

Summary Report

Day of Dialogue: Recruiting and Retaining Black Males

April 18-19, 2016

Prepared for:

Florida Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys

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Summary Report

Day of Dialogue Education: Recruiting and Retaining Black Males

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

The Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys (CSSBMB) convened a four-member panel to discuss the state of black males in education; while specifically assessing the critical challenges threatening recruitment and retention of black males. In partnership with the Bethune-Cookman University (B-CU), the Council extended an invitation to the Deans of Education from four historically black colleges and universities to participate in a Day of Dialogue Event in Daytona Beach, Florida. The two-day event began with a round table discussion on the evening of April 18, 2016, at the Mary McLeod Bethune Performing Arts Center, President's Banquet Room; and culminated on April 19, 2016 with a panel discussion at the Michael and Libby Johnson Center for Civic Engagement, both on the campus of Bethune-Cookman University.

1.1 Background

The CSSBMB is a legislatively mandated body, created to propose measures to alleviate and correct the underlying causes of the conditions affecting Black men and boys. In addition, the Council is required to produce an annual report on their findings and recommendations.¹

Established in 2008, the Council's primary goal in hosting the Day of Dialogue was to understand the shortage of Black males in the field of education. Hearing from experts would also provide the Council with additional guidance in their charge to provide recommendations.

This summary report presents the findings and recommendations of the panel guests. It also captures the main points of the panel discussions during the event.

1.2 Panel Members

The panel included the following members:

- Dr. Idriss Abdoulaye, Dean of Education, Florida Memorial University
- Dr. Marie F. Snow, Dean of Education, Edward Waters College
- Dr. Traki L. Taylor, Dean of Education, Florida A&M University
- Dr. Willis Walter, Dean of the College of Education, Bethune-Cookman University (Panel Member and Facilitator)

1.3 Charge of Panel Members

The Office of Dr. Edison O. Jackson, B-CU President and Council 1st Vice Chair, prepared a list of specific questions for the panel participants. Questions included education related topics designed to prompt discussion at each meeting. The main topics included:

- Challenges within education
- Classroom management issues
- Benefits of teaching

1.4 The Report Organization

The organization of this report generally follows the list of topics outlined in the agenda and the course of panel discussions. Section 2 includes a summary of opening remarks and panelist's comments related to questions presented during the panel discussion. Sections 3 reports overall recommendations made by panelists as a result of the discussions related to questions presented during the panel discussion. Section 4 entails comments and questions provided by other meeting attendees. Section 5 includes final thoughts and closing remarks.

Certain statements without references are included throughout the report, and have not been verified or validated by the Council or the panel. However, in subsequent sections, panelist's initials are used to feature comments. They are as follows: Dr. Idriss Abdoulaye (IA), Dr. Marie Snow (MS), Dr. Traki L. Taylor (TT), and Dr. Willis Walter (WW).

SECTION 2: OPENING REMARKS AND PANEL DISCUSSION

2.1 Meeting Format and Opening Remarks

The first Day of Dialogue began with brief welcome and opening remarks by Dr. Edison O. Jackson, President of B-CU and Council 1st Vice Chair and Dr. Eddie Regnier, Council Chairperson. Since the roundtable discussion was intimate in nature, time was allotted for each Council member and attendee to introduce themselves. Afterwards, the floor was turned over to Chief Argatha Rigby-Gilmore, CSSBMB 2nd Vice Chair. As presider for the evening, Chief Rigby-Gilmore provided opening comments. She expressed the Council's excitement to have the distinguished panelists present to provide their insight and direction. Afterwards, she gave the panelists instructions on presenting the following four talking points:

- Tenure (Length of time in the field of education)
- Challenges they have had in developing Black males for the field education
- Barriers they have found that have kept young Black males out of the field of education
- Expound on recruitment (any barriers or issues they may have)

Afterwards, the panel engaged in dialogue, followed by the floor being opened for questions.

The last Day of Dialogue began with introductory and welcome remarks by Chancellor Rod Duckworth, CSSBMB Vice- Chair and Dr. Edison O. Jackson. Then Council member Dr. Albert Simpson, Jr. performed the invocation; and each Council member present was allotted time to introduce themselves and offer additional remarks and about the importance of education. Afterwards, the panel engaged in open

discussions related to three main charge questions. Discussions generally followed the meeting agenda, distributed at the start of the event.

Dr. Willis Walter, Dean of the College of Education, B-CU facilitated the panel discussion. He set the tone by stating that the panel discussion was designed to discuss critical issues such as:

- The state of education
- Dilemmas within the field of education
- Solutions to problems within education

During his initial remarks, Dr. Walter stated that B-CU is developing the largest group of minority educators that will serve the state of Florida for the next 10-15 years. He also stated that many students experience systematic oppression, and this Day of Dialogue was designed to address critical issues like education dilemmas and solutions. Dr. Walter read pre-written questions one at a time and allowed the panelists to respond on a volunteer basis.

