fathering and the Center for Democracy and Citizenship, the Hennepin County African American Men Project set up this project, in which, for 17 weeks, 11 African American men learned teamwork, collective planning, organizational goal setting, community mapping of resources, recruitment and accountability. As a group, Brother Achievement determined its mission: "Reconciling the black man socially, mentally, emotionally and spiritually to himself, his family and his community." Its members developed an ambitious goal of creating a large network of mentors for young African American men in need of direction and guidance, based on a chapter structure. Brother Achievement’s members have made a continuing commitment to skill building in areas such as organizing, recruitment, training and mentoring.  

- **Urban Ventures Leadership Foundation**\(^{66}\). This is a group of Minneapolis-based initiatives that includes the Center for Fathering (which sponsors fathering classes, skills training and a variety of other programs for fathers), People's Exchange (which provides job referrals, counseling, advocacy, transportation, food, clothing and a variety of other goods and services to people who need them) and the Colin Powell Youth Leadership Center (a planned learning and recreation center in central south Minneapolis). Affiliated with one of Minneapolis’s largest churches, Urban Ventures focuses primarily on the city’s south central neighborhoods.  

- **ACE (A Commitment to Excellence) Program**\(^{67}\). Based at the University of Minnesota's General College, ACE is an after-school and summer program designed to help African American boys ages 12-16 to develop the skills needed to pass the Minnesota Basic Standards Tests in math, reading and writing. The program also teaches valuable social skills and life skills, and teaches students about responsible leadership, community service and the importance of educational achievement. ACE provides participants with individualized help in math, reading and writing, as well as field trips and community service opportunities. The ACE program includes a physical fitness and sports

\(^{64}\) Source: The Minneapolis Foundation web site. Access this page at www.mplsfoundation.org/pr/2000-02-29.shtml  
\(^{65},^{66},^{67}\) Brother Achievement, the Center for Fathering, ACE and Harvest Prep Seed Academy are described in detail in the Research Compendium published in connection with this report.
component, but teaches boys the importance of maintaining a balance between academics and athletics. The entire ACE program is rooted in African history and tradition; the ACE staff consists mostly of African American men, and the program regularly hosts African American male guest speakers and athletes. ACE also strongly encourages parental involvement. ACE’s combination of Afrocentric principles, discipline, parental involvement and high expectations has resulted in large improvements in academic skills, as well as more positive self-concepts for ACE students.

- **Harvest Prep Seed Academy**[^68], a charter school in North Minneapolis, serves 300+ African American children from kindergarten through grade 6. Fifth-grade Harvest Prep students significantly outperformed their Minneapolis Public Schools counterparts on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment in both math and reading during the last two school years; third graders had similar results in 2000, but mixed results in 2001.

- **Stairstep Foundation** emphasizes economic opportunity—both good jobs for individuals and the creation of an economic critical mass in north Minneapolis. Stairstep provides a diverse range of resources and opportunities for the African American community, other communities of color and low-income people in general. One of Stairstep’s many ventures is Sisyeza, a food processing plant in Near North. Vested workers now receive stock options, and plans include eventual worker ownership of the company.

- **The Monitors** is an informal network of successful business people, all of them African American men, who mentor African American boys and young men. Monitors provide their mentees with guidance, counseling, skills training, information, contacts and other useful assistance.

- **Minneapolis Urban League** is a large, well-funded organization that offers a variety of programs to help level the playing field for low-income people and people of color in Minneapolis. The Urban League also publishes a variety of relevant reports.

- **OIC/Summit Academy** and **Twin Cities Rise** offer education, mentoring, scholarships, community service opportunities, college and job placement services, skills training and literacy programs to low-income people.

[^68]: Brother Achievement, the Center for Fathering, ACE and Harvest Prep Seed Academy are described in detail in the Research Compendium published in connection with this report.
• **Inroads** is a fast-track program for minority high school and college students who want to become leaders in business and law. Students meet with instructors and mentors every other week to build their skills, knowledge, and political and social savvy. Inroads also sponsors retreats and a variety of other special programs.

• **The Urban Coalition** is a research organization which represents low-income people and communities throughout the Twin Cities area. It is a combination advocacy group, think tank and clearinghouse of information.

• **Quest** is an after-school program to help students succeed in school, do well on academic standards tests and prepare for higher education. This program is open to anyone but focuses largely on African American students. It is run by a private nonprofit but is offered through North and Washburn High Schools.

• A wealth of other well-intentioned programs and initiatives—some highly effective (which should be maintained or grown), others largely ineffective (which should be shut down or allowed to die), and some whose results have not been measured (which should be carefully reviewed and evaluated).

This confluence of money, programs and organizations creates an enormous and unprecedented opportunity for Hennepin County citizens to increase everyone's quality of life. Wise application of these resources becomes even more critical when we understand that the county's labor shortage is predicted to worsen in the next two decades.

**Will and Leadership:**

**A Call to Action**

So what are we all waiting for? Two things: will and leadership.

Fortunately, both of these exist in abundance in a wide range of circles and groups: Hennepin County’s African American community, its business community, its religious communities and a variety of other communities of interest. Leaders and supporters simply need to step up to the plate.

It is time for our waiting to end; time to choose a new direction. **This is a call for leaders—seasoned and new, old and young, traditional and atypical—to step forward.** Many of these leaders may—and, ideally, would be—young African American men. Others may be older African American men and women. Still others may be the wives and partners of young African American men, who have a visceral awareness of these men’s needs, strengths, limitations, responsibilities and potential.

This is a call for leaders—seasoned and new, old and young, traditional and atypical—to step forward.

This is also a call for followers—not just young African American men, but stakeholders from all backgrounds, races and income levels. It is a call to rediscover citizenship and **public work:** “sustained, visible, serious effort by a
diverse mix of ordinary people that creates things of lasting civic or public significance. Public work interacts with the world to leave a legacy. It changes the community, the larger world, and the people involved." And it is the very essence of self-determination.

This is also a call for mutual accountability: African American men and all other stakeholders need to hold themselves, and each other, responsible for creating better outcomes.

What Is County Government’s Role?

Shouldn’t Hennepin County government take a leadership role? With its thousands of employees and an annual budget of well over a billion dollars, isn’t it ideally suited to lead the way?

The answer is no. Money and size do not, in and of themselves, create leadership or inspire followership. Were Bill Gates to show up and declare, “I and Microsoft have come to lead the African American community of Hennepin County,” he would (quite appropriately) be told, “We hope you and Microsoft will invest here and hire here. But lead us? That’s none of your damn business.” This is as true of county government as it is of Microsoft.