In addition to the panelists, over 100 observers attended the second day of the meeting. The observers included representatives from Bethune-Cookman University faculty and student body, Edward Waters College student body, Florida Memorial University student body, Florida A&M University faculty, and Office of the Attorney General, other state agencies, and community and professional organizations. Although the discussion at the meeting was largely among the panelists, attendees were given an opportunity during the meeting to comment and ask questions.

2.2 Panel Discussions

Panel discussions regarding critical challenges threatening the recruitment and retention of the Black males in education are highlighted below.

Historically, Minority males have experienced systemic oppressions. Which challenges have been the greatest in education?

One panelist indicated that the greatest challenge in education is the clash between home and school learning. This clash of cultures forces children to function as bi-polar. Children are required to navigate through what life looks like in school and what it looks like at home. (i.e. wearing uniforms at school vs. not wearing the wrong colors at home) In addition, teachers are often prejudice but unaware of this while teaching our students. They fear Black males, but are simultaneously responsible for their education. Additionally, some teachers enter the classrooms because they are unable to obtain meaningful employment elsewhere. (TT)

Many of our Black males suffer at the hands of teachers who literally snuff their natural genius abilities out of them by the time they reach 1st grade. (TT) Black males face systematic discrimination within the classroom by the start of pre-school, through the use of exams and are already 11 months behind in school by the start of kindergarten. Many teachers also lack an understanding of the issues Black males face. (WW)

A third panelists stated that one of the challenges faced in education is that student engagement has become absent from the learning process. Teachers are required to spend most of their time teaching a standardized

test. During the process, some teachers become easily frustrated with slow learners and are unwilling to teach these children until they show they are in the learning cycle. (MS)

Another panelist regarded the largest challenge faced in the field of education as the financial woes. Teaching candidates are hit with approximately \$1,000.00 in additional certification costs, after paying for their education. These costs are higher for students who fail these exams and are required to retake them. Education students also receive the least amount of financial aid and scholarships. This may partly explain why approximately 80% of education students eventually change majors. (IA)

Many K- 12 children are raised by a single parent (50% of Black males live with their mother only, compared with 16% of whites with a mother only). Because of this, we have classroom management issues. What are you doing to prepare teachers for this?

One panelist indicated that historically, schools were the meeting place to deal with our issues. However, now teachers must be prepared to do so. They must be trained to teach “urban” children. These are children who are being labeled by our school systems. To prepare future teachers, one education department has changed their name to the Department of Teacher Education and Urban Studies (MS).

Another panelist stressed the importance of understanding that school culture is different from the culture present in the home. Many of the issues teachers face in the classroom are cultural, not problems or deficits. (IA) A third panelist stated that the problems within our classrooms are not exclusive to Florida. The same issues are occurring in classrooms across the nation. There is segregation within the school system that separates Individualized Education Program (IEP) students from the general population. We must be prepared to deal with all students. However, parents have the right to refuse to have their children labeled. For the past twenty-five years, one university has hosted a summer program for at-risk kids, to ensure that their students complete their 1st year of college. (TT) Our final panelist pointed out that it takes a village to raise our children. We must deal with our own pain and aches openly and use it help our children. (WW)

What are some of the benefits of being a teacher or going through your program?

One panelist referred to teachers as the closest thing to “miracle workers,” who have the ability to give hope and opportunity and create future leaders. (TT) Another panelist pointed out that teaching is the oldest profession and described teachers as “influencers.”(MS) Teaching was also described as a “noble profession” where its takers become well-rounded individuals. Perhaps one of the most obvious benefits mentioned was the three month vacation received by educators. (IA) However, one panelist ended by referring to teachers as the greatest support system we will ever have. (MS)

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel offered the following specific recommendations:

- *Start grooming Black males early.* By exposing Black males to exceptional educators and positive education experiences, we can spark an interest to become teachers. Having great teachers, makes great teachers.(TT)
- *Make becoming a teacher more affordable.* Reducing additional costs and increasing education scholarships will help to reduce financial barriers and allow more graduates with a degree in education to enter into classrooms. (IA)

- *Provide support and assistance to help Black males find their passion.* Identifying better ways to support Black males inside and outside of the classroom, will help them identify their strengths and interests. (MA)(WW)

SECTION 4: PUBLIC COMMENTS

During both Day of Dialogue meetings, the public was given an opportunity to address the panel with comments and questions related to the discussions. Public comments and questions are summarized below.