The county is, however, ideally suited to supporting and assisting change efforts, by providing the necessary infrastructure. Its rightful (and, at times, righteous) role is serving individuals, families and communities, not displacing their leaders. It can and should provide support through a range of initiatives—some run by the county, most run by other organizations.

However, strategic planning, goal-setting, methods, and measures and mechanisms of accountability must come primarily or entirely from African American men and women.

Lasting change comes from within communities; it cannot be superimposed from the outside (except, perhaps, through conquest and colonization). If stakeholders expect county government to save the day—to wave the wand of money or social services and magically make people change—then the day has already been lost.

The first step to saving the day is seizing it. The good news is that this is something a wide variety of stakeholders can do, one day at a time.

This is not to suggest that the county does not have a role or a responsibility. Indeed, there is much that Hennepin County government can and should do to support the mutual success of young African American men and other county stakeholders. That support must be significant in terms of the amount of dollars, person-hours, brainpower and honest sweat contributed to the collective effort.

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69 One organization that vigorously promotes and supports public work is the University of Minnesota’s Center for Democracy and Citizenship. This definition is from the CDC’s website. Access at www.publicwork.org/1_2_philosophy.html
However, **Hennepin County’s role must be a supporting one.** Its mission, after all, is to serve its citizens, not direct their lives. In a democracy, government must respond to the will of the people rather than impress its will upon them.

In short, Hennepin County should:
- Establish new lines of communication.
- Encourage greater citizen engagement.
- Align and coordinate county services.
- Evaluate the efficacy of county programs, policies and procedures.
- Measure the specific, concrete results of what each county program does.
- Redesign systems and strategies to be more proactive, and to create greater value.

In short, this means that Hennepin County (as well as the state, the City of Minneapolis and educational systems) can and should rethink their policies so that they support people, families, communities and economic growth—rather than contribute to (or, at least, fail to address) dependence, labor shortages, economic recession and multi-generational poverty. It means being willing to rethink, realign and, in some cases, redesign a variety of institutional arrangements—our priorities, our strategies, what we fund and how we fund it. At minimum, we need to stop doing the things that continue to deliver poor results.

It also means that Hennepin County should think in terms of investing in its future rather than merely funding programs. We can begin by honestly weighing the cost of each activity against the value county residents receive from it.

For instance, one of the county’s goals is to create a safe environment for all residents. This means spending our money on some combination of law enforcement, criminal justice, skills training, education, mentoring, job placement and other initiatives. We know that arrests, trials and incarcerations are all very expensive. But when are these the most valuable option, and when will prevention efforts yield better results at a lower cost? What allocation of funds toward each of these very different efforts will yield the most benefits for the most people at the lowest price? Now is the time to find out.

John Kretzmann and John McKnight sum up Hennepin County’s role and obligation eloquently, by insisting that governments “shift their role from defining problems and creating solutions to following community definitions and investing in community solutions. This shift will result in government leaders fulfilling their legislative roles as public servants.”

In short, by focusing on service, value and results, Hennepin County will be doing exactly what it was designed to do.

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A Scenario of Success

If people knew that what they were working on was going to make a difference, then they would roll up their sleeves for the next five, ten, fifteen years—guaranteed.

—Brett Buckner, Third Vice President, Minneapolis NAACP

What seems lacking in the ghetto is a direction—a sense of options, opportunity, and hope. The obvious place to start is by providing clear, direct routes into the mainstream.

—David T. Ellwood, Poor Support

Unfortunately, the qualifying criteria for current government assistance programs are not properly designed to channel resources where they are most needed....Location in an economically distressed area and employment of a significant percentage of its residents should be the qualification for government assistance and preference programs. Shifting the focus to economic distress in this way will help enlist all segments of the private sector in the solutions to the inner city's problems.

—Michael E. Porter, On Competition

The work of creating strategy cannot be programmed like that of shoveling coal....Even the best of intended strategies have to be tailored to all kinds of circumstances inconceivable in their initial formulation.

—Henry Mintzberg, The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning
In practical terms, what might actually happen when new and seasoned leaders seize the day, and county government provides the right kind of support? Let’s look at one possible success story, which begins just months from now, when county commissioners approve the recommendations in this report.

In February of 2002, the county partially funds the creation of an advisory board known as the African American Men Commission (AAMC), an independent body of community, business, religious, academic, nonprofit and government leaders. The members of this commission are mostly, but not entirely, African American; most are male. Members range in age from 20 to over 70; several members are young African American men. Because of Hennepin County’s commitment to support—rather than compel—community-based efforts, only one Hennepin County employee (and one City of Minneapolis employee) sit on this 12-member commission. The AAMC:

- Provides leadership and advice to policymakers, foundations, nonprofit organizations and the community on issues, programs and policies that impact the lives of African American men.
- Works to help create a stronger economic infrastructure in African American neighborhoods, thus increasing both employment opportunities and entrepreneurialism.
- Requires and ensures mutual accountability for results among African American men and all other stakeholders.
- Sponsors a clearinghouse of information about programs and organizations that serve African American men.
- Works with new and existing organizations and systems to help them align and coordinate their services and ensure accountability.

The AAMC also sponsors a conclave, entitled “Success in the Hoods: How Hennepin County and African American Men Can Help Each Other Thrive,” which is held during the 2002 Juneteenth celebration. This three-day conclave is attended by several hundred young black men from the county; 200+ professionals from a wide range of fields; policymakers and policy wonks; leaders of businesses, nonprofits, foundations and religious communities; university professors and administrators; and other interested people from throughout Minnesota. At this conclave, hundreds of ideas are discussed publicly in panels, presentations and breakout sessions; relationships, alliances and associations are formed; and strategies and initiatives are suggested and planned.

The conclave focuses on what works—on ideas, initiatives and approaches that already yield good outcomes for families, neighborhoods, cities, counties and individual citizens. Some of these

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21 Many other successful scenarios are of course possible. The one presented here is meant to illustrate the type of efforts and approaches that can create a critical mass of leadership, commitment, creativity and perseverance; it is not intended as a blueprint. However, the actions undertaken by Hennepin County government are based on the recommendations contained at the end of this report.
approaches are already at work in Hennepin County; others have worked well in other counties and communities. For those already in place in the county, discussion centers on how they can be further strengthened and, perhaps, applied in other situations. For those that are working well elsewhere, the discussion focuses on which approaches can be helpful locally, how they can be successfully adapted and employed, and what people and organizations might take the lead in making each one a reality.

A common theme quickly emerges: what is good for young African American men is good for everyone in Hennepin County. Everyone benefits when young, disadvantaged African American men (and poor or disadvantaged young men of all races) build their skills, get more education, become more involved with their children, hold steady (and, ideally, better) jobs and/or build thriving businesses. This quickly becomes clear to attendees; yet they also acknowledge that, in the past, this now-obvious conclusion has been generally ignored or overlooked. What becomes equally clear is that when young men do poorly, they are not the only ones who suffer: every person, family and business in the county also pays a price in the form of a continued labor shortfall, reduced tax revenues, more crime, and higher costs for social services, law enforcement and county courts. In short, ignoring these young men is expensive; a far wiser and less costly option is investing in their success.22

As a result of the formation of the AAMC and the June conclave, a powerful group of African American leaders emerges as well. Some of these men and women have already served as leaders for some time—in schools, businesses, nonprofits, religious communities, parents’ associations, etc.—but are only now publicly connecting themselves with (or being recognized by) the larger community. These leaders commit themselves to rallying their current constituencies behind many of the recommendations in this report and, with the help of committed partners and followers, to developing specific ventures and initiatives that move in those directions.

22 Stephen A. Hoenack’s essay, ”African American Males: An Overlooked Investment Opportunity,” provides a detailed analysis of the costs of maintaining today’s status quo. Dr. Hoenack estimates the costs to stakeholders—i.e., Hennepin County citizens and businesses—of crimes committed by 18 to 30-year old African American men at over $218,000,000 per year. Other costs—reduced tax revenues, MFIP, subsidized school lunches, subsidized health care, etc.—add tens of millions dollars more to stakeholders’ tax bills. Dr. Hoenack’s essay is included in the Research Compendium published simultaneously with this report.
Other committed leaders emerge as well. Inspired and energized by the conclave, by the AAMC or by their own enthusiasm for certain ideas, approaches or initiatives, these men and women come forward to offer their time, skills, perspectives and insights.

All of these leaders share a commitment to several broad goals which, they acknowledge, will need to be achieved through multiple means:

- **Better outcomes for young African American men:** greater employment, more skills, more education, closer ties to their children, etc. Greater personal accountability is a core requirement for all of these outcomes—and, in part, a by-product of them as well.

- **Stronger, more stable families.** More two-parent families (especially those in which at least one parent is employed) will help to create better homes for kids to grow up in.

- **A stronger local economy.** Employment among young African American men increases dramatically in a healthy economy—and shrinks just as dramatically in a sluggish one.

- **Closing the job gap.** The growing labor shortage can be lessened in two ways: by building people’s skills and by increasing the number of people in the labor force. County businesses and young African American men both have a large stake in this; indeed, this may be where their interests are most closely aligned. However, a pernicious and self-perpetuating equilibrium in the labor market will need to be upset: employers tend to not seriously consider young African American men as potential employees because so many of these men lack education, training and/or work experience—and these firms cannot or will not spend the money to train them. In turn, many of these young men do not seek education or training, because they perceive (in part, correctly) that they are not sought after or viewed as potential employees.

- **Greater self-reliance, self-determination and mutual accountability for results within the African American community.** This does not mean that the business community, nonprofits and county government do not have strong supporting roles, particularly in terms of investment and the commitment of resources. It does, however, mean that the needed leadership and accountability must come from African Americans. So, too, must strong family and community standards. However, for self-reliance and self-determination to exist on a community level, they must also be encouraged, supported and demanded on the individual level.

The philosophies, temperaments and personal priorities of these leaders differ widely, and on many specifics some of them disagree deeply; but perfect agreement is not the point. In fact, because of the diversity of their backgrounds, experiences and views, these people are able to mobilize a variety of highly diverse constituencies at the same time, and in a variety of complementary directions. Most of these diverse efforts—and many efforts already underway, such as Urban Ventures and Brother Achievement—are coordinated, monitored and held
accountable by the African American Men Commission. Some of the new initiatives include:

- **The creation of an African American Men Asset Bank.** Using volunteers from churches throughout the county, thousands of African American men of all ages are surveyed by phone, by mail and in person. Each is asked a series of questions that identifies his skills and abilities in a wide range of areas. Church volunteers compile these skills into a book and database. Employees at a north Minneapolis community center write a grant to establish an Asset Exchange desk and hotline within the center. The grant is awarded, and the Asset Exchange becomes a way for employers to hire temporary and permanent workers; for individuals, families and small businesses to find local people to complete needed tasks, from babysitting to upholstering to home repair; for people to barter their services; for people and organizations to find skilled volunteers; and for men with similar skills to come together to create small businesses, political action groups or other initiatives. Over time, this effort is so successful that—with the support of churches, businesses, foundations and county government—it grows into the African American Asset Bank and begins serving people of both sexes. After four years of continued growth, it opens a second office in the Powderhorn neighborhood. Now a widely-known and well-used community resource, it redefines itself as a neighborhood organization and opens its doors to people of all races living in Near North, Phillips, Central and Powderhorn.

- **A set of coordinated initiatives for increasing the incomes of young African American men and creating more stable families**. These projects get immediate attention with a publicity campaign (donated by a local PR agency) based on two simple slogans: "More Money" and "More for Your Family." A dozen different groups—all coordinated by the AAMC—sponsor their own undertakings. These include What She Wants, a group of mothers who lead workshops for young women on how to encourage their men to succeed; a temporary employment agency, specializing in providing workers for northside and downtown businesses, run out of a church basement in Near North; and a Minneapolis version of the Ballard Initiative, in which men sign a pledge to hold jobs, stay with their families and fulfill their roles as fathers.

- **Business development in the five heavily African American communities, particularly Near North.** Private sector leaders and investors take on leading roles in creating several dozen new businesses. At the heart of these efforts is a commitment to create

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73 Several studies—Hoffman and Duncan, 1995; South and Lloyd, 1995; South and Lloyd, 1996; Bumpass, Sweet and Cherling, 1991; Manning and Smock, 1995; Smock and Manning, 1997—have established a correlation between a father’s earnings and his likelihood of getting married and staying married.
economically viable businesses, not just jobs. The larger intent is to build a sustainable economic base in these communities in the same way that it is built elsewhere: through private investment based on economic self-interest and competitive advantages. Thus, these businesses must have true competitive advantages—e.g., strategic location, local market demand, human resources and integration with regional clusters—that derive from their inner-city locations. This commitment to truly sustainable businesses results in $68 million in business investment, plus another $15 million in Empowerment Zone and Northwest Area Foundation money. Most of the businesses are of one of three types: 1) business services that obtain advantage by being close to downtown Minneapolis—e.g., catering, trade show exhibits (for trade shows at the Minneapolis Convention Center), construction, and heating and cooling systems services; 2) businesses that gain advantage by being close to 1-94—e.g., a major-chain motel, a trucking firm and a moving company; and 3) retail businesses serving Near North neighborhoods—e.g., dry cleaners, a travel agency, a supermarket, a movie theater, a pharmacy, a gas station, two banks, a night club and several restaurants. About a third of these businesses are owned by African Americans living in Hennepin County. The businesses hire neighborhood workers as much as possible and maintain strong neighborhood ties. The retail stores emphasize goods most demanded by people in these neighborhoods. The City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County support these ventures by assembling and offering building sites at market prices, and by granting fast-track approvals for zoning, construction, license and permit acquisition, etc. Existing businesses in other parts of the county work with these new ventures by providing training, creating business partnerships and helping to establish clusters of businesses that serve key local industries: food processing, construction and financial services.

- **The creation of learning communities.** These mini-institutes encourage competency-building through a combination of interest identification, mentoring, coaching, goal-setting and mutual support. Each learning community focuses on a specific set of skills that are needed by the community or organization; individual men select the learning community that best reflects their own needs and interests. Ultimately, each participant in a learning community creates a career and life plan, which includes specific, concrete steps toward equally concrete goals. Initially, learning communities are created by businesses seeking to train skilled and committed workers. As

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these prove successful, however, many Hennepin County school systems begin creating learning communities of their own in high schools and junior highs. These academic learning communities ultimately boost graduation rates, better prepare young people for careers and life, and raise students’ confidence and expectations of themselves.

• **Help in buying homes.** Working with the NAACP and several financial institutions, the AAMC helps to establish the North Side Mortgage Company (NSMC), a private lender that uses Fannie Mae funds to offer mortgages to low-income people from the North Side. NSMC also offers classes in home buying, credit repair, home ownership and basic home maintenance. Many other groups and organizations help to promote NSMC: the county, the City of Minneapolis, real estate companies and agents, and other local lenders. In its first three years, the NSMC helps over 700 families and individuals buy homes on the North Side; default rates are slightly lower than average for the community, and only slightly higher than the average for the county as a whole. The program proves so successful that in 2004 it expands to include Camden, Central, Phillips and Powderhorn.

In addition, the AAMC coordinates, aligns, builds and strengthens a variety of initiatives in several key areas:

• **Keeping kids in school and out of trouble.** The City of Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board, Quest and others coordinate activities that support students’ academic success, keep them in school longer and improve graduation rates, especially among African American boys. In addition, with partial funding from Hennepin County, the public school systems, park boards and churches develop after-school recreation programs in sports and the arts to enrich students’ lives, give them additional ways to excel and keep them out of trouble. Similar teams and clubs are sponsored by organizations such as Phyllis Wheatley, Sabathani, fraternities and African American-owned businesses. These programs offer men of all ages the opportunity to be volunteers, coaches and mentors. As a result of these programs, high school graduation rates grow steadily. More important, community standards for school success, individual responsibility and neighborhood safety rise as well.

• **Supporting and encouraging success in school for African American students, especially boys and young men.** This involves efforts on multiple fronts: building and sustaining a wide range of mentoring programs; lobbying school systems to implement the kinds of practices that everyone agrees will improve graduation rates; encouraging corporations to create job training programs; backing outside-the-box ideas that merit pilot projects; and promoting and publicizing specific educational initiatives that prove successful.

• **Encouraging post-secondary education.** The University of Minnesota, the Minnesota State College and University System,
Inroads, Upward Bound, Hospitality House, the YMCA's Black Achievers program and high school guidance offices agree to actively recruit African American students and support their academic success. In addition, many Hennepin County businesses establish scholarship funds to support low-income male African American students. Part of this money is used to pay some or all of their tuition and fees; part is used to hire tutors and coaches, who support students' academic progress throughout their college careers and their final years of high school.

A local foundation sets up the Minnesota College Tour, a program that enables college-bound African American high school students from the Twin Cities to visit colleges and universities throughout the state. More local hospitals and health care professionals participate in the COACHES program, which offers mentoring and an immersion experience for students in middle school (especially poor and minority students) who are interested in medical careers.

Hennepin County government supports all of these efforts, and others organized or coordinated by the AAMC, by providing:

- Essential funding.
- Relevant information from Hennepin County studies, the U.S. Census, and other data sources, on request.
- Consulting services and expertise from appropriate county professionals (e.g., providing the AAMC with a facilitator to help with strategic planning).

These are provided only at an organization's specific request.

In many cases, the City of Minneapolis also provides funding, information and/or assistance.

Sometimes separately, but more often together, the county and the City of Minneapolis aggressively lobby the state to similarly align and focus its own efforts on behalf of young African American men—and all young men who live in poverty. The mayor of Minneapolis develops a strong personal interest in the AAMC, and takes a very active, highly visible role in promoting the AAMC's agenda. He also encourages widespread support from the City Council, and generally champions the causes of more employment, opportunity, training, education, strong families, community involvement, high neighborhood standards and personal accountability and responsibility. Under his leadership, the City of Minneapolis and the county work closely together to provide the necessary infrastructure of funding and expertise; to focus and align their efforts; and to unstintingly support the agenda of the AAMC. When (and only when) the AAMC requests it, the county and Minneapolis also support and promote specific collaborations, and provide oversight to ensure that money is being spent wisely.

The county also moves forward with a number of initiatives of its own. These are intended to complement, never duplicate or conflict with, those coordinated by the AAMC. Each of these grows out of one or more of the
recommendations at the end of this report. These include:

- **Supporting employment.** In February 2002, county commissioners authorize two pilot projects dedicated to economic empowerment for young African American men who lack the skills to succeed in the workplace. One project helps 75 men who hold menial jobs to move up to skilled employment; the other assists 25 young men who were recently released from jail to build marketable job skills. Both projects, run by Hennepin County Training and Employment Assistance, also coach these men in important soft skills such as listening, conversing and trust building. These programs are up and running by the summer. Because both programs are selective—young men must apply and be accepted—men with little motivation or interest are automatically screened out. As a result, both programs are significant successes: within one year, nearly half of the men in the job-advancement program have increased their earnings by $2 per hour or more. Within two years, over half have completed their GEDs; about one-third have completed a formal training course in a job-related skill (keyboarding, bookkeeping, welding, institutional cooking, etc.); and three-quarters have boosted their wages by at least $2 per hour.

The job-readiness program for released prisoners is more difficult to assess, because it is impossible to know who would commit another crime without it. However, two years after the program begins, nine of the 25 men are in stable employment, and six more are enrolled in career training courses. Only three have been rearrested. The county estimates that these programs have created a small net gain for taxpayers: their cost is exceeded by the modest additional tax revenue from these men’s earnings plus the significant savings of potential criminal justice costs. As a result, in 2003 these programs are expanded to serve many more young men, thus creating further net gains for taxpayers.

Two ancillary programs are also developed. One helps illiterate, chemically-dependent, low-skilled young black men get and keep jobs, and become economically self-sufficient. The second is a center that aligns and coordinates services to help young African American men train for, get and keep jobs.

- **Helping young African American men build political capital.** Building on its initial success, Brother Achievement becomes a model "school" for political and social action—and the creation of political capital—for young African American men. Over three years, with support from the county and two universities, the initial Brother Achievement organization grows to five chapters, one in each of the five largely African American communities noted in this report. Each year, these chapters help over 300 young men to develop political skills, learn a
different kind of politics and constructively impact the community in a variety of ways. As a result, these young men greatly increase their political capital and work together on political and social issues in a focused and organized way. As the years pass and the number of Brother Achievement alumni grows, young African American men steadily build more and more political clout—and use it with neighborhood associations, city and county administrators, and city, county and state governments.

- **Advocating for the health of young African American men.** Knowing that better health for young men means stronger families, higher employment and reduced social service costs, Hennepin County government lobbies vigorously and steadily for state legislation that encourages employers to offer health insurance to more employees. In partnership with the North Minneapolis Health Advisory Committee, the Minneapolis NAACP and area churches, Hennepin County offers free workshops on public health services, how to use them and how to sign up for them. HCMC follows the lead of a very successful hospital program in Chicago: it offers free haircuts and dinner to men one night a week. A physician is also in attendance, and he provides free checkups and consultation to anyone who asks for them. This program, which soon grows to three nights a week, brings hundreds of men back into the health care system. HCMC estimates that the initiative saves the county $45,000 per year in emergency room costs. The county also hires two professionals whose sole job is to help residents with the paperwork needed to receive health services. These people each spend one day a week at a different community site—Pilot City, HCMC, Powderhorn Partners, Sabathani and Brookdale.

- **Spreading the word about the value of families and the difficulties that come with out-of-wedlock births and single parenthood.** In collaboration with two foundations, Hennepin County initiates a large public relations campaign that includes talks at high schools and junior highs by young African American fathers (both married and unmarried); radio and television spots (many of them on KMOJ); and the filming, release and promotion of a 30-minute documentary, “Is That My Daddy?” This campaign unabashedly promotes marriage—not as some overly-romantic ideal, but as the best foundation for encouraging stability, supporting job and career advancement, raising kids and helping them succeed in life. These efforts help young men recognize the responsibilities and joys of fulfilling the role of fathers, and the irresponsibility and dangers of being absent dads. They also help to support and strengthen family and community standards.
• Keeping young African American men out of jail. The county creates and strictly enforces policies forbidding racial profiling in any of its business units lines, especially public safety and criminal justice. It also sponsors two programs through junior high schools: 1) visits to the county jail and workhouse and 2) talks by young men who have done time. In addition, because a large number of young African American men who are arrested cannot afford bail, the county creates a conditional release program for low-risk offenders. This program includes safe housing, counseling and referrals.

• Creating incentives that encourage those who have already committed crimes to remain part of society rather than to commit new crimes. The county and the City of Minneapolis lobby the state for automatic expungement of any person’s criminal record if they have committed a lower-level, non-violent crime, served their sentence and maintained a clean post-conviction record. The state passes such a law, which puts the burden on the state to establish why an offender’s conviction should not be expunged under such circumstances. The same law also restores civil rights to ex-offenders who have committed low-level or non-violent crimes. Working as partners, Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis provide an integrated set of ex-offender services to help releasees obtain employment and transition back into the community.

• Sponsoring public forums on all of the above issues at libraries, schools and community centers. These keep citizens actively involved and provide county government and leaders with crucial input.

But perhaps the most important thing Hennepin County does is get out of its own (and its citizens’) way. This means holding its welter of institutional arrangements up to the light of examination; keeping and improving what works well; and eliminating or redesigning what doesn’t.

As a result of this process, the county removes several stumbling blocks to its own effectiveness:

• It encourages all municipalities to end racial profiling.
• It realigns its strategies for providing health care, and access to health care services, to the poor and to communities of color.
• It aggressively hires and trains people who represent a wide range of backgrounds, ethnicities and nationalities. As much as possible, it matches clients with workers who have similar backgrounds.
• It expands its focus on supporting the poor so that it helps people move out of poverty and build stable families. This results in initiatives that include women, children and men.
• Through its policies and strategy, it begins to play a significant role in providing affordable housing. This includes assisting municipalities in providing housing for single adults, families, youth and people with disabilities. It also includes
coordinating development and housing services throughout the county.

While these changes have positive effects on African American men, they improve conditions for a wide range of individuals, families and organizations throughout the county.

Other stakeholders follow Hennepin County’s lead. Hennepin County’s school systems, especially the Minneapolis Public Schools, are essential players in the growing web of stakeholder partnerships. With the support, leadership, endorsement and lobbying of many different stakeholders, the Minneapolis Public Schools and other school systems make these systemic changes:

- **Systems focus on improving graduation rates rather than just test scores.** This is done in every high school, based on clear, measurable goals—and provides schools with clear financial rewards for success (and equally clear consequences for failure). The focus is on improving each school’s graduation rate, not just attaining some fixed level of success. School completion outcomes are regularly reported to the community and widely publicized.

- **High schools are redesigned to be more flexible.** The traditional fixed, four-year framework is abandoned in favor of a flexible, seamless process that ends when a student has mastered the material and is prepared to move on to the next level of their education. For many students, this process takes more, or fewer, than four years.

- **Students are given more alternatives.** This means creating a wider range of charter schools. It also means expanding the existing Post-Secondary Educational Options program to connect at-risk students with the world of work through career exposure and technical education.

The state of Minnesota steps up to the educational plate as well, both by holding high schools strictly accountable for higher graduation rates and by providing funding for the following:

- Early childhood education.
- Class sizes of 15 students or less.
- Initiatives to identify at-risk students and to address whatever difficulties they may be having.
- Rewards for strong teacher performance, as well as for teachers who agree to work in the toughest schools.

Galvanized by the efforts of all of these organizations and groups, Hennepin County’s philanthropic community begins to coordinate its activities on behalf of African American men with those of the county and the City of Minneapolis. All of these efforts are organized around reaching specific, measurable goals and outcomes. Foundations also establish and agree to a five-year coordinated plan for working together on issues related to African American men and other disadvantaged men.
Creating a Nerve Center

All of these initiatives do some good, and some do a lot of it. Furthermore, coordinating all of these efforts adds to each initiative’s overall usefulness and cost-effectiveness.

As stakeholders see these efforts slowly but steadily achieve positive results, more and more of them commit time, attention and resources to partnering with young African American men. This growing commitment soon turns into a steadily-building cycle.

But something else emerges that is more valuable still: a group of leaders who—with widespread support—set the course for Hennepin County’s African American community for the decade to come.

It begins as an informal group of high-profile business, religious, political and community leaders, as well as prominent figures from sports and the media, who meet monthly to discuss the changes underway and how to make the most of them. Most of these leaders are African American; all live, work or have a major stake in the five poorest communities in Minneapolis. Some, but not most, of these men and women are members of the African American Men Commission, which continues to fulfill its own mission. All members of this informal group are widely respected in the African American community; most have the respect of the larger community as well. All are movers, shakers, coaxers, galvanizers and experts at getting media coverage.

By early 2003, this group—which now calls itself Community Movers—evolves into a more formal structure, with a president, a regular meeting schedule and a clear vision for the future: full economic and political equality for everyone in Hennepin County. Its meetings are now broadcast on a local cable station. Because it has so many well-known faces, people from many different communities of interest pay close attention to what it says and does.

Its members are very aware of this widespread support, and by the end of 2003 make good use of it by creating a strategic plan for Hennepin County’s African American community, which it calls “A Blueprint for Greatness.” At a well-publicized news conference, the Community Movers announce this plan, which includes several interrelated components:

- A 10-year economic development strategy for Near North, with commitments in place from a variety of investors and partners.
- A parallel social development strategy for all five of Minneapolis’s poorest communities—also with commitments of money and sponsorship in place—which focuses on increasing school success, reducing crime and increasing the number of two-parent families.
- A framework for measuring the performance of nonprofits and government agencies that work with large numbers of African Americans. This framework requires each organization to fulfill its obligations in ways that are equitable, cost-effective and responsive to the community’s needs.
• A watchdog board charged with coordinating this oversight and accountability.

Every major stakeholder has agreed to back these efforts—Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, major corporations, other businesses, 85% of relevant nonprofits, six large foundations, most local politicians (including the mayor of Minneapolis and all of its City Council members), both major newspapers and dozens of high-profile individuals from all walks of life.

The president of the Community Movers ends the news conference with these words: “Connection is the key. What our community has needed is a step-by-step process that allows as many people as possible to get involved. With the help of many others, that is what we have created—a blueprint that says, ‘This is where we’re going and this is how we’ll get there.’ It isn’t perfect, but it’s ours. So let’s pull together like the brothers and sisters we are and get it done.” He receives a thunderous ovation, widespread local media coverage and, the following day, offers to appear on several national television and radio programs.

With the rollout of “A Blueprint for Greatness,” a threshold has been crossed. A cadre of viable, widely-respected, closely-aligned African American leaders has emerged, and a critical mass of focused energy and commitment is in place. The larger (mostly white) community is on board as well.

With all major stakeholders signed on as full partners in “A Blueprint for Greatness,” Hennepin County government renews and reaffirms its reputation for innovation, creativity, cost-effectiveness and positive results. And Hennepin County as a whole regains its position as one of the best places to live in the country—a place in which all demographic groups share in a thriving economy, low unemployment and a high overall quality of life.
The Challenge

We stand at a crossroads: the intersection of not merely two roads, but many. And we know that it is time to choose what we want our future as a community to be.

We also know that what is good for young African American men is good for all of us—our families, our businesses and our community.

Each of us has a role to play in building prosperity and a greater quality of life—not only for young African American men, but for all of us who live or work in Hennepin County.

The new road lies before us. Will we walk it—or will we lag behind?
Effective maintenance of a community or pursuit of common goals cannot possibly be accomplished by governing every action or decision of individuals and organizations. Societies rely instead on broad structures and rules that will have a "multiplier effect," shaping people’s behavior without continuous and specific directions.

—Deborah Stone, The Policy Paradox
The African American Men Project has enlightened us about the challenges facing all residents of Hennepin County:

- A growing number of impoverished young men with few skills and little education, most of whom are African American
- Disjointed social service, educational and criminal justice systems
- A growing long-term labor shortage
- A worsening short-term economic recession

How can the people of Hennepin County turn these challenges into opportunities?

The answer: we can consider these young men—untrained and untapped—as a potential resource, and we can work collectively as governments, businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and community members to grow that resource.

The African American Men Project focused on the status of 18 to 30-year-old African American men. Clearly, however, this is not the only demographic group in Hennepin County with poor outcomes. In fact, this study found that American Indian and Hispanic men in Hennepin County often face similar challenges. Although the recommendations in this report focus on young African American men, most of them are intended to improve conditions for all impoverished young men, particularly those living in the five poorest communities in Minneapolis.

The recommendations that follow are the result of a long-term, committed effort by Steering Committee members, county and city government staff, business and nonprofit leaders, educators and community members. Successful implementation of these recommendations will also require a long-term commitment.

Race-related issues are not new—nor are issues related to poverty, age or gender. Many efforts to dissolve inequity, especially racial inequity, have been attempted in the past. Most, however, have not been coordinated or aligned with one another, and in many cases results have not been clearly and reliably measured. As a result, many of these efforts have had only a marginal impact.

In acting on these recommendations, we must not forget the systems and agencies already in place. We must consider not how to reinvent the wheel, but how to:

- pair new and vital approaches with the best of what is already successful
- invigorate the best of these existing programs with cutting-edge strategies
- replace competition among service organizations with collaboration
- create something entirely new that renders the old paradigm obsolete
Recommendations

- Create an advisory board—tentatively called the African American Men Commission (AAMC)—to coordinate efforts to improve outcomes for 18 to 30-year-old African American men.

- Create a partnership to provide training and employment opportunities for young African American men, especially those with low skills, education and/or training.

- Support and strengthen efforts to keep African American boys in school. These efforts should include innovative after-school recreation programs that enrich students’ lives and keep them out of trouble.

- Assist young African American men in enrolling in and completing post-secondary educational programs.

- Coordinate adult and community education with job training programs.

- Develop and promote public policy to ensure that all African American males have access to health care. This includes guidance in completing the necessary forms for obtaining health care services.

- Coordinate health education initiatives to target young African American men.

- Initiate a public campaign to raise awareness of the important contributions African American males make as fathers, sons, siblings, uncles, grandfathers and boyfriends.

- Redefine public policy to recognize the importance of fathers in the family, as opposed to focusing only on mothers and children.

- Coordinate efforts focused on affordable housing to target 18 to 30-year-old African American men.

- Coordinate efforts to reduce the disproportionate involvement of minorities (particularly 18 to 30-year-old African American men) in the criminal justice system.

- Develop and coordinate programs (both philanthropic and faith-based) to engage young African American men in their communities.
Detailed Recommendations

1. Create an advisory board, tentatively called the African American Men Commission (AAMC), to coordinate efforts to improve outcomes for 18 to 30-year-old African American men.

The Commission will provide leadership to the community and advice to the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, the Minneapolis City Council and representatives of the business, faith, nonprofit and philanthropic communities on policies, programs and legislation that impact African American Men.

The AAMC will:
- Be comprised of African American men and community, business, religious, academic, nonprofit and government leaders.
- Provide leadership and advice to policymakers, foundations, nonprofit organizations and the overall community on issues, programs and policies that impact the lives of young African American men.
- Work to create an economic infrastructure in neighborhoods that are largely African American, thus increasing both employment opportunities and entrepreneurship.
- Create policies that deconcentrate poverty and encourage people to move to areas where jobs are most available.
- Promote business ownership and entrepreneurial efforts that employ young African American men.
- Sponsor a conference to identify:
  - desirable outcomes
  - how to achieve those outcomes
  - whom to hold accountable for creating those outcomes
The conference should include partners from business, state and local government, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and the overall community.
- Provide an ongoing mechanism to coordinate, facilitate and monitor the implementation of these recommendations.
- Serve as a resource and clearinghouse of information for organizations, programs and individuals concerned with young African American men.
- Provide periodic reports on outcomes for young African American men in Hennepin County.
- Work with organizations and systems to better coordinate efforts and build and maintain accountability, rather than merely run programs.

Economic Empowerment

2. Create a partnership to provide training and employment opportunities for young African American men, especially those with low skills, education and/or training.

- Establish a pilot project dedicated to economic empowerment for two groups of young African American men: 75 with low skills and 25 who have recently been released from prison.
• Provide young men, particularly those ages 18-24, with coaching in the “soft skills” (e.g., listening, conversing, trust building, teambuilding, etc.) that are crucial in getting and maintaining employment.
• Develop a program to help young, low-skilled African American men who are illiterate and chemically dependent to become economically self-sufficient.
• Establish a center to coordinate services that support the economic empowerment of young African American men.

Education

3. Support and strengthen efforts to keep African American boys in school.

• Strengthen truancy and attendance initiatives.
• Create after-school recreation programs to enrich students’ lives and keep them out of trouble.
• Develop an Afrocentric curriculum that relies heavily on male teachers, tutors and other role models.
• Create and implement a comprehensive Community Education Action and Support Plan (CEASP). This plan appears at the end of these recommendations.
• Explore innovative ways to keep kids in school by any reasonable means. Examples include cash incentives for high school graduation, arts and sports programs specifically for African American boys and radical curriculum changes.

4. Assist young African American men in enrolling in and completing post-secondary educational programs.

• Develop programs that help prepare African American boys in grades K-12 for post-secondary education.
• Provide two years of subsidized post-secondary education for students who pass the basic skills tests and have C grade-point averages or higher.

5. Coordinate adult and community education with job training programs.

• Provide life skills training to young African American men.
• Create a community-education curriculum for young African American men, with a focus on math and reading.
• In partnership with employers and community colleges, create a skill-training program that guarantees employment on completion.

Health

6. Develop and promote public policy that ensures that all African American males have access to health care. This includes guidance in completing the necessary forms for obtaining health care services.

• Health disparities reports produced by the Minnesota Department of Health should review and discuss the health status of African American men.
Public purchasers of health care, especially the Minnesota Department of Human Services, should analyze data on the health status of African American men receiving services under PMAP, MinnesotaCare and other publicly-supported programs.

The Minnesota Department of Health should take the lead in ensuring that health care data sources contain reliable and useful racial data codes.

Encourage community organizations to examine how their services and delivery systems can be better configured to meet the needs of African American boys and men.

Make all workers whose health insurance is not completely or almost-completely paid for by their employers eligible for MinnesotaCare.

Support training and employment efforts that place young African American men in jobs with health insurance and other benefits.

Public health agencies and community organizations should work outside of their traditional public health roles to identify social and economic factors that influence health and create innovative ways to educate people on living healthier lives.

Lobby for state legislation that offers incentives to businesses to provide health insurance for all employees.

Advocate for citizens’ access to health care, not just access to health insurance.

Lobby the State of Minnesota to adequately fund county safety-net services.

Work to increase the number of minorities in health care professions.

7. Coordinate health education initiatives to target young African American men.

Refocus our efforts on health education and health improvement to promote personal responsibility.

Develop a grassroots strategy that helps men and women better understand the consequences of various lifestyle choices, supports timely access to health care and engages the entire community in a plan to support and nurture the health of all people.

Identify opportunities to educate, test and treat community members for sexually-transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, HIV and syphilis.

Develop and enhance partnerships among a wide range of organizations to create an integrated health care system.

Support physician education efforts that let providers better understand African American male health risks and needs.

Use marketing and public outreach to educate young African Americans on the importance of health check-ups and how to get health insurance (public or private).

Create, implement and coordinate a Community Health Awareness and Action Plan (CHAAP) for young African American men for a minimum of 10 years. This plan appears at the end of these recommendations.
Family Structure

8. Redefine public policy to recognize the importance of fathers in the family, as opposed to focusing only on mothers and children.

- Create strategies that emphasize:
  - Ways to increase the incomes of African American men.
  - Fathers’ financial responsibilities to their families and children. This should include widening our focus to include males across the lifespan who play (or could potentially play) significant roles in the lives of families.
  - Develop Afrocentric (and other culturally-specific) fathering programs.
  - Develop a mentorship and manhood training program for young fathers in coordination with current fathering programs—i.e., Minneapolis Father Project, Center for Fathering, etc.
  - Facilitate easy recognition of paternity at birth. This would include a community education initiative, as well as new printed and online information on the process.
  - Create a pre-tax benefit for the deduction of child support payments.
  - Develop opportunities for males and their partners to gain the relationship skills necessary to develop and sustain familial bonds.

- Develop a network of speakers who can inform young men and women about the difficulties that come with out-of-wedlock births and single parenthood.

Housing

10. Coordinate efforts focused on affordable housing to target 18 to 30-year-old African American men.

- Provide incentives to Minneapolis and its suburbs to build affordable housing.
- Create programs and incentives (tax breaks, partial subsidies, county guarantees, etc.) for people to buy homes, and for lenders to give them mortgages.
- Promote more Section 8 housing outside poor neighborhoods.
- Create local, regional and national housing conferences and committees to monitor concentrated homelessness, shelter use, home ownership, housing construction and community development. These groups would secure funding from foundations, corporations and private industry.
- Work with banks and lenders to help people buy homes.

Criminal Justice

11. Coordinate efforts to reduce the disproportionate involvement of minorities (particularly 18 to 30-year-old African American men) in the criminal justice system.
• Simplify, clarify and expand Minnesota’s expungement law so that expungement is more readily available for lower-level, non-violent crimes and provides an incentive for offenders to remain crime-free. For example, to make expungement more available, the process could be initiated by the state; to provide an incentive to live crime-free, the state could have the burden of establishing that an offender’s conviction should not be expunged if the offender’s post-conviction record is clean.

• The county, through its criminal justice entities, should explore the feasibility of a pilot project that would give detainees suspected of non-person offenses additional options for pre-trial release before their first court appearances. These options should utilize community resources and programs to enhance the likelihood of these persons making their court dates.

• Restore civil rights of ex-offenders who have committed low-level or non-violent crimes.

• Expand the services of Afrocentric (and other culturally-specific) drug treatment programs.

• Encourage county and city prosecutors’ offices to record the race of defendants in all cases reviewed, and in each decision to decline, charge, divert, etc.

• Rigorously analyze the causes underlying the disproportionate involvement of 18 to 30-year-old African American men in the criminal justice system.

• The county should encourage community organizations to develop a program that would help those unable to post bond to obtain release from jail by providing bail money under certain conditions.

• Law enforcement agencies should routinely collect and report data on the race of crime victims. This would allow analysis and action that would address racial disparity in victimization.

• The disparate representation of persons of color throughout all aspects of the criminal justice system in Hennepin County should provide ample reason for the county to initiate a racial/ethnic disparity study within each aspect of the system. These studies would attempt to: a) establish the dimensions and source(s) of disparity, b) determine whether or not the disparity is the result of systemic racial bias and c) develop plans to address any disparities caused by such bias.

• Encourage all police departments to collect data on all traffic stops, including the location, date and time of the stop; the age, race/ethnicity and gender of the driver; the reason for the stop; the result of the stop (arrest, citation, warning or no action); whether a search was conducted; and the result of any such search.

• Improve efforts to recruit and retain employees from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds, especially African American men.

• Provide an integrated set of ex-offender services to help releases obtain employment and to help them transition back into the community.
Community Involvement

12. Develop and coordinate programs, both philanthropic and faith-based, to engage young African American men in their communities.

- Jump-start a wide range of mentoring programs solely for African American boys ages 8-18.
- Designate $75,000 of county funds for a citizenship educator/trainer with a special focus on young African American men, to continue the Brother Achievement project.
- Work with churches, schools, community centers and libraries to offer arts and sports programs that will draw in African American boys.
- Develop programs that work with faith communities to address the emotional, moral and spiritual well-being of African American men, especially in the areas of grief, loss and trauma.
Community Education Action and Support Plan
(See Recommendation #3)

This plan is designed to reach 5,000+ students over a period of 10 years with the help of community agencies, businesses, churches, corporations and other organizations across the county. The goal is to strengthen the academic and social development of young African American males by coordinating existing resources and efforts.

Objectives
1. Improve the academic performance of all African American boys and young men in Hennepin County public schools.
2. Increase parents’ involvement with their kids’ education.
3. Increase rates of high school graduation and GED certification.
4. Increase and support young African American males’ enrollment in higher education.
5. Prepare African American boys and young men for life.

Structure
- Establish and coordinate 50 CEASP sites throughout the county over five years.
- Work with up to 20 students per age group (7-9 years, 10-12, 13-15, and 16-18) per site, for a total of 80 students per site.
- Create cohorts of five people for each group.
- Each cohort will have its own coach.
- Sites will be open four days a week, from 2-6 p.m., plus Saturdays:
  - Monday – Upper level
  - Tuesday – Lower level
  - Wednesday – Upper level
  - Thursday – Lower level
  - Saturday – Special assignment (service or study)

Activities
- Academic tutoring in math, reading, vocabulary and writing.
- Mentoring: each student will have an adult mentor; each mentor and mentee will meet at least once a month. Upper-level students will also mentor lower-level students.
- Leadership and teambuilding.
- AAA (academic, achievement, attitude) awards for both individuals and teams; prizes are given weekly, monthly and annually based on grades, leadership and social development, and personal evaluations.
- Scholarships.
- Junior leagues of fraternal and sororital organizations.
- Social clubs (Jack and Jills, etc.).
- Training in personal life management: developing and understanding purpose; goal setting; time management; money management; career exploration.

Standards
- All participants must attend at least 95% of all scheduled activities.
- Parents must participate in monthly programs.

Action Steps for Initiative Leaders
1. Develop a county-wide mentoring process for African American boys and
young men with Hennepin County public school districts, businesses, churches and community-based organizations.

2. Develop and roll out a communication/media campaign to encourage parents and community agencies to get involved with the CEASP.

3. Sponsor monthly breakfast or lunch meetings of community organizations and local businesses to encourage them to form and maintain partnerships, create after-school programs, etc.

4. Sponsor meetings with businesses to encourage them to develop an internship program for African American boys and young men.

5. Sponsor an annual recognition process to recognize and reward students, teachers, parents and organizations.

6. Provide organizational and technical assistance to the entire initiative.
Community Health and Awareness Action Plan
(See Recommendation #7)

This plan unites the efforts of community agencies, businesses, churches, organizations and individuals throughout the county. It should be designed and implemented by a task force consisting of health care leaders, policymakers and community members, and it should have the support of the county for at least 10 years.

Goals
1. Increase the number of years in which African American men lead healthy and productive lives.
2. Inform young African American men of available health care programs and insurance options.
3. Change the attitudes and behaviors of these young men concerning their health.

Initiative Components
- Monthly community information sessions on insurance, leading health indicators, etc.
- Health education courses
- Health-related focus groups and surveys
- Health-related support groups
- Mental health support groups led by mental health professionals
- Free screening for respiratory problems
- Stress management courses for all citizens throughout the county
- Support for mass media campaigns on responsible sexuality
- Seminars on responsible sexuality
- Cable-access television show on health in the African American community
- Web site
- Surveys and focus groups
- Recreational activities, sports teams and leagues
- Continued support of community health fairs
- Comprehensive media/communications support for the initiative
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