Question: *What are your thoughts on temporary certification? What impact does it have on the field of education?*

Answer: This is a huge slap in the face, with the amount of time we put into preparing our students. Students with other disciplines can go into the field with no supervision; whereas, a student that could not pass a portion of the general knowledge exam cannot. Our students hear these stories and then become discouraged. This becomes a major retention barrier for us. We must then get students to focus on the fact that one day they will be helping someone that looks like them. (WW) However, the biggest contradiction is that after we help a student for four years to become a teacher, they won't be allowed into a classroom because they are a few points away from passing a certification exam. Yet, someone with a degree in a completely different area will be allowed into a classroom for years. (TT) There are many ways to become a teacher now. You can go into the classroom with a degree and if you don't pass the certification within three years, they can let you go. We should give education majors something special, like better pay or student loan relief. Now the state of Florida has come up with a way to devalue our students. (IA) Our students can go anywhere and teach. The problem is that Florida is one of the lowest paying states and it lowers our ranking when our students go to another state and teach. (WW) We must take this information and run with it. We must not sit and talk and do nothing about these issues. (MS)

Dr. George Ramsey Clinical Counselor, Bethune-Cookman University

Dr. Ramsey expressed that teaching was his opportunity to be a father to many young people. He also posed a question regarding teacher recruitment- *Why aren't Black men going into the profession?*

Answer: Many students are taking courses that will just boost their GPA and allow them to play sports. (MS) Another panelist discussed their College Explorers Program at one of the local high schools. We are all teachers. If you can learn it, you can teach it. (TT)

An attendee stated that his wife identified two children in her class who were to have the IEP label removed, but met resistance from parents because of the financial incentives.

Question: *Have you considered cross-training?*

Answer: Programs must meet certain qualifications to keep accreditation, making it difficult to use incentives. It's easier for someone with a Criminal Justice degree to apply for a teacher's certificate than someone with a degree in Education. (WW)

An attendee briefly discussed the following topics:

- Catalyst Mentoring Programs

- Schools returning to being our community centers
- Males learn differently than females
- Integrating the African- American experience into schools
- The work of Steven G. Peters- *Do you know enough about me to teach me?*
- Turning our issues into teachable moments

A panelist advised the community to stop letting others tell them what they cannot do. (MS) Another panelist stated that after school programs are there, but cost additional funds because our schools are not properly funded. (WW)

Question: What are your thoughts on the TEACH for America Program?

Answer: We need to ensure teachers are using the methods in which students are learning. (TT) If teachers are assessing their students often, they know whether their students are getting it. If every student fails the test, then the fault lies with the teacher. (MS) We should be preparing students for the real world. The TEACH for America Program is a scam. Many enter the program to have their loans forgiven. (IA) This program also gives teaching a black eye because they stay for a short time; we are encouraging those without a real interest in teaching to come aboard. (WW)

Question: In terms of the debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois, how do you view technical training centers?

Answer: If we open those doors, we will be forced to go through them. (IA) We are working with Volusia County partners now to pursue career academies. (WW) Chandler Duckworth indicated that technical education came from the move of vocational education. The purpose was to provide students with more than one skill in a technical field. Companies were standing at the door to take away technical teachers; so we must reward our teachers.

Question: Discuss the difference between teaching versus educating or following the scripts vs. delivering with passion.

Answer: Teachers tell children what to do, while educators guide children so they can do. (TT) Teaching tells students what to think; educating shows them how to think. (MS)

Question- How do you help students that can't focus because they are dealing with personal issues?

Answer- You must engage them in the place where they are. (TT) Students do not learn as much, if they aren't involved. (MS) Share with parents the good things, so they will be more accepting when something is wrong. We must go where the parents are. (WW)

SECTION 5: FINAL THOUGHTS/ CLOSING REMARKS

Panelists offered the following final thoughts:

- Lots of people will say you can't succeed, but tap into advocacy. Don't be afraid to lead, learn and teach. (TT)
- We are grateful that the Council is truly interested in what we have to say. (MS)
- To recruit and retain Black male teachers, we must:
 - Use outreach
 - Identify Black males in high school
 - Mentor them and encourage them

- Recruitment must be year round
- Provide social economic support (IA)
- We must look at all teachers that want to go into the field. Having a President that gets it helps. No social justice without educational justice. We must put our thoughts into policy driven decisions. (WW)

Dr. Eddie Regnier offered closing remarks by sharing his personal story about being labeled as a special needs child because of a language barrier. After spending one year in a special needs class, a teacher taught him English after school. Even after overcoming these odds, he was still discouraged by his high school counselor to attend college. Dr. Regnier went on to graduate from Harvard and lead a successful career as a clinical/forensic psychologist. He ended the day by reminding us that change happens because of data, not emotions.

¹ The 2015 Florida Statue 16.615- Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys.