2016
STATE OF
BLACK HARTFORD
Urban League of Greater Hartford
The State of Black Hartford 2016

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Dedicated to the people of Hartford
Acknowledgement

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Introduction
Urban League of Greater Hartford through the Years
Adrienne W. Cochrane, President and Chief Executive Officer

Urban League of Greater Hartford has created a rich tapestry inextricably woven into the fabric of its namesake city. From humble beginnings to present day, the League has remained at the forefront of social justice and economic parity for very low to moderate income individuals and families in urban pockets of Hartford. More than 3,000 individuals and families are served annually through a continuum of services in five broad programmatic thrusts: Adult Education; Economic Enrichment; Health and Wellness; Workforce Development and Training; and Youth Development.

Debuting in Hartford against the backdrop of the tumultuous civil rights era of the 1960s, and just two months after President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, the Urban League quickly established itself as a dynamic catalyst for change. The League was born in 1964 during an explosive period of change, both in Hartford and the country. African American leaders in North Hartford recognized the similarities and ties to the civil rights struggles of their brothers and sisters in the south which resulted in asking the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to visit and speak at the University of Hartford. By all accounts, Dr. King’s visit ignited a flame that signaled the beginning of a decade marked by challenges to the status quo.

Shortly after Dr. King’s visit, early architects and pioneers of the Urban League Movement in Hartford issued a joint invitation to National Urban League President Whitney M. Young. Not one to disappoint, Young delivered a rousing, impassioned plea to executives from Aetna, United Technologies (UTC), Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and United Way imploring them to support an Urban League affiliate in Hartford. Rachel Milton, an African American community activist and leader; Marion Grant, the well-connected sister of actress Kathryn Hepburn; and Norris O’Neill, a local politician and attorney spearheaded this effort which soon gained the attention of the National Urban League Board of Trustees. It was clear that Hartford was poised and determined to join this dynamic Movement.

By spring 1964, Trustees for the national office welcomed Urban League of Greater Hartford as the 66th affiliate. Armed with a modest budget of $42,000, the League officially opened for business at 53 Allyn Street on September 14, 1964. The first program was
Employment Services. One month later, an enthusiastic crowd of job hopefuls arrived for the first Open House.

The dynamic and charismatic William “Bill” Brown became the first executive director in 1964 and served until his retirement in 1983. Affectionately called “Dean of the East Coast” and “Mr. Urban League,” he established a legacy of effective programs in housing, job training, education, financial literacy, and later, youth development. His leadership cemented the Urban League presence in Hartford through his good-natured ability to balance the needs of various stakeholders while keeping the integrity of the League—and his own—firmly intact. At the height of the civil rights movement, he masterfully built consensus and promoted collaboration that bridged communities that at times were disparate. Bill Brown’s two decades of service to a city and Urban League he loved would define the grassroots movement for opportunity and justice that still exists today.

The need for housing, education, and employment opportunities for African Americans in Hartford spurred the League’s quick growth and solid support from corporations and foundations, both in the 60s and successive decades. In 1965 Aetna Life and Casualty recognized the unique opportunity to develop diverse local talent by providing the League funding to support job training programs. In 1967, Aetna sponsored the nation’s first computer training program to be conducted by a company using its own facilities and in 1968, Aetna again partnered with the League to establish HI-GEAR, a driver training initiative to assist 100 minority youth in qualifying for careers requiring driving skills.

By 1967, Urban League satisfied all requirements for the Standard of Admission to the Greater Hartford Community Chest, now United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, effectively making the League eligible for funding. The following year, a Summer Skills Bank was established to help high school and college students find summer employment. Soon, Travelers joined forces with the League to graduate its first Modern Office Skills Training (MOST) class, and hired all 10 female graduates in its Hartford offices. That same year, Hartford National Bank and Trust began a Teller Aptitude program to create better job opportunities for non-whites.

Urban League established a Housing Department in 1965, and with the assistance of the Greater Hartford Council of Churches, established a home down payment fund to help low income families purchase homes. By 1968, Housing Now, Inc. was developed by the League in
partnership with the Council of Churches, Society for Savings and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, with the steadfast goal to help low income families purchase homes.

Receiving substantial grants from the National Urban League to train unskilled Hartford workers bolstered the League’s employment initiatives during the latter part of the 1960s. Funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation to explore methods of transporting core-city unemployed to job training in suburban plants provided an additional boost. The establishment of the Church Academy at Central Baptist Church, would have an impactful presence in Hartford for the next three decades, by providing training and employment opportunities for hundreds of Hartford residents.

The 1970s witnessed exponential growth in Urban League programs, services, and customers. By 1972, the League had outgrown its original home and established temporary residence at 1359 Albany Avenue. One year later the League relocated to 1229 Albany Avenue, its home for the next 27 years. Highlights from the ‘70s include the creation of Project TOTAL, an Urban League Alternative Learning Center, with a $41,070 grant from Travelers to serve children 13-18 years old who had either been expelled from or dropped out of school; Equal Opportunity Day Dinners keynoted by sitting NUL CEOs, Whitney M. Young in 1970, and Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. in 1972; and the receipt of a $250,000 youth focused grant from the Department of Labor. With employment programs firmly implanted in League services, it was time to turn its focus to education.

In the early 1980s, a satellite office on Farmington Avenue housed the Adult Center of Education (A.C.E.) with a $194,000 grant from The Hartford Insurance Group (now The Hartford). One unique aspect of this program was that it offered free childcare. The first graduation was held in 1981 with 35 students receiving high school equivalency diplomas. Over the course of the decade more than 750 students attained GEDs through A.C.E. Notably, in 1989 Sondra Haughton scored the highest GED score in Connecticut and was presented with an award by the Connecticut State Board of Education.

The League ended the decade with the selection of Esther Bush, its first female president, as the third Urban League leader in 1989, replacing John E. Saunders III, who assumed the presidency following Bill Brown’s retirement in 1983.

By the 1990s the Urban League was on a proverbial roll. The Housing Department was one of only two certified housing agencies in the state. The minority male HERO program was
created to provide group education and skills building for African-American and Latino males, ages 10-14, as part of a substance abuse prevention initiative. The UTC Literacy Volunteers, funded by UTC, was initiated to provide adult education for Head start parents.

In 1992, the Urban League was awarded nearly one million dollars by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for an HIV/AIDS prevention program. By 1993, Urban League of Greater Hartford became the only affiliate in the country to manage a needle exchange program.

In 1998, James E. Willingham, Sr. took the helm as the fifth Urban League president. Under his leadership, a $5,000,000 capital campaign yielded the purchase of a permanent home for the League, the current 31,000 square foot headquarters located at 140 Woodland Street. The four floor building has allowed League programs to flourish in their own dedicated space under one roof and realize one of the wealth building dreams that it espouses: build generational wealth by owning your home. Fittingly, the League is four years shy of owning its home free and clear of mortgage encumbrance.

In 2010, Adrienne Cochrane became the sixth president and second female in League history to take the helm of the Urban League of Greater Hartford. In the six years since, a number of strategic partnerships and collaborations have been formed. Chief among them, however, is the long-term lease agreement between Urban League and Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, signed in 2012, to house the Curtis D. Robinson Center for Health Equity (formerly The Curtis D. Robinson Men’s Health Institute) on the first floor of the Urban League headquarters. The multi-year, multi-million dollar partnership, the brainchild of Curtis D. Robinson, an entrepreneur and prostate cancer survivor; Dr. Marcus McKinney, vice president for health equity at Saint Francis; Christopher M. Dadlez, former president and CEO of Saint Francis, now president and CEO of Trinity Health New England; and Dr. Jeffrey Steinberg, a board certified urologist formerly of St. Francis Hospital, recognizes the unique opportunity to provide an in-depth understanding of the multiple factors that impact the health of African-American men in Hartford who face socio-economic challenges which correlate to poor health 4-5 times higher than the general population. Currently, there is no other Urban League affiliate housing a major medical and research hospital operation within its building.
On November 7, 2014, a sold-out 50th Anniversary Equal Opportunity Day Dinner audience at the Marriott Downtown Hartford witnessed the unveiling of the inaugural William “Bill” Brown Leadership and Community Service Award. The honor was bestowed upon the late Chief John B. Stewart, Jr., the first African-American Fire Chief for the City of Hartford. The following year another history-maker, the first African American State Treasurer Denise Nappier, fittingly a Bill Brown protégé, received the coveted award.

Since the journey began 52 years ago, the League has served more than 100,000 youth and adults. The League has witnessed dramatic changes throughout the decades within our organization; both in physical and fiscal proportions. The League has broadened programmatic funding, and partnership support in African-American, Caribbean, and Latino communities. The League has accumulated countless success stories in homeownership, youth development, adult education, workforce, and health. The League has also weathered storms that might have felled lesser organizations and we are fully cognizant that there are more struggles ahead. But, our work is not done. The League cannot stop—must not stop—until the work is done. The League does not have the luxury of waiting for future generations to appropriate fairness under the law, enfranchisement, equal opportunity and economic prosperity. Dr. King famously said that “we must bend the long arc of the moral universe towards justice once and for all.” Urban League of Greater Hartford will continue to carve out its most impactful place in Hartford by playing an integral role in the lives of those that we serve by providing them with the foundation to achieve educational, occupational and economic parity for themselves and their families. Through these efforts the League will enhance the quality of life for all, not only in Hartford, but throughout Connecticut.

**Urban League of Greater Hartford Timeline**

**1964**

Hartford office officially accepted by the organization’s national board, becoming the League’s 66th affiliate.

The Hartford office opened its doors on September 14th at 53 Allyn Street; an open house was held on October 17th. The first budget was $42,000. The first program was an Employment Services Program.

The Hartford’s first registered delegate to the National Urban League Assembly meeting was Clarence Shelton.
1965

Aetna Life and Casualty became the first area corporation to become involved in job training programs with the Urban League.

Hartford National Bank and Trust starts Teller Aptitude Programs to create better job opportunities for non-whites, the nine members in the first class were screened by the Urban League.

The League’s Housing Department was established.

The Guild’s first endeavor was forming the Youth Community and raising money to send teen delegates to the National Urban League Assembly in Miami.

1966

League awarded Hartford National Bank a community award of merit at the Equal Opportunity Day Dinner.

League satisfied the requirements for the Standard of Admission to the Greater Hartford Community Chest (currently the United Way).

With the Greater Hartford Council of Churches, League established a home down payment fund to help low income families purchase homes.

1967

The Travelers graduated its first MOST (Modern Office Skills Training) class. All 10 women were offered and took jobs at the Travelers.

Established a Summer Skills Bank to help high school and college students find jobs.

Aetna Life & Casualty started the nation’s first training program in the computer field to be conducted by a company using its own facilities. Called “CO-Opportunity”, six men were nominated to the program by the Urban League.

1968

In partnership with Aetna Life and Casualty, a program to make driver training available to minority youth was announced; Hi-GEAR is designed to get 100 youth into the marketplace for jobs requiring driving skills.

The Hartford Urban League Guild luncheon held at the Hotel America Nov. 2; Homer Babbidge, President UConn was guest speaker.
Guild raised $2,444 for the newly formed Scholarship Fund.

Housing Now, Inc. was developed by the Urban League, the Council of Churches, Society for Savings and The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. This company helped low income families purchase homes.

1969

Church Academy opened at Central Baptist Church; Evelyn Lewis, Director.

Received a $25,849 grant from U.S. Department of Transportation to explore methods of transporting core-city unemployed to jobs and training in suburban plants.

Received an $180,000 grant from the National Urban League to train 150 unskilled workers in the Hartford area.

First integrated graduating class of the State Police Academy; class was recruited by the joint efforts of the Urban League and the State Police.

Project FINE (Families Involved in New Education) created, aimed at meeting the educational needs of low income families with children who have special learning problems.

1970

The first Equal Opportunity Day Dinner was held at Valle’s; Whitney Young, Executive Director of the National Urban League was the speaker.

The Scholarship Fund awarded twenty students scholarships totaling $3,500.

The Church Academy was awarded a $165,000 contract by the National Alliance of Businessmen’s JOBS program to provide training and jobs for seventy-two people.

1971

Formed the Government Affairs Council of the Urban Leagues of Connecticut as the statewide arm of the Hartford, New Haven and Southwestern Fairfield County Urban Leagues.

League awarded $69,000 training grant for the Labor Education Advancement Program (LEAP)

1972

The Guild raised money for the Scholarship Fund which awarded 12 students grants totaling $2,375.00
Office relocated to 1359 Albany Avenue.

Equal Opportunity Day Dinner speaker was Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Executive Director, National Urban League; awards were given to Hartford Precision Company, The Travelers Insurance Company, Connecticut Mutual Insurance Company, Standard Builders, Inc. and Utility Developers, Inc.

The Church Academy graduated 36 students and 29 were retained by their sponsoring companies.

Project LEAP placed 85 people in trades during the year, a 100% increase over 1971.

1973

Started the Business English for Spanish Speaking Trainees (BEST) Program sponsored by the Travelers.

Moved to 1229 Albany Avenue, on Sept. 30.

The League was granted $250,000 for a youth program by the U.S., Department of Labor.

1974

Equal Opportunity Awards were given to United Aircraft Corp. Research Laboratories; Hartford Insurance Group; Aetna Insurance Corp.; and Edward and Francis McDonald.

Opened an outreach office in Charter Oak Terrace.

Annual Meeting Dinner Speaker was Donald McGannon, President of the National Urban League.

1975

The Scholarship Fund presented 18 Scholarships totaling $5,400.

Created Project TOTAL, an Urban League Alternative Learning Center, with a $41,070 grant from the Travelers, to serve children 13-18 years old who had either dropped out of or been expelled from public school.

Conducted workshops on cable television, revenue sharing, ex-offender disabilities, voting rights, and special education.

Signed the Lenders Voluntary Compliance at the Hartford Insurance Group. This voluntary affirmative action mortgage plan was the first of its kind in the nation.
1976

The Scholarship Fund awarded 23 scholarships totaling $6,900.

The Guild held a golf outing at Tunxis Plantation Country Club in June.

The 12th Annual Meeting Dinner was held at Chateau de Ville Dinner Theater; Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. Executive Director of the Urban League was the speaker.

1977

The Scholarship Fund awarded 27 scholarships totaling $8,100.

Equal Opportunity Day Dinner was held at the Howard Johnson Conference Center; Ronald H. Brown, Deputy Director of the National Urban League was the speaker.

LEAP more than achieved its contractual goal with 88% of total placement in the skilled trades. This is the highest percent of all affiliates operating in LEAP outreach programs in 45 cities nationwide.

1978

Celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Scholarship Fund; 130 students were helped over the years. The First Scholarship Dinner was held; 32 scholarships were awarded; $9,000 was raised.

During a special recruitment session Allstate Insurance, Pratt and Whitney and Chandler Evans conducted interviews at the League offices.

Received a grant of $264,581 from the U.S. Department of Labor for a senior citizens community service employment program.

The Church Academy had a 93% retention rate.

The Housing Department became one of the five agencies certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Connecticut.

1979

The Young Executives reception increased the membership by 1000 and contributed $5,000 to the League’s general fund.

HUD awarded the League a $10,000 grant to provide counseling for people with housing problems.

The Guild donated $2,500 to the Scholarship Fund.
The Church Academy revised its curriculum, upgraded training materials and introduced new teaching procedures to meet the needs of the students; the Academy had a retention rate of 87%.

1980

The Scholarship Fund awarded 27 scholarships.

The Adult Center of Education (A.C.E) funding was provided by a $194,000 grant from the Hartford Insurance Group; for the first time the program offered day care service for parents.

A.C.E. opens its office at 410 Farmington Avenue.

1981

First GED testing at A.C.E.

A.C.E. holds its first graduation, 35 completed the requirements for their high school equivalency diplomas.

Health and Social Services served 308 people. Housing Department served 300 clients. Direct Job Placement Department found jobs for 212 people.

The Guild sponsored its first Ebony Fashion Fair and raised $5,500 for the Scholarship Fund.

1982

The Guild donated $2,000 to the Scholarship Fund.

The Church Academy placed 86 people in jobs and had an overall retention rate of 86%.

The Scholarship Fund awarded 18 scholarships; 13 at $600 each and 5 at $400 each.

A.C.E. prepared 69 people to take the G.E.D. exam and 62 passed.

1983

The Church Academy exceeded its goal of 45 and trained a total of 92 people, with a retention rate of 86%.

The Adult Center of education prepared 95 students to pass the General Education Development Examination; 110 students took the exam.

William Brown retires; the Board appointed John E. Saunders, III Executive Director.
1984

The Guild hosted the first regional meeting of New England Urban League Guilds.

Provided job search assistance to 850.

The Church Academy had 93% placement record and received a funding level of $144,000.

The Scholarship Fund awarded 13 scholarships totaling over $12,000.

97 students passed the General Education Development Exam.

1985

The Church Academy exceeded its job placement goal by 25%.

90 students passed the General Education Development Exam.

The Scholarship Fund awarded 16 scholarships totaling $13,000.

The first Summer Youth Employment & Training program begins, in conjunction with CREC.

LEAP completed its 15th year of service to the community and the building and construction trades.

1986

The Hartford Guild hosted a meeting of the New England Regional Council of Urban League Guilds.

For the first time the Church Academy offered training on fully computerized office equipment. IBM’s Community Assistance Program provided the equipment.

The Urban League Scholarship Fund awarded 14 scholarship totaling $10,500.

A.C.E. offered its first summer adult basic education classes.

1987

The Guild hosted the Eastern Regional Delegate Assembly and raised over $5,000 for the Scholarship Fund.

The Church Academy enrolled 111 trainees and 89 were placed in full-time jobs.

Project M.A.S.H (Making Something Happen) was started with the American Leadership Forum and the National Puerto Rican Forum to provide the on-site pre-employment preparation, job search skills, and placement and support services to families living in the Stowe Village Housing Project.
The Scholarship Fund awarded 20 scholarships totaling $11,375; the Gail Smith Memorial and Council Dixon Memorial scholarships were awarded for the first time. A Greater Hartford student was awarded a $10,000 Kraft/National Urban League Scholarship.

1988

A.C.E. sets up an External Diploma Program based on job and life skills. No class attendance or testing is involved. Diplomas are issued by the Hartford Board of Education.

The first Corporate Membership Campaign netted 31 companies.

The Scholarship Fund awarded 24 scholarships totaling $15,375.

1989

Esther Bush named president & CEO by the Board of Directors.

Two community service awards were given to the Wish School/Phoenix partnership and the Schools/Business Collaborative sponsored by the Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce.

A.C.E. student Sondra Haughton scored highest GED score in Connecticut and is presented with the award by the Connecticut State Board of Education.

Established the Rachel Milton and William J. Brown scholarships. Both are one-time awards, based on need, for the purchase of books.

1990

The A.C.E. Programs James McHenry was awarded the Conn. Association of Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) “Student of the Year.”

A Church Academy graduate, Winona DeCarish, testified before a U.S. Senate Committee about the Church Academy’s success record. The White House called the Church Academy and requested a copy of its curriculum and operational procedures.

The Urban League/University of Hartford scholarship was established.

The Housing Dept. was certified by HUD to offer Home Equity Conversation Mortgage Counseling. Only two agencies in Conn. hold this certification.

The League met or exceeded contracted performance objectives in 95% of its programs.
1991

The Minority Male “HERO” program was created to provide group education and skills building for African American and Puerto Rican/Latino males age 10-14 as part of substance abuse prevention initiative.

The Church Academy enrolled 97 and the overall retention rate was 89%.

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity started a GED mentoring program for A.C.E. students.

The UTC Literacy Collaborative was started. This is a family literacy program of the Urban League, CRT Headstart and Literacy Volunteers Funded by UTC, this program provides adult education for Headstart parents.

1992

Beverly LeConche, Education Department Director, won CAACE “Educator of the Year” award.

The Urban League was granted nearly one million dollars from the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention for HIV/AIDS prevention program.

A survey commissioned by ITT Hartford found that the League was viewed as the non-profit organization doing the most effective job in addressing community needs.

1993

The League became the first affiliate in the country to manage a needle exchange program.

First National Urban League Incentives to Excel and Succeed (NULITES) youth program Chapter in Connecticut.

Won contract to run the Career Opportunity Program, a school to-work training program for high school junior and senior students. This program is funded by a $100,000 grant from ITT Hartford.

Esther Bush is named the host and producer of “The Urban Agenda,” a weekly radio program.

1994

A.C.E. Satellite II began at ETI career Transition Center (part of the Pratt & Whitney/Hamilton Standard retraining program).
The first NULITES Violence Prevention Project started with a grant from Greater Hartford JAYCEES.

The Scholarship Fund awarded 14 scholarships.

**1995**

Milton & Brown Equal Opportunity Awardee Dr. Frederick Adams and United Technologies Corporation.

800 students enrolled in A.C.E. Programs.

50 families obtain mortgages with a value of $2,600,000.

Lawrence P. English; President, CIGNA Healthcare Honorary Chair of EOD Dinner.

**1996**

20 students are placed in after school or summer work with 40 Hartford based companies.

Urban League of Greater Hartford begins a collaborative arrangement with Union 1199 to provide members with external diploma program.

First Annual Dr. Frederick G. Adams Multicultural Health Summit.

“North Hartford Initiative”; $50,000 CEDF grant, Urban League of Greater Hartford lead agency.

**1997**

EOD Dinner raises $152,535 in unrestricted funds.

Employment and Training Department served 5,000 persons.

ULGH Development Corporation was established.

Minority AIDS Prevention Program (MAPP) recognized by the Centers for Disease Control as a “program that works.”

**1998**

James E. Willingham, Sr. appointed as President and Chief Executive Officer; Urban League of Greater Hartford.

Church Academy assisted 291 students with clerical/computer skills training.
350 applicants receive mortgages with a total value of $18,269,926.

21st Century Community Learning Center opens at Fox Middle School.

1999

Created Youth Division with emphasis on the Family.

Assisted 400 individuals to become First Time Homebuyers in a total value of $20,879,915.

Provided 700 people in job placement opportunities.

Largest dinner fundraiser ever in the history of La Renaissance.
MECCA continues to provide outstanding services to the HIV/AIDS population with continued regional recognition.

2000

Capital Campaign to raise $5,000,000 kickoff under Peter G. Kelly to move to a new Regional Headquarters at 140 Woodland Street.

Employment and Training department helped to place over 340 clients in 2000.

The Third Annual Dr. Frederick G. Adams Statewide Multicultural Health Summit held Jan. 2000 attracted over 200 participants.

Martin Luther King III; President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference; EOD Keynote Speaker.

Regional Housing Seminars targeted to the Urban League of Greater Hartford 40-town service delivery area, first regional housing seminar in the city of East Hartford.
Executive Summary
Stanley F. Battle, Ph.D.

The Urban League of Greater Hartford was born in 1964 during the decade when the United States was experiencing political turmoil, social unrest, social problems and the rediscovery of poverty. Lunch counter sit-in protests by Negroes seeking to be served had spread throughout the South, resulting in rioting in some major cities. (The State of Black Hartford, 1994).

It was the decade in which Senator John F. Kennedy threw his hat into the ring of presidential hopefuls and won the election. In his 1961 inaugural, he appealed to the nation to “bear the burden of a long twilight struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war…The hand of hope must be extended to the poor and the depressed [oppressed]”. His statements aroused many citizens of all races, especially the nation’s young people, and helped to revive faith in purposeful social action. (The State of Black Hartford, 1994).

This period witnessed mass migration to the Nation’s cities of people who belonged to groups left out of the mainstream of American life. The concerns nationwide were also to be found in Hartford, Connecticut. A fact sheet, compiled by the Urban League of Greater Hartford in Fall 1963, reported that between 1950 and 1960 the number of non-whites in Hartford increased one hundred percent, seventy-six percent of the increase was due to migration from the South. “Negro workers are unemployed at three times the rate of white workers; twenty-one percent of employable Negro men in Hartford under the age of twenty-five are unemployed; and thirty-eight percent of Hartford’s Negro community are under fourteen years of age.” High numbers of school drop-out[s], poorer quality schools, disadvantaged home environments and segregation were among the issues facing Hartford. (The State of Black Hartford, 1994).

The State of Black Hartford 2016 addresses challenges that African Americans face at both the national and local level through a series of briefs and chapters. This new addition is more scholarly, and although it is impossible to capture all of the personal needs of residents in Hartford, scholars pay close attention to how Blacks are perceived by the public. In addition, the authors incorporate barriers to education, economic stability, health and welfare. Metrics and case studies are used to better understand Black Hartford. The scholars who participated in this project did not receive compensation for their contributions.
In 2016, Hartford, Connecticut, is experiencing new leadership with plans for improvements, but the city remains challenged with high unemployment rates, uneven public education, missed opportunities in economic development, and a work force that is not adequately prepared to achieve sustainable living wages. There are new forms of discrimination where children graduate from high school without a real education to support themselves. Technology with STEM preparation is the direction for success in the future; however, you must be able to read and master science and math. The State of Black Hartford 2016 will provide insight into who we are and how we need to proceed in the future.

The inaugural edition of the State of Black Hartford was published in 1994. In 2016, Hartford has greater diversity, and more universities and colleges that are located in downtown Hartford, but the city continues to face imposing challenges.

The future of Hartford rests with how we educate our children so they can contribute to the state and survive as productive citizens. Stanley Battle examined the significance of *Sheff vs. O'Neill*. The complexity of charter choice and magnet schools is an outgrowth of *Sheff*. The plaintiffs in *Sheff* provided expert testimony that presented a four-point proposition to describe education in Hartford. First, the social and economic conditions of the community place high demands on the Hartford school district. Second, the resources were inadequate to educate children. Third, inadequate resources in Hartford's school district in comparison with greater resources in other Connecticut districts create a comparative disadvantage for Hartford students. Fourth, the inadequate resources in Hartford prevents it from offering an occasional program for all children. Many could argue that years later there has been limited change. The level of disparity has not changed and this chapter explores the challenges.

Peter Rosa examined retention and graduation of college students of color. Students who successfully complete high school and enter college face a new set of requirements. They must maintain an acceptable grade point average and meet appropriate requirements in order to graduate from four-year institutions. One half of high school graduates need help when they start a community college or a state university. Sixty-three percent of Hartford high school graduates require a remedial coursework. Rosa's brief describes the problem, provides a sound overview, and offers recommendations.

Economic sustainability and growth has been a challenge for Hartford dating back to 1960. Stanley Battle, Amos Smith and the Honorable Senator Christopher Murphy examined
economics and implications in Hartford. The persistence of poverty in Hartford has had an impact on economic development and the future outlook for the community. In 2013, President Barack Obama presented his plan to designate a number of high poverty, urban, rural and trial communities as Promise Zones. The idea is for the federal government to become a partner and invest in communities with the goal of creating jobs and stimulating investments. Promise Zone designees will receive:

- an opportunity to engage five AmeriCorps Vista members in the Promise Zones work;
- A federal liaison to help designees navigate federal programs;
- Preference for certain competitive federal grants; and
- zone tax incentives

The reality of the zones is no money has been appropriated as of this date. Over the years we have had Model Cities initiatives, War on Poverty, and the War on Drugs, but the problem still persists. Why is it that some neighborhoods thrive while others remain perpetual places where the worst dysfunctions process such as gun violence, murder, infant mortality, addiction, high rates of diabetes, teen pregnancy, school failure, early entry into juvenile criminal justice systems, and drug markets? How do all of these things get affixed to Black/African-American communities in the Hartford's North End and other cities? Within the context of the new promises, Blacks must become a major part of the growth strategy of these neighborhoods. The promise will only work if there is a diverse group of investors with Black investors in these zones. Black people must become owners in the city in greater numbers. The promise zone means employment and opportunities. Senator Murphy has pledge to support and will work in the Senate to increase support to Hartford. The question remains will there be any money for the new promise?

Maris Dillman provided a demographic examination of Black Hartford. Multiple factors contribute to the current state of Hartford. These factors also contribute to the future progress or decline of the city. Ignoring the facts will only delay much-needed intervention to change and facilitate progress and growth. The lifeblood of Hartford depends on education, business, employment, economic status and mortality, housing and food.
Rodney L. Powell takes a hard look at the obvious and often ignored voices of Black youth. They mature and become adults often with many questions and challenges. Those who once were poor Black urban youth rarely develop the societal status and voice to be considered a valid resource. Powell points out this is an example of how systematic oppression works and thrives.

Yan Searcy presented a challenge in the chapter on Blackness, LLC in the context of Hartford. The construct of Blackness is attached both to culture and class. There will always be tension between government responsibility to redress state-sponsored racial oppression and American values of self-sufficiency. Searcy points out these tensions provide the impetus for the government to rely on market based solutions to social problems that are tied to the enduring class dynamics of Blackness. Searcy shared findings on academic mentoring of undergraduate Black and Latino males in the importance of support. Slightly less than one third of Black males and slightly more than one third of Latino males to begin college education for your public institutions of higher education complete their education within six years. Searcy meticulously examines this issue with case examples of program intervention.

Searcy also examined leadership and the link between racial identity and poor leadership. Leadership in Black communities is closely aligned with the relationships and trust. The complexity of race can at times lead to poor outcomes. When differences of religious traditions enter into the equation, leadership may become more complex. Searcy examines these dynamics through case examples to better set the context of racial identity in leadership.

Kimberly Hardy provided a very direct and sobering assessment of the Black church and its role in the urban community. Faith has always been the foundation of community life since the days of this country’s chattel slavery system. Through denominations in the Black church, communities have emerged. Hardy examines and history through faith and tradition which is reflected through religious expression. Overtime the church continues to be a beacon of light however change has evolved. Hardy carefully addresses the role of pastors as leaders and the challenges they face.

Shelley Best addressed challenges of faith in the context of Hartford and the reality of need with limited resources. The needs of populations at risk continue to expand, however church is a challenge to meet those needs because of limited resources. Best presents a strategy to provide appropriate intervention to assist populations in need for the church.
Health issues are introduced by Yvonne Patterson through an examination of African Jamaican woman's health beliefs with the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic among African-American/Black women's risk. Understanding how the academic impacts different ethnic groups of women is crucial in developing effective intervention strategies. Patterson explores the meaning of communication and male condom use.

Eunice Matthews provides insight regarding the state of Black Hartford by introducing a tool for assessing the social health of the community. The assessment tool, the social health index of Black Hartford, is similar in purpose to other indices. The social health index of Black Hartford provides a composite measure to monitor and diagnose the social health of Black Hartford. The social health index of Black Hartford offers a holistic reflection of the quality of life in Black Hartford through the development of an annually generated composite measure of social health.

Clyde Santana addressed how we are perceived via imagery. Santana's background as a law-enforcement professional and playwright gives him a unique perspective of how we are viewed by the public. Santana discuss our history through the impact of visual art, Ferguson, West Baltimore and Black Lives Matter. Frequently Black people assume a role in their job, and revert back to their roots when they go home. Santana refers to "Art in our Urban Life" as this dilemma. This chapter will challenge you and make you think carefully about image. Lastly, Trevor Johnson discusses the criminal justice system as it relates to Hartford and the challenges the city faces.

Hartford is our state capital and is worthy of support. The future of Hartford cannot be ignored. The question is simple: how will we address it?
**Education in Hartford: The Sheff Challenge**  
Stanley F. Battle, Ph.D.

*Sheff vs. O’Neill* started in 1989 with Milo Sheff, an African-American fourth grade student at Annie Fisher Middle School in Hartford, Connecticut. Elizabeth Horton Sheff, Milo’s mother, joined with 10 families from Latino, White and African-American backgrounds to address inequities in education in Hartford Public Schools. In short, this case helped define and determine the quality of education for all children in Hartford. In 1994, 92% of the approximately 25,000 students in the Hartford school district were either African-American, Puerto Rican, Latino, Asian, or Native American.¹ With the exception of Bloomfield, which is 80.5% Black and Latino, East Hartford (33% Black and Latino) and Windsor (36.7% Black and Latino), the other school districts in the 22 towns within the surrounding region consist of predominately white school students.²

By 1994, economic conditions had created two worlds around Hartford, Conn. and *Sheff* emerged as a national case on school desegregation. Based on population estimates from the 2013 U.S. Census Bureau, there were significant changes regarding African-American population growth and communities around Hartford. For example, in East Hartford, the African-American population was 26%, while the Latino population was 25.8%.³ *Sheff* provided an option of hope for families. There has been a sharp increase in the number of students taking advantage of the changes within education in Hartford. How has *Sheff* changed the landscape of education for students in and around Hartford?

**Sheff v. O’Neill Outcome**

The lawsuit’s goal was to provide an integrated, equal educational opportunity to both urban and suburban children. In 1996, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled 4 to 3 in favor of *Sheff*. The court stated that the separation of suburban and Hartford students violated the separation clause in the Connecticut Constitution, and that it was the State’s responsibility to provide equal educational opportunity for all students. At that time, the court did not provide any remedy or timeframe to address the limitations students were faced with. *Sheff* became a political challenge for the executive and legislative branches of the State’s government. The current

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Republican governor and Democratic led legislature did not want to alter boundary lines that divided city and suburban districts. There were a number of suggestions that included a united, regional, metropolitan school district. The Greater Hartford area has a bold and independent town and city government approach, and as a result the Metropolitan School District did not have support.

In 1997, the Connecticut State Legislature passed legislation “An Act Enhancing Educational Choices and Opportunities,” which encouraged voluntary action to support racial integration. This legislation also included measures that supported magnet and regional charter schools. The state’s Department of Education was faced with the responsibility of developing a five-year plan to assess and eliminate inequalities between school districts.\(^4\)

A hearing on the progress of the case in 2002 and negotiations began on a settlement, which was approved a year later. The goal was to have 30% of Hartford’ students of color in less segregated settings by 2007. In 2007, the 2003 settlement expired short of the goal. In 2008, a second settlement was negotiated, which included building magnet schools in the Hartford suburbs and increasing the number of openings for Hartford children in suburban public schools. There was also the inclusion of state run technical and agricultural high schools. The agreement carefully supported the wishes of suburban parents by offering opportunities for students from the city in their community.\(^5\) Children would be shielded from the realities of their community while in school during the day, however how would achievement be measured when those same children were forced to compete academically with children throughout the State?

In 2008, the State of Connecticut and the plaintiffs developed a 50 page document that provided a roadmap of how to address unmet goals through the creation of magnet charter schools. Today, approximately 19,000 students participate in the region’s school integration program, which are part of the Sheff decision. There are four types of programs: interdistrict magnet schools, open choice, reverse choice, and vocational high schools in the interdistrict cooperative. Over 17,000 students in Greater Hartford attended Sheff magnet schools during the 2013-2014 school year. There are 21 Hartford host magnet schools, 19 Capital Region Educational Complex (CREC) magnet schools, two magnet schools operated outside of Hartford,

\(^5\) http://www.schoolfunding.info/states/ct/lit_ct.php3
three magnet schools operated by Goodwin College, two magnet schools operated by Bloomfield Public Schools and one magnet school operated by East Hartford.⁶

The open choice option provides an opportunity for students in Hartford to attend a magnet school in a suburban town, and for suburban schools to increase diversity with participating Hartford students. Twenty-five school districts in Greater Hartford voluntarily participate in this program. In 2013-2014, approximately 2000 students participated in open choice. In 1996, open choice was known as Project Concern and was an outgrowth of Sheff. There is also a reverse choice program where public school students from suburban communities can apply to attend non-magnet public schools in Hartford.⁷ Charter schools also played an important role in the Sheff movement. There are 25 charter schools in Connecticut, including three in Hartford. The state of Connecticut has spent over $2 billion building magnet schools and allocates more than $100 million to charter school management companies. What looms as a bigger challenge is the presence of poverty and losing our children to the Department of Children and Families.

Economic Conditions

The plaintiffs in Sheff provided expert testimony that presented a four point proposition to describe education in Hartford. First, the social and economic conditions of the community place unusually high demands on the Hartford School District. Second, the resources were inadequate to educate children in the Hartford School District. Third, inadequate resources in the Hartford School District in comparison with greater resources in other Connecticut districts create a comparative disadvantage for Hartford students. Fourth, the inadequate resources in Hartford prevents it from offering an educational program for all of the children in conformity with commonly accepted standards of educational quality. This presents an absolute disadvantage for Hartford.⁸

Children comprise our most valued asset in Connecticut. In Hartford, it is fair to say they are challenged in terms of access to appropriate educational options. Children learn and take cues from their environment. Parents, teachers, and community leaders play a significant role in shaping the lives of children. Schools facilitate learning through the promotion of individual

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⁷ Ibid.
efforts, group participation, and applied experiences. The reservoirs for learning start at home and are influenced by the community interaction with events, which become the norms of life at an early age. Teachers are faced with the responsibility of shaping and molding children based on their family’s experiences. Teachers develop their teaching approach based on the composition of students. Schools as learning centers are an example of the whole exceeding the sum of its parts. If a child comes to school and is hungry and needs food, the basic need must be met before the child can truly be academically engaged.

In 1991, 23% of women who gave birth in Hartford were teenagers, nearly 2 1/2 times greater than the state wide average. Statewide, only 8.9% of mothers who give birth are teenagers. Research has shown that children born to adolescent mothers face developmental disadvantages in pre-school and elementary schools. The health status of a pregnant woman is linked to behavior and the intellectual development of the child. Parents who embrace risk factors like alcohol, drugs and smoking have an impact on the unborn child. When we consider the challenges of 2015, in Connecticut infants and toddlers disproportionately live in low-income families, leaving them vulnerable. In Connecticut, 70% of infants and toddlers live in poverty, while the national average is 23%.

Post Sheff, Hartford is one of the poorest cities in the nation, with three out of every ten families living below the poverty line. In contrast, the Hartford metropolitan area is ranked 32nd out of 318 metropolitan areas in total economic production and 7th out of 280 metropolitan statistical areas in per capita income. When employment is considered, the population of Hartford doubles each workday—commuters descend on the city to work and support their families. This population is well-educated and highly skilled. Approximately 82% of the region’s workers commute within the Greater Hartford region. Hartford plays a major role in the state’s economy—83% of the 120,000 jobs in Hartford are filled by commuters, 65% of Hartford residents with jobs are employed outside of Hartford, while 75% of Hartford workers who

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commute outside of Hartford make less than $40,000. Thus, the issue is not a lack of resources to support children in Hartford; it is more of an analysis of how money is spent.

Economic status plays a major role in performance and achievement. Children and families below the poverty line repeat grades at twice the rate of children above the poverty line, and they drop out of school at a much higher rate. In 1991, Hartford was the poorest city by comparison of surrounding towns of its residents living in poverty: Farmington 1.6%, Glastonbury 2.2%, and West Hartford 3.4%. Current data for 2015 presents similar outcomes for poverty in Greater Hartford: Farmington’s poverty rate is 4.5%, Simsbury’s is 2.2%, Glastonbury’s is 2.1%, and West Hartford’s ranges from 1.62 to 9.28% depending on zip codes. Hartford’s poverty rate, as of 2013, is 38%, which is the highest in the state. What has transpired is that more families have moved out of Hartford and the suburbs are experiencing more poverty, particularly when the economy suffered in the mid-2000s. Connecticut was very slow to recover. However, when you compare the poverty rates of surrounding towns to Hartford, it is hard to not see the difference (See Table One). Post Sheff, there has been an increase in poverty outside of Hartford. For example, East Hartford’s poverty rate is 10.3% and Manchester’s is 8%. Part of the challenge is if children are better educated, what happens to the parents?

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12 In Metro Hartford Progress Report, Snapshot of our Communities, 2014
14 Ibid.
15 See www.citydata.com/povertyreports-Connecticut
Children who are hungry cannot learn. In 1991, 63% of children in Hartford were eligible for free or reduced lunch meals three times a day, which was greater than the state average of 19.8%. In 2008-2009, the official enrollment was 21,587 students with over 92% qualifying for free or reduced lunch. That is an increase of 29% over a 17 year period.

The level of poverty truly sets the table for academic achievement. However, the city and state do not have a solution for poverty. The poverty level translates into a small tax base, with only 24% of the school’s budget coming from local revenues. The state of Connecticut provides 66% of funding and federal and special dollars amount to another 10%. Approximately 66% of adults in Hartford have a high school diploma.

### Educational Performance and Poverty

The correlation between familial stability, neighborhood, language and income plays a significant role in the academic performance of a child. The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) provide a score which gives educators a better understanding of a child’s level of ability in a subject area. The challenge from 1991-2015 is how to factor in the impact of reduced or free

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lunch, limited access in the community, and challenges at home. With this economic challenge, it is not a surprise that the scores on the CMT are lower in Hartford.

Family composition plays a significant role in academic achievement. In 2008, the graduation rate in Hartford was 29%. As of 2013, the graduation rate was 71%, which is below the 85.5% state average, but is still a significant improvement. Children who graduate from high school still face challenges if they plan to attend two- or four-year institutions. Frequently, they are required to take remedial courses in order to attend college.

Children struggle with achievement because of their environment; this fact has not changed in Hartford or the entire state of Connecticut. Education, child welfare, juvenile justice, non-profit support and community engagement are all part of the formula to support children in Hartford. In 2008-2009, 43% of students in Hartford lived in households where English was not the primary language. In the Greater Hartford region, there are more than 100 different languages spoken in homes. The city and region are more globalized than 24 years ago. There are approximately 40 languages spoken in the city of Hartford. It is easy to say that parents are not educated, however, many of them don’t speak the language. This is a difficult challenge. This contributes to over 14% of students coming to school not fluent in English.17

**Population Profile**

The statistical profile of Hartford remains robust and more diverse. However, the need to support at-risk students has not changed. In 1991, a typical Black or Latino child lived at home with only one parent or grandparent. The child would go to school, and receive free lunch due to poverty. Based on the census data of 2010, there were 124,775 people, 44,986 households, and 27,171 families residing in the city. The racial make-up of the city was 29.8% White, 38.7% Black, .6% Native American, 2.8% Asian, 0% Pacific Islander, 23.9% from other races and 4.2% from two or more races. 43.4% were Hispanic or Latino, primarily of Puerto Rican descent.18

The profile of children in the Hartford Public School system reflects a combination of social, economic and political factors that impact educational options. We generally view success as earning a degree and becoming a productive member of society. Children in Hartford are stressed, experience poverty, and often live with a single parent. In addition, there are health disparities in terms of access to healthcare. What complicates Hartford today is the significant

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17 In Metro Hartford Progress Report, Snapshot of our Communities, 2014
18 In American Fact Finder ([http://factfinder2.census.gov](http://factfinder2.census.gov)), United States Census Bureau
improvements as a result of *Sheff*. Approximately 47.5% of Hartford’s 21,458 minority students are currently enrolled in segregated settings. That is an improvement from 11% in 2008.19 The state has spent about $2.25 billion on new magnet and other educational programs over the last 10 years. The profile has expanded in terms of need and the student population is greatly at-risk. Our society appears to be less patient and our financial resources are limited. The family environment remains the most critical variable to determine the success of a child. In the United States, 13 million children live in poverty, including the 5.6 million living in extreme poverty. They are more involved in serious delinquency than children from families with higher incomes. For children who experience serious adjustment challenges in Connecticut, the Department of Children and Families becomes the option for intervention and support.

Throughout our society, the American experience cannot be predicted. Many poor children have become very successful through support and education. It is difficult to achieve in schools that are poorly staffed and under-funded. In 2009, Hartford students showed a 20% increase on standardized test scores since 2007, with 27.9% of students performing at their grade goal level. Still, this percentage is much lower than peer districts standardized test score increase at 36.3% and the statewide average of 62.3%. While 10th grade standardized test scores remained relatively flat, Hartford’s rate of academic improvement for grades 3-8 outpaced all peer districts, with an increase of 3.7 points over 2008. The state’s average increase was 2.5%.20

The reports provide improvement and hope for children in Hartford. Overall, Hartford continues to perform much lower on state standardized tests. Approximately 27.9% of Hartford students perform at grade goal level on state standardized test in 2009. That performance represents a 4.6 point increase since 2007 with a 20% improvement rate, compared to 10% improvement rate for peer districts over the same time. Hartford’s rate of improvement is based on the performance of students in grades 3-8. There is also encouraging data that indicated that Hartford’s K-8 students are improving at accelerating rates. Hartford’s 12 host magnet schools consistently outperform Hartford’s neighborhood schools. In 2007, 63.7% of all Hartford magnet schools students were performing at proficient level compared to 44.6% of Hartford’s

19 In http://wtnh.2014/12/07/07/demographics-complicate-hartford-desegregation
neighborhood school students. As neighborhood schools have improved over time, so have magnet schools at an increased rate.\textsuperscript{21}

Hartford’s graduate rate has increased at a consistent rate of 1.5% each year from 2010, until it reached 64.8% in 2012. This rate is slightly faster than the state’s. Overall, Hartford’s rate is 20 percentage points lower than the State of Connecticut.\textsuperscript{22} Nationally, college enrollment has increased from 1996-2012. Blacks and Latinos are starting college, however, they do not complete their degrees. In 2012, 9% of Blacks from a pool of 14% completed their degree, while Hispanics accounted for the same completion rate. For Whites, they accounted for 58% of college-age students, but 69% of young adults with Bachelor’s degrees.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{Resources}

One of the most contentious issues in public education is cost and who will pay for it. Expenditures per pupil and instructional expenditures are high priority issues. Post \textit{Sheff}, there has been significant progress on new facilities which include charter and magnet schools. Over the years, economic factors have been shared with surrounding communities, but Hartford remains the most challenged. The proposed budget for Hartford’s 2015-2016 academic year is $429.3 million. Approximately 78 positions will be cut across the system. The Hartford Public School administration faced a $24 million budget rescission when they crafted their budget.\textsuperscript{24}

There are personal demands and student needs—how should the budget be divided? In 1992, there were similar challenges with teachers not having graduate degrees and administrators with limited experience. These issues have been addressed but achievement is elusive when funds are limited. The economy in Connecticut has not been kind. The overall financial recovery and growth has been very slow in Connecticut.

The challenges in the Hartford School District are extraordinary and require the best teachers to take on this responsibility. With the demands of poverty, children who are stressed and parents who have nowhere to turn for help, the schools become the guardians for the city. Unfortunately, this scenario has not changed. Hartford needs resources, however, where will they come from?

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Report Christine Cambell & Betheny Gross, Improving Student Opportunities & Outcomes in Hartford Public School, June 2013.
\textsuperscript{23} http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/24more-hispanics-black-enrolling-in-college-but-lag-in-bachelors-degrees
\textsuperscript{24} http://www.courant.com/community/hartford/hc-hartford-schools-budget-0418-20150417-story.html
Educational Equality

There are examples where children can turn and experience the value of education. There are leaders in the community that are respected for their ability to influence and lead when there are challenges. Numerous institutions of higher learning have centers, institutes and majors in leadership development. The common denominator seems to be people who have great intentions, but discuss leadership and inequality in a vacuum. Racial inequality is not a theory, it is a reality. By the year 2020, children of color will be the majority. Populations of color will represent the majority by 2043. Sheff was a reality long before its time, but how much progress has really been made? In the Hartford Public schools system, the minority child is already the majority.

In order to address racial inequality, we generally look to racial balance as a strong component in educating children. We judge the educational competence of children based on mastery test scores. Are all children equal in terms of support and resources they receive at home? Does a mastery test take into consideration educational attainment of the parent(s)? How does the mastery test take into consideration the impact of poverty? Parents who are involved with their children affirm the importance of education. The most significant indicator for success is income in a family. With adequate income, school drop outs, graduation rates, college admissions and mastery tests will generally not be a problem. Inequality does not only influence a score on the mastery test, but it is also a barrier to life experiences.

At the heart of educational and racial inequality is the challenge of family incomes and racial isolation. Cultural differences in a city like Hartford are significant. Education and exposure to opportunities is a new and exciting world for children, but how will parent(s) respond? Sheff argued that for Whites and people of color, there was a need for increased racial and ethnic diversity to make education more effective.

Nationally, there is a correlation between educational inequity and teacher experience. Minority students across the United States face poor instruction and harsher discipline. African-American students, particularly males, are far more likely to be suspended or expelled. Black students make up 18% of the students, but 35% of students suspended once and 39% of students expelled.\textsuperscript{25} We do a great job describing the challenges of inequality, however, the impact of inequality continues to flourish. The new battlefield must be expanded. What role should two

year- and four-year institutions play in engaging children in K-12? The boundary lines around Hartford are more inclusive in some ways but remain world’s apart. There has been significant movement post Sheff, but inequality in education cannot be addressed without intervention at the family level. It is very different to have hope when an individual is dependent upon others for survival.

Conclusion

The challenge to better educate children in Hartford and similar urban school districts across the country is beyond crisis. Many states have grown skeptical because of the enormous expense. Connecticut has been responsive, however, addressing educational inequality is not cheap. The cost of schools, staff, teachers, security, special needs services and a strategy that works remains elusive. A significant commitment has been made through choice programs and building new magnet and charter schools. When the time elapsed on the Sheff agreement, the new order agreed to require the state to pay to open four new magnet schools, offer more Hartford students seats in vocational-technical high schools, and send more children to suburban schools. The key to the Sheff decision is to change the environment and expose children by crossing district lines to education. There are concerns about magnet schools and charter schools in terms of how they discipline Black children. The outcomes of Sheff are not perfect, however, we must not lose sight of educating children in public schools in their neighborhoods. What must be added to the important mission is attitude adjustments from teachers, professors, and administrators nationally. Children of color can learn and achieve with love and support. The Sheff decision will continue to re-write the future of Hartford because the minority student is now the majority.
Black and Brown Hartford: The Retention and Graduation of College Students of Color  
(A Brief)  
Peter Rosa, J.D.

The National Student Clearinghouse now serves as a public policy instrument that collects relatively accurate and consistent data regarding student college attendance patterns in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. Through this tool, advocates and scholars alike can get a clearer and more reliable snapshot of how our students are being served by the educational establishment, including our students of color. No longer will phenomena such as summer “melt” (college non-enrollment after declaring plans to attend) confound what is understood about college attendance. The Clearinghouse counts only actual enrollment and not the intention to enroll as reported to the high schools upon graduation, a more accurate if imperfect picture can be presented for both the sending high school and the receiving college, and since the Clearinghouse follows individual students longitudinally, actual retention and graduation rates can be tracked. (The term “retention” is used here rather than “persistence” in order to emphasize the onus on institutions for keeping their students.) This is significant because after decades of efforts and relative success in providing equitable access to students of color, it has become evident that equitable retention and graduation of Black and Brown college students are a different matter altogether and requires attention.

This is true for Black and Brown Hartford. This brief focuses on one intentional effort—altering the campus climate—needed at the collegiate level to remedy the current disparity still experienced by students of color who graduate from high schools like those in Hartford.

This challenge is outlined in a recent Connecticut Mirror article (Steller, 2015). Utilizing the most recent Clearinghouse data, which ended in 2013 and began in 2006, Steller calculates that just 22.5 percent of the Hartford graduates that went on to college eventually earned a college degree within a six-year time-frame. Due to varying circumstances—the student tendency to drop out, change majors, or enroll in less than a full-time schedule, thereby interrupting the smooth flow of their studies—six years is the conventional time-frame used to measure the eventual attainment of a four-year degree. Similarly, three years is the conventional time-frame used to measure the attainment of a two-year degree for full-time community college students.
Steller found that when individual “neighborhood” high schools are examined (i.e., those schools that, unlike their magnet school counterparts, serve only Hartford residents with little exception), as much as 40 percent of Hartford graduates never go on to higher education. He also calculated that more than 30 percent of those who do go on to college eventually drop out before completing their studies. These are alarming findings, especially for those interested in higher educational equity for students of color. While these figures are reflective of Hartford high school graduates overall, the fact is that they reflect what is happening disproportionately to students of color because the vast majority of Hartford students are indeed students of color.

This information is readily available through the data portal on the website of the Connecticut State Department of Education which utilizes data from the National Clearinghouse according to high school. For example, a review of Weaver High School’s data reveals a six-year college graduation rate of 16 percent. For Bulkeley High School, the six-year college graduation rate is 18 percent. Both schools are proxies for what is happening to Black and Brown Hartford students. It is clear that much has to be done to arrive at equitable rates of completion for Hartford students of color. The high school proxies for race are reflected in the fact that Weaver has a largely African-American student body (90.4 percent), while Bulkeley has a largely Latino student body (66.2 percent). Accordingly, these rates disproportionately impact youth of color and must be dealt with by both the high schools and the colleges. Focusing on the colleges, the question is what can be done to reverse this alarming statistic.

A study reported in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2006) posits that there are actions that should be taken by colleges and universities to favorably impact the graduation rates of students of color. Pointing to the graduation record at elite colleges (e.g., Harvard University, Amherst College, Princeton University, Wesleyan University, Williams College, among others—each with Black graduation rates of 93 to 96 percent), the journal’s authors suggest that it is the college’s “race sensitivity” that is such a critical factor. Race sensitivity is manifested in what is commonly referred to as “campus climate.” Thus, adjusting campus climate may facilitate higher graduation rates for Black (and Brown) students.

As used in this study, campus climate is defined as the intentional actions taken by the college to keep its students. These actions often include offering solid orientation programs, retention programs, first-year experience programs, and financial aid options, each with a sensitivity to the unique needs of students of color. Providing an example of such a need, the
authors point out that students of color at elite institutions are more likely to experience economic anxiety than their white peers. Over 69 percent of the Black students surveyed pointed to the challenge of financing as a major stressor compared to 43 percent of their white peers. There may be many reasons for this, including the likelihood that on average, students of color come from less affluent backgrounds. However, a college should be sensitive to such dynamics and respond accordingly.

The report also suggests that students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) tend to feel more comfortable at their institutions. Feelings of “fitting in” generally help the cause of retention and graduation. This benefit of HBCUs may be absent for Latino students since there are very few “Historically Latino Colleges and Universities,”—less than a handful nationally. The closest parallel to the HBCUs are what the federal government defines as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and these tend to be community colleges (68 percent of the total) with all the challenges, financial and otherwise, that exist at the community college sector.

An institution can be identified as an HSI with as little as 1,000 enrolled Latino students, or whose enrollment consists of at least 25 percent Latino students. Hartford’s own Capital Community College was Connecticut’s first HSI by meeting the latter enrollment criterion. Unfortunately, there is little known about the retention record of HSIs, although it is known that community colleges, for various reasons, experience a lower graduation rate than do four-year colleges regardless of their student body’s racial characteristics. The National Council of La Raza reports that while HSIs represent just five percent of all U.S. institutions of higher learning, they enroll a little more than half (51 percent) of all Latino college students in the country (Kohler and Lazarin, 2007).

Continuing along the line of campus climate, the Journal of Higher Education published a study that bolsters the concept as a determinant of college graduation. In this study, Fischer (2007) found that the availability and involvement of Black and Brown college students in college extracurricular activities tends to benefit their retention rates. On the other hand, negative perceptions of the campus’ racial environment undermine “minority satisfaction [thereby] increasing the likelihood of leaving.” Both of these tendencies speak to the strategy of taking campus climate into account and altering it as necessary.
The concept of campus climate was actually incorporated in Connecticut higher education public policy 30 years ago under what was known as the Minority Advancement Program (MAP). Under MAP, financial incentives were available to those public colleges and universities whose individual plans for student diversity yielded an increase in the enrollment of students of color. Other MAP strategies included the establishment of the Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation (CONNCAP) program – the first state-funded Upward Bound-like program in the nation, and a higher education Affirmative Action in Employment fund to be distributed by affirmative action officers at their colleges in support of the recruitment and upward mobility of faculty and administrators of color.

Later, this employment strategy was replaced by another student strategy, presumably to help promote the retention of students of color—the Connecticut College Access and Success (CONNCAS) program. Significantly, there were two advocacy organizations that played a role in calling for a race-sensitive strategic plan, and later developing it. These organizations were African-Americans in Higher Education in Connecticut (AAHEC) and the Connecticut Association of Latinos/as in Higher Education (CALAHE). Today, only CALAHE still exists.

At the time that MAP was established, each institution had to create a plan that established Black and Brown enrollment goals. Utilizing individual college goals that sought to diminish by half within five years a particular college’s racial disparity in enrollment, the Connecticut Department of Higher Education would issue incentive funds to reward the college’s success in meeting its enrollment goals. Those that did not succeed would not receive incentive funds.

The strategy to address and change campus climate as necessary proved to be fundamental. The oversight entity, the Department of Higher Education, was responsible for reporting on each institutional plan. This has changed somewhat today. During the 2014 legislative session of the Connecticut General Assembly, the now Office of Higher Education still has some oversight and reporting responsibilities but it presumably carries less administrative burden. It is not clear what impact this change will have on the MAP programs and on the cause of Black and Brown student retention and graduation, but it merits continual scrutiny.

What is clear is that something needs to be done to address the issue of low college Black and Brown student completion rates as reflected in Hartford’s six-year graduation rate. Thus, the next focus on higher educational equity has to be student retention and graduation and how
campus climate should be altered as necessary. While K-12 education continues to undergo reform, the higher education sector has to adjust to assure that the major credential into today’s economy—a college degree—is attainable for everyone, including those who continue to experience inequity, those from circumstances similar to Black and Brown Hartford.

References


Hartford is a city of significant diversity that is challenged in terms of its economic development. People of African descent have had a presence in Hartford since the 1700s and play a very important role in the development of the city. The Black community is diverse and reflects centuries of migration from the South. The migration road for African-Americans was one of pain and challenges. The movement began with the arrival of Jerry Jacobs, the first recorded African-American land owner who helped establish an underground railway from the South to the North.26

From 1910 to 1930, there was a significant shift in the demographics of northern cities. This was known as the Great Migration, and a mass movement for Southern African Americans in search of jobs and new opportunities. In Hartford, the population increased 140% between 1910 and 1920, one of the largest percentages of the Northern cities.27 The challenge for all of the new arrivals was employment. African American, Italian and Polish settlers all competed for jobs. The Italian and Polish settlers were usually hired over African-Americans. In addition, the West Indian population increased with the immigration of professionals from the Caribbean Islands in the 1960s and 1970s. Hartford’s Black population tripled between 1915 and 1925 in response to industrial needs of World War I.

In the 1960s and 1970s, economic challenges confronted many northern cities and racial rioting occurred as a result of poor housing, high unemployment and crime. On July 12, 1970, New Bedford, Massachusetts experienced riots. On July 31, 1970, Hartford, Connecticut exploded in violence between African-Americans and Puerto Ricans. In each of the cities, three to four days of rioting ended with sections of the city shut down because of confrontations among racial groups.28

Fifty-two years ago, many Americans faced a War on Poverty that was declared by then President Lyndon B. Johnson. The struggle centered on inequality and the need to improve health, skills, jobs, education, and access to resources to help build cities and rural areas. The effort to address poverty and support families of all racial groups has been consistent. The

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26 See Timeline of people of African descent in Hartford, RSA project of the Institute for Community Research 1991
percent of the population in poverty, when measured to include tax and other benefits, has declined from 25.8% in 1967 to 16% in 2012.29

There has been a significant effort to address poverty in the United States. In 2011, it is estimated that $1.03 trillion was spent on the federal government to combat poverty. Based on data from the Center for Medicare Services and the Oxford handbook for State and Local Government Finance, budget committee staff determined at least an additional $283 billion in state contributions to those same federal programs. The programs totaled 83 overlapping federal welfare programs including SSI, family planning, summer food stamps programs, Indian education, federal work-study and rural education achievement programs.30 In 2012, there were 49.7 million Americans below the poverty line, which included 13.4 million children.

The persistence of poverty in Hartford has had an impact on economic development and the future outlook for the community. In 2013, President Barack Obama presented his plan to designate a number of high poverty urban, rural and tribal communities as Promise Zones. The federal government would become a partner and invest in communities with the goal of creating jobs, stimulating investments, increasing economic activity, providing educational opportunities and reducing crime. The Promise Zone designation partners the federal government with local leaders who are addressing community challenges. Promise Zone designees will receive:

- An opportunity to engage five AmeriCorps Vista members in the Promise Zone’s work;
- A Federal liaison to help designees navigate federal programs
- Preference for certain competitive federal grants;
- Zone tax incentives

As of April 2015, there are eight, second-round Promise Zone designations. By the end of 2016, it is expected that 20 communities will receive a Promise Zone designation.31

30 In report CRS: Congressional research service, welfare spending the largest item in the federal budget, 2013.
In Hartford, approximately a three-mile area—Clay Arsenal Northeast and Upper Albany neighborhoods—was named a federal Promise Zone designation. Out of 17 Hartford neighborhoods, Clay Arsenal has the highest rates of obesity, heart disease, infections and infant mortality. The community suffers from pervasive poverty; the per capita income for residents in this area is $12,099, compared to $16,286 citywide.\textsuperscript{32}

Some of the most important nonprofits have agreed to participate as partners in the Hartford Promise Zone. What is really at stake is providing comprehensive support for children and parents. Adults will need an education and training with results focused on a long-term solution for permanent independence and community stability.

**Table 1: Metro Hartford Employment Snapshot**

- 70% of the unemployed residents in the region live in the suburbs
- 3,000 people return from prison to the region each year
- Over half return to the city of Hartford
- 29% of the unemployed in the region are between 16-24 years-old
- 7,600 Hartford residents are looking for work and cannot find jobs
- 25,000 suburban residents are looking for work and cannot find jobs

Table 2: Unemployment by City in the State of Connecticut

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Source: CREC Town Profile, 2008, Hartford

Based on the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average unemployment rate nationally is 5.5%. In 2006, 16.8% of workers in Connecticut received wages that were below the poverty wage, which is $20,000 for a family of four. In 2008, Connecticut had the highest per capita and household income overall. The median household state income is $65,859, and the median household income was $26,150.
Editorial:
Promises, Paychecks, and Ownership Opportunities
Living with Desperation in a City that is Constantly Changing
Amos Smith, MSW

Hartford is a fascinating city that attracts tens of thousands of people every year. It is the State’s Capitol. It is a center of culture, arts, and sports in Connecticut. The city has had a unique role in welcoming immigrants and migrants from countries in Europe, Caribbean, the Southern United States, and the African Diaspora. Hartford can also be described as it was in the Promise Zone (PZ) Application, as a city where the highest rates for obesity, heart disease, infections and infant mortality is co-located in three or four of its 17 neighborhoods. Within those 17 neighborhoods, Hartford, like many others cities, has managed to find that most of its poorest citizens reside in these PZ neighborhoods. Promise Zone neighborhood residents barely make $12,000 annually by comparison to a much higher incomes citywide. In light of some of these challenges, Hartford remains a great place to live and work if you live downtown, or in the south and west ends of the city. While many of these neighborhoods in the North End or PZ rest on the edge of poverty and desperation, Hartford will celebrate the opening of a new minor league baseball stadium right on the edge of these neighborhoods. It is my hope that city and state policy leaders will continue its expansion into the communities adjacent to and north of the stadium.

Isn’t it curious how some people do well all the time while others barely stay above water? Some neighborhoods thrive while others remain perpetual places where the worse dysfunctions persist e.g., gun violence, murder, infant mortality, addiction, high rates of diabetes, teen-pregnancy, school failure, early entry into juvenile and criminal justice systems, and drug markets. How do all of these things get affixed to Black/African American communities in Hartford’s North End and other cities? What, how, and when will the Black community in Hartford marshal its collective strength to have its interest served as every other group seems to be able to do? Keeping promises are important – whatever happened to the promise of the Neighborhood Revitalization Zones?

The Black community, like many of its people, have been living on broken promises that provide seeds of alienation and mistrust from traditional power structures, the results of which are easily observed in lack of civic participation. We know that neighborhoods grow or become stagnated when they are overlooked and under-developed. The Black communities that compose
the Promise Zone neighborhoods will only grow if they are viewed as places that can grow the tax base, attract jobs, and incentivize development. Within the context of the new promises, Blacks must become a major part of the growth strategy of these neighborhoods.

City leadership has an obligation to cultivate a diverse group of investors, but certainly a group of Black investors for these Promise Zone communities if none already exist. Black people must become owners in this city in greater numbers than what currently exist. When the deals are being cut, it is not good enough to just say that there will be jobs for city residents because jobs come and go. When jobs leave the community, Black people are still among the last hired and first fired when the cutting begins.

Sustained investments over time in the form of meaningful work and ownership opportunities tend to drive other important investments in a community. When Blacks are not opening businesses (with the exclusion of barbershops and hair salons), we dilute our own economic strength. When we are not included as deal makers, we become relegated to job seekers. In order to ameliorate the issues that negatively impact the Black community such as poor birth outcomes, poverty, and long-term unemployment, we must develop a working economy. Tens of millions of dollars flow through the hands of poor and working-class Black people annually, but their dollar takes a one way trip out of the community. When money leaves the community on a one way trip, the community suffers. Communities thrive when the people reinvest in where they live. When we do not have sufficient numbers of businesses in Black communities to invest and reinvest, we increase dependence on someone other than ourselves to employ and feed us. In a land of plenty there is enough to go around for all Americans, even those locked into communities that are consistently overlooked and beset by desperation.

The only way to guarantee more sustained support in the Black community is to ensure that the levers of control are in the hands of not just a business and political class of leaders, but resident investors with interest in the community. This will ensure that money is exchanged within the community more than once which will enable growth and expansion of new business development. This means we must invest, support, and bet on each other.

The politics of the Black community must intersect with the permanent uplift of communities where Black people live. If white politicians support the growth and development of Black communities, we should support them. Hence, the problem with being Black and poor is directly related to too few votes, and the absence of too few Black millionaires to cultivate and
leverage investments in things that matter to Black people. People with money invest in what they know and care about. They invest in things of interest and they support people with whom they will forever be affiliated, associated, and linked. Some Black class and income conscious individuals may not like being linked to poor people even when there is shared ethnic and racial identity. Some of us have tried to escape the association of being Black, but in an ethnic and race conscious society Black people are inextricably linked. It matters less that some of us were dropped in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Louisiana, South Carolina or Virginia. Black people must cultivate a passion for ownership and entrepreneurships.

With regard to building community, what is the function of the mayor in addressing longstanding issues and grievances of Black people such as health, education, economics, business development and housing? Mayors can give strategic guidance and substantial leadership to things that matter in the lives of people. With regard to matters of electoral politics, Hartford is unique. Hartford was distinguished some time ago when it elected Thirman L. Milner. Mayor Milner was the first Black Mayor and the first in New England. Mayors are charged by the electorate to maintain a permanent focus on the interest of the city and to ensure a vibrant future for its citizens. Mayors can choose to make a discernible difference in places where new business development is needed, or continue a line of investments as those that came before them. A mayor can make new policy decisions and invest in new things that may transform life for some of the less fortunate. Mayors can also go in a different direction and select new developers as his partners, and can choose to target new neighborhoods for public and private investments.

Hartford Mayors have not all been equal and have not had the same access to the levers of power that the three most recent mayors have had because of Charter Revision. The current mayor in Hartford can begin anew, and take the opportunity to make critical investment in the North and Northwest corridors of the city. Pedro Segarra and Eddie Perez, both former Mayors’ of Hartford, served the City of Hartford under Charter Revision that provided greater administrative powers to the Office of the Mayor for the foreseeable future. Mayor Mike Peters, Carrie Saxon Perry, and Thirman Milner were elected before the City Charter was revised, and therefore the locus of control for making things happen was shared between the Mayor and Governing Counsel. This is interesting because other cities of similar size have not had the diversity in City Hall as Hartford. All Mayors have opportunities to make choices about who
they will partner with, what project they will tackle, and where they will focus their time and influence.

With that in mind, targeting Promise Zone communities for business development would be among the smart new choices that a mayor can and should make. The ability to lever already existing development going on downtown, including the anticipated move to relocate University of Connecticut from West Hartford to Downtown, the new mayor can make a substantial contribution to the Black communities, Black people, and the City of Hartford. Mayors can often be heard describing the challenges of leading a city but within those challenges are opportunities to cultivate entrepreneurialism, inspire new partnerships, and make new business leaders.

Over time, the lack of multiple strategies and incentives to build strategic economic drivers in the North End of Hartford is what ails North End communities. The absence of such has left few avenues for upward mobility for residents. The absences of welcoming spaces for businesses to flourish serve as inhibitors to creating successful businesses in the North End. Clean and esthetically pleasing structures that are safe for patrons are required for businesses to be incubated and grow. Every time someone is killed in these neighborhoods it provides a disincentive to open a business. Government must be at the vanguard of helping neighborhoods manage its collective trauma. Government can help to ensure that sufficient incentives exist in a community for business by providing the better tax incentives in these communities than they do for downtown businesses. Government can also help poor communities by becoming more business savvy in identifying common long-term interest. Better and more concentrated efforts must be targeted to address school dropout and individual performance. When a person fails in school, it hurts the community. School failure is the seed to all other ills and evils in community and will often lead to early death or imprisonment.

We must look at the cause, conditions, and potential solutions of student/school failure as an issue that requires intervention by the family and the community. We should start with using already known strategies coupled with investments that work to build and grow communities. The unveiling of activities associated with Hartford’s recent designation as a Promise Zone provides opportunities for people who live and work in these neighborhoods to have a new start. The PZ offers the next best thing to real investment opportunities for people to build a stake in shared prosperity. It’s a short-term strategy, but a mayor working together with legislative
leaders can incentivize new and longer term opportunities by working with state and federal
governments. Growing jobs for neighbor residents is a fine short-term goal, but the only
permanent solution to arresting poverty and destitution is to ensure that businesses can develop
in those neighborhoods. When people are connected to the means of production and self-
sufficiency, they stand the chance to heal and recover from a history of alienation,
disenfranchisement, trauma, and discrimination based on the absence of wealth and opportunity.

The charge of Black people in Hartford is to have consistent years of extraordinary voter
turnout. Black people in Hartford must develop the habit of voting. In order to move the
government, one must vote. A critical mistake in the Black community has been too little
attention to voter turnout, particularly in communities of poverty and desperation. Black
communities in Hartford and other cities leave too many eligible voters on the sidelines.
Inspiring people to vote, and turning out the vote must become as essential as church building for
Black people. We must work night and day to ensure our people vote. It is clear today more than
ever before. Though barriers are being erected to stymie Blacks and poor people from voting, it
should not be a deterrent. By comparison to what those who came before us did, our challenges
are minuscule because they are mostly related to effort and inspiration.

In the past, our grandparents had to risk death, dismemberment, bombing, castrations,
and being fired from a job. Our generations are beset mostly by transportation and ignorance. We
must learn to articulate a powerful case for voting that’s more compelling than the forces
attempting to dissuade Black people from voting. This is a cause that is going unclaimed in our
community. We do just enough to keep the current system going but having part-time volunteers
is no longer good enough to effectively address the needs, information gaps, and knowledge for a
people whose fight today is clearly a cerebral one. Our vote is intimately related to our interests.
We should always have interests in voting. It is not good for democracy when our people are on
the sidelines. It is not good business when we do not use our power as a voting block to demand
that which is in our interests. The Black community like all other communities must take the lack
of participation in the voting booths as among the first issues to be addressed when developing
an attitude of ownership.

Today, we need politics and business to be inextricably linked, instead of or in concert
with, politics and faith. Simply stated, we need more business leaders, and we need them to hire
Black people. The history of economics and politics provides enough data to show that having
Black elected officials only is not good enough to deal with long-term and entrenched issues that impact Black communities. Rebuilding the Black/African American community must be done using a new paradigm. How we see ourselves and our communities must begin with a new and an unparalleled relationship between business ownership, finance, politics and faith. We can do this by remembering the messages from the past. Important messages that we seem to have forgotten can provide the best lessons, they are contained in our history of struggle—the Emancipation Proclamation, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And, now, we struggle to create a vision as well as a blueprint for our children, a future that is restorative and one they can embrace.

The struggle for this generation is to become builders again. We must stand guard to ensure that we become the teachers for our children again. We must re-create places of refuge when others are wounded. We need safe places to plan, heal, and recover from the steady and persistent pounding of structural, systemic, and silent forms of racism. We must build new systems and partnerships that allow for a true distinction of who is a friend, and who is foe. We must teach the history of what actually happened during the Presidency of our first African American President. We must own his legacy together. It is but for his election that we have seen race hatred and bigotry emerge in plain sight. We must teach this history to our children. They must savor it, and use it as the steam needed to power ingenuity and creativity for a new generation, because Black Lives Matter. More importantly, we must remain mindful that it is difficult to build institutions that nurture, support, and produce healthy Black communities when much of the Talented Ten no longer live in these communities. When we become alienated from each other it makes it easier for corporate and political interest to lock us out and create reservation type communities that only brings death, however slow it might be. It becomes easier for governments to ignore potential dangers in the environment where Black people live. The proverbial question of, “What can a mayor do for poor Black people?” is very different from “What can we do for ourselves?”
In 2012, during my campaign for the U.S. Senate, I spent a day meeting voters and shaking hands outside the C-Town on Barbour Street. The folks I met that day were exceedingly nice and interested in hearing my pitch asking for their vote (or at least nice enough to pretend to be interested). I had a great day, but it struck me that nearly everyone I met was openly skeptical about everything I said. Initially, I was surprised that so many people just assumed I was trying to sell a bill of goods. But as I thought about it, I realized their skepticism wasn’t about me. It was about the generations of candidates who asked for their votes and disappeared after election day.

The failure to “save” this area of town is obvious to anyone familiar with Hartford’s North End. Historically, when city and state leaders talked about a Hartford comeback, they talked exclusively about the insurance industry or dreams of another professional sports franchise. Too often, community and business leaders were looking out for the people who commute to Hartford, overlooking those who actually lived there. Majority Black neighborhoods like Clay Arsenal, Northeast and Upper Albany were neglected by leaders who were either unwilling or unable to turn things around. Today, after half a century of decline, Hartford’s North End faces an unemployment rate approaching 30% and half of families living in poverty.

It was with all this in mind that I made a promise to not forget the people I talked with that day outside C-Town. Progress would take time, I told them, but I would be there for them in the Senate.

So that’s why nearly three years ago, I sat down with community and government leaders and suggested that Hartford pursue a federal Promise Zone designation. Promise Zones are economically challenged neighborhoods with unique, innovative strategies to bring all sorts of community players together to set a new direction for families. The handful of neighborhoods that get this designation essentially get to cut the line for federal grants that support education, economic development, and housing programs. I knew that this would be a game changer for residents of the North End, so I dove into the effort head first, even hiring a staff member to keep pushing when I was in Washington.

After years of organizing, planning and prodding federal officials, our efforts paid off last April when North Hartford was officially granted a Promise Zone designation. Fifty years after
the construction of I-84 separated the neighborhood from the rest of the city—physically and economically—we finally had a coalition of local, state and federal governments, local community groups, and businesses working hand-in-hand to turn things around. In less than a year, the Promise Zone has brought over $1 million in federal dollars—a good start to making a difference in people’s lives. We’ve already seen new money for hyperlocal housing and job training programs, mental health services for residents, and long abandoned industrial sites will soon be redeveloped to employ North End residents. A North End renaissance, sparked by the Promise Zone, will attract more businesses to open their doors and provide good paying jobs.

Our work is only just beginning, and we have much more to do to make certain the Promise Zone succeeds. I will continue working closely with Mayor Bronin, the City Council, and community groups and local charities to ensure we’re doing all the right things to help those who live in the North End escape poverty and live happy, healthy lives. As I told folks gathered at the community meeting I convened at the Parker Memorial Community Center recently, this Promise Zone will not be a success unless it creates jobs—and not just any jobs, but jobs in the North End for people who live in the North End.
Breakdown: An Examination of African American Population in Hartford (A Brief)  
Maris Dillman

Many factors contribute to the current state of a city. These factors also contribute to the future progress or decline of that particular city. Ignoring the facts, which can be analyzed in order to find the source of the problem, will only delay the much needed change to facilitate progress and growth. Several of these factors include education, safety, employment, health and mortality, economic status, housing, and food. Understanding these major issues and how they breakdown in each demographic and location in Hartford will assist with targeting key underlying issues that can be assessed to promote positive change.

First, we must understand and break down the demographics of the city of Hartford. The American Community Survey analyzed data gathered from the United State Census and other reports every year. To get a more accurate picture of a community, the Mayor of Hartford outsourced a firm, APB Associates, to collect data from 1990, 2000, and 2010, as well as from 2009 to 2011. The purpose of collecting this data was to evaluate the current socioeconomic status, population, employment, housing, educational, and financial status of the city of Hartford. The goal is to utilize this data as a tool to address major concerns of the city of Hartford and find solutions that benefit those areas of concern.

The United States Census estimated that the total population of the city of Hartford in 2010 was 124,775 (census.org, 2010). According to the U.S. Census in 2010, 43% of the total population of Hartford was Hispanic, (census.org, 2010), with the largest ethnic population being Hispanic/Latino. The total Latino population in Hartford is approximately 53,900 people. Seventy-seven percent of the total Latino population is Puerto Rican, 5% is Peruvian, 3% is Columbian, 4% is Mexican, 4% is Dominican Republican, and 6% is other, (Becker,P., 2014, p.4). Out of the total Hispanic/Latino population of 53,900 that reside in Hartford, 50,200 were born outside the United States (p.5). Between 1990 and 1999, 11,200 came to the United States from either Puerto Rico or other countries. Seven percent, or 2,300 individuals, were not United States citizens. Thirty-eight percent of the total population of Hartford speaks Spanish or a dialect of Spanish (p.7).
When it comes to education in Hartford, nearly half, or 46%, of the Hispanic population does not attain a high school diploma. Twenty-eight percent of the Hispanic population of Hartford is able to graduate or receive a G.E.D. Only 7% of the Hispanic population of Hartford receives a college education. The low high school graduation rate amongst the Hispanic population effects the ability to qualify for employment and adds to the overall poverty level of Hartford.

Compared to the other major ethnic groups in Hartford, the Hispanic population is second in unemployment between 2009-2011 with 38,900, or 21%, of the total Hartford population. Comparably, the percentage of people not having a high school education in Hartford is 22% of the population.

The neighborhood with the largest Hispanic population in Hartford is the Behind the Rocks neighborhood. According to the 2010 United States Census, 72% of the population of the Behind the Rocks neighborhood was of Hispanic ethnicity, (data.hartford.org, 2010).

*Source: 2009-2011 ACS and United States Census*
Table 2

The poverty level correlates with unemployment and lack of a high school education. The Hispanic population of Hartford has the lowest median income amongst the three dominant ethnic groups at $23,200. The Hispanic population of Hartford also makes up 41% of those living in poverty in the city of Hartford, the most out of the three dominant ethnic groups. According to the 2010 United States Census, 30% of the Behind the Rocks neighborhood are single female family households that have lived for a year or more below the poverty line (data.hartford.org, 2010). The 2010 United States Census data also reveals that 22% of the Behind the Rocks population is under 18 and living below poverty level. The per capita income for the Behind the Rocks neighborhood in 2010 was $19,876 (data.hartford.gov, 2010).

Sixty-eight percent of housing in the neighborhood is rental occupied. Only 32% of the housing is owner occupied (data.hartford.gov, 2010). However, only 6% of the housing in this neighborhood is vacant or abandoned.

*Source: 2009-2011 ACS and United States Census*
There has been an elevated spike in the growth of the Hispanic population in Hartford from 1990 and 2000. This spike in population correlates with the rising levels of poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and lack of income.

The second largest group of people based on racial or ethnic background are Black Non-Hispanic. According to Mayor Segarra’s 2014 Demographic Report and the United States Census, 35% of the total population of Hartford was Black Non-Hispanic in 2010 (hartford.gov, 2014). The largest ancestry group in Hartford are Jamaican, making up 9% of the population of Hartford, (hartford.gov, 2014). Sub-Saharan African ancestry makes up about 2% of the population of Hartford, (hartford.gov, 2014) According to Mayor Segarra’s Demographic Report from 2014, “the most significant sending country is Jamaica, with more than a quarter of the total immigrants including a proportionate number of children and adults,” (hartford.gov, 2014).

The Blue Hills neighborhood in Hartford is predominately African-American, making up 90.1% of the total population. Compared to the Blue Hills neighborhood, the African-American population only accounts for 38.2% of Hartford’s overall population. It is even less when equated to the 10.1% of Connecticut’s population of African-Americans.

*Source: 2009-2011 ACS and United States Census*
Table 4

Race Representation in Connecticut as of 2013

*Source: American Fact Finder, United States Census 2009-2013.

Table 5

Blue Hills CDP, CT Racial Breakdown

*Source: American Fact Finder, United States Census 2009-2013
According to the American Fact Finder of the United States Census, 10% of the Blue Hills neighborhood of Hartford over the age of 25 has no high school diploma, (census.gov, 2013). The number of people without a high school diploma may relate to the 12.3% of people living below poverty level in the Blue Hills neighborhood of Hartford, (census.gov, 2013). This percentage of people without a high school diploma also correlates with the 10.7% of people accepting SNAP benefits and the 9.5% of people that are unemployed in the Blue Hills neighborhood of Hartford.

Table 6

*Source: American Fact Finder, United States Census 2009-2013.*
According to the United States Census, only four homicides occurred in the Blue Hills neighborhood of Hartford between 2008 and 2012 (census.gov, 2012). All four homicides were African-American. Out of the four neighborhoods that are predominately African-American in Hartford, the Northeast neighborhood had a total of twenty homicides (census.gov, 2012). Nineteen of these homicides were African-Americans (census.gov, 2012).

*Source: American Fact Finder, United States Census 2009-2013.*
The neighborhoods of Behind the Rocks and Blue Hills of Hartford may be different in racial and ethnic make-up, but share many similarities in terms of their needs. Both neighborhoods are facing challenges with lacking basic education, high unemployment, lack of health insurance, and individuals and families living below poverty. These basic needs must be addressed to help rebuild the neighborhoods of Hartford before anything else.

Education is key to assisting an individual with employment, creating income to provide for themselves and a family if need be. Employment can lower the need for public assistance, provide benefits, and help reduce the number of people living below poverty level. In turn, criminal activity may be indirectly reduced by education and employment. Individuals that have a high school education or higher may have employment opportunities that may reduce the instance of living in a mode of survival and desperation for scarce resources. Raising the rate of employment may also assist with home ownership, adding to the tax pool for the cities’ budget. More money in the Hartford’s budget will increase the number of projects to help revitalize the city such as new schools, parks, businesses, transportation, and safer and cleaner neighborhoods.
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So What’s the Problem?

Even a superficial investigation into current economic conditions quickly reveals that childhood poverty is increasing. Our adult socio-economic issues are creating lasting issues for our youth, resulting in a vicious and continuous cycle of poverty. Information on the economic costs of poverty is certainly in no short supply. However, with the ever-intensifying role of the media on our attitudes about particular subsections of American society, it is crucial that we heavily consider our sources of information. The most accepted sources typically contain heavy helpings of the most alarming data one can extract from available study results. We trust these sources because it is generally agreed that, “numbers don’t lie”. However, the summative effect of this pointed data, regardless of its validity, is ultimately a catalyst to the aforementioned vicious and continuous cycle of poverty.

When it comes to poor black youth and the issues they face, there are two dominant strategies employed to analyze their socio-economic positioning. There are those who approach the situation by identifying poor black youth, especially males as being at risk of a myriad of societal dangers that will ultimately result in some form of failure. This approach characterizes the subject as a set of problems that desperately require a solution. The other dominant strategy also identifies poor black youth as a set of problems in need of addressing. The nuance to this approach, however, is that the perceived problems are seen as a threat that needs to be eliminated in order to protect a universally accepted way of life. The problem with both approaches is that poor black youth, especially males, are seen as “The Problem.” They are not afforded the luxury of having problems that they did not bring on themselves. Instead they are the problem, in need of a solution, or elimination.

When the U.S. federal government developed an obsession with publishing student achievement data in the early 2000’s, these two problem-solving strategies set out on passionate journeys to either solve or eliminate the problem. Of course, in most areas, especially urban school districts, poor black youth were the problem. Achievement gaps were now the enemy that everyone was out to defeat. The first order of the day was to find what was broken. At the two opposing ends of the enemy gap are economically disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. Well-meaning educators from both progressive and conservative camps
immediately descended upon the usual suspects. Once again, poor, black, urban youth are the identified problem.

So what’s missing here? The answer is obvious. The voices of black youth are consistently ignored while we all run around trying to fix their lives. Additionally, those who were once poor, black, urban, youth rarely develop the societal status and voice to be considered as a valid resource. This is an example of how systematic oppression works and thrives.

In an attempt to counteract the negative effects of this cycle, this chapter will primarily focus on highlighting the stories and voices of black boys and men who grew up in the neighborhoods of Hartford, CT. Furthermore, in order to avoid the pitfall of focusing on all that is broken, the life paths highlighted will be representatively varied, in order to reflect the nuanced experiences of young black males, even those who grew up in the same city.

T.M.
Age: 19
Recent High School Graduate (June 2015)
Lifelong Hartford Resident

I was born in Brooklyn, New York but grew up on the north end of Hartford, Connecticut. Where I grew up it was rough. I had my bike stolen multiple times and had my share of fights. What really made it hard were the people I had decided to hang with at a young age.

Family life was good. I live with my mom, aunt and two little brothers. When I set bad examples for my brother’s family life is not so good. People have high expectations for me so everyone, even outside my immediate family, tries to encourage me to be the best I can be. It makes me proud when my mother smiles and brags about how well I am doing in school.

My experience at Opportunity High (a high school for over-aged and under-credited students designed to reduce barriers for youth) was exactly as it says, an opportunity... but a great one that exceeded my thoughts of what the program had to offer me. I gained so much in such little time it was amazing. I gained skills that I will use everyday. The Part of the OPP (Our Piece of the Pie) program and high school that worked for me was the encouragement and support I got from all the staff in the building and sometimes even my classmates. You start to feel hope for yourself and actually feel like you can make it.

My experience in my community was bad. There was a lot of crime at the time and the
kids I grew up with were all into gangs and other illegal things. Seeing these things helped me to develop and mature at a young age to see that it is easy to be sucked into the violence and quick cash that most people do get into. Now, I choose my friends wisely and keep far away from anyone I feel may bring me down in any way. Honestly, one of the things that worked for me was being friends with the bad kids. Even though I was their friend in school, I never took part in any of the wrong things they would do. I became street-smart hanging with these people and learned little things that would help me in that kind of situation.

When I was young I looked up to my youngest uncle. He is an athlete and really smart. He was independent and did what he needed to. My mother is also another role model of mine. My father left when I was young so my mother was daddy too. She taught me to be independent and not to rely on others. All my role models in my life are positive, although some of them may have went about teaching their lessons the wrong way, they all had good intentions in mind.

My number one resource is the library. There are many teachers, Youth Development Specialist (YDS), and tutors that were offered to me but I like to get it done myself. Anything I cannot understand just needs to be read a bit more carefully.

Staying on track is the only problem me and my peers should face. I did face it, and addressed the problem, when I saw it begin to affect my little brothers. I overcame this barrier forgetting about friends and worried about my education. I have always overcome the barriers in my life and I will continue to do so the appropriate way.

In my community, relationships are formed through discrimination. This affects me negatively to know everyone can't get along. People are picked on for things like being gay and for teen pregnancy.

To change the community I grew up in I would take away the gangs. They had a big affect on the young people in my community. I have seen a lot of kids fighting for absolutely no reason, groups of kids beating on one kid, and kids bringing weapons to schools. The influence they had damaged a lot of young peoples’ futures. I would keep the after school programs like Boys and Girls club or other activities to keep kids off the streets.

The good thing about this community is the free education. To make schools even better, I would implement more early college tours and classes, and I would offer more trades in high school. I would also increase online help and tutoring.
I grew up in Hartford, CT but, to be specific, I was raised on Wethersfield Ave. It was a diverse neighborhood. As I got older I saw many races come & go. When I was a young boy there were many Black & Latino faces around but throughout the years that went by, rent skyrocketed then all those who once were my neighbors, suddenly vanished. Out of all my childhood friends’ families, we were the last ones to move out. A puzzle piece, the center puzzle piece, is the description I would use to describe my family when we were living there. My mother was the spark in the plug. She knew everyone. If you were a resident in that building you had to hear or know of her. She got along with a lot of people on that avenue. As she would say, "I'm a free spirit." Well, I guess that’s what I inherited from her because through the guardian connections she had, I've attracted the children of those who were keen about her. The big brothers of the friends I had met through my mom & school taught me real-life lessons so I didn't need my Mom's nor my big sister's influence that much. They played their part but it wasn't needed half of the time. Some of the information that was given to me was difficult to relate to or self-explanatory. I remember as a youth, always asking myself "I wonder how my life would've been If my Dad was around more." He was around, but not really “there”. I can't explain his situation thoroughly because it doesn't make sense at all but you can say that he wasn't fully there for me until the end of my high school graduation. I know it’s sad, but hey, it’s better than not knowing your father at all right?

Since my father was barely in my life I had older friends & music (Hip-Hop) teaching me about reality, which was the most difficult experience I've faced in my life. My elementary school ride was a semi-breeze but I totally lost it when I arrived in middle school. My teen years were mostly influenced by other teens at school because my mother, her being a woman, couldn't connect with me as much as a father or big-brother could have. Long story short, I've faced a lot of trails and went through many tribulations. I truly believe some of the mistakes I've made throughout my younger years could've been avoided if I had such a figure in my life. Now, I want to thank him for not being there because if it wasn't for me getting out there & facing my fears and obstacles, I wouldn’t be able to become the man I am today. I've seen the hardships of those who lived "that life." The same life these rappers profess to be about.
Inside of my home was peaceful but the area that surrounded where I stayed was the total opposite. Thankfully, the stories of my friends & the news that broadcasted on my TV scared me straight (for the good) so I didn’t have a thought of committing a crime because I saw and heard the consequences that were given to those who attempted such of thing. My past schools provided many programs for students such as myself so it kept me occupied after I was released from the building. One of the programs I went to as a youth was the "Boys & Girls Club." They have many fun activities there. You can play basketball, soccer, ping pong, billiards etc. All of them are great but at that time I wasn’t involved in any of those. I was interested in one thing & one hobby only... Music creation.

In those years I always wanted to make songs but I didn't have any clue about how to do it, so, what I used to do was, take songs that were already created, scrap them & revise it till' I was satisfied. I did that with many artists but mainly with those who were my favorite. Jay-Z & 50 Cent were the most listened to artists on my IPod Nano, at least at that time. Many may say their lyrics are harsh & promote violence but they've taught me many things that the school & my parents didn't. They've given me pointers on how the real world--- well, my world works. Those two came up from the same urban setting as I did & made millions off of their story. Just that fact inspired me to make music. I wouldn't call them role models but I would compare them as life coaches or teachers that gave out tips.

Those two belong in the rap category but rap itself has sub-genres. There is a sub-genre of rap for every mood I had. Whether I needed something soothing, knowledge, or inspirational-motivational words in a rap format I can get that in a matter of a Google search. Music was my escape. Writing poetry, which is a form of expression closely related to rap, is a way for me to release all of my negative energy. In other words, the ones who are conveying a message in a song format are the ones who are in my support system. As a youth, I was an introvert so I didn't communicate with others that much so me having access to others through music was more convenient than bothering someone for advice. Although I was an introvert, I’ve been approached frequently because of my extensive music library. I could be walking or on the bus heading home after a long day of school and all of a sudden someone asks me a question about the song I was listening to. That conversation will often lead into me exchanging numbers with that person because of our similar taste in music. That's what I love about my neighborhood. The residents are hip to the latest hip-hop & R&B. Most of the concerts that take place in Hartford
are packed to the teeth, so I would definitely like to see more music venues in my area. More people in one area equals more communication with one another. I believe that unity is what we need and the idea of separation is what harms us as humans. Therefore, I'm pro-activity clubs for the youth because it keeps the people together. Since my neighborhood & the majority of the people I live with love the music scenery why not implement the modern day music into school curriculums?

Welcome to the Community

We are all born into a particular community. As we grow up we are shaped in significant ways by the environment in which we live. When it’s time to move out of our community, nostalgia often causes us to claim allegiance to the place of our upbringing, embracing the good, the bad and the ugly. In fact, we often profess to be a “product” of our community. There is certainly no fault in recognizing where our memories, thoughts, and traditions originated. Unfortunately, certain segments of our society have the privilege to distance themselves from their particular community, at appropriate times without causing alarm or raising any eyebrows. In the black community, separating from your roots is often seen as an act of treason. The consequences created by “selling out” and moving out is a violation that is difficult to recover from. The not-so-unspoken pledge of allegiance required to survive in “the hood”, creates an enormous amount of pressure to conform to a set of rules that may not be productive to leading a successful and sustainable life.

There are times when members of a particular community act in a way that is seen as negative or even criminal by the larger society. In predominately white, middle class communities, the norm is to distance oneself from these individuals and label them as outcasts, in need of punishment. There is an inherent privilege in this act that is not afforded to those in poor black communities. There is an internal pressure from the black community to unify and defend our members from outsiders, regardless of the infraction committed. This is the residue of a people who have had to band together consistently since our forced arrival to this country in order to survive. This pressure is seen as loyal, real, and right in the black community.

The perspective of this unity from more privileged communities is a bit different. In the black community’s effort to support and protect one another, we inadvertently send the message that we condone lawlessness. Additionally, the black community is not afforded the privilege of being seen as a collection of individuals. Instead, each negative act is another blemish on our
image as a whole. An individual who decides to rob a store or shoot someone is not seen as an exception to the norm. Rather, they are depicted in the media and throughout dominant discourse, as representative of the norm in the black community. This is certainly a heavy load to bear.

Young people are virtually powerless against this phenomenon. Yet, they must absorb the harshest blow from its long-term effects. No matter how much of an individual you try to be, as a poor urban youth, you are consistently presented with an image that portrays you as the problem society must solve, or eliminate.

J.P.
Age: 48
Inmate at a Connecticut Correctional Facility
Lifelong Hartford Resident

I’ve been thinking a lot about the relationships between Black people in my community. I feel like African-Americans through many generations are proud, loving, and family oriented. So, it’s a natural thing for people in the neighborhood to gravitate toward one another. Despite what people outside our community might think, our unity has always been strong and real.

When I was growing up, not only did neighbors look out for one another but for one another children as well. Men and women stuck together as parents and raised children to have values. Unfortunately, that’s not happening today. So, young black men and boys are populating prisons and institutions.

I believe change lies in the hands of men. It’s time for us to step up to the plate and be the leaders we’re meant to be. We need to develop a proper perspective on what it means to be a real man. We need to teach the youth to be assets to the community and not liabilities, casualties, or statistics.

When it comes to my story, I wouldn’t say something failed in my path. I chose the wrong path on my own. I was primarily raised by my grandparents and always had my aunts and uncles around me. My family is full of hard workers. My grandparents’ lifestyle laid a blueprint for the rest of us to follow. They educated themselves and expected the same of me. Unfortunately, from early on as a youth, I had an attraction to the things I saw in the street. I wanted to be like the cool dudes I saw with cars, jewelry, and women. So, I chose to go down that path myself.
I grew up in the Albany Avenue and Garden Street section of the north end of Hartford. I never really liked school. To me, school was like a chore. I had to go. That’s the way it was. I was forced to go. If I had my choice, I wouldn’t have gone. I was more interested in messing with girls, gambling, and smoking weed. I was too busy trying to get out to the streets, not being in school. My grandparents worked at Pratt n Whitney and I was a latchkey kid. In front of them, I pretended to be a good boy so they would be happy but when they weren’t around, I did whatever I wanted. It was like I was leading a double life at an early age.

I see a lot of the young dudes today doing the same things. They are on the same path I was on back in the day. Some are even worse today because of the negativity that they see that I didn’t even see when I was coming up. That just makes them worse. The only thing that could change that is more opportunities for young people. They need more structure and better role models. They don’t have anyone around them doing positive things and most kids today are born to teenage parents. It’s like the kids and their parents are growing up together. That’s why they don’t know nothing. Their parent’s don’t have the knowledge or wisdom kids need to grow up strong and positive. So they end up with no tools, values, morals, or respect.

What improvements need to be made to the educational system? How can we make things better for students in our schools?

I think they should go to colleges and universities and look for future educators that are from the neighborhoods these kids are growing up in and offer incentives to work in neighborhood schools because they know how to approach the students. They have a better understanding of where these kids are coming from. The same goes for law enforcement. We need police officers that actually understand the dynamics in our community. If they did that I think there’d be a lot less shootings between cops and citizens and increased graduation rates in schools.

What’s the overall effect of students not being able to relate to teachers and school administration?

That’s easy. The kids end up being like, “You don’t know me or where I come from. So, why should I listen to what you have to say?” It seems like they pass us through and graduate us even if we don’t have the quality education of other communities. Or, they push us out so that we end up in the street with no options. Then we can fill the lowest levels of society. So, we’re at a disadvantage. We turn to the streets because unlike school, life is familiar there. These days, people with Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees can’t even get jobs. So what are we left to do?
I.N.
Age: 45
Director of Peacebuilders and Community Relations for COMPASS Youth Collaborative Inc.
Longtime resident of Hartford, CT

Describe where you grew up.

I grew up between Hartford, CT and Brooklyn, NY. Both neighborhoods are considered an inner city community. In Hartford CT, we lived with our mom in a housing complex and in Brooklyn NY we lived in a home purchased by my father. They were both on busy streets.

What was family life like?

Family life was different in each home. In the home in Hartford there were drugs, gangs, poverty, neglect and abuse. In the NY home there was physical abuse and very strict rules. My mom was out on the streets and involved with many different people and my dad had a set schedule for work and for being home. In the Hartford home we shared rooms and in NY we slept in the basement of the building. Due to my mom’s habits we moved often so family life was different depending on where we lived.

What was your experience like in school? What worked for you? What didn’t work?

School was different in NY compared to Hartford. In NY school was as routine as school can be... Attend classes and go home. In Hartford school was stressful due to the racial tensions between African-Americans and Latinos. We were constantly in disagreements and fights due to the tensions. I also did not speak very fluent English so it made it a little more difficult to learn.

What worked for me in Hartford was while in middle school having a teacher who made sure to check in on me to make sure that I was ok. In NY, as best I can remember it was the structure and safety that made education possible.

What did not work in Hartford was the constant tension between different communities and the lack of supervision by school staff.

What was your experience like in your community? What worked for you? What didn’t?

I was involved in community groups/posses/gangs and this made my community experience very violent and full of conflict. It appeared to me that nothing worked for me although, I would suggest that being in the groups that I was in made it feel as if I had a family in the community. What did not work for me was missing a connection to positive, caring adults.

Who were your role models? Were they all positive?

I did not have any roles models as a young man.
What resources could you count on? What/who were included in your support systems?

I did not have any resources that I remember I could count on. I know that my oldest brother was someone that I could count on. If I could mention something else that was similar to a support system, it’d be school. When I was hungry I knew that I could eat at school and in middle school I could depend on a teacher to check in on me.

What barriers did you and your peers face? How did you overcome them? Did you always overcome them?

The barriers we faced were a community racial conflict that made it very difficult to be outside without looking over your shoulder. We could not leave our neighborhood on most days. We overcame by coming together with others in our own group and fighting against those who were trying to hurt us. I did not always overcome them and I ended up involved in the criminal justice system.

How are relationships formed in your community? How does this affect you as an individual?

Communities are formed by making sure to connect with people, making sure to be kind to others, and extending help to those who need it. As an individual it allows me to form good relationships with people and to have the trust of people.

What would you do to change the dynamics in the community you grew up in? What would you keep?

I would expose families to one another so that they are familiar with one another and so they have a better understanding of each other’s culture. I would ensure that adult role models were available in each neighborhood where youth are present. I am not sure what I would keep. The one thing that I remember being good was the break dancing and talent shows in downtown Hartford.

What’s good about your community?

My community is clean, friendly, quiet and safe. Those are the things that are good about the community I am currently living in.

What would you do to change the way schools operate? What would you keep?

I would decrease class sizes. I would increase the number of school guidance counselors. I would provide after school support activities, ex. Tutoring, Enrichment Sessions, Life Skills Development Sessions. I would have a student resource center at each school. I would make sure that cafeteria staff included staff who were focused on developing positive relationships with youth and to listen for any information that may lead to student conflicts. I would have those individuals meet with school administration on a bi-weekly basis to share any information that will assist in keeping the school safe and ensure students are successful. I would ensure that all
students are provided career service opportunities so that students can experience the career they believe they want earlier than their graduation date. This will ensure they know if that career is what will be best for them. (Work Experience). I would keep the student success centers at high schools. I would keep the academies.

G.D.
Age: 44
Director of Youth Development Services at OPPortunity Academy- A high school in Hartford serving Over-aged and Under-credited youth.
Lifelong Hartford Resident

Describe where you grew up.

I grew up in the North end of Hartford, in an apartment complex. It was a tight-knit community where everyone kept each other in check (In a good way). I can recall having only one corner store and often using food stamps or going to get credit until my mom got paid at the end of the week. Most of the families did not have a father in the home, just strong Black and Hispanic mothers doing their best to raise large families. Believe it or not, even the (bums) which is a term used to describe people who hung outside of package stores drinking, gave us good advice and words of wisdom. I don’t recall any crime maybe it had a lot to do with everyone looking out for each other. I have to say I grew up in a great era and I wouldn’t trade that experience for anything.

What was family life like?

My family consists of 4 sisters and 2 brothers, I was second to the youngest, we lived in a 4-bedroom apartment and we slept 2 to 3 in a room. My mom was a very focused lady who worked 2 to 3 jobs a week to make ends meet. We usually ate dinner at the same time but with such a large family some of us would sit in the living room while others sat at the kitchen table. My siblings and I loved and supported each other. My brothers and sisters always kept jobs through high school, which set a good example for my younger sister and me.

What was your experience like in school? What worked for you? What didn't work?

I was always the type of student who did just enough to get by C’s were good enough for me. I knew I could do much better but I just didn’t see the importance of it. I remember getting into trouble since elementary school and my mom being called often to pick me up or speak to me about my behavior. I believe one of the things that worked for me was having adults giving me a consistent message about my behavior and academics. Although I got in trouble, I knew my limits and didn’t push too far. My mom didn’t make it past the 8th grade due to helping at home with her younger siblings and household chores. Growing up it was an unspoken expectation for all of my mom’s children to have good attendance and to graduate. Looking back on my
schooling the only thing that didn’t work for me was teachers who were too relaxed and laid back, I would take advantage of that and get little to nothing done.

What was your experience like in your community? What worked for you? What didn’t?

I was very connected to the community I grew up in; I grew up participating in low-income family programs such as WIC, head-start, parks and recs, free lunch, afterschool tutoring and summer youth employment just to name a few. One of the most important parts of my community was being connected to other families, playing outside with my friends and having all adults in the neighborhood looking out for us. The people in my community were like family, in fact, I grew up believing they were extended family, no matter what ethnicity. What worked for me was how the adults in the community looked out for one another and the children. I needed structure growing up and when I didn’t receive it I would drift in the wrong direction.

Who were your role models? Were they all positive?

As sad as it may seem, I cannot recall having any role models growing up. I was connected to the hip-hop culture and idealized old school rappers especially the way they dressed. As I entered high school I started to hang around popular guys who were not doing the right thing but they had nice things and I wanted those things as well. I would say these were negative influences but then again I always knew right from wrong therefore I would have to put the blame on myself.

What resources could you count on? What/who were included in your support systems?

I could always count on my family especially my older sisters who always looked out for me. My brothers were busy doing their own thing but I knew they had my back. My mom was working especially from middle school on so my older siblings took care of me.

What barriers did you and your peers face? How did you overcome them? Did you always overcome them?

Even though we were a low-income 1-parent home I really can’t remember having any real barriers. My mom worked several jobs to provide for us. I didn’t realize what little we had or how much support we got from state and federal programs until I became an adult. I guess the biggest barrier was living in the hood, which denied us access to opportunities families who didn’t live in the hood had.

How are relationships formed in your community? How does this affect you as an individual?
Relationships in my community were formed through participating in and being a part of the community. We spent most of our adolescence and teenage years outside playing and learning from each other. The adults engaged with us and sometimes played with us. You could go 6 blocks in any direction and families still knew who you were and weren’t afraid to address you if you were out of line in any way.

*What would you do to change the dynamics in the community you grew up in? What would you keep?*

I wouldn’t change much because the community I grew up in gave me the foundation I needed to be a successful adult. If it weren’t for that foundation I would not have been able to rebound the way I did when I lost my way and turned to the streets.

*What’s good about your community?*

The support systems, the feeling of being loved, and taken care of by all.

*What would you do to change the way schools operate? What would you keep?*

I would work to empower parents to get more involved in their students education, starting with finding the right school and not settling for what everyone else is doing. There are so many educational opportunities for inner city students but parents have to be informed and encouraged to pursue them to break the cycle.

C.G.
Age: 26
Workforce Development Specialist (Youth)
Lifelong Hartford Resident

*Describe where you grew up.*

I grew up in Hartford, CT. I was a resident of the Northend of Hartford having moved to several of the most commonly known streets which included Garden Street, Capen Street, Westland Street. I also moved to the Westend during my later years.

*What was family life like?*

Family life was amazing. My parents had me at a young age and separated but that had no effect to my life. My dad was very involved and supported my mother to help raise my brother and sister. My mom is the greatest and I attribute getting my hard work qualities from
her. Our family is very tight and close with each other. Just like when I was younger, we always celebrate all the holidays with each other and we make sure that we are always in contact even if it is a text or conference call.

What was your experience like in school? What worked for you? What didn't work?

In elementary school it was very challenging because I was not like everyone else. I did not really have interest in the girls yet nor was a sports fanatic. I was just really smart which sometimes caused others to bully me. I persevered and by the sixth grade I had become a little popular. I decided to run for class president which caused me to gain a few more friends. During that year, I was recommended to attend Renbrook School. My teachers thought that it would be a better choice than the traditional high schools. After many interviews and tours, I was accepted into the school. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity but I decided that I was not going to go because I was unable to adjust to the different environment. I returned to Quirk Middle School where life changed for me. I immediately ran for class president again and won for all years. What I noticed was that the more I was involved the more people liked me. Learning this I decided that I would join more clubs and groups. I eventually went to high school where I again looked for opportunities to learn as much as I could and acquire leadership roles. I started my high school career at Northwest Catholic. I really enjoyed this experience but decided to transfer my sophomore year because the lack of assistance and help the school provided with going to college. Long story short, I went to Hartford Public High School where I graduated class president. For college, I went to Howard University to study Biology. I believe aside from joining various groups and running for political positions what really worked for me was believing in myself and paying close attention to my surrounds. I only became popular because I saw what the popular students were doing.

What was your experience like in your community? What worked for you? What didn't?

Growing up in Hartford has been one of my best experiences. My experience was a great one with lifelong memories. My family was very protective over where I went and what I did. I never had a chance to hangout late with my friends. Therefore growing up I may have been shielded from the violence. Hartford for me has been very supportive. When I was younger, my brother and I were members of the Boys and Girls Club, we played football and basketball, we were boy’s scouts. Not only did we become friends with our teammates and partners but these same friendships have lasted many years. I believe that my family was a major reason why I have such great memories of Hartford as a child. It is important also to make sure that you are involved in your community. These things helped me out. Thus; I will never forget growing up in the Hartford community.

Who were your role models? Were they all positive?
When I was younger I dreamed of being a doctor so I admired Dr. Ben Carson. He was very positive and is a very well-known physician. Since I was unable to call and get advice from him, my dad played a major role in my life. He was tough when it came to education and always made sure I was reading something new. There was a time in my life when I followed the wrong group of students who rather skip school and not succeed in life. This group was not positive at all. Today my father as well as my pastor plays a big role in being my role model.

What resources could you count on? What/who were included in your support systems?

In terms of resources, there was my family and teachers. I was a member of the Boys and Girls Club so there were mentors that assisted along the way. Since my family was so supportive everything came from home. My dad made me start working at the age of 15 so I was able provide for myself.

What barriers did you and your peers face? How did you overcome them? Did you always overcome them?

I think the barrier that I had to face was being a young male of color and actually liking education. My family was very protective as I stated and demanded me to carry myself a certain way which helped out while growing up. Another barrier was being low income. If my parents at the time were able to afford a better place to live or a better educational system I am sure they would have moved away. But my mom would always say that sometimes things are not going to be the way you want them to be but be sure to take full advantage of what you have been blessed with. That is how I overcame my barriers I always look for the good or positive in every situation.

What would you do to change the dynamics in the community you grew up in? What would you keep?

If I had the opportunity to change something about Hartford it would be the education that our youth receive. I believe that Hartford Public School was ranked really low in terms of how effective the curriculum is. I strongly believe that if you give someone knowledge anything is possible. This affects me because growing up I had to work extra hard to make sure that I was keeping up on a national level. I remember going into college and seeing how behind I was.

What's good about your community?

The great thing about my community is the people who live in this city. Due to the fact that many are low income and battling their own issue most people remain friendly. When
Hartford needs to come together they always do. There are also great organizations in my community that assist in different area that assist the residents.

*What would you do to change the way schools operate? What would you keep?*

For starters, I believe that there are way too many schools so I would start by creating one universal curriculum for all students. In the past there were only three high schools in my community. Today I believe there are more than we can count on both hands. I feel like the troubled students are sent to the public schools which in turn does two things, it increases the dropout rate and it also increase statistic for the non-public school which increases funding for those school leaving the public school with practically nothing. There is nothing that I would keep except those nice buildings they spent taxpayer money to build and maybe some of the teaching staff.

*Where do we go from here?*

The lack of cops and robbers style sensationalism in these stories makes us uncomfortable. We expect juicy details that prove our preconceived notions of pre-destined failure or that make us shake our heads, embarrassed about the condition of “our people”. The relevant newsflash here is that Black youth and Black people are normal. If we force ourselves to accept this normality as a universal and shared characteristic of the human experience, then we are also forced to confront our segmented approach to problem solving.

The most relevant place to start is in the world of education. Before young people understand their socioeconomic positioning in their community, they develop an identity as a student. Urban educational reform efforts must immediately discontinue their obsession with bad apples. Much like the War on Drugs or the War on Poverty, we are experiencing a large scale and fatally ineffective failure in the War on the Achievement Gap. The reason these wars fail is because the key ingredients are the identification and marginalization of the perceived offending group. Progressive efforts to improve the lives of Black youth by closing the achievement gap translate into several undesirable outcomes:

1. **We have developed an overall distrust for black families.** Black families are seen as more broken than others. When it comes to raising children, they are simply not doing it right. So we must legislate their parenting experience so that students are in school for as many hours as possible, decisions are made by districts rather than families, and families are punished for trying to be a part of the process. All of this is seen as providing a set of
wrap around services. Instead, it too frequently eliminates the voice of the most important
teachers… parents.

2. **Young people are being treated as the enemy of progress.** School districts are busy implementing versions of “tried and failed” strategies in schools and the students seem to be in the way, especially if they are black. Attempts to include student voice in the educational processes are superficial or non-existent. Districts seem generally annoyed by students for not following the script, even though the script never included them in the first place. We stop treating students as a side story. They are the main event. Any educational reform plan that does not authentically begin with and focus on students is upside down.

3. **We are pretending that there is no school to prison pipeline in urban schools.** There are far too many similarities in facilities, methods of discipline, top-down decision-making processes, and profiling tactics. Urban schools are bearing a scary resemblance to institutions of corrections. We are eliminating all things that inspire in favor of all things designed to contain, control, discipline, divide, and conquer. It’s no wonder students in urban schools are acting out in ways that resemble rioting prisoners.

4. **We are using the media to create a constant feeling of crisis in education.** From bad budgeting decisions, to irresponsible data practices, to ego-laden wars being waged in education and political spheres, adults are making a mess of schools. This mess is being reported as an accurate reality that makes urban students look like the root of the problem. This creates societal pressure to either solve or eliminate “the problem.”

If you eliminate the voices of students and their parents, convince all onlookers that Black students are the problem that needs solving or eliminating, and allow schools to resemble prisons in order to create the perception that you are upholding the ideals of the public, you end up right back where you started. Instead of moving forward, we seem to be satisfied with changing the paint and spinning in circles.

The solution involves honest discourse about our expectations of Black youth and the communities in which they are raised. Plans must be developed that start with equal representation of all relevant voices. Authentic inclusion is scary to those in power because it threatens the status quo. We must demand more for our youth. Clever quotes and campaign slogans won’t get the job done. Until we refuse to allow ourselves to be excluded from the conversation, our stories will be misrepresented. Until we recognize that all people from all communities have similar hopes, desires, and visions of success, certain groups will be further marginalized. When we begin to erase the parentheses separating Black problems from the rest of society, we will begin to accept the level of responsibility required to make sustained change.
We all have a story to tell. Our stories are infinitely connected and valuable. It’s time to start listening.
Blackness, LLC
Yan Searcy, Ph.D.

Because Blackness in the United States is attached both to culture and class, there is tension between governmental responsibility to redress state sponsored racial oppression and American values of self-sufficiency. This tension provides the impetus for political leadership to suggest that the onus of responsibility to improve conditions tied to the enduring class dynamics of Blackness lies with Blacks and, more importantly, that the ways to ameliorate those conditions should not be structural but market-based. Market-based approaches to addressing racial disparities have essentially re-commodified Blackness. Hartford, which contains the largest percentage of Blacks per capita in Connecticut, serves as an apt microcosm of the conditions experienced by urban Blacks throughout the United States. This chapter, examining market-based approaches to address racial disparities in Hartford, discusses Blackness as an enduring commodity that is again tied to private sector profit.

Since Blackness is tied to perceptions of culture, it obfuscates the structural underpinning of racial disparities and points to community responsibility to remedy what is viewed as its own problems. Black people are viewed as designers and architects of their own condition and conversely are viewed as being responsible for engineering a reversal of social disparities. These views limit governmental and public liability for addressing structural issues. This perception of culture and relative culpability impacts the policy responses to social problems that are associated with Blackness. Although legislation, beginning with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and culminating with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which arguably effectively ended state sponsored oppression on the basis of race, created the oppressive conditions experienced by Blacks, it is the market that is viewed as the solution to Black oppression (Vose, 1959). The existence of historical rulings and laws banning disparate treatment based on race essentially unburdened government from directly addressing racial disparities. Those rulings and laws have also promoted the idea that because laws have been changed, there is limited reason to continue race specific policies.

Conservatives and center leaning liberals argue in effect that there is no more liability on the part of government to address racial disparities (Murray, 1984; Elder, 2001; Boston, 2004). They link enduring disparities to cultural dynamics not the structural dynamics believed to be
addressed by past legislation. The economic market, by default, has been viewed as the place to equalize opportunity and remedy racial disparities.

Economic markets are driven by profit incentives. The profit incentives that are built into policy responses, however, are impacted by racial biases. Policy responses to social problems associated with Blackness (and people of color generally) tend toward focus on punishment and suppression. Policy responses to social problems that are associated with whites, on the other hand, tend toward treatment and addressing causation. Specifically, this chapter raises: (1) the issue of Blackness as a commodity; (2) discusses the market basis and the impacts of incentivizing punitive approaches to social problems associated with Blackness; and (3) recommends reorienting incentives for intervention with Black populations away from punishment and suppression. The social problems that are tied to the enduring class dynamics of Blackness covered in this chapter include criminal justice, mental health, education, and housing.

The Social Construct of Blackness

The construct of Blackness was created in the late 1500’s to facilitate economic exploitation of human beings. It was a creation derived from a capitalist framework intended to maximize profit not merely by purchasing labor, but by purchasing life (Wood, 1966; Genovese, 1976; Baptist, 2014). Chattel slavery was the result. A single sale entitled the purchaser to the life and the offspring of the purchased. One person could own generations. Another could be sentenced to servitude ad infinitum.

Blackness was used strategically to facilitate the differentiation of slaves from the free in lands that had no existing residents of African descent or a peasant class (Steinberg, 2001). A mythology of Blackness was then created to justify the enslavement and exploitation of people of African descent. The mythology posited that Africans were subhuman savages and slavery as an institution civilized them.

When slavery officially ended in the United States in 1865, Blackness remained. The lived experience of Blackness cemented elements of culture to the construct. However, Blackness was essentially a class construct in which the mythology and stereotypes of Blackness confounded its state legislated class origins. The Reconstruction era and federal government laws provided structural avenues for Blacks to acquire land, own businesses, vote and secure public office (Vose, 1959). However, roughly 25 years after Reconstruction, Jim Crow laws in both the South and the North served to structurally limit the life options of Blacks (Woodward,
Jim Crow legislated where Blacks could live, die, and be buried. Jim Crow legislated where and if Blacks could gain education, where they could work, gain healthcare, who they could marry, and where they could worship until 1964 when the Civil Rights Act barring racial discrimination was passed. Despite 50 years since the passage of the Civil Rights act and associated mandates that eliminated de jure racism, racial disparities continue to be as stark as (and in some cases worse than) they were prior to the passage of the act (Richmond, 2011).

**Blackness as a Public Commodity**

Although programs intended to equalize opportunity and provide greater access to economic upward mobility through education and employment exist, Blackness remains tied to limited economic mobility and is associated with restricted spaces. On nearly every measure of socioeconomic status (SES), Blacks occupy the lowest rungs of the U.S. mobility ladder (2010). Nearly one in four Blacks live in poverty, unemployment rates are consistently twice that of whites and unemployment rates for Black youth often soar to rates three times that of white youth (Wilson, 2016; Edwards & Hertel-Fernandez, 2010). Black youth have higher high school dropout rates and are likely to attend low-resourced schools. Public schools are more segregated today than when the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling eliminated public school segregation (Richmond, 2011). The impacts of Blackness due to environmental stress also affect physical health – infant mortality, heart disease, diabetes, and particular types of cancer disproportionately impact Blacks (Sternthal, 2011). Blacks are also more likely to be victims of violent crime than any other racial group in the U.S. (Hartney & Vuong, 2009).

Absent the political will to directly address structural issues that impact disproportional representation of Blacks on measures of socioeconomic status, governmental privatization of service provision introduced and encouraged profit motivated service corporations to fill the vacuum. Those industries are represented primarily in what some label the “school to prisons pipeline,” where there has historically been greater state investment in incarceration than education (Meiners & Winn, 2010). Privatization of the provision of education and criminal justice services was originally introduced by legislatures as a cost saving measure intending to increase quality and efficiency (Lopes-de-Salinas et al., 1997).

Originating from conservative law makers nationwide, privatization was soon embraced by nearly all layers of government as a putative approach to reduce public spending on services. Privatization, however, introduced a profit motive. Private firms were driven to maximize
profitability, and this was interpreted as providing more services. The incentive for private firms was to increase services rather than decrease them. For example, rather than decreasing those involved in criminal justice system, private corporations increase revenue based on the numbers of those who are processed, placed on probation, and/or incarcerated. An egregious example of this was found in Pennsylvania when judges accepted bribes from the owners of a juvenile detention facility in order to increase the number of youth into detention (Schuppe, 2015).

In this analysis of Hartford, we examine the disproportionate representation of Blacks within the identified systems within the state of Connecticut. Hartford, with its marked racial disparities, serves as an example of the enduring legacy of the creation of Blackness. Hartford with its use of private sector responses to the social disparities associated with Blackness reflects the continued existence of Blackness as a commodity. Social welfare programs that have a history of privatization and disproportionate racial representation are profiled here - criminal and juvenile justice systems, public educational systems, and the state child welfare system. As one writer dramatically put it via character in a stage play about wealth disparities between Blacks, “Children are the new cotton.” That is, providing services to children can be lucrative. Indeed, the Pennsylvania scandal was given the moniker, “Kids-for-cash.” It is argued here that Blackness, like cotton in the past, is a commodity that generates revenue streams for private industry.

**Black Hartford**

Census data from 2010 lists Hartford County with 900,000 residents. Whites comprised 77 percent of the population, while Blacks were 15 percent, Latinos were 17 percent and Asians were 5 percent. The city of Hartford is where Blacks and Latinos are concentrated. Blacks made up 40 percent of the population and Latinos 43 percent. Whites were 30 percent of the city population. Statewide, Blacks make up 11 percent of the Connecticut population while Latinos compose 15 percent. Whites are 81 percent and Asians are 5 percent. Hartford with its urban/suburban racial and spatial mix suggests that it represents a microcosm of urban areas in the United States.

**Criminal Justice**

Connecticut state prisons are disproportionately Black despite decreasing imprisonment rates since 2012 (Bureaus of Justice Assistance, 2015). About 41 percent of the 16,913 inmates in January 2015 were Black. The juvenile justice system as well is overwhelmingly Black.
Juvenile admissions totaled 1,501. Nearly 50 percent of those admitted as juveniles were Black (718), with about 15 percent originating from Hartford. Whites were 34 percent and Latinos were 31 percent (Rabe Thomas, 2015). Although Blacks and Latinos combined are one-third of Connecticut, they are two-thirds of all children charged with crimes. Arrests are only one component of the dynamic.

Criminalizing Blackness is lucrative. Efforts intended to decrease the size of the incarcerated juvenile population in Connecticut may be well-intentioned. However, funding provided to the Judicial Branch for community based diversion programs has increased markedly since 2004. There was a nearly 50 percent increase in funding from 2004 to 2010 to $29.2 million. Youthful Offender Services bloomed to $7 million from its seeding of below $100 in 2004. Noteworthy is that a youth must be an offender in order to gain services. This is not a prevention program. It is a recidivism program. *There is no incentive to decrease first time contact with the criminal justice system.* The incentive is to decrease repeat contact.

Adult alternative programs increased by 69 percent in the same time period to $54.1 million. The diversion programs include: Accelerated Rehabilitation Alcohol Education, Drug Education and Community Service, Family Violence Education, Community Service Labor, School Violence Prevention, Suspended Prosecution for Illegal Sale, Delivery, or Transfer of Pistols or Revolvers, Treatment of Drug or Alcohol Dependent Offenders instead of Prosecution, and Juvenile review boards. As with juveniles, the incentives aim to reduce repeat contact, not initial contact.

**Education**

Disparity found in education is a gap within graduation rates between races. The statewide graduation rate is 85 percent. About 92 percent of whites graduate within four years while 73 percent of Blacks and 69 percent of Latinos graduate within four years. The Hartford Public Schools graduation rate lags behind the state rate at 77.4 percent. Just 72 percent of low-income students graduated with their class in 2013, compared to 93 percent of their more affluent peers — a 21 percentage-point gap. Two years earlier, the gap was 27 percentage points. This moderate progress coupled with Connecticut’s ranking as having the second highest per pupil spending ($10,285) the state still maintains one of the highest graduation gaps; only six states had a larger gaps than Connecticut in 2013.

**Child Welfare**
The Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) created a disparity index to track the relative disparities between races regarding involvement with their services. The index shows that Black children are almost three times as likely as white children to have cases opened for services. Black children are 3.5 times more likely to enter protective care than white children. There are 3.7 times more Black children in care than white children. There are 13.7 percent more Black children indicated as delinquent. Black children are 2.8 times more likely to be victims of abuse or neglect. (DCF, 2015) Child welfare services are disproportionately Black.

**Urban Housing**

Affluence in Hartford County is concentrated and is disproportionately white. About 13 percent of residents live in affluent and racially concentrated neighborhoods in comparison to 3 percent of those profiled in a nationwide study of 15 urban regions. Roughly 22 percent of Greater Hartford area residents live in concentrated poverty areas. This nears Detroit’s level of 25 percent.

The Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program is a program granting incentives to residential builders and property owners to provide affordable housing for the low-income. HCV utilizes markets to build and maintain property by subsidizing the rent of low-income residents. Connecticut state law 8-30g requires a minimum of 10 percent affordable housing stock. Only 31 of the 169 towns in Connecticut are in compliance. Hartford shares a disproportionate burden and it is reflected in the income segregation in the area. Hartford County maintains a federal housing assistance density of 284.6 units per 1000 renter households. The average federal assistance density across Connecticut is 178.8. The Hartford Housing Authority lists 32 percent of its households as Black and 64 percent as Latino.

**Solutions**

Reimagining LLC Incentives

Incentives tilt strongly toward pathology when addressing social problems that may be disproportionately identified as affecting Black populations. When social problems are not viewed as “Black problems,” the policy approaches tend to tilt toward healing and assistance and adopting disease models in which the incentives are oriented toward treatment vs. punishment. A medical model stressing treatment applies to social problems largely affecting white populations. A moral model applies to social problems largely affecting Black populations that
stresses punishment. Indicative of the approach to treatment of “white problems” is a statement from center leaning liberal Hillary Clinton in a February 2016 town hall address when discussing a policy approach to heroin addiction in New Hampshire. (New Hampshire is 96 percent white and heroin addiction is identified there as a social problem mainly impacting whites.)

“We need to utilize] a new law enforcement approach so that first-time, low-level drug users are not sent to jail but instead we have more treatment and recovery programs. There are 23 million people who need help in our country, both alcohol and drugs. There are 10 percent of the kind of spaces that they need to take care of those people. So we’ve got to work on law enforcement. We have to work on doctors to understand better when they prescribe opioids, which is often the first step towards heroin. We have to have every police department equipped with naloxone, which is the antidote to reverse overdose, save lives here in New Hampshire. We’ve got to put more money into this.”

Reimagining incentives toward treatment and moving toward long-term solutions is necessary to address all social problems.

Criminal Justice

Criminal justice programs must focus on prevention and early intervention. In Connecticut, programs are following this model and examining disproportionate minority contact (DMC). Hartford has a DMC committee composed of social service program coordinators, school officials, DCF staff, and juvenile court judges. This model utilizes an interdisciplinary approach that has a singular focus on decreasing disproportionality.

An encouraging sign for reorienting incentives in criminal justice is found in a state of the state speech in January 2016 from Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy who expressed:

“I also look forward to… making our criminal justice system more fair and equitable. Together, we can be the first in the nation to
acknowledge that young adults in our juvenile or adult systems need a different approach. We can give more young people a better chance to reform and become contributing members of our economy. And we can do it while saving taxpayers money. And finally crime is at a 48-year low. Violent crime is down again from the previous year, our prison population has reached new lows, and this year we closed our fourth prison. These efforts have saved taxpayers tens of millions of dollars and made us safer.”

Criminal justice program incentives should be oriented toward decreasing numbers through an approach that rewards programs for decreasing initial law enforcement contact, as well as reducing recidivism. Incentives to provide community supports in the form of adequately resourced community based activities and multi-service centers serve to decrease the likelihood of initial law enforcement contact and decrease recidivism.

**Education**

For schools, testing is an important component to assess progress and achievement of competency. Funding incentives are tied almost exclusively to test scores and poverty rates. (For federal funding school assistance is based on attendance head counts. More than test scores, attendance informs dropout and achievement risk (Bruner, 2011). There should be a multifaceted approach to establish school effectiveness. Singular focus on test scores has three pitfalls. First, education directed to critical thinking recedes to the background as course content focuses on test taking. Test taking is only one way to assess competence. Competency-based education pedagogies that incorporate projects and presentations are ways to assess content mastery. A second pitfall of singular focus on test scores is that it leads administrators to “game the system” by fraudulently altering test scores, discouraging low performing students from participating in testing. A third pitfall in Connecticut is that urban schools are disadvantaged in rankings due to having a high proportion of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners whose scores are lower due to language barriers yet their scores are counted in the standardized test results. ESL learners are disproportionately represented in urban, Black and Latino schools.

Utilizing test scores favors those schools (corporations) who are likely to have created pedagogies intent on improving test scores rather than content mastery. Nationally, most charter
schools have only slight test score gains over traditional public schools (CREDO, 2015). Charter schools, on average, however, provide more days of instruction than traditional public schools (CREDO, 2015). There are ways to direct policy incentives to improve substantive student outcomes: increase days of instruction, improve student attendance, focus on content mastery through projects and presentations, meeting staff diversity guidelines, and rewarding the existence of culturally relevant curricula.

**Child Welfare**

Reimagination involves a paradigm shift that includes following best practices. Best practice models in social welfare, however, are oriented toward program elimination. That is, best practices lead to decreased need for the program intervention. In short, a worker is working toward eliminating her job. Traditional paradigms are oriented toward maintaining jobs. An example from social work is telling. Child welfare programs that address families and communities aim to decrease abuse and neglect of children. Effective work then leads to decreased numbers of children and families coming to the program’s attention. Decreased numbers suggests less need for program staff. Clearly, a paradigm shift is needed to orient private corporations to pursue incentives that could inevitably lead to their obsolescence.

Currently in child welfare, incentives have been used to promote permanent placement of children through adoption. Program renewal contracts with private agencies are based on children moving to adoption. Though well-intentioned to decrease trauma impacts, the approach leads to agencies focusing on adoption of children not on community education or prevention. Children gain permanent homes which is positive, however, because the incentive is to focus on the total number of children moved to adoption, it has led to failed adoptions in a number of cases and/or children moving into family homes that suffer from the same dysfunction that led to the children coming to the attention of child welfare services (Coakley & Berrick, 2008). Incentives must be linked to long-term goals that address prevention and treatment.

**Urban Housing**

Housing program incentives have been oriented toward encouraging the construction of affordable housing. The Housing Choice Voucher Program also known as Section 8 provides vouchers for the low-income to afford market rate rents. Additionally, national policy through the Department of Housing and Urban Development grants subsidies directly to builders who set aside units for the low-income. Connecticut law mandates that a minimum 10 percent of its
housing stock meets affordability standards. Only 31 of 169 towns in Connecticut meet this standard (O’Leary, 2015). Hartford along with other major Connecticut cities that have Black and Latino populations over 15 percent shoulder the responsibility for upholding the affordability standards. A number of towns have filed for appeals under the statute and others are simply non-compliant (O’Leary, 2015).

It is clear that policy incentives exist to produce affordable housing that addresses the class issues correlated with race. However, it is also clear that enforcement of the policy remains a problem. Failure to enforce the policy decreases mobility of low-income Black Hartford residents as viable housing options are limited outside of the city. Lack of enforcement acts to perpetuate the problems associated with areas of concentrated poverty that include low educational attainment, criminal activity, and joblessness.

**Lifting the Limitations of Blackness**

Historically, Blackness indicated legislated servitude and class status. Legally enforced segregation, coupled with individual experiences of Blackness, yielded elements commonly associated with culture. Despite legislation that created the structures of racial disparity, dominant views of Black culture and the purported moral norms associated with Black culture drive social policy. Social problems that disproportionately impact Blacks are politically framed as culturally based, not structurally based. This focuses the root of the problems on Black communities. Those communities, then, are viewed as responsible both for creating the problems and for finding solutions. The solutions, reflecting traditional American values of individualism and competition, utilize markets to address disparities and essentially limit the liability of government for proposing structural solutions to racial disparity. Understanding this policy approach, the chapter argues that to address disparities utilizing markets requires reimagining policy incentives to focus on prevention and treatment of social problems associated with Blackness. Failure to reimagine policy incentives serves to commodify Blackness whereby industries benefit from disparities rather than their elimination.

Questioning Black community responsibility to address its own problems reflects an aspect of the norm of commodifying Blackness. Black community problems are compartmentalized as “Black” problems and therefore beyond the scope of government intervention. Often invoked are calls for the community to do something about “Black on Black” crime. These problems, then, are not viewed as American problems or civic problems, they are
viewed as cultural problems despite government’s role in creating the conditions that led to the problems. Categorizing problems as Black problems removes the responsibility and liability for action to address them away from government. Asking what the Black community is doing to address its problems is a flawed query. It equates to asking women what they are doing to stop wage inequality. The correct question to ask is, “What are we as a society doing to eradicate wage inequality?” The correct question for us to ask is, “What is Hartford doing to eradicate racial disparities?”

References


Strategic Academic Mentoring of Undergraduate Black and Latino Males: Initial Findings
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Abstract
Slightly less than one-third of Black males and slightly more than one-third of Latino males who begin their college education at four-year public institutions of higher education complete their studies within six years. Only five percent earn degrees within three years at community colleges. While research shows the importance of formal institutional academic support services to assist with retention and graduation rates, Black and Latino males report using academic support services at higher rates than white males who have the same grade point average, yet graduation rates for Black and Latino males stubbornly lag behind white males by roughly 20 percent. This suggests that academic support services are not enough to improve graduation and retention rates of Black and Latino males.

As an approach to increase retention and graduation rates of Black and Latino males at a regional comprehensive public university, high-impact, youth-centered practices were utilized in the creation of an informal program that utilizes a strategic academic mentoring framework (SAM). SAM is comprised of three components: (1) Space (establishing a safe space for expression and disclosure); (2) Support (peer-based and through faculty/staff mentors); and (3) Resources (linking students to summer internships, academic opportunities, and employment). This qualitative study introduces SAM as an important mentoring approach to improve retention and graduation rates and presents the initial findings from year one of the Brotherhood of Scholarship and Excellence program (BroSE) at a New England regional comprehensive state university.

College preparatory programs and college preparatory high schools that have a focus on college attendance have garnered serious academic and popular attention over the past 10 years as means to improve the educational and social outcomes of Black and Latino males (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper & Harris, 2010; NCES, 2012; Wood & Turner, 2006; Tovar, 2015). Mentoring programs abound that have identified goals of increasing college attendance of Black and Latino males (Phinney et al., 2011; IHEP, 2011). These initiatives are now part of the permanent landscape of programs aiming to increase college attendance and improve the educational outcome of Black and Latino males. Many have proven to be successful in a relatively short period of time of promoting college attendance (Harris, 2012).

Since 2000, the percentage of Black males in college has steadily increased when the numbers were under 800,000 students (Cook, 2012). By 2010, the number rose to over 1.3 million (Cook, 2012). Nearly 1.2 million Latino males were enrolled in college in 2010 (Yeado, 2013). About eight percent of the 16 million Black males in the United States were in college in 2010 and about five percent of the 25 million Latino males were in college in 2010 (U.S. Census
Bureau, 2012). These number of Black males in college counter the prevalent myth that there are more Black men incarcerated than enrolled in higher education programs.

Success for a number of college preparatory programs designed to improve the academic performance of Black and Latino males are measured in college attendance, but not college or university completion (Harris, 2012; Phinney, et al. 2011; Noguera, 2012). In 2010, slightly less than one-third of Black males and slightly more than one-third of Latino males who begin their college education at four-year institutions complete the program within a six-year window (Harper and Harris, 2010; CCSSE, 2012). For community colleges, only five percent earn degrees within a three-year window (CCSSE, 2012).

College completion is associated with gender, and as a result, specific attention has been directed at improving completion and retention rates of Black and Latino males. Black females have twice the graduation and retention rates as Black males and the gender disparity is similarly pronounced between Latino males and females (ACE, 2010). Attempting to address these issues and the varying rates of college completion among Black and Latino males, a number of programs have been developed. These programs are often found under the umbrella term of Black and Latino Male Initiatives. These nationwide initiatives are of various formats and are of varying impacts. A number of programs have proven to be successful in improving the overall graduation rates at their respective institutions however retention and graduation rates still lag behind their Asian and white counterparts (Reynolds, 2012).

Research has shown that formal, institutional academic support services do indeed improve retention and graduation rates, however, Black and Latino males report using academic support services at higher rates than white males who have the same grade point averages, yet the graduation rates for Black and Latino males continue to lag behind white males as a comparison group by nearly 20 percent (CCSSE, 2012). This suggests that academic support services are not enough to improve the graduation and retention rates of Black and Latino males (Casazza and Silverman, 2013).

As an approach to increase retention and graduation rates of Black and Latino males at a regional, comprehensive public university, high-impact, youth-centered practices were utilized in the creation of an informal program that utilizes a strategic academic mentoring framework created by the authors—Strategic Academic Mentoring (SAM).
**Program Background**

Elements of SAM are derived from the 25 years of best practices of engaging with at-risk youth by the authors. Best practices indicate that there is a need for youth to be given opportunities for active engagement, ownership of the group or program, authentic and supportive staff, nonjudgmental staff with knowledge of community resources, physical fitness engagement, intellectually stimulating and challenging content, flexible programming, and focus on providing participants with tools needed for effective decision making, which includes presenting real life information for consequences of life changing choices. The “strategic” elements of SAM incorporate best practices with the intentionality of retaining and graduating participants. The specific components of SAM presented in this qualitative study include: (1) Space (establishing a safe space for expression and disclosure); (2) Support (peer-based and through faculty/staff mentors); and (3) Resources (linking students to summer internships, academic opportunities, and employment).

**Space**

Conceptualized in the context of SAM, space is primarily relational and cognitive and secondarily physical. Boostrom (1998) examined the metaphor of classrooms as safe spaces and paradoxically revealed that the metaphor of safe spaces illuminates what is often outside of safe spaces— isolation and insecurity. Feelings of isolation are correlated with dropping out from college (Bowman & Denson, 2014). According to Boostrom (1998), safe spaces allow for expression of “diverse individuality” and students thrive in spaces where individuality is freely expressed.

The Brotherhood of Scholarship and Excellence program (BroSE) utilized a physical meeting space only as a setting for participants to feel “free” to express personal and social issues that affect them on a daily basis. The actual meeting room of the weekly meetings may change from time to time, but the actual set-up of the meetings, chairs in circles or around tables in a boardroom format, remained consistent and have become the defining physical arrangement for all program participants. The strategy of SAM is to create a safe space for participants on campus that originates in a physical setting (meeting room), but actually extends to the entire campus.

The intention is that the safety of the space be carried cognitively and affectively with the
participants outside of the weekly meetings. Stengel (2010) maintains that safety itself is “relational, risky and deeply connected to affective states.” Additionally, Stengel (2010) maintains that student fear may be involved in educational processes and creating safety in the fear is a “necessary pedagogical move.” Acknowledging student anxiety with a number of issues ranging from study skills, interpersonal relationships, sexuality, grooming, finances, and career was part of the strategic pedagogy involved in BroSE. Particularly for Black and Latino males, safety of space also required addressing the virtual world of social media and websites which may be anxiety inducing (Kellerman, 2014). The virtual world often reflects status marginalization that is experienced in the actual world. (A casual review of web based comments to newspaper articles or to posted videos exemplify “virtual” web-based cultural assaults that may contribute to feelings of isolation and persecution).

**Opening Check-in**

The space itself is opened through a ritual check-in that program participants initiate at the beginning of every meeting. The check-in intends to decrease the boundaries among participants and to create connections that engage participants and allows them to take ownership and leadership of the meeting. It also prepares the setting for the ability to contain what will be discussed. Houseman (2004) suggests that ritual efficacy is related to its ability not only to be applied during meeting performance but outside in the actual world. The check-ins were framed to create group cohesion and symbolize the opening of the safe space. Rituals, according to Borg (2008), convey social status and social importance. Here the goal of the ritual is two-fold: eliminate social status between students and staff, and establish the opening of a safe space for interaction and exchange. In the BroSE, the ritual check-in has established itself as a positive framework that has embedded itself as a part of each meeting.

**Support**

Support involves the mentoring of students through the connection between the mentor and mentee and through peer participants. It is creating an environment that is affirming throughout the campus. BroSE utilizes a group mentoring approach that incorporates both staff and peers as mentors. Staff and students reinforce a message that the primary reason for the student participant being in college is to graduate and this goal is expected to be achieved. Peers are encouraged to create study groups and to encourage each other to have strong academic performance. Staff mentors hold students accountable by periodically checking grades and
academic progress and meeting with the students individually when academic concerns are identified by the staff. Mentees are encouraged consistently to visit staff offices for one-on-one discussion sessions about academic and personal concerns.

**Resources**

Key to the initial participation success of BroSE (15 consistent attendees out of a cohort of 30 who were invited only by email or word of mouth) was the incorporation of identifying resources for participants. These included identifying mentors and university resources, assistance with financial aid, graduate and professional school applications, serving as job references, and focusing on summer internships, and providing interviewing skills. Additionally, targeted conversations about study skills and accessing university resources and those outside of campus were provided. These “real world” elements served as incentives for attendance and attendance would lead to improved outcomes for participants.

**Methodology**

As a first year program with an organic ontology, we relied on observation and participant self-report of the BroSE program at a New England regional comprehensive state university. Membership in BroSE is voluntary and notice of meetings was given through email or verbal invitation by faculty members or members of BroSE. The Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs informed Black and Latino males by verbal invitation. Some members were invited as a result of casual interactions with the authors on campus. Others were referred by colleagues who expressed concern about the performance of some of the Black and Latino males in their classes.

**Findings**

**Formal vs. Informal**

A key component of Black Male Initiative programs and similar programs established to improve graduation and retention rates is their formality and official recognition and structure as part of university administration. The programs tend to be jointly funded by grants and the university itself. Essentially, the programs are extensions of the college or university. As such, these programs may represent the type of institutional structures that dissuade participation from those students who are resistant to formal structure and who are resistant to race or gender-based groupings. Such initiatives may only attract students who are accustomed to and comfortable with formality and groups.
SAM as an intervention is intentionally informal and student centered. Embedded in the informality is the intentional and strategic sensitivity to the idea that institutions do not always positively connect with Black and Latino youth. Schools, hospitals, criminal justice systems, and government sponsored programs tend to be viewed with suspicion as youth and their extended family members may not have had favorable interactions. We were careful to utilize a program design that does not replicate the rigidity and hierarchical structure of bureaucratic institutions. Such institutions traditionally intersect with Black and Latino males from platforms that communicate the superiority of the institution and the inferiority of the individual. The informality of BroSE allows the group to operate without fear of Student Government reprimands or threats to budgets. It also is a practical approach that aims to be more inclusive to those students who may not be inclined to join a student club or organization.

The Naming Process

While this may seem of marginal importance, the process of naming the group was reflective of the components of granting participants’ ownership of the program. Naming is not simply identifying a group; it is also about allowing members to participate in the process so they are not merely participants but active owners. The process shows that participants are on equal footing with facilitators and support the idea that their opinion matters. It shows their input has value and they matter as individuals and as a collective body. A nonjudgmental brainstorming session allowed for everyone’s ideas to be represented. Once all ideas were recorded on a white board, a facilitator collected the results, sent an email to participants and then noted that the name from the list would be voted on at the next meeting. The naming process was driven by the facilitators, however, the name itself was driven by program participants.

Non Hierarchical Leadership

A key component of the group is a non-hierarchical leadership model. That is, there is no president or vice president. The group agreed that all members are leaders themselves and did not require a representative to lead. Staff facilitators intentionally created an environment based on equity to allow all voices to be heard. To that end, the facilitators noted that traditional leadership titles would be forgone in favor of a student leadership team that would be tasked with leading group check-ins and organizing discussion topics. While Nygreen (2006) suggests that there are challenges in leading student groups without controlling, we were certain to place
decision making finality in the hands of the participants. The view was that the participants would be held accountable for their decisions and that was reflective of a paradigm of expecting accountability and the value that it adds as a life skill. We were sensitive to avoid struggles that Nygreen (2006) suggests are “especially pertinent because wider societal power relations between adults and youth or teachers and students are well established” (Laz, 1998; Males, 1999; Minkler & Robertson, 1991).

The Importance of Recognition

We discounted the importance that recognition played in the eyes of the participants. Soon after the name was selected, several members wanted to have t-shirts and polo shirts made. This theme of having a desire to be recognized was consistent through the program. Many wanted to sponsor events in order to “get the name out there.” The ideas ranged from handing out long stemmed flowers to co-sponsoring campus events to giving “shout-outs” about the group at other events. This, the authors believe, stem from a desire to have a positive image projected and that others see them as Black and Latino males in a positive light. We also recognize that the status of the organization was based on the pride of those who are members and they wanted to gain esteem and status as a result of the association. The recognition, to be clear, was not to be recognized by the university but by other students on campus.

Observations

- Group mentoring was effective to the extent that there were multiple options for students to feel connected across campus—academic side (dean and faculty); student affairs, and staff involvement.

- Faculty felt more at ease with referring students to the program. Those who lacked the ability to connect to Black and Latino students expressed feelings of reassurance that there was a group on campus that focused on Academic issues. Some noted that they recognized underperforming students as being Black or Latino but did not know what to do about their poor performance.

- Identity issues were present among Black and Latino students. One Latino noted that he felt uncomfortable with identifying as Puerto Rican. Another student revealed that his high school years were impacted by what he felt as not being accepted by Black students.

- It is important to be authentic. The space created requires that questions are answered—for example, the salaries of participants.

- The support of administration is important yet not necessary.
• Created an open door policy where participants felt comfortable for seeking support without judgment. Students were given assistance with graduate program applications, letters of support and recommendation.

• There will be sporadic attendance by some folks but a core, committed group.

• A range of images of manhood by virtue of the participants gaining multi-generational viewpoints and a continuum of expressions of gender

• Supporting students in their activities (theater, sports, student clubs, parenting)

• In effect, the program creates a space for students to feel comfortable that the campus is their place too and they see themselves connected, affirmed, and cared about.

Challenges

• Identifying strong freshman and sophomore personalities to promote continuity;

• Maintaining meeting times to maximize participation;

• Staff participation and having representation of cultural experiences (Caribbean, African, Latin American).

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Historical Persecution Reaction Complex (HPRC): Exploring a link between racial identity and poor leadership outcomes

Yan Searcy, Ph.D.

Abstract

Employing critical race theory (CRT), this paper utilizes three case examples of Black American leadership that manifest the elements of Historical Persecution Reaction Complex (HPRC). HPRC describes the reluctance of oppressed populations to publicly criticize the recognized performance shortcomings of leaders who are members of their identity group. Two of the three cases involve educational leadership while the third example involves political leadership. This paper asserts that while HPRC operates as a functional reaction to oppression by serving both as an act of cohesion and resistance to oppressive structures, HPRC is paradoxically detrimental to oppressed identity groups due to maintaining substandard leadership. Argued is that HPRC perpetuates racial oppression since the victims of the poor leadership outcomes in the case examples tend to be overwhelmingly Black.

This paper explores oppressed identity group responses to recognized shortcomings in leadership within its own identity group. Historical Persecution Reaction Complex (HPRC) is a term utilized to describe evidence of the reluctance of oppressed populations who have a history of persecution to publicly criticize the recognized shortcomings in leadership of those within their population. Recognized refers to documented and substantiated instances of misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance. To be certain, HPRC is not a blanket term to describe anyone who has a reluctance to criticize those in leadership positions. HPRC presupposes that, all things being equal, individuals are prone to comment on and criticize failures in leadership. HPRC also presupposes the condition that there are no legal limits on freedom of speech and expression.

HPRC hinges upon the identity group’s tacit understanding of their history of oppression and the perception of continued marginalization of the group by a dominant identity group. HPRC has four elemental arguments that reflect the oppressed identity group’s attempt to protect itself from perceived further social marginalization and to preserve the identity group’s leadership gains in the greater society. Those elemental arguments are:

- Public criticism shows a lack of unity and disunity provides opportunity for further subjugation and oppression
• Poor leadership outcomes by dominant group members have been accepted from those in dominant groups and identity groups and the recognized shortcomings are not worse than what was experienced under dominant group leadership

• The symbolism of the person in a leadership position benefits the entire identity group despite the person’s shortcomings

• There is a conspiracy to disparage any leadership in the identity group so while the leader may be guilty of an offense, it was likely part of a larger plan to discredit the leader as a representative of the identity group.

HPRC can be applied to any identity group that has a history of oppression. However, as a theory building effort, the case examples are taken from the U.S. racial identity group that has extensive documentation of historical and current oppression that is largely independent of nationality and ethnicity—Black Americans. Two of the three case studies involve educational leadership. Intending to broaden the application of HPRC, the third case study involves political leadership.

Though not identified as a concept prior to this work, HPRC reflects the admonition given in a 1964 speech by Malcolm X entitled “The Ballot or the Bullet.” Discussing differences of religious traditions among Blacks in the Civil Rights Movement, X offered, “If we have differences, let us differ in the closet. When we come out in front, let us not have anything to argue about until we get finished arguing with the man.” The differences in the closet refer to private criticisms of leadership. Coming out in front refers to public comments that are to have no indications of dissension or displeasure with or among Black leadership presented to non-identity group audiences.

**Definitions**

While this paper is not directly an exploration of leadership or oppression but an examination of oppressed identity group responses to leadership, it nonetheless requires both a definition of oppression and identity group, as well as a brief discussion of the leadership literature in order to provide subject context. We operationalize oppression employing the work of Young (1990, 2004) who offers that oppression not only refers to structural elements that limit rights and freedoms but incorporates any limits that one group or individual places on another group or individual. We also utilize Young’s (1990) conceptualization of identity group that is defined “not primarily by a set of shared attributes, but a sense of identity (p.44).”
An examination of the leadership literature across multiple disciplines yields several definitions of leadership and reveals the complexity of defining leadership as a term (Manolis, et al. 2009; Miranda & Goodman, 1996; Schuhman, 2010). Those complexities are shown in the literature through descriptions of leadership traits, discussions of styles of profession-specific leadership, skills related to effective leadership, and paradigm shifts in leadership (Roberts, 2008; Kotterman, 2006; Gallagher, 2002). Recognized as moving the discussion of American leadership toward inclusion of post-industrial commercial and political demands in his attempt to define leadership is Rost (1991) who defined it as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes. (p.102)” Leadership, according to Rost (1991), is concerned about what leaders and followers do together.

Reflecting this changing leadership paradigm are several writers who offered that leadership is concerned about useful change (Kotter, 1996). Northouse (1998) identifies leadership as a process that is goal directed by an individual. Summerfield (2014) argues that a leader’s job is simply to “make things better. (p. 252)” Overall, agreement about leadership tends to center on its complexity rather than a singular definition (Eddy & Vanderlinden, 2006). Echoing Rost’s (1991) is Kinsler (2014) who proposes that, “[Leadership] is not just a person placed in a leadership role… it is a multi-faceted complex construct that involves followers, groups and the organization… with the intention of accomplishing a goal. (p.93)” Kinsler clarifies, “In its simplest sense [leadership] is a process of influence involving a leader and a group (p. 93).” While there are several definitions of leadership, we operationalize it in this study as a distillation of Kinsler (2014) and identify leadership as a dynamic process-driven activity that involves role, goals, and influence between a person and a group.

**Group Identity and Responses to Leadership**

Part of the leadership literature examines group identity and leadership (Hohman, et al. 2009; Hogg, 2007, Hogg, et al. 2014). Discussions of identity group responses to leadership have been reflected in uncertainty-identity theory. Uncertainty-identity theory holds that people are motivated to have stronger group identification when they feel uncertain (Hogg, 2013). The theory also holds that when people view that their security (physical/financial/emotional) is threatened they “yearn to identify strongly with a group that can actually get things done to remove or buffer the threat.” Uncertainty-identity theory has relevance to oppressed groups since an element of oppression is that individual and group security is compromised. However, the
theory does not specifically cover criticism (or lack thereof) as a specific reaction of identity
groups to recognized shortcomings in leadership. The theory operates to explain factors that
influence group allegiances and behaviors. Hohman et al. (2009) explore individual leaders’
exploitation of uncertainty in order to craft greater group support of their initiatives. Here we see
uncertainty-identity theory being relevant to the explanation of the formation of identity groups
themselves but limited in its ability to specifically explain group responses to shortcomings in its
own group leaders. HPRC rests outside of the theoretical scope of uncertainty-identity theory.

**Methodology**

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) argues that an element of the continuing significance of race
as a social construct is due not directly to current legislation but to historical practices that
impact current perspectives on identity group leadership. Derived from Critical Legal Studies
that assessed legal doctrine as a tool of oppression, CRT was developed to inform analysis by
looking at the centrality of race in the analysis of law and other social structures (Young, 2013).
It is largely a framework used to “understand the history and relationship between white
supremacy and marginalized populations, and to challenge the connection between racial power
and law” (Kee, 2013, p. 68). Matsuda et al. (1993) add that while the CRT framework directs
analysis to law and policy, experiential knowledge of the oppressed is valuable analysis. Critical
Race Theory also reflects a movement and a putative activism approach (Cerezo et al. 2013). As
a theoretical framework, CRT has been embraced across social science disciplines, particularly
due to its applicability to the myriad components and systemic nature of race and racism (Young,
2013). However, despite its wide interdisciplinary usage, CRT does not yield to an agreed upon
operational definition but is known for being an analytical framework to understand practices
that contribute to inequality (Kee, 2013).

Critical race theory’s theoretical breadth allows for its applicability to the evolving
dynamics of race and its ability to give voice to the experience of racism through narratives.
Narratives, actual and fictitious, have been used to provide voice and legitimize unexplored
experiences, norms, and values where they may have been muted by scholars representing
dominant norms about race (Delgado, 1989). It has been applied extensively to educational
policies in order to examine institutional racism (Leonardo, 2011). Critical race theory has been
applied to higher education to argue fundamentally that educating non-whites is by design a
racial act and that all elements of educational administration are impacted by racial considerations and are likely to have racialized outcomes (Leonardo, 2011). As a result of the past utilization of CRT in exploring racialized outcomes in higher education and its theoretical breadth it was selected as a framework for this study of HPRC.

This paper utilizes CRT as an analytical tool in order to demonstrate that while the case examples presented in this study do not provide prima facie evidence of racism because the actors (both the leaders and reluctant critics) are of the same identity group. However, the decision making involved in withholding criticism reflects racial considerations and the outcomes related to withholding critique have racial impacts. Race is defined as a social construct that awards (or denies) privileges based on skin color. Racism, as operationalized in this study, is the use of race as a decision making factor in social interactions. Our discussion positions its analysis as part of the ongoing anti-racism literature that aims to engage discussions on what constitutes racism in various forms. Effective anti-racism needs to focus on more than traditional racist attitudes and conceptualizations of white privilege and challenges traditional ways of addressing the manifestations of racism. (Nelson, 2015). This paper recognizes racism within institutions that are putatively controlled by non-whites and asserts that identity group members who are victims of racism can inadvertently serve as agents to perpetuate racism. This paper is positioned to add to the anti-racism discourse in order to promote action against racism.

The CRT lens is applied to racial identity with the embedded irony that racial identity and its imputed norms of behavioral expectations can perpetuate negative outcomes for members of that same racial identity group. An important element of CRT is the social justice or activist component which strives through the application of analysis and criticism to develop responses to end oppression and raise consciousness of the pervasiveness and persistence of racism in society. It is here in the raising of consciousness that this study is rooted.

**Case Examples**

As a theoretical exercise, the study utilizes case examples that provide evidence of HPRC. Case examples are utilized rather than case studies. A case study approach attempts to answer “how” and “why” and contextualize the studied phenomenon through detailed examination (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case studies also attempt to answer specific questions by providing in-depth descriptions and interpretations (Hays, 2008). Also case studies are utilized when variables cannot be manipulated (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Studies often incorporate case
studies in order to answer “how” and to identify variables that may impact the “how” and to indicate why outcomes resulted (Yin, 2013). Here, the aim is to introduce and explain the existence of HPRC.

Subsequent examinations of HPRC will incorporate detailed case studies in order to reveal variables that contribute to the existence and the manifestations of HPRC. The desire here is to present theory that will ultimately guide questions in follow up studies; therefore, case examples of HPRC are applied.

Our use of case examples is derived from an intentional sensitivity to not to fall into the analytical trap of utilizing case studies to prove the existence of a concept (Yin, 2013). That is, in truly exploratory studies, case studies should be chosen to test the existence of variables rather than to find the variable and therefore prove a correlation (Yin, 2013). In such studies, scholars essentially hold the arrow of theory in one hand and the target of variables in the other and move the bullseye to the arrow to ensure a perfect shot toward correlation. Our goal is to utilize case examples that manifest HPRC. Our aim is to present evidence of HPRC not to explore correlation. Case examples are best utilized to fulfill this aim.

**Selection of the Case Examples**

As mentioned above, two case examples in higher education were chosen as a result of the prior application of CRT in higher education and the knowledge of the authors of both the leadership and exposure to Black community responses to the respective leaders. The final case example was selected to manifest the applicability of HPRC across leadership contexts.

To limit value judgment bias that may be more pronounced in narratives, bulleted timelines of selective instances of misfeasance, malfeasance, and nonfeasance along with selective accomplishments are listed. Narratives were avoided for two reasons. The first reason is to limit the value judgment bias of the authors and the potential for sensationalism to obscure theory. The second reason is to allow readers freedom to apply their own judgments. The reader may decide the degree to which the leadership shortcomings are substantial. In certain ways, leadership shortcomings are much like beauty – judgment rests in the eye of the beholder. Most important for the analysis, however, is not the behavior of the leader, it is the behavior of the identity group.

**The Cases**
The three case examples are formatted with a brief description of the conditions that led to the person gaining a position of leadership and the institution involved. Background is provided to each case example in order to contextualize the leadership of the candidate. It is important to clarify here that HPRC is exemplified after leadership is selected, not during the selection process. Criticism of the candidates existed prior to their selection to leadership positions in two of the three case examples. A bullet-point “timeline” is used to identify accomplishments and leadership shortcomings during respective leadership periods. Bullet points are used to avoid narrative bias.

**Case Example 1**

This case involves the presidential leadership of a state university in a large metropolitan area. The university has a designation as a Predominantly Black Institution (PBI). The university is 75 percent Black, 15 percent Latino and 5 percent white and 5 percent Asian or other. (As a currently sitting president, the authors agreed to anonymize the identity of the leader and the institution.)

The president of the university was selected out of a pool of over 25 candidates. The selection process was marked by campus concerns about the selection process and the concerns were punctuated in a letter of resignation signed by all members of the Presidential Search Advisory Committee who were appointed by the Board of Trustees to recommend candidates. The president was the former chancellor of a community college system whose graduation and retention rates were lower than the university’s graduation and retention rate that he was hired to improve.

Prior to the selection of the president by the university’s Board of Trustees, a groundswell of resistance crested as the two finalists for the position engaged in campus interviews. Both candidates were greeted on campus with several students wearing t-shirts reading, “We spent $35,000 on a presidential search and all we could find are these two lousy candidates.” Once the presidential selection was made, however, public outcry became mute.

Timeline:

- 2009: Hired
- 2009: Presented as a cost maximization decision, the president directed an internationally renowned literary icon who was responsible for creating a campus-based center to study
and promote Black poetry and literature to increase teaching responsibilities to include freshman composition and three other courses each semester; the decision was recognized by nearly all observers as retribution for the icon’s derision of the newly selected president. (The icon ultimately retired from the university); The majority media covered the story by a Black columnist who penned a story framing it as a fight between two Black men- “Clash between cultural icon, controversial president is tragic.” The introductory line reads “It is painful to watch two powerful black men fight publicly. In just about every instance, it is the community that loses.”

- 2009: Hiring of person who had no 4-year institution experience as the chief of a department for enrollment, retention and graduation who came from the same college system as the president that had retention and graduation rates that were lower than the current institution

- 2009: Hiring paramour who at the time had limited higher education experience and only a recently acquired bachelor’s degree and subsequently promoted this paramour three times in two years to a vice president position

- 2009: Renegotiated official start date due to state retirement regulations that require 90 days between taking employment. Started working as a “volunteer” in order to maintain salary and past retirement benefit despite utilizing state resources until 90-day period ended; appealed rejection from the state retirement board twice but won approval on final appeal

- 2009: Appointed to academic leadership positions people who had no experience in administrative academic affairs

- 2009- 2015: Declined enrollment in every year since appointment

- 2010: Failed to appoint democratically peer-selected (by faculty) department chairs on four occasions; made own appointments

- 2010: Maintained interim status of several high ranking administrators on average of 2.5 years

- 2012: University fined by the Department of Education for financial aid irregularities

- 2012: Eliminated economics major due to low program enrollment and reorganized academic departments

- 2012: Hand selected faculty tenure track faculty appointments for a department prior to application but publicly denied doing so despite the appointments publicly acknowledging that they were encouraged to apply and the jobs were promised

- 2013: Campus achieved 10-year accreditation by the regional accrediting body
• 2013: Board of Trustees found the president guilty of violating Board policies

• 2013: Negotiated a sabbatical to “be able to better help my 96-year-old dad whom I feel has suffered most from my current 24-7 commitment to the University. I would also have more time for the level of academic research and writing I wish to achieve as president of a major American University,” yet failed to comply with the sabbatical despite the Board of Trustees granting this as a concession rather than an outright firing

• 2013: Successfully fought the firing by assembling politicians and select Black ministers to defend him against the Board of Trustees

• 2013: Subject of three wrongful termination lawsuits

• 2014: Promoting to Provost a person without a Ph.D., any publications, and ultimately maintaining the employment despite documented evidence of plagiarism in the person’s Ph.D. dissertation that was conferred nearly six months after the appointment; the dissertation was removed from the institution granting the Ph.D. while the plagiarism charges were being investigated (the President of the university is a member of the Provost’s dissertation committee)

• 2014: Subject of wrongful death lawsuit

• 2014: Loss of one of the lawsuits. Plaintiff was awarded $3 million. Decision was appealed and upheld with the judge’s opinion stating, "The public has been made aware of questionable misconduct at [University Name Identified] and the public may hold the responsible officials accountable so as to deter any future misconduct."

• 2014: Maintaining the employment of people known to have falsified employment applications (including paramour)

Case Example 2

This case example involves the former superintendent of Atlanta Public School (APS), Dr. Beverly Hall. Hall arrived in Atlanta from Newark, New Jersey with a reputation for making difficult financial decisions in order to address severe budget deficits. Her record for improving academic performance was not strong. Only marginal test score improvements were gained during her tenure from 1995-1998 in the Newark public school system where she was appointed directly to the position by the state. Public criticism only came after Hall announced that she accepted the Atlanta position. Former mayor of Newark, Sharpe James offered, “That lady [Hall] is getting out of here before you realize she hasn’t done anything” (Judd, 2015). In Atlanta, Hall incorporated a business model of management and sought to attract private dollars to fund technology development in public schools.
Though esteemed early in her tenure as Superintendent of APS as an innovator, her legacy is now firmly attached to what many identify as her tacit endorsement of altering test results in order to report higher student achievement scores. After investigation, Hall and other administrators faced charges of racketeering, conspiracy, influencing witnesses, and making false statements (Straus, 2015). Hall died in early 2015 before standing trial. Her declining health delayed the trial proceedings that were to have begun in 2014. Eleven APS administrators were eventually convicted on various charges in April, 2015 for their connection to altering test results.

**Timeline**

- 1999: Hired
- 2004: The Atlanta Journal Constitution conducts an expose on APS waste and mismanagement of millions of federal dollars. Two high ranking officials receive jail time
- 2005 Atlanta public schools opens first redesigned high school
- 2007: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awards APS $10.5 million to help redesign the system’s high schools
- October 2007: G.E. Foundation awards $22 million to Atlanta public schools to foster STEM programs.
- 2009: Hall wins national Superintendent of the Year from the American Association of School Administrators. Hall is credited with raising the district’s test scores and graduation rate.
- 2010: A district record $129 million in college scholarships earned by APS students
- 2010: An approximate 30 point increase in district wide graduation rate
- 2010: $160 million invested in APS by national and local philanthropic groups
- 2010: An approximate 30 point increase in district wide graduation rate
- 2010: A total of $1 billion invested in constructing and renovating state-of-the-art schools
- 2010: Georgia Department of Education reviews state exams and determines suspicious erasure marks on thousands of students’ answer sheets in classrooms statewide. The state board orders the district to investigate
• 2011: Hall resigns as superintendent of Atlanta public schools

• 2013: Thirty-five people including Hall indicted in the Atlanta Public Schools

• 2014: Hall trial delayed due to her declining health

• 2015: Hall dies before trial date

Case Example 3

The case example below involves the former U.S. House of Representatives Congressman from Illinois, Jesse Jackson, Jr. The son of Civil Rights icon Jesse Jackson, the congressman was celebrated for his progressive voting record and his infrequency of absences from votes. His telegenic appeal and pedigree had many predicting that “Junior” would be a serious U.S. presidential candidate. After expressing interest in the U.S. Senate seat vacated by then newly elected U.S. President Barack Obama, “Junior’s” candidacy for Senate was impacted by his involvement in a federal inquiry into campaign spending related irregularities. This case example provides a timeline of Jackson being the subject of investigations that ultimately led to his imprisonment.

Timeline

• 1995 Elected to U.S. House of Representatives

• April, 2009: beginning of federal inquiry into Jackson’s attempt to “buy” Senate seat vacated by newly elected U.S. President Barack Obama

• September, 2009: House of Representatives conduct ethics probe of Jackson and he claims no wrongdoing

• May, 2010: Jackson is subpoenaed in case against former Illinois Governor Blagojevich

• July, 2010: Court testimony indicates that Jackson associate promised to fundraise in exchange for appointment to the senate seat

• September, 2010: Testimony to federal investigators reveals that a Jackson donor paid for airfare for Jackson and a social acquaintance later revealed to be a mistress

• May, 2011: Jackson testifies in Blagojevich trial
• March, 2012: Jackson wins primary with 71.2 percent of the vote
• June, 2012: Becomes subject of federal investigation
• June, 2012: Reports that he is on medical leave for “exhaustion” two weeks after he goes missing
• July, 2012: Checks in for psychological treatment but discloses no detail to where he is
• July, 2012: Jackson staff states that he has a mood disorder
• July, 2012: Reportedly is in Mayo clinic for depression and gastrointestinal problems
• July, 2012: Releases statement about bipolar disorder and a return to work but he does not return to Congress
• October, 2012: Federal probe reveals irregularities in finances of Jackson 10/12/12
• November, 2012: Reelected to Congress despite essentially no campaigning
• November, 2012: Reportedly seeking plea deal with federal authorities
• November 21, 2012: Jackson resigns from Congress noting the distractions of the federal investigation
• August, 2013: Jackson sentenced to 30 months in prison
• October, 2013: Jackson begins serving prison sentence

Social Network Queries

As a theoretical article, the idea of HPRC was explored through the utilization of unstructured interviews of over 50 Black Americans residing in Florida, Connecticut, and Illinois. They were selected due to location access by the authors who were residents of these states during the time of interviews. The respondents reflect Southern, East Coast and Mid-Western Blacks. There was consistency in responses independent of the region. Adding West Coast respondents will be necessary in future research. The interviews involved introducing the participants to the concept of HPRC and querying their understanding of HPRC and the validity of the idea. Additionally, through social media contacts that were distributed via emails and text messages, the following questions were posed to Black Americans in Florida, Connecticut, and
Illinois: “Why do you think Black unity is important (if you do)?” Do you see Black leadership as symbolic to and for all blacks?

**Analysis**

There are four core component perspectives that are reflected in varying degrees in HPRC. These perspectives derive from reactions of the identity group to oppression and how the group orients itself to leadership from its identity group. The components are:

- Public criticism shows a lack of unity and disunity provides opportunity for further subjugation and oppression
- Poor leadership outcomes by dominant group members have been accepted from those in dominant groups and identity groups and the recognized shortcomings are not worse than what was experienced under dominant group leadership
- The symbolism of the person in a leadership position benefits the entire identity group despite the person’s shortcomings
- There is a conspiracy to disparage any leadership in the identity group so while the leader may be guilty of an offense, it was likely part of a larger plan to discredit the leader as a representative of the identity group.

In the three case examples, there was limited public criticism of leadership by those who shared the same identity group. Web-based examination of archival reports (articles and radio transcripts) involving the case study subjects indicated minimal public criticism of the leaders emerged. An exception was an internal blog established by faculty in case study 1. Another notable exception was Jesse Jackson, Jr. in which his admitted extra-marital affair sparked public criticism among Blacks and was a topic on Chicago-based Black talk-radio stations. Additionally, Junior’s absence from public view during his treatment for depression revealed a limited amount of criticism but it was roundly reserved for Black media outlets.

Here we introduce CRT to the analysis that incorporates the experiential knowledge of the oppressed by including the narrative perspectives of Blacks on unity and responses to leadership (Matsuda et al. 1993; Delgado 1989).

Component one was evident in all three case studies – the reluctance to publicly criticize for fears of not appearing as a unified identity group. The fear reflects a belief that disunity may lead to further subjugation.
Unity, among many Blacks, is viewed as an elusive goal but valued as evidenced in reply to a social network query for a response to the question, “Why do you think Black unity is important (if you do)?”

“Commonality, oneness in agenda and purpose are the foundation of any successful movement. Tactics can vary but unity in purpose cannot.” Another reply generated, “It’s the threshold for revolutionary changes.” “Black unity leads to better resource allocation for our community which improves our quality of life.” “It’s important because the odds are always against Blacks and unity is something that we lack.” “Other religious and ethnic groups have shown the strength to fight adversity when unified.” “As a singular unit of people, Black unity and its collaborative effects cures the obvious social-economic dysfunctionality that is present within the Black community.” “Without unity we will never possess the power we need to become relevant and collectively prosper.” In a manifesto for Black Liberation written by the Black Left Unity Network in 2013 they urge, “We need to be on the same page and channel our efforts into one mighty fist that can strike decisive blows against our oppressors.” In a Southern op-ed in 2014, LeRoy offers, “Until we truly unite as a people in the black community…we can expect to continue to be left out of almost everything.”

The resonant theme of all responses is that group unity provides a bulwark against oppression and is believed to be tied to increased economic and political fortunes for group members. Though unity can certainly be manifested in many ways, a common operationalization of unity is manifested as public support for select Black leadership.

Support manifested as unity is connected to the second HPRC element: Poor leadership outcomes by dominant group members have been accepted from those in dominant groups and identity groups and the recognized shortcomings are not worse than what was experienced under dominant group leadership. The same social network query about unity resulted in the following response.

Perhaps it’s a twisted maternal/primal instinct that makes us protectively overlook unethical and immoral behavior. Maybe it’s an in your face, ‘Oh, hell no,’ we aren’t going to allow you to hang him on this given all the dirt you’ve done to us over the years or all the dirt you do.’ Just simply, ‘The white man gets away with it so, why not him, because he’s black?’ Whatever the reason, I believe it comes down to a base us against them.”

A related reflection on leadership job performance evaluation suggests that racial concerns are primary in the desire to pursue unity. The respondent begins, “I can remember thinking at times, ‘Let me be easy on him/her. I'm black, he/she is black. I'm not going to throw him/her under the bus’ (Knowing good and darn well that my evaluation didn't reflect that individual to the least bit).”
Commenting on the leadership that was covered in case example one, a Black adjunct professor stated that the provost of the school who had been accused of plagiarism did nothing more than a white university president from the same state who was accused of plagiarism. The professor offered, “He [the white university president] kept his job. So, if he keeps his job, then the Provost should too. The same professor remarked that he did not hold his university’s president in high regard but that he understood the president to behave in ways that other public officials have. He added as a comparison to other public officials, “[The president] is just sloppy.” This interestingly suggests that his concern is more focused on the leader being found culpable, not on the illicit behavior.

Component three of HPRC that maintaining the symbolism of the person in a leadership position is important to the identity group as a counter-normative image to the prevailing images of the identity group despite the person’s behavioral shortcomings. This was readily apparent more so in case example three than in case examples one and two. Component three tends to be reflected in electoral political leadership where the identity group member in elected office symbolically represents identity group progress against oppression. Reflecting a nuance about unity and the symbolism of elected office leadership, a respondent offered, Given the environment in which I was socialized [Mississippi]. Mississippi, historically, as well as when I grew up there, was incredibly and overwhelmingly racist. Because of the extreme overt individual and systemic racism deriving from whites, black folks were taught to "stick" together. I remember a family member saying, ‘Even if a black person run for office as a dog catcher, we have to vote for them.’ I understand that sentiment, seeing as black people's interaction with white leadership in the South was hostile, racist, and oppressive.

The respondent noted that it was clearly not a vote for the person herself or himself, but a vote against an oppressive past.

The social network query posed the question: Do you see Black leadership as symbolic to and for all blacks? A respondent suggested, “I don’t think any meaningful outcome is achievable without a symbol. Think about history. There has always been a name or symbol associated with significant progress. And that isn’t limited to Black people.” Another suggested, “Black leadership is symbolic. Our current visible leaders tend to focus rhetoric on a segment of the black community.” An additional response offered, “I grew up with black leadership therefore for me it’s the norm. Based on the historical and ongoing racial component and how compartmentalized things are, I think it is symbolic.”
Portending a shifting view of Black leadership symbolism a commentator reflected briefly, “Yes and its only symbolic to those paying attention.” This view suggests that not all view Black leaders as representing them regardless of shared identity. This was echoed in several other responses: “As a Black, I am not always in agreement with our leadership and as a cynic, those people can be bought and sold on their personal agendas. I don’t want just anyone speaking for me based solely on race.” Another person added, “We all don’t follow the same leaders.”

Another respondent expanded on the same sentiment:

“A black leader is seen as representing issues or a district relates to blacks, but doesn’t necessarily represent all blacks. They may represent the opinions of some or most, but not all. We have seen a lot of times when black leaders state opinions that I and a lot of blacks disagree with. Blacks are like any other race, there are disagreements among them on various issues.”

Component three rests on the idea of symbolism and what that symbol means. It may not mean that all Blacks see the leader as representative of their identity group, but expressed as an understanding that others see the leader as representative. In response to the question about whether Black leaders are symbolic for all blacks, a person added “Yes, as a Black leader you are one of the few which means [for] a lot of people you will determine their definition of a Black person. So be your best at all times.”

The symbolism of identity group leadership reflects the Iron Law of Generalization (borrowing from the language of Steinberg 1989 who utilized the term “Iron Law.”). The Iron Law of Generalization holds that the negative behavior of minority racial group individuals are generalized to the entire group, whereas the behavior of majority racial group individuals are interpreted as isolated instances and are not generalized to the entire group. The converse – positive behavior of minority racial group individuals are not generalized and are not viewed as representative of the group – is also part of the Iron Law. That is, a Black leader’s negative behavior is reflective of all Blacks while a white leader’s behavior is reflective only of that particular leader. The Iron Law of Generalization operates to the extent that one believes that all Blacks are potentially affected by the ouster of a leader under negative circumstances and therefore another opportunity for a Black is not likely to be granted due to generalizing the behavior to all Blacks.

Therefore, it may be believed that a victory is obtained in maintaining the person in power because it translates into a cultural victory. The identity group, in this case, American
Blacks tacitly understands the Iron Law of Generalization and may not criticize leadership to protect the identity group from the appearance of a “loss.”

It can be argued that the value in symbolism is essentially more important than the effectiveness of the leader. There is inherently less scrutiny because of the representativeness value of the leader and the desire to “win.”

Responding to the social network query about Black leadership, a respondent offered:

I think people put too much emphasis on blacks in leadership. They use this person as the spokesperson for all blacks and that's not only a lot of pressure on that person but we tend to hold them to a higher standard with nothing to back it up. We just see ooh they're black yes. But if they would've really looked at their platform or what they needed to become qualified some may stick with that person and some will leave.

Component four is evidenced in all three case examples - There is a conspiracy to disparage any leadership in the identity group so while the leader may be guilty of an offense, it is viewed as likely being part of a larger plan to discredit the leader as a representative of the identity group. Certainly many may discredit and dismiss those who harbor conspiracy theories as irrational, paranoid, or out of touch with reality. However, Black Americans have clear reason to acknowledge that conspiracies – not theories - have figured greatly into their history over the past 150 years. White citizen councils and mortgage and insurance companies have conspired to limit housing options. Elected officials conspired to limit the voting of Blacks historically and currently, noting Florida and Pennsylvania where legislators have requested state issued identification to vote. (Studies have shown that young Blacks are less likely to have state issued identification (Demby, 2012).

Black leaders have been targets of lynch mobs, FBI investigations, IRS audits, and local police task forces. Marcus Garvey was jailed and deported for tax evasion. Both Martin Luther King and Malcolm X were the subjects of lengthy FBI probes. Fred Hampton was executed by Chicago Police during a night time raid. The well documented case of the Tuskegee study from 1932 to 1972 that is now used as a cautionary example of unethical human subjects design where Black Americans were deliberately not treated in order to test the long term progression of syphilis is cemented in the academy of research scholars as evidence of conspiracy against Blacks. Marion Barry in Washington D.C. was entrapped by a FBI sting operation in which he was enticed to smoke crack on video when he was verbally recorded as initially rejecting the offer. Overturned convictions of falsely jailed individuals continue when DNA evidence and
lying police officers are identified. Local experiences with law enforcement show that illegal activity proceeds in Black communities while the same activity is suppressed in non-Black communities are among other examples. Although conspiracy theorists may seem out of touch with reality by some characterizations there are compelling reasons to acknowledge conspiracy as a possible motive to marginalize Black leadership.

Due to the historical persecution of Black leadership, many blacks have responded by defending Black leadership regardless of the performance of the leader. As an additional defense mechanism, public criticism is often muted. The duality of impact of this component is that it allows for the leadership to manipulate the narrative of persecution to serve his or her own ends when they are ensnared in wrong doing and it allows for the identity group to protect the leader from criticism because of the understanding of past attempts to undermine Black leadership.

Absent public criticism of a leader from within the identity group operates to undermine the legitimacy of the charges from those not in the identity group. A popular admonition to Black leaders is, “Never forget that you are Black.” This admonition stresses the perspective that Black Americans in leadership should always be conscious of the idea that they are held to stricter standards of performance than white colleagues.

Manipulation of the narrative of persecution is also utilized when it benefits leaders involved in wrongdoing. In case study number one, despite hiring as an interim Provost a person with nearly no academic affairs experience without a Ph.D. [a minimum qualification for the position in nearly every U.S. university] and subsequently having the awarded Ph.D. scrutinized for plagiarism by the awarding institution, the president offered publicly and privately, “She [the interim Provost] is not being prosecuted because she is guilty, she is being prosecuted because she is Black.”

HPRC is evident in the progression of events that ended with the eventual imprisonment of Jackson, therefore a list of accomplishments is not provided. Twenty years is too lengthy to document here and HPRC is readily evident in the three years in which Jackson’s leadership gains greater public scrutiny due to criminal and ethical allegations. Despite the investigation and looming prison sentence there was limited public criticism of Jackson by members of his identity group – Black Americans. He was reelected with over 70 percent of votes despite not campaigning and being absent from fulfilling job responsibilities in his congressional office.
When Hall’s role was revealed in the cheating scandal, many teachers were charged in the scandal and all of the senior administration including Hall were charged with federal crimes. Many in the African-American community defended Hall with the age old justification that the idea that her wrong doing was no more than a federal witch hunt. As noted in the HPRC, the idea that wrongs committed by Blacks in power are justified because they mirror wrongs committed by others in power from other ethnic groups. Her staunch defenders characterized the prosecution of Hall as a racist agenda by the federal government citing the lack of prosecution of Michelle Rhee the former CEO of Washington DC public schools which was enthralled in its own cheating scandal following Rhee’s tenure. This was presented as proof of the unequal treatment of Hall. As noted earlier this ideological mindset reflects the fourth dimensions of the HPRC. Many in the African-American community cited Hall’s accomplishments as stated below as justification for the community to continue in her defense. With the idea that any financial largesse brought to the African-American community outweighs any of the wrongs committed by the person in leadership.

Premise five articulates that there are constant conspiracies amidst to disparage any leadership in historical marginalized identity group by the institutionalized unequitable structure of power. Such that any charge of misdoings of a leader that may be guilty of an offense, was likely part of a larger plan to discredit the leader as a representative of the identity group of the HPRC ideological construct. To have a clear understanding of why the Hall story illuminates condition five of HPRC we must understand the history of Hall as CEO of Atlanta Public School. Her leadership narrative provides a pivotal context for the implications of HPRC in a major urban K-12 educational context. To fully contextualize the narrative of Dr. Hall as an exemplar of the HPRC ideology, we must first contextualize the cheating scandal that engulfed the City of Atlanta, State of Georgia and the nation.

The demonstration of the traits associated with the mindset of HPRC was evident in the supports of Hall despite the presentation of the mounting evidence that clearly pointed to Hall’s role at the center of the scandal. Specifically, the unyielding defense by Hall apologist and many sympathetic members of the African-American community within Atlanta held steadfast in their belief and proclamation of Hall’s innocence. For example a group of supports develop a website to help fund the legal defense in the Hall trail. The justification given for this support was stated as follows "Those of us who have developed professional and personal relationships with
Beverly over the years find it incomprehensible that she is defending herself against the charges. She must rely upon her personal resources and your generosity to help pay the staggering costs that will be associated with the trial." Another supporter suggested "... there was something else going on in Atlanta during Hall's tenure, which appears to be at odds with the picture of Atlanta painted by the investigators and the media .... The investigators were only after evidence of cheating. Perhaps a broader investigation would yield a better understanding of what was going on." One of the most prominent examples, was levied by iconic civil rights leader Andrew Young who cast the trial of Hall as a witch hunt. Specifically, declaring a pretrial delay of the preceding by the federal judge overseeing the case due to Hall’s terminal illness that would eventually be the cause of her death as a proclamation of justice preserving the rights of the innocent (Huffington Post 2014). Andrew Young was not the only leader in the African-American community in Atlanta to stand firm in their defense of Hall (Blue Blog 2011). Select African-American organizations were staunch defenders Hall who in the prelude to the cheating scandal was recognized as the 2009 national superintendent of the year for gains the APS had made with standardized test scores. These organizations spoke of a systematic witch hunt in the defense in of Hall’s actions. “The problem here wasn’t just the illegal and immoral behavior of a few individuals, but an absurd system of top-down, heavy-handed, test-based accountability, which is why cheating scandals have been popping up all over the country for as long as we’ve had high-stakes testing. And even if the Hall administration had raised the scores without cheating, Atlanta schoolchildren were still cheated out of a real education because the schools were turned into glorified test-prep centers.”(Atlanta Journal Constitution, 2015).

The case of Beverly Hall clearly illustrates and aligns most clearly with premises four and five of HPRC. Premise four of HPRC articulates that the symbolism of the person in a leadership position benefits the entire group despite the individual shortcomings of that individual. Specifically, to the Hall narrative those in the community would argue that Hall’s ability to leverage funds from large philanthropic organizations such as the Gates Foundation to urban school districts and as a woman of African descent being recognized as national superintendent of the year is such of symbolic representation for all women of color who stride to reach that position. Her good deeds for the community outweigh her misgivings and such that any wrong doing is justified because of the historical impact of her tenure.

**Conclusion**
HPRC derives from a protective response to a history of oppression. As CRT posits, an
element of the continuing significance of race as a social construct is due not directly to current
legislation but to historical practices that impact current perspectives on identity group
leadership. HPRC contributes to maintaining poor leadership performance among the groups that
can least afford to endure it.

Noteworthy is that the victims of poor performing Black leadership tend to be
predominantly Black people. The oppressed group unwittingly participates in its continued
oppression by its public support of underperforming leaders. An unintended result of HPRC is its
contribution to exacerbating racially inequitable outcomes (For example, Jesse Jackson, Jr. was
absent for months and missed several Congressional votes when he left his constituents without
representation. A disproportionate amount of Black voters were left without Congressional
representation. Of Junior’s 2nd Congressional District of over 700,000 people, 56 percent of the
population was Black, 37 percent was White and the remaining was largely Latino.)

This disproportionality of negative impact of leadership outcomes along racial lines
relates to CRT originator Derrick Bell’s (1980, p. 523) assertion that, “The interest of Blacks in
achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of
Whites.” That poor leadership performance may be maintained arguably suggests that dominant
group members are largely unimpacted by the performance. We suggest that if the victims of
poor leadership outcomes were not disproportionately Black then the poor performance would
not be tolerated despite the silence of Blacks.

We also argue that underperforming Black leadership reflects a status quo narrative about
Blacks. That is, leadership that does not challenge the status quo narrative of Black educational,
political, or cultural leadership dysfunction is systematically allowed to be maintained by
dominant groups. Equalizing outcomes through leadership is not central to the dominant group
since it is not greatly impacted by the shortcomings of the leadership.

Utilizing Black American leadership as an example of HPRC, it is clear that there is an
inverse relationship between the intended desire of responding to oppression through group unity
and the outcomes from poor leadership that disproportionately impact Blacks through decreased
opportunities for upward economic mobility due to decreased socioeconomic opportunities
secured through political leadership and the impaired status of the institutions in which students
receive degrees or diplomas that are tainted by scandal and underperformance. Samad (2009) argues, “The call for unity is often a fraudulent call to accept compromised realities.”

While HPRC protects individual leaders, it disadvantages the collective identity group. Those in leadership positions may symbolize the arrival of group equality since they are a member of the historically oppressed group. However, leader action or inaction may have pervasive collective impacts that essentially render the leader as a direct agent of oppression. We argue, however, that differing only in private as in HPRC ultimately benefits those who oppress. The lack of overt criticism (the response to leadership) by identity group members of other identity group members in leadership tilts toward poor leadership outcomes.

We are not arguing that public criticism does not occur. Although refraining from public criticism of those in one’s identity group may be a widely held value, as with other popularly held values, all are not bound by adherence to the value. This paper illuminates HPRC as deriving from a widely held value among identity groups that operates as a reaction to oppression in order to protect the group.

References


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For African-Americans, faith has been the cornerstone of individual and community life since the days of this country’s chattel slavery system (Raboteau, 2004). The brick-and-mortar churches African-Americans attend today have their roots buried deep in the soil of the slaveholding southern states born out of what has come to be called the “invisible institution” – clandestine praise and worship rituals held by enslaved Africans in the wooded outskirts of their plantation dwellings (Raboteau, 2004). Languishing under the oppression and racial hatred during the week, enslaved Africans were forced by their white overseers to endure hypocritical Christian teachings on Sunday mornings in segregated pews. On Sunday evenings, however, they would “steal away” to the woods to sing and pray for a freedom many of them would never come to know (Raboteau, 2004).

Those hidden gatherings, which reflected the same frenzied expression of petition and praise that characterize many Black worship services today, would eventually lead to the establishment of the seven denominations which make up what scholars and lay persons call the Black Church. According to Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), the institution of the Black Church is comprised of “those independent, historic, and totally black controlled denominations, which were founded after the Free African Society of 1787 and which constituted the core of black Christians” (pg. 1). Traditionally the denominations of the Black Church were the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), the National Baptist Convention USA Incorporated, the National Baptist Convention of America Unincorporated, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) (Hardy, 2014). In recent years, however, the term “Black Church” has been used more broadly to include predominantly/completely Black Protestant congregations even within traditionally white denominations (Hardy, 2014; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990) such as the United Church of Christ (UCC) which was thrust into the national spotlight by the passionate preaching of Rev. Jeremiah Wright, former pastor to Barack and Michelle Obama, during the 2008 Presidential election.

From its inception the Black faith tradition has reflected a unique religious expression that included a desire for spiritual and earthly deliverance from the relentless persecution of the
world. Even before slavery ended, the Black Churches that dotted the southern states in the late 1770s, offered refuge for their members (Raboteau, 2004; Whelchel, Jr., 2011). After the unjust institution of slavery formally ended, Black Churches grew in great numbers operating as informal social service agencies by providing food, shelter, clothing, and other needed resources to anyone in the community regardless of their formal affiliation with the church (Billingsley, 1999; Hardy, 2014). Black Churches started schools for children and adults to learn basic academics and trade skills. African-American clergy gained national prominence for their influence during the Civil Rights Movement often leading marches and using their sanctuaries as a political rallying venue in pursuit of social justice (Hardy, 2011).

Generations later the Black Church continues to be the most revered institution in the African-American community particularly for those living on the social and economic margins of society. They continue to target programming to their members – rites of passage and academic assistance for the youth, health and mental health screenings for the elderly – while assisting poor residents from the surrounding community with meal services and emergency cash (Billingsley, 1999; Hardy, 2011). One need only query some of the country’s most prominent African-Americans to learn the Black Church was typically the incubator for their creativity or leadership. Black Churches today continue to be the first stages upon which African-American children perform, the first audiences who cheer their efforts, the extended families that celebrate their accomplishments.

At the helm of these institutions is the pastor who is afforded a great deal of respect in their churches and communities (Allen, Davey & Davey, 2010; Butler-Ajibade, Booth & Burwell, 2012; Hardy, 2014). The pastors of Black Churches, the overwhelming majority of whom are men, are first and foremost men of the gospel who shepherd their congregations along a spiritual journey, but even today some have followed the lead of predecessors such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and placed themselves directly in the center of the fight for justice, fairness, and equality. These institutions have never been merely pulpits and pews, hymnals and sermons – they have always been havens for escaping spiritual and earthly warfare. It is for all of these reasons that attempting to explain the risk and resilience of Hartford, Connecticut’s African-American population in the face of the city’s socioeconomic deprivation without including the church is to offer an incomplete analysis.
The Black Church by the Numbers

The Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life conducted a U.S. Religious Landscape Survey in 2008 and 2015. With a sample size of over 35,000 people across both surveys, they represent the largest, most comprehensive national studies on religion in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2015). In both administrations of the Religious Landscape Survey, researchers identified over 12 different religious traditions that were further disaggregated into denominations over 24 of which were Protestant (Pew Research Center, 2015). Among the identified denominations is the formal recognition of the Historically Black Churches as a separate, distinctive Protestant denomination: “churches in the historically Black Protestant tradition have been shaped uniquely by the experiences of slavery and segregation, which puts their religious beliefs and practices in a special context” (Pew Research Center, pg. 22). Of particular importance in the survey results is the finding that African-Americans are the most religious racial group in the country – more than all other racial groups combined (Pew Research Center, 2008) – and that despite significant membership declines across most Christian traditions (including Catholicism) and a substantial increase in people identifying as “religiously unaffiliated” in recent years, the membership of Historically Black Protestant Churches remains stable and even saw a modest increase (Pew Research Center, 2015). Among the denominations of the Historically Black Protestant Churches, “six-in-ten … identify with Baptists denominations, including 22% who identify with the National Baptist Convention, the largest denomination within the Historically Black tradition” (Pew Research Center, pg. 15).

The Landscape of Hartford: Demographic Data

Hartford, Connecticut holds the distinction of being both the capital for one of the wealthiest states in the country and being one of the poorest cities in country. According to Hartford’s Department of Health and Human Services Community Health Needs Assessment (2012), nearly 40 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and “nearly a third of the adults do not have a high school diploma” (pg. 3). Additionally, “the proportion of Black and Hispanic/Latino residents” in the city is higher than the rest of Connecticut and the United States (DHHS, 2012, pg. 9). In Hartford, 37 percent of the population is Black yet they make up only 10 percent of the population throughout the rest of Connecticut and 12 percent of the population in the United States (DHHS, 2012). The population of Hartford is younger than other
Connecticut and U.S. cities with over 70 percent of the residents being under 45 years old (DHHS, 2012). Over half of the adults in Hartford report having never been married at all (55%) and only a small number of Hartford residents report being married now (24%) compared to the rest of the state and the country (DHHS, 2012).

Taken together, the fact that Hartford is currently so poor is not surprising given that its population is dominated by young, unmarried, people of color with limited education and high unemployment. Each of these populations tend to have a poorer quality of life individually, but the intersection of these demographics paints a very bleak picture for the future of Connecticut’s capital city. With a demographic landscape like this one, it would be imprudent not to expect there to be a continued reliance on the Black Church for the economic resources and social support that is either unavailable or insufficient in supply from other sources. Even the Pew Research Center recognizes the necessity of a unique cultural lens to understand the socioeconomic experiences of the broader African-American community.

The Doors of the Church are Open: The Hartford Churches

Continued financial disinvestment in low-income, African-American communities burdens the churches in those communities with finding ways to provide support and resources that the residents and congregations need while operating with a limited budget of tithes and offerings and using an all-volunteer staff. This is hardly a new phenomenon, however. Even in the 1920-1930s urban churches were encumbered by mountains of debt in their efforts to meet the needs of their membership (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). African-Americans who migrated to Chicago from the south were accustomed to seeking out assistance from the pastors of their rural church homes and continued the practice once they reach the north with pastors doing all they could to help them (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Presently Black Churches are still striving to meet increasing demands with decreasing resources. There are over 250 churches in Hartford (a number which does not include the many storefront churches) of all denomination and racial makeup with over 30 just within the 06120 zip code associated with the North End and the majority of those are next-door neighbors on Main Street. While a review of the websites and social media sites for the churches do not readily announce the work they do in their communities, through relationship-building with these institutions one comes to realize the extent to which they are engaged in community-based anti-
poverty work on a daily basis. For example, Allen Chapel AME hosts a Clothes Closet providing free clothes for men, women and children in conjunction with their Community Outreach Day; Union Baptist and Mount Olive Baptist provide health education events; Faith Congregational hosts over 100 each for free meals and hosts an annual coat drive for residents in the community that surrounds the church; and Shiloh Baptist operates a soup kitchen and closing closet as well. Most of the churches provide emergency cash to members and community residents in need to help with rent, food, and utility bills.

In their attempts to encourage excellence and academic achievement among their younger members, Union Baptist hosts HBCU College Tours for teens and their parents and most churches provide modest scholarships to their teens who are embarking on their collegiate journeys. Hartford’s Black Churches also strive to meet the needs of those beyond the borders of their immediate community. Faith Congregational Church is working in conjunction with other churches in Hartford to raise money and collect water for the ongoing water crisis facing low-income residents in Flint, Michigan. Shiloh Baptist sponsors a Prison Ministry to reach those who preparing to re-enter the community after their incarceration.

Enumerating the activities of the Black Churches of Hartford, however, offers limited insight into the current state of these institutions (locally and nationally). One need only enter the sanctuaries to see the dearth of men and young people in the congregations or observe the number of congregants traveling from more affluent suburbs to attend church compared to those who worship from within the community. These phenomenon in particular underscore the changes that are taking place within Black Churches and few have a better vantage point for observing those changes than those who sit in the pulpit.

Through the Lens of the Pastorate: Needs & Challenges of the Black Church

In an interview with Rev. Steven Camp, Senior Pastor of Faith Congregational Church which is a predominantly Black congregation within the UCC denomination, it became clear that there were very real challenges facing Black Churches in Hartford and other major metropolitan areas that threaten the continued existence of these institutions. Rev. Camp’s comments were serious and sympathetic in his challenge for clergy and their members to invest in growth and change. Regarding the lack of substantive community and political involvement among many pastors, Rev. Camp stated that many “don’t see the word ‘community’ as an active word, but
rather a by-product of their world. Every church is an island here. We need to develop a “we-ness” in ministry rather than saying ‘it’s not my job.” He went on to define “we-ness” as moving beyond the independent to a space where “people care about each other, help each other, and do it out of a sense of Spirit.”

Scholars and observers of the Black Church have remarked that the church is “turning grey” reflecting a nearly elderly-only membership. Rev. Camp shared his insights on the Black Church including the decreasing enrollment of teens and young adults:

*The Black Church doesn’t have people 30-50 years old – they’re not here. We’re losing members because the church is not the same anymore; the ground we walk on is not the same anymore. Young people don’t want old rhetoric and old stuff. We keep going on in the same vain as an institution.*

When asked about reasons for the increasing generational gap in membership, Rev. Camp identified several issues including the growth of megachurches: “It’s not about the dollars, it’s about the Word!” Lack of technology in the churches was another issue impacting generational growth which makes it difficult for younger people to find and connect with the churches. As an example of how important technology is in the Black Church now, Rev. Camp shared that Faith Congregational had over 1.2 million views to their website in four years indicating that members and no-members are both visiting their website on a regular basis. Faith Congregational Church’s website is one of very few Black Church websites in Hartford that transcends purely religious doctrine by boldly intersecting faith and current sociopolitical issues. Rev. Camp believes that the church needs to ask “what’s happening in the world that we need to be responding to? Violence, poverty, healthcare.”

He concedes, however, that even when pastors attempt to engage in community-building around these social issues they are not always heralded for their advocacy. The congregations themselves can sometimes be a significant a barrier to community engagement:

*We want the usual characteristic in the pulpit and it amounts to settling for Bro. So and So saying ‘but he looks good in the pulpit!’ DuBois was right – the Black Church as theater is still who we are.*
Essentially Rev. Camp was sharing the ways in which congregations in the Black Church can sometimes hamper the efforts of their pastors to delve deeper into the issues impacting the world outside their doors. Rev. Camp and his colleagues in the UCC in Hartford, however, have been buoyed in their efforts to tackle major social issues in a variety of ways. His colleague Bishop John Selders of Amistad UCC has been vocal in Hartford on multiple social issues and has recently led members of the Hartford community in a number of Moral Monday social justice rallies that, on one occasion, led to a major traffic disruption in the center of the city during the evening rush hour. Rev. Camp spoke on the steps of the capital alongside faith leaders from various religious traditions after the death of Trayvon Martin and has been a frequent contributor to the North End Agent, a local newspaper serving the residents in the North End of Hartford. He has also coordinated a violence prevention training for teens that culminated in a trip to Birmingham, Alabama where he took 15 young people to the site of church bombings. These leaders are intentional in their advocacy work of “marrying the Word with the world” are have seen younger people drawn to their efforts.

Another challenge facing the Black Church is the small number of men compared to women in the pews. Rev. Camp shared his thoughts on this phenomenon:

*The Black Church is seen as a women’s organization. The message is feminized, not masculine in tone. Most stories have a bend toward cultural words like “softness,” “loving,” and “caring,” not “strong” and “fight.” We’re fighting against [male] culture. There are so many guns in the community because they’re a sign of strength. “I’ll cap you rather than talk to you.” When there is male imagery it is always about sports, not about what’s happening to the psyche of men.*

In many ways the Black Church continues to be a port in the storm particularly for low-income African-Americans and in its steadfast desire to help those in need, the church cannot change without it hurting many individuals and families. Rev. Camp shared that Faith Congregational provides “$6,000-7,000 a year in diapers, light bulbs, rent … you name it. We usually run out of money by March each year.” In other ways, however, Rev. Camp sees a need for change if the Black Church is to remain a viable community institution:
I’m hopeful for the future. We’re nurturing leaders. The Black Church is still the only institution we’ve got; some young pastors are really community-driven. The younger generation of leaders is trying to do a different thing.

But how does the Black Church move forward and begin to be relevant again? Rev. Camp outlined five points toward that end:

1. We need a lot of internal work.
2. Be real about who we are as people and a community.
3. Be clear that we are a community that is evolving and growing.
4. We need to understand that we can no longer tolerate “closetedness” – we need to be accepting.
5. We need to re-imagine justice and care for each other and the community.

View from the Ivory Tower: Evolving the Faith

The Black Church has been a formidable institution for generations. It has made a way out of no way from our enslaved ancestors to our freedom-fighting forebears and remains a steadfast pillar of the community in present day. It has been celebrated the births of babies born and teenagers born again; it aisles have ushered families into the pews for weddings and funerals; it’s alter has borne tears of both joy and sorrow; its organs have piped music of praise and petition. There is not another institution in the African-American community that has done more for so many for so long and it is an institution worth preserving. Indeed, the demise of the Black Church shall surely signal the end of the fight for justice, freedom, equality, and salvation for the Black community.

It cannot, however, continue along the current path. There is a point at which there must be an evolution in some areas of the Black Church and a recapturing of the old ways. Viewing the Black Church as an institution first and foremost, one realizes that it typically operates in a top-down managerial style where all decisions must be approved by the pastor as CEO. This organizational structure was necessary and relevant at a time when pastors were not simply the leaders in the church, but in the broader community. However, top-down leadership, particularly by people whose only preparation for the clergy might be their “calling” to preach, is no longer well received. As Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) stated:
The time when the minister was looked upon for leadership because he was the best-educated, or among the best-educated people in the black community are gone. To win the respect of the new black professionals and college-educated black people, the clergy must also, at a minimum, achieve professional parity (pg. 129).

Rev. Camp echoed this sentiment stating that there is a “lack of training and understanding of pastors” which limits what they are able to do and who they are able to attract to their churches. He shared that Faith Congregational is considered “a middle-class church” and discussed the differences in churches along socioeconomic lines. If the Black Church is going to remain as valuable an institution as it has always been, it will require a change in leadership structure that reflects shared governance and decision-making among the members.

Related to Rev. Camp’s statements regarding the use of technology by Black Churches, there is a need for clergy and congregations to bridge the generational divide by bridging the digital divide. Increased use of technology not only provides an opportunity for the Church’s message to travel further faster, but is a natural gateway to engaging younger members of the church in what amounts to mutual growth and development. Acquiring the skills to build and maintain websites and social media platforms benefits the teen members of the church and the reach of the church’s message to a broader audience allows others to see the work that the institution is doing and the ways in which they “marry the Word with the world.”

Additionally, the separation of Church and State has always been an artificial disaggregation for the Black Church. Indeed the Black preachers of the slave plantations in the mid-1770s, the Black clergy of the Civil Rights Movement, and Black pastors of Hartford have all pushed society toward their best, most moral selves in the fight for freedom. They have used the Word of God to hold elected officials and laymen accountable for their treatment of others and a return to that active involvement of faith leaders as community leaders in the ongoing struggle for social, political, and economic justice is no less necessary now than it has ever been.

Finally, the Black Church cannot continue to operate as an independent agent with sparse budgets drawn from the meager donations of an already struggling congregation. Clergy and congregations need to build coalitions with other churches so that their efforts are not needlessly duplicated. For instance, Rev. Camp shared that they suspended their coat drive last year because another church was doing one so they put their resources into meeting other needs. Pastors must
be willing to collaborate across denominational and ideological divides to ensure that the needs of the community are being met efficiently and effectively. Black clergy need to apply for grants designated for faith-based organizations so that they can have an influx of capital for use in the uplift of their communities.

Many have praised God’s goodness and attested to their having “come this far by faith.” Truly this is the remarkable testimony of the institution of the Black Church. However, we are admonished in the Word for acting on our faith alone:

(James 2:14) What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? (26) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (NKJV).

References


Faithworks: A Paradigm Shift for Community Survival
Rev. Dr. Shelley D. Best

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

James 2:14-20
New King James Version

Hartford, Connecticut is considered one of the poorest cities in the nation. A mere 18 square miles in size, it is surrounded by some of the most affluent suburbs in the world. Who would believe that bucolic Connecticut, with Hartford as “The Insurance Capitol of the World,” has neighborhoods blighted from the injustice of real estate segregation and poverty? One only has to drive down Scarborough Street to see some of this city’s grandest houses—only to be greeted at the intersection by the remnant of Westbrook Village, one of the last low income projects in the city. The contrast of rich and poor is easy to find here. Albany Avenue, one of the region’s main thoroughfares, has distressed small businesses, frail dogs searching for food, and weary people standing on street corners – looking and waiting -- for a change to come.

In the North End of Hartford, where a significant portion of African Americans reside, the transformational institutions left behind are churches, the new YMCA, the public library branch and Community Health Services. Most of the churches, the organism called to be “the light of the world and a city on a hill\textsuperscript{33},” stand closed during the week because the majority of pastors must work other jobs to make ends meet. In addition, many of the small neighborhood based nonprofit organizations lack the institutional resources needed, such as facilities and volunteers to address the community’s most pressing needs. If we could build strong collaborations between all stakeholders and leverage our assets, we might be able to shift the tide.

The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the challenges and opportunities

facing African American faith leaders in Hartford as they seek to serve their primarily suburban and commuting flocks while balancing the prophetic call to make a difference in the lives of the under-resourced families left to survive in the heart of the city.

**Assessment of the Ministry Context and Challenges**

The Conference of Churches (TCC, The Conference) is a 116-year-old faith-based organization located in Hartford. The Conference came into existence as an ecumenical organization with a mission to bring the “Body of Christ,” together as an expression of social justice. When I was appointed to serve as president and chief executive officer in 2001, I was the first in multiple ways: female leader; person of color; and first minister from a historically black denomination. At the time I inherited an organization that was confronted with “changing or dying.” Through a study of faith leader perceptions of ministry, the members discovered that most could not articulate a tangible value that ecumenical gatherings added to their ministry or the community as a whole.

Nevertheless, on a regular basis, various government, philanthropic, and human service leaders approached the TCC to urge the organization to use its position of influence as a convener of faith communities to develop collaborations among community stakeholders that might work together to improve the lives of the underserved in the community.

The result of these contrasting views served as a catalyst for The Conference of Churches to restructure its work so that it could serve as a collaborative, capacity building resource for faith-based community development. To achieve this goal, TCC utilized its expertise in community organizing and development and spent hundreds of hours conducting one-on-one interviews with stakeholders to discover how we could refocus our efforts for greater impact. This approach made us aware of the dichotomy in the area of Hartford’s North End, which TCC now refers to as “Project Holy Ground.”

**Ministry Context: Project Holy Ground**

33 “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. 34 I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt. 34’”

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“Project Holy Ground,” is a name we use to define a three-mile geographic area of Hartford in the 06120 zip code. When TCC began its work in 2008, it was reported that over 48% of residents in this area had income below the poverty level, while the rate of poverty for the entire state of Connecticut was only 9.3% (city-data.com). Further, 23% of the residents in this area are 50% or more below poverty as compared to only 4.1% of the entire state’s population. Eight years later it is reported that poverty in this area has been reduced to 41%.35

This neighborhood is of particular focus to the work of The Conference of Churches because of its faith commitment to those living in poverty. According to TCC’s research, 06120 is one of the most poverty impacted zip-codes in the country and it is home to over 39 well established African-American faith communities.

This particular neighborhood is representative of many other urban neighborhoods. Sadly, most neighborhoods with profound poverty have limited institutional resources making a difference. Faith communities are one of the few institutional assets distressed neighborhood can draw upon, yet persistent, abject poverty demonstrates we are struggling to meet the needs.

In addition to my role leading TCC, I serve as executive minister of Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church in Hartford, where the Senior Pastor is Reverend Terry L. Jones. Metropolitan is a 183 year-old historically Black congregation located in the “Project Holy Ground” area. In light of the research implications, I became aware of the need for my church to also develop collaborative partnerships to address the issue of poverty in the region.

Neighborhoods such as “Project Holy Ground” exist in urban communities across the country. By using Hartford’s Project Holy Ground area as a case study, the FaithWorks Community Development Leadership model for urban ministry was designed to serve Hartford and be replicated nationally.

Project Holy Ground as an example of Urban Poverty

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Project Holy Ground of Hartford begins where Main Street meets Albany Avenue and is home of over 39 well-established, predominantly African-American, faith communities. The Churches represent African Methodist Episcopal Zion; African Methodist Episcopal; Baptist, Non-Denominational; Salvation Army, Congregational, United Holiness Churches of America; United Church of Christ; Christian Methodist Episcopal, Missionary Baptist, Progressive Baptist, National Baptist, Apostolic; Roman Catholic; Episcopal; and Church of God in Christ churches to name a few. In addition, this area hosts over seven, well established Latino faith communities including House of Restoration Church—a large Pentecostal mini-mega-church in a facility that seats over 2,000 people and has membership of approximately 4,000 individuals. Most of the churches in this area have existed for well over 50 years and several of the African American congregations have been in existence since the days of reconstruction.

The Project Holy Ground Churches are clustered by the various numeric locations.

According to DataPlace, the 06120 zip code of Hartford has a total population of 12,766. It ranks the third lowest in median age with 35.5% of the population under the age of 18 and the highest on the rate of elder poverty. In this area, 54.6% of the children and 43.5% of the elders live in poverty. Of the 4,108 households recorded in this area, only 758 are

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
married couples with children. As a whole, 56.6% of the population is African American and 37.1% of the population is Latino. The unemployment rate for this area is recorded at 18.6% and the median household income is $15,727 or a take home salary of $302.00 [a mere $7.56 per hour] to support an average family of four.

In this section of town, those in the workforce are subjugated to low-paying jobs with 29.8% of the people working in sales; 28.6% in the work of personal care or service occupations, and 19.3% in production occupations. According to the U.S. Census Bureau fact sheet on this area, only 50.9% of the people living there have a high school diploma or GED and only 4.5% of the individuals have a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

“Project Holy Ground” is a dichotomy. Through research of TCC, it was discovered that the 45 African-American and Latino faith communities have a combined membership of over 15,000 people of color in Greater Hartford. Many of the members of these churches are significant community stakeholders.

Sadly, when congregation leaders in the Project Holy Ground area were asked to estimate the percentage of members of in their churches living in the neighborhood, they reported an average of 5-10%. This means that the churches may be located in the neighborhood, but the neighborhood members are not located in the church. These findings have caused ministry leadership in Hartford with an interest in reaching the poor, to begin developing programs and services that provide tangible resources for their neighbors. This has begun to be accomplished through the creation of asset building programs.

The Shortcomings of traditional benevolence

Over and again, Hartford community activists and social commentators ask the question, “What is the church doing?” This comment could be echoed across the country in many inner cities. Fortunately, in some cities, like Queens, New York, the location of Allen Cathedral led by

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
former congressman Floyd Flake, there are key churches working miracles. In other cities like Hartford, the impact of the church in the public square almost seems insignificant.

With this in mind, in November of 2003, The Rev. Dr. R. Drew Smith of Morehouse Colleges’ Faith Communities and Urban Families Project published “Beyond the Boundaries Report of Low Income Residents, Faith Based Organizations and Neighborhood Coalition Building,” which was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Through the project, they looked at four cities across the country to see exactly what the churches are doing in response to extreme poverty.

The “Faith Communities and Families Project” arrived at a number of not so very surprising conclusions. First, it proved that two-thirds of the low-income families in target areas had little or no contact with the churches in the area. According to the data recorded for Hartford, within the radius of “Project Holy Ground” churches, 74% of the Nelton Court Low Income Housing Residents reported no involvement with the church in the past year. Next, the study illustrated that many faith communities have programs of potential value to those living in abject poverty in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, only church members—who often commute from outside the neighborhood—take advantage of them. The research proved there was a lack of focused outreach and engagement in the neighborhood.

Dr. Smith’s study also proved that the church is still a significant institution in most urban communities and “an important spiritual and social resource for some low-income families. Unfortunately, it has “limited impact on the lives of families living in the poorest inner-city neighborhoods.” The Conference of Churches’ research of faith leaders in Hartford’s North End confirmed the limited interaction many traditional churches have with the poor and truly disadvantaged in the midst.

In the course of the last decade we have seen an increase in engagement thanks to those leaders who have participated in The FaithWorks program. In the last decade several churches such as Metropolitan AME Zion, Philips CME, Faith Congregational, Union Baptist, Mount


49 Smith, 43.

50 Smith, 3.
Olive Ministries, Shiloh Baptist, Citadel of Love, North United Methodist and Mount Calvary, have shifted the service paradigm. I believe a higher degree of community engagement creates a higher level of social capitol in the neighborhood, and the increase in social capitol is beginning to reduce the high level of poverty.\textsuperscript{51}

In this chapter the term “traditional church” is used to refer to churches that currently specialize in activities of worship, Christian education, and pastoral care. Many of the faith-leaders of these congregations have only been trained as “traditional” church leaders and have little to no training in areas of economic development, nonprofit management, social service program development, community outreach, and nonprofit fundraising. This is because most “traditional church pastors” have been trained “traditionally.”

When the clergy in Hartford were surveyed about the various methods that prepared them for pastoral ministry: 68% were mentored by a former pastor; 64% had denominational studies; 44% went through a certificate program [many commented it was at Hartford Seminary]; 44% had seminary training; and 8% said they learned how to pastor as on-the-job-training.\textsuperscript{52}

Therefore, most of the “Project Holy Ground” churches are traditional churches, with pastors who trained by traditional methods of pastoral ministry development. Through the survey, it was clear that their lack of training does not mean a lack of interest in providing more innovative services for their neighborhood; it is just that they lack the training and economic resources to do so.

When asked about the barriers that keep them from providing asset building services there was a high response rate regarding the need for specific training along with support from their congregation. The response rate included the need for:

- Funds for service delivery – 64%
- Grant-writing training – 64%
- Leadership training – 60%
- Fundraising training – 52%
- Volunteer Recruitment – 44%
- Church Member’s Support – 40%
- Church or Ministry staff person to lead effort – 40%
- Membership attitude changes – 40%
- Office Equipment/Computers – 28%

\textsuperscript{52}Shelley Best Study, 2006.
• Program Development Training – 32%
• Denominational Support – 12%
• Political Support – 4%

The study documented the perception that many Pastors see a need for funds for social service delivery, as well as training in nonprofit administration, grant writing, leadership, and fundraising. Several of those surveyed spoke of their dream of having a church administrator, or person to lead faith based services. The faith leaders also identified ministries/programs they would provide for the well-being of the community if the perceived barriers were eliminated. In the study, a high rate of motivation to lift people out of poverty was expressed. The pastors also indicated they would welcome the opportunity to present social justice programs which could liberate people from unfair social conditions.53

When pastors reported the services54 they would provide if there were no barriers, they responded:

• Money Management/Credit Counseling – 56%
• Affordable Home Development – 52%
• Homeownership & Financial literacy Education – 52%
• Literacy Program – 48%
• Senior Housing – 48%
• Soup Kitchen or Food Pantry – 40%
• Apartment Rehabilitation Development – 40%
• Credit Union – 36%
• Short-term Emergency funds – 36%
• Job Training or Employment Counseling – 36%
• Adult Day Care – 32%
• Clothing Closet/Thrift Shop – 28%
• AA or NA Support Groups – 28%
• Substance Abuse Treatment – 28%
• Technology Education – 28%
• Technology Center/Computer Access – 28%
• Employment placement – 24%
• Day Care – 20%
• Legal Clinic – 20%
• Skilled Home Health Aides – 16%
• Health Education & Promotion – 16%
• Mental Health Care & Family Counseling – 16%

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
• Business Development/Entrepreneurial Skills – 16%
• Business Development Funding – 16%
• HIV/AIDS Education & Services – 12%

In other words, the faith leaders articulated a high motivation and interest to provide asset building services. At the time of the study, 100% of the churches surveyed in the Project Holy ground area reported providing “benevolence services” or some form of emergency funds for utilities or other family emergencies, along with food and basic clothing. In other words, they provide “fish” for those who are hungry right now, but do not teach them “to fish.”

According to Amy Sherman, who wrote “Restorers of Hope: Reaching the Poor in Your Community with Churched Based Ministries that work,” benevolence programs, while well meaning, often do more harm than good. “Money sometimes puts a Band-Aid on a broken leg.” 55 When churches “respond to poverty with direct social service provision, such as food distribution, it does little to build up community assets and address the long term solutions to poverty and unemployment.” 56 Through the study of Project Holy Ground churches, it became clear that faith leaders would like to do more than provide benevolence services, but lack the skills to do so. Benevolent handouts seem to be the easiest thing to do.

A New Paradigm for The Conference of Churches

The Conference of Churches has invested extensive resources to evolve our work for greater impact. When the research began in 2006, we focused our efforts on providing capacity building training for faith and neighborhood based leaders so we could implement best practices in our city. Through this effort in the last decade, there has been an increase of health equity and community engagement programs in 71% or 28 of the 39 targeted Project Holy Ground Churches. To increase these efforts, TCC has been compelled to move from simply teaching and consulting on faith-based community development to modeling the efforts through the learning laboratory of The 224 EcoSpace.

The 224 EcoSpace is a 30,000 square foot $2.5 million facility that was acquired for $387,000 with a state bond grant of $500,000 through the proven methods of faith-based

55 Amy Sherman, Restorers of Hope: Reaching the Poor in your Community with Church–based Ministries that Work (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 147.
56 Sherman, 177.
community development. It is located in the Asylum Hill neighborhood of Hartford and was redeveloped through the volunteer efforts of residents and people of faith and goodwill. The Conference of Churches took on this effort to model what is possible in other faith-based organizations in our city. Its mission is to “create positive impact, build social profit, and foster a thriving community through the tools of faith-based community development.”

The goal of 224 EcoSpace is to provide the environment, context and social enterprise platforms to gather people (artists, educators, families, entrepreneurs, health advocates, faith and thought leaders) who want to contribute and facilitate change in the city of Hartford.

*The 224 EcoSpace Platforms*

As a faith-based community development organization, the LivingWell Centre provides health and wellness services; economic development and financial stability services through the Business Growth Centre, and inspiration and innovation through our Collaboration Centre. Each of the platforms are designed to help faith leaders have a tangible model to shift their own paradigm for survival.

**A national model of Faith-based Community Development**

In 2009, TCC was one of 85 nonprofits selected nationally out of 900 applicants to receive a Strengthening Communities Fund Grant for the FaithWorks Community Development Leadership Institute, in partnership with the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. In addition, the Conference has spearheaded a number of education
and advocacy programs designed to provide faith-based volunteers with the information and skills they need to impact public policy. These efforts have included TCC’s Universal Health Care Organizing project, Health Equity Leadership Council, as well as the CityHarvest: Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Initiative. Each of these proven capacity building strategies recruited and developed faith leaders as advocates to increase health equity in our region.

The research and training model of “The FaithWorks Faith-based Community Development Leadership Institute” represents the collective wisdom of The Conference of Churches with a passion to transform the lives of people of color and those trapped in the grips of poverty. As an organization, TCC continues to teach other faith-based leaders locally and nationally. Therefore, as The Conference continues to execute the elements of its newest strategic plan, it creates a living example of the principles it teaches.

The New Paradigm for Faith-based Community Development in Hartford

As an African-American female faith leader, I have had the privilege of serving the capitol region of Connecticut for 15 years. At this time, we are in the midst of a “changing of the guard” in the Project Holy Ground area. Since we began this work 18 of the 39 Senior Pastors have changed and 6 more are in the middle of a transition. The good news is while several of the faith leaders are changing, they leave behind congregations who now possess an openness and lay leadership capacity to serve the neighborhood. This is progress. In the beginning of our journey, many of the pastors surveyed told stories, “off the record,” of how they found themselves caught in the struggle of meeting the needs of the middle class commuting members over the needs of the distressed families in the neighborhood. That has changed. Now we see more members of the congregations actively engaged in social change in the neighborhood.

The experience of launching and leading the FaithWorks Community Development Leadership Institute and establishment of The 224 EcoSpace has illustrated the profound potential found in ordinary people with passion and a heart to provide extraordinary community leadership. Many people have a desire to help the poor, they just don’t know how. The FaithWorks Institute has not only taught emerging leaders the techniques of nonprofit management, but it has also created collaborative efforts with those leaders and strategic partners and public policy makers.
Once you see, you cannot unsee

When I first experienced consciousness to the tragic realities of “Project Holy Ground,” I realized the ghetto is no accident for it is the result of institutionalized racism and public policy neglect. Highly condensed urban areas are often the locations of insular faith communities and fledgling, nonprofit organizations. These organizations exist because there are people of goodwill who want to be where the greatest need can be found. The reality is these leaders who could be the greatest assets to a community often lack the wide range of skills needed to bring forth a shift in public policy.

As TCC moves forward with faith-based community development in the city of Hartford, there will continue to be a need for capacity building experiences for faith leaders and community advocates. The issues facing the community are complex and so are the solutions. Given the scarcity of resources the people leading and living in the area of Project Holy Ground can not expect someone else to come in and transform the environment. The only way change will come is if those impacted by the issues are part of the solution not mere recipients.

Conclusion

The FaithWorks Community Development Program of The Conference of Churches has a proven track record of success. In the greater Hartford community, FaithWorks Fellows (participants who have gone through the training) are engaged in social change at all levels. When it comes to faith and neighborhood based leaders on the public stage in greater Hartford, and beyond, FaithWorks Fellows are truly making a difference.

References


An Exploratory Study of African Jamaican Women’s Health Beliefs around Male Condom Use and Negotiation in Relationships
Yvonne Patterson, Ph.D.

Abstract

The impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic among African American/Black women in the United States necessitates a more in depth investigation into all the factors which may heighten their risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. African American/Black women’s risk has been explored along several variables. However, there remains a gap in knowledge around the effects of ethnicity on the rate of infection among the culturally diverse groups of women, living in the U.S, subsumed under the label African American/Black. Understanding how the epidemic impacts different ethnic groups of women is crucial in developing effective prevention strategies. Qualitative interviews were conducted with six African Jamaican women receiving services through the Community Renewal Team Inc. located in Hartford, Connecticut. The interviews explored the women’s lived experiences and meanings around the communication and negotiation of male condoms in their relationships. All women interviewed had appropriate knowledge of the seriousness of HIV/AIDS, risk of transmission and the effectiveness of male condoms. In spite of this, women used condoms either inconsistently or not at all with their male partners. Women’s perception of HIV risk in their relationships was very low. Participants described several barriers and meanings associated with condom use which presented challenges to communicating and negotiating. Successful negotiation hinged on women’s feeling of their partners’ possible infidelity. Women also had inadequate knowledge about the importance of HIV testing and correct protocol. Information derived from this study can inform the implementation of HIV prevention services targeted towards African Jamaican populations.

Keywords: African Jamaican women, HIV/AIDS, Connecticut, HIV risk behaviors, and Condom negotiation.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), African American/Black women rank fourth among all subpopulations most impacted by HIV/AIDS in the U.S (CDC, 2015). Not only are the new infection rates highest among African American/Black women in comparison to all populations of women, but their rates of new AIDS diagnoses also outnumber all racial groups of women in the U.S (CDC, 2015). African American/Black women account for approximately 13% of the overall female population but represent over 63% of the new HIV infections and are 18 times more likely to be diagnosed with AIDS in comparison to European descent women who account for approximately 75% of the U.S female population [Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), 2014]. Despite the advent of life-saving technology which has dramatically extended the life of those impacted by HIV/AIDS,
African American/Black women are also most likely to die due to complications associated with AIDS (KFF, 2014). Second only to African American/Black men. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of all new HIV infections among African American/Black women in 2013, were attributed to high risk heterosexual contact (KFF, 2014). African American/Black women are more likely to contract HIV/AIDS from a steady male sexual partner who fail to use condoms with them during sexual intercourse.

Researchers have extensively examined variables which heighten heterosexual African American/Black women’s risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. These variables include women’s disempowered gender status which negatively impacts their ability to communicate and negotiate male condom use, culturally normative beliefs and attitudes which undergird women’s repertoire of sexually acceptable interactions and sexual scripts, women’s knowledge/skills around HIV/AIDS, communicating and negotiating male condom use, as well as anatomical/biological risks (Amora & Raj, 2000; Harvey, 2002; Soler, 2000; Beckford, Jarret, O’Sullivan & Hoffman, 2009; Parker, 2009; Kull, 2010).

Many have also emphasized the necessity of looking beyond individually-based factors and behaviors towards structural or environmental factors which may be fueling the epidemic in low-income African American/Black communities (McNair and Prather, 2004; Sormanti, et al., 2004). The depressed social and economic realities of low income African American/Black communities shape sexual networking patterns which increase HIV risk apart from their personal behaviors (Adimora, Schoenback & Flore-Moore, 2009). For low-income African American/Black populations poverty curtails choices of where one can live, influences their lack of mobility out of low income communities, destabilizes heterosexual relationships, presents housing instabilities, as well as possible a loss in healthcare (Adimora, Schoenbach, & Flores-Moore, 2009). All of which adversely impact the development of healthy sexual networks.

The advent of social policies, such as the War on Drugs, has been marked by a rise in incarceration rates among African American/Black men, has had a devastating effect on the already lopsided gender ratio imbalance in low income African American communities, where women far outnumber men (Durmont, Allen, Brockman, Alexander & Rich, 2013). Overall the supply of African American/Black men is severely decreased because of high rates of incarceration, death related to HIV/AIDS and homicide, as well as unemployment (Wilson, 1987, Alleyne & Gaston, 2010; Airhihenbuwa, 2013). Also significant is the fact that African
American/Black women are less likely to date outside of their race (National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors [NASTAD], 2008; McNair & Prather, 2004). This context creates fertile ground where an increase in overlapping partnerships helps to accelerate STI’s (Adimora, Schoenbach, Bonas, Martison, Donaldson & Stancil, 2002). A reduction in the amount of men available in isolated low-income communities exacerbates the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STI’s), such as HIV (Newsome & Airhihenbuwa, 2013).

Despite the breadth and depth of research which has tremendously furthered knowledge of the HIV/AIDS epidemic among African American/Black women, very little is known about what, if any cultural differences exist among African American/Black women. This may also be impacting the trajectory of the disease. Most of the surveillance data, scholarship, important research, census information, HIV/AIDS prevention strategies continue to lump diverse ethnic groups of “African American/Black” women into one single racial category. Because groups are not commonly broken out, there is dearth of culturally specific HIV/AIDS data around the differences which may exist between different ethnic groups subsumed under the category African American/Black. This lack of data negatively impacts the development of culturally specific prevention interventions. With the use of the broad racial category African American/Black, equal HIV rates and risk behaviors are often assumed (Kerani, Kent, Sides, Dennis, Ibrahim, Cross, Wiewel, Wood, Golden., 2008). The term African descent disaggregates the racial category, African American/Black, while more appropriately accounting for multiple ethnic groups (Gellespie-Johnson, 2008). This term will be used going forward. The impact of HIV/AIDS on African descent populations in the U.S necessitates a more specific response, one which takes the ethnicity and culture of each subgroup of African descent women into consideration.

The Pan African diasporal community in the U.S is composed of multiple ethnic groups representing diverse cultures from around the world (Bent-Goodley, 2007; Beckford Jarret, O’Sullivan & Hoffman, 2009). In 2005, 75% of the 2.8 million foreign-born African descent populations in the U.S. were born in the Caribbean or another Latin America country. Thirty percent of African descent people who migrated from those regions to the U.S came from Jamaica (Kent, 2007). This report has not been updated. Connecticut is 8th among the top ten states where African Jamaican immigrants settle in the U.S (Kent, 2007). In 2014, of the 86,000 people living in Connecticut who reported having West Indian ancestry, 60% identified as
having Jamaican ancestry (U.S Census Bureau, 2014). Over 90% of persons reported with AIDS in Jamaica that identified transmission category, the most commonly reported was heterosexual transmission (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS [UNAIDS], 2014). African Jamaicans leave one country of high prevalence to settle in states where prevalence rates among African descent populations are high as well. Despite the stark differences in culture, HIV/AIDS reporting information among African descent populations in Connecticut are not routinely broken out by ethnicity. The Connecticut Department of Public Health’s [DPH] (2009) report on country of birth for those with HIV/AIDS, stated that among the 19,216 HIV/AIDS cases reported from 1982 to 2008, only 68.8% were reported with a country of birth. In this report, Jamaica was the fourth leading country of birth for those with HIV/AIDS. However, the DPH report cautions, “Country of birth is incompletely reported for HIV/AIDS cases because it is not systematically recorded in medical records” (DPH, 2009). This report has not been updated.

Although, there has been a steady growth in Hartford’s population to include African Jamaicans, the HIV/AIDS services available to them overwhelmingly are those developed within an African American context. Very little is known about the HIV/AIDS risk factors among Jamaican populations. After thorough review of the literature, Charlery (2014) identified only three studies which explicitly explored the HIV risk behaviors among Jamaican women. Hartford, Connecticut’s diverse African descent population provides a unique opportunity to examine African Jamaican women’s HIV risk factors, such as their inability to communicate and negotiate condom use with male sexual partners. This scholarship can help to close the gap in knowledge found in the literature and lead to the development of culturally appropriate prevention strategies.

Theoretical Framework

Developed by Rosenstock, the Health Belief Model (HBM) has been one of the oldest and most widely used theoretical approaches that seeks to explain “health-related” behaviors (Rosenstock, Strecher & Becker., 1994). The HBM analyzes an individuals’ perception of threats for contracting a particular illness as well as their evaluation of behaviors that could prevent the threats (Rosenstock, Strecher & Becker., 1994). There are six core variables within the HBM—perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, cues and action, and perceived self-efficacy. Five of which were used—perceived severity, perceived susceptibility, perceived benefits, perceived barriers as well as cues and action. African Jamaican
women’s perception of the threat of contracting HIV/AIDS along with their evaluation of male condom use in their intimate relationships can help to determine their exercise of self-protective behaviors, such as communicating and negotiating condom use. The HBM was utilized in developing and understanding African Jamaican women’s health beliefs and experiences around communicating and negotiating condom use in their relationships.

**Methodology**

**Subjects/Settings**

The qualitative data used for this article were derived from a dissertation study entitled: *African Descent Women: Ethnicity and Condom Use*, authored by this researcher. In 2013, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six women who identified as African Jamaican and utilized services provided through the Community Renewal Team Inc, (CRT), an anti-poverty agency, located in Hartford, Connecticut. A phenomenological approach was utilized to explore women’s meaning and beliefs around male condom use in intimate relationships.

CRT provides services to the Upper Albany, Blue Hills, Asylum Hill, Clay Arsenal, and North East neighborhoods. These neighborhoods in Hartford have the highest percentage of African descent populations, including African Jamaicans (One City, One Plan Demographics Report [OCOPDR], 2010). Jamaicans lead all foreign born population concentrations in all five neighborhoods mentioned. Hartford among six other cities have the highest rates of HIV/AIDS (DPH, 2013). According to the One City, One Plan Demographics Report (2010), these neighborhoods have a 30% to 40% percent rate of high school graduates, and 26% to 55% percent high school or less educational level. Poverty rates are also highest among these neighborhoods, four of the five neighborhoods served by CRT have a 40% or more poverty rate (OCOPDR, 2010). All of these neighborhoods also have near 40% or more female-headed households, except for Asylum Hill, which has a 22% rate (OCOPDR, 2010).

Participants were recruited on a volunteer basis through agency staff, agency events where researchers introduced the study as well as through a confidential drop box placed in each of the nine CRT sites selected for recruitment. Eight of the nine sites were located in Hartford, while one other was located in Bloomfield, Connecticut. All potential participants signed informed consents and were then screened to determine their eligibility for the study. There were four requirements for participating in the interviews: (a) women who identified as African Jamaican had to have been born in Jamaica and have at least one parent who was also born in
Jamaica, (b) women had to have had sex within the past three months (c) and use condoms inconsistently or not at all (d) the women had to have also been between the ages of 18 -54 years old and (d) receiving services through CRT’s Early Childcare Education and Energy Assistance programs. Eligibility for the ECE and Energy Assistance programs requires an income level at or below 200% of the federal poverty line. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in private settings with each woman in face to face encounters. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was audio recorded.

**Instrument**

The HBM framework was used to develop the semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide contained five global questions, based on the main constructs laid out in the HBM, each with follow-up probes. The researcher utilized probes to clarify questions and elicit more detailed responses from each woman. These included perceived severity, perceived susceptibility, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, and cues/actions.

**Analysis**

The audio recordings from each of the six interviews were transcribed verbatim. The data was cleaned and interviews were de-identified before beginning the analyses. Accuracy of each transcript was ensured through listening to each of the audio-recordings while reviewing the corresponding transcript. A phenomenological approach was then utilized to analyze the data (Creswell, 2007). Six preliminary codes were developed: barriers for condom use, facilitators for condom use, barriers for condom negotiating, facilitators for condom negotiation, trust and cheating. ATLAS.ti version six was used to block code the transcripts using the initial six codes. After careful review, the codes were collapsed and refined from six to four. The four final codes focused on African Jamaican women’s knowledge of HIV/AIDS and safe sex as well as their perceptions around condom use, condom negotiation, and trust/cheating. Quotes in the coded transcripts were then grouped by code label using ATLAS.ti. The generated report were then reviewed with the quotes. A cluster of meaning was developed into themes using African Jamaican women’s significant statements (Creswell, 2007). These themes were then used to write a description of the women’s experiences.

**Results**

Five major themes along with corresponding sub-themes were identified—women’s basic HIV prevention knowledge, women’s perception of risk in their relationship, condom use and
relationships, condom use negotiation and negative meanings/consequences, and successful
condom use negotiation and intentions.

**Women’s Basic HIV Prevention Knowledge**

Overall all women interviewed had adequate knowledge of HIV transmission. Their
knowledge was consistent in areas of seriousness of the disease, people’s risk of transmission
and appropriate prevention methods. However, their knowledge of the testing protocol was
skewed.

**Seriousness of disease.** All six women verbalized that the epidemic of HIV/AIDS was a grave
disease which required their full attention.

“…[it’s] a disease that you can get sexually make you either very sick or in some instances end up in death.”

“It means you’re dead and there is no return. I would leave my three beautiful children behind.”

“When I heard about AIDS it let me know that when a person catches it they are doomed for life. HIV/AIDS is a very serious disease that has no cure but it is treatable these days. It’s no longer so much of a death sentence but it’s pretty scary. It’s like cancer you know, I put it in very similar categories.”

“To me it’s a disease that cannot be cured, so I think it’s incurable and with medical advancement I know you can live a productive life somewhat. But it’s not like it’s gonna eliminate the disease at all so to me it’s detrimental to health if you ask me…Yes, because of medical advancement. There’s medicine. I think there’s more accessibility to it too. So maybe more money you have, I guess you better to get the top line medications. Magic Johnson look at him. You have the best doctors if you have the money to get that taken care of. But at least it’s not frightening as it was at first. The fact that there was medicine for it.”

Three women reported being directly affected by the disease.

“I know two somebody [patois- somebody -- people] in Jamaica, one when I was in Jamaica and when I was here the other died and their two children.”

“Yes I know people with HIV, who are HIV positive. People I’ve worked with, some have died. Some are living with the disease. I have close friends who are like family who are HIV positive. So it’s hit close to home.”

**Overall risk of transmission.** Along with knowledge of the seriousness of the disease,
five of the six women also reported the possibility of their contracting the disease due to risky behaviors such as impairment because alcohol, high risk sexual networks and limited knowledge of partner’s risky behaviors.

One woman stated,

“It is very likely; I would say it’s very likely. The person you control is yourself. I don’t know what my husband doing when I turn my back. So yeah, it is very likely.”

Another stated,

“…I think I just feel blessed. Because of putting everything together my carelessness, now reaches up closer to a seven. [scale of 1 - 10]. Not meaning that I was promiscuous, but the few that I did [sexual partners], I still should have taken precaution.”

Others stated,

“…50/50% chance meaning that you as a person know that you’re protected but sometimes your partners that you might think that is not doing anything and you can’t swear for them might, you understand, you are protected 50% but your partner is the other 50% of you. So if they do something then they’re exposed to it.”

“…Because, alright, not that you couldn’t have one person and get it from that one person, even for that one time. That’s a possibility but to me the more players involved, the more likelihood I would say. See what I mean?”

“Not practicing in risky behavior. Because a lot a times people are not themselves. They drink and go out and they do things that they would not do normally do. So even though you have one partner, whatever, your drunk and somebody rapes you or somebody else say you have consensual sex with them that would not necessarily happen if you were not living that lifestyle…”

**Prevention methods.** As with transmission methods, women were also very aware of the effectiveness of male condoms in preventing the spread of STI’s. Five of the six participants stated,

“Well to me safe sex should be, hmm, when you have your male partner using some sort of protection, condoms. As the doctor would say, commercials tell you. But to be honest the safe sex that I have been following is just having the one partner and not being promiscuous and feeling safe with that.”

“Using a condom. I think that more than anything else. Double up if you have to, you know…Put on two (laughter). I’m just kidding, I’m just saying condom, condom, condom. You know what I mean, I would say that it’s the safest. And the next thing
having one partner just that one person. Don’t be hop, skipping and jumping all over the place.”

“I would say condom use in this day and age is very essential to our lifestyles because there is so many other types of diseases out there not only AIDS but there are other types of diseases that you can contract through sexual contact. Not only from vaginal use but also from your mouth. So I mean condom use…. It only can protect, if a person have an outbreak especially on their mouth.”

“Well, I feel like using a condom will, nothing is 100%, help at least but I feel protect me from contracting any type of venereal disease, whether HIV or STD diseases. Help prevent pregnancy and for me give me a chance when I just meet a guy, just make sure that ummmhh until I get to know him everything is of health wise.”

One participant stated,

“[Safer sex means] wearing a condom all the time.”

*Testing*. Women’s knowledge of the effectiveness of male condoms was intact, however; their familiarity with the appropriate testing protocol recommended as another form of prevention method was insufficient. Three women revealed methods of testing used in the past, which did not fall in line with the appropriate CDC testing protocol. One stated,

“Safe sex practices every three month you do your annual, you do your uhmm your annual test. Well that’s when me and him started, before everything, you understand. Before him do all of him tests and I got back all his results. I would go do and do a test every three to six months just to make certain there is nothing there. But since me and him are both clear…”

CDC protocol requires that women get tested annually, refrain from having unprotected sex and then go back three months later to be re-tested. This process should happen every year. Despite the CDC recommendations of ongoing annual testing, the above respondent did not return for annual HIV testing once she perceived both her and her partner were clear. She stated further,

“there was no excuse for not having on a condom [before] like I said when we both went and took our test and everything come back clear then we went on…”

two other respondents stated,

“Right. Safe sex for me in my relationship? Let me see now. Safe sex for me I still go and do all my pap smear and still do everything. So I mean do all my checks to make sure me myself is not carrying anything that I can give to my partner and make sure my partner hasn’t contracted anything which he can give to me. So safe sex to me is protecting
myself the best way I know how, which is like I said following with the doctor or so forth because we don’t use condoms.”

“Me and him don’t have any problems, we go to all of our doctor’s appointments together, we go, have the same doctors together. So I mean, health wise there is no health issues but like I said there is no issue. The only thing this [condoms] is for birth [pause] prevention of birth.”

**Women’s Perception of Risk in Relationships**

In spite of using condoms inconsistently or not at all, knowing the seriousness of HIV/AIDS and behaviors which may increase their risk for contracting HIV women’s evaluation of their risk of contracting HIV in their current relationship was very low, if at all evident. Overwhelmingly respondents reported they trusted their partners and believe they were in monogamous relationships. Their belief of being in committed relationships may have impacted their perception of low risk. When as to rate the risk in their relationships on a scale, five of six women reported very low risk.

The women reporting risk stated,

“[Ten being not] …Definitely not contracting anything, I’ll say around a … say around an eight because I don’t think I will, but in the back of my mind I’m still within doubt of this guy.”

These five women who reported low risk stated,

“I would say a three, my chances slim. I don’t think he cheating. Ten being the worst you say?…I would say (laughter). I would say maybe a four and that is because you don’t know what the next person is doing. You know what I mean. I can vouch for me, I can’t you know what I am saying…”

“You know, we, I worry about it at times. But when you have someone who is your partner and you trust. I will admit that I don’t think about it as much. You know you always feel that it won’t happen to you so you probably don’t take as much precaution to it, but I worry about it at times.”

“[10 being worst] Ahhh.. with my behavior now of being unprotected, I say maybe, I put myself maybe a two, because once, I’m like most feeling like it won’t happen to me.”

“There are no benefits because I trust him. I’m pretty sure he is not doing what he’s not supposed to do.”
“…I say probably three years into the relationship then we became committed to the point where we didn’t need to use any protection.”

She states further,

“Probably a two [10 being the worst], because even though when I try every now and then. Like I said the conflict after a while, you just, your head just don’t want to be bothered with it.”

Three women described why they thought their risk was low.

“…Safe for me is that I have one partner, and that’s basically what I use in my relationship in terms of remaining safe. Might not be the safest but at this stage of the game I’m not quite comfortable in introducing condoms on a regular basis with somebody I have promised to be faithful with. Because he’s faithful and I am faithful, it’s unlikely that we would have that problem.”

“Mine are minimal. Although I’m in close proximity with people who are HIV positive. Based on how the disease is passed on, it’s very unlikely. Because I drink from them [share the same glass/cup], because based on the knowledge I have I know that’s no problem. I know, you know, what to do in the case someone gets cut [practicing universal precaution]. I have one partner and I think he’s faithful. So I think my chances are minimal. I’ve never been promiscuous or anything like that even before getting married.”

**Condom Use in Relationships**

Women divulged that their inconsistent condom use was due in large part to their male partner’s lack of desire for wearing a condom. Men’s dislike of condoms was fueled by limited sexual pleasure and/or discomfort while wearing. Some women also reported a dislike. Four women stated that condom use was more problematic for their partners than it was for them.

“cause you know most men don’t want to use condoms…”

“Yeah. Because he’s busy convincing, talking about it doesn’t feel the same… So eventually you convince yourself that he’s enjoying you much better without it. She goes on to say, cause you know most men don’t want to use the condoms…”

“Well remember I tell you that it doesn’t feel the same. They feel like it’s blocking or don’t feel the sensation the way they would want to.”

“… They [men] also say that the feel of it, so then you don’t want them to not enjoy you because they said the condoms feels, you know, you can’t get much feeling from it. So that also puts a play in making them get away with not using it too. Because you want to be pleasurable to them or they may go to somebody else.”
Women were asked about barriers for using condoms. Three stated,

“I wouldn’t so much say it’s the barriers. It’s for the fact that he don’t like it so he complains. So that’s where it is. To me it don’t make a difference. He said it make a difference to him. Like you know he not feeling me or something because of course that is between us. So I would say him, him not liking it and complain. So it’s him, that has absolutely nothing to do with me, for me it doesn’t make a difference. ... No, no his apprehension is not to wear it. He saying he don’t want to wear it.”

“[H]is negative is not really a negative. His negative is it don’t feel the same. To him it’s like, what I would say now, he pulls on the experience. For me I don’t see any difference. I don’t think there’s a negative on my part. As a matter of fact I feel better using it after than not using it. When you use it you know that was a safe experience and I feel freeing. ... To me I feel like I have a better feeling afterwards using it.”

“Well probably for him what me [patois me – meaning “I”] can think of is him not feeling it the way him suppose to feel it. Sensation.”

When asked if sensation was an issue for her the previous respondent stated,

“Not at all.”

She went on to explain that condoms rather than limiting pleasure can enhance pleasure.

She stated,

“Yes, if his penis is not like very big and you wear a condom, it kinda help, I think with stimulation. Or if you’re too wet, there’s a certain times, certain times of the month that you’re just quite sure. But there’s times of the month that you’re just so wet. But it’s just too wet, you know, wet. So with the condom it helps.”

But some women gave reasons as to why they did not like condom use. Two women reported the discomfort and limited pleasure of condom use, another reported that it just felt different.

“So besides them not wanting to use it, I’m going to admit sometimes it gets uncomfortable for me too. It dries me up or I might end up itching from the latex of it. So it’s not just not on their part of them convincing you [not to use]. So its like I use that as an excuse as well for me not to because it does give me a different feel from the actual sex... I’ve tried a couple of different [condoms]. I tried the lamb skin that’s suppose to be more natural. But that doesn’t protect you against the venereal diseases. You know, then you have the other one. But for some reason I don’t know the feel of it is just a little
different. I don’t know if I’m a little bit more sensitive, but I can definitely feel a
difference to it.”

“Mmmhmmm (gestures no), not really. Sometimes you want little changes…Well when I
say changes, you use to doing it without, so now you take up doing it with it. So you want
to go back to feel how it feel without it again.”

Condom Use Negotiations and Negative Meaning/Challenges

Although only three of the five women believed were more of an issue for their male
partners, overwhelming the participants feared that the communication and negotiation of
condom use could critically undermine the stability of their relationship. Women believed that
the negotiation of condom use would convey negative meanings, such as the possibility of
infidelity or lack of trust on their part. Some of the women also shared five challenges they
faced during communication and negotiations which impacted their lack of success. These
challenges included—condoms breaking during arousal, men’s insistence on being trusted
allergic reactions, fear of their partner’s reaction and their partner’s persistent complaining. Two
women who were in agreement with non-condom use, felt empowered to demand the use of
condoms, but had no desire for condom use unless it was being used as a pregnancy prevention
method. These women disclosed that they used other forms of birth control methods.

Challenges.

“What is wrong if we go without, so you don’t want to stop in, you know, the middle of
hmmm… I guess that’s the best way excitement or you don’t want anything be turned off
or you your partner being turned off. .. In this instance that’s what I’m talking about
telling them to put maybe we should wear one and being that you’re in the middle of the
excitement he’s telling me, why, you know. Like I said we’re in the middle of
excitement right now we shouldn’t what’s the problem, you know, you don’t trust me,
you know.”

She stated further,

“Ah, yes. One occasion we end up using one but it breaks and we don’t go put another
one on…Once again when that happens you don’t bother using anymore…I feel
comfortable, it’s just that ahhh he still would come out with his different excuses of why
we don’t have to, why we have to now put it on we been together for a while don’t you
trust me, or it doesn’t feel the same, you know. And then right back to the same old,
yeah and if you continue to try to let them [condom use] , well we should, then they go to
the other extreme well why is it because you seeing someone else [laughter], we’re
hurting their feelings now. Their being suspicious now and of course sometimes it causes you to come back down.

Sometimes no condom is around and sometimes I say let’s try it without a condom.

Maybe availability when you feel for it may not be the time when it is there. So you have to get it. Cause remember once and this was not even.... I don’t necessarily think that this was for AIDS prevention but for pregnancy prevention... If you know your not with somebody you don’t want to carry or you don’t want him to feel like you’re carrying. Ability I think might be an issue, because you have to go buy it where you go you don’t have condoms at that time.

I didn’t know how to go about telling him that he had to use the condom. I was scared I didn’t know what I was gonna say or how he was gonna react.

I don’t know, I don’t know, is just, if I say wear he would say why, why, why. So I don’t know what his why is. It’s hard for me to think from his perspective. He just says “why baby” And that’s where it stops....”

When this respondent was asked why she gave in, she stated,

“maybe because I don’t want to hear the complaining.”

One woman stated that her partner’s desire not to use condoms became compliment overtime.

“And then another thing too after a while you start convincing your own self that its some kind of uhhm, compliment because he wants to feel you (laughter), you know, natural.”

**Threats to the relationship.** Two women stated,

“They think you gonna, you be cheating or they think you gonna cheat so that’s why you want them to use a condom.... Yeah cause you know sometimes they say why you want to use condoms all of a sudden? You cheating. Or some of them would say I’m not using any condoms so it [patois it –meaning it’s] better you find somebody that will use it (laughter).”

“My partner feeling that I am messing around with someone else is that’s why I want him to wear it. He gonna think I’m cheating and maybe don’t sure if the person that I’m cheating with have any form of disease or whatever.”

As a follow up question respondent were asked, so do you think that he would probably want to leave the relationship if you tried to negotiate condom use? While women affirmed. She simply stated,

“Yes, yes.”
The second woman stated,

“Yeah because of the same fears of can you catch something. You definitely don’t want HIV or any other venereal disease. At the same time you trusting that this someone that I care about and I don’t want to be insulting them, you know, hmmm if you bring them up [condoms] or they’re feeling like you don’t trust them. So you start out wanting to do the right thing then they talk you out of it you know.”

She further explained,

“You just don’t want to hmmm, you just want to keep your relationship as comfortable and as healthy as possible and if he starts thinking that sometimes then that sometimes that will create, you know, arguments. Or as a woman sometimes if he thinks that of you then he might step out and do the same thing.”

**Successful Condom Negotiation and Intention Use**

Women disclosed that their ability to successfully communicate and negotiate the use of condoms was reliant on two conditions – the beginning of new relationships when commitment was not confirmed, as form of birth control and if there was any inclination that partners were cheating.

“Yes, when you start out with, when I first meet my partner then I would suggest the condom, you know, that very first cause I don’t really know you… You know you getting to know as far as sexually. So their trying to make me as comfortable with not too much, you know, disagreeing because they want to get to the goal of having sex. So in the moment there is not too much of fuss and so I’m usually successful with the beginning of relationship when we first meet.”

“Well it just happen like a vibes thing and when we just chilling and me [patois me – “I”] know say that wasn’t a boyfriend and girlfriend thing. It was just we got up as friends and so therefore both of us know say that we just have to protect ourselves. Cause it wasn’t, we weren’t really in a committed relationship at the point when we started …”

“…Right because I know that my partner and I are both clear but say I’m introduced to a new relationship where I don’t know about the person status that is[condom use] always a must.”

**Pregnancy prevention.** Two participants stated that they only negotiated condom use as a means of preventing pregnancy.

“So right now I’m on birth control and sometime I don’t feel like having the ring [type of birth control] inside so I would pull it out and say alright for this month me [patois me – “I”] no want no birth control. So we just use condoms for this month; that way me get a break and you understand, there still vibes in between where we still enjoy we self [patois – we self – “ourselves] without the risk of me getting pregnant…He has no problem.. No him better no have no difficulties because me will chop him up [laughter] So him have to accept it same way [laughter].”
She went on to state,

“The benefit is me not going to breed [patois – breed “get pregnant”] again that is one benefit… Second benefit is uhhmm. Health wise I’m not always having any birth control. It’s a second type of birth control for me.

But I wasn’t trying to get pregnant anyways so it was more that reason… Not now because now I can’t have any more children, I did an operation.”

Infidelity. When respondents were asked what would motivate them to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS. Overwhelming all participants agreed that they would negotiate condom use if there were suspicions of infidelity in their relationship. This included women who stated they did not desire condom use. They stated,

“If I think he’s out there cheating [pause] maybe I’ll suspect him if I see spots in his clothes, or different body odor, or he’s not eating at home no more.”

“If I have any feeling that he is not faithful to me. So if I have any feeling in the back of my mind, any intuition or anything that suggest that he might be unfaithful or it’s headed in that way then yes.”

“What would some of things be? Maybe if I noticed anything funny…Yeah, I been trying to think when I say funny what I’m saying. Ah, if something is unusual. Because you know the person you been with them so long, so suppose he’s avoiding you.”

“If have reason to feel that he is not faithful, he cannot tell me that I cannot protect myself. Unless he makes it clear that there is no such reason for me to be worried. You what I am saying… So my big stick is that if you give me reason to doubt you. You got to fix it and if you don’t fix it this what I’m gonna do to protect …”

She went on to detail grounds for deciding whether her partner is cheating. She stated,

“Well if I see things like I can’t see him when I usually see him… He’s getting phone calls and cannot tell me who is calling. Somebody tells me something that he was not supposed to be. Or somebody saw him with somebody. If things just change, something that you know, something doesn’t seem to be going the way it use to …”

Two other respondents stated,
“If me [patois me – “I”] see a sign of something then it mean say me a share something that don’t belong to me you know my girl [patois – if I caught her man cheating]. So once me have a sight of something it not going to really continue. So motivation would be for my health.”

“Yes if I found out that my partner had extra affairs with other women, or is involved in other risky health situations like needles, because you can get AIDS from doing drugs not necessarily from having sex with someone else. Then I would be a little bit more worried and say well you know you’re doing risky things with your life and not considering me now, and so now we’re in a place where you’re making it more dangerous for me. So since you’re not looking out for me in that because I’ve trusted you, for my health and my life in your hands, you know. And you’ve disappointed me in that way, so now I have to…I have to take charge and protect myself by using a condom. So your choice of us not using a condom is no longer a valid choice.”

In spite of her remarks she went on to say,

“And to be honest, he’d probably have to mess up more than one time (laughter), because we tend to be forgiving. You have to be truthful about that. We tend to be forgiving. And uh, I would never do it again [in male voice]. So it would probably have to be more than one time.”

This participant then detailed specific strategies she uses to determine whether her partner is cheating. She stated,

“Some sign would be if somebody a call the phone and him can’t answer in front of me, why him can’t answer in front of me. Why him can’t answer him phone. Another sign would be if him have to go out on the road for something and I don’t know what him going for. Why you have to go out on the road? [laughter]. If him body odor change. Him, him don’t want me to wash certain things for him or do certain things for him. Well me know say there is something else going on with my husband if I’m calling his phone and not getting him. He have to call me back within a certain period of time.”

She commented further that any suspicion of infidelity would just end up in an end to a relationship rather than any negotiation of condom use.

Discussion

Similar to studies conducted in Jamaica and in the U.S among Jamaican populations, the six African Jamaican women’s perception of the seriousness of HIV/AIDS, knowledge of transmission as well as the known effectiveness of male condoms were adequate (UNAIDS, 2014; Gellespie-Johnson, 2008). Previous studies noted low levels in these areas among Jamaican women (Warren, 1999; Wyatt, Guthrie, LaFranc & Forge, Guthrie, LaFranc & Forge 1999). For instance, Wyatt, Guthrie, LaFranc & Forge (1999), found that young women in
Jamaica had little information regarding contraception and STI’s. This shift in knowledge may be artifact of a global increase in awareness around HIV due to the massive proliferation of educational and prevention resources in combatting the spread of HIV/AIDS over the past 30 years (UNAIDS, 2010). Regardless of their fundamental awareness of HIV/AIDS and prevention methods, two participants interviewed were unaware of the appropriate testing protocol used as a method of prevention. While these women had inaccurate information, the other four women made no mention of HIV testing as an appropriate prevention measure. Campbell-Stennet, Holder-Nevins, McCawBinns & Eldemire-Shire (2009), conducted a study aimed at identifying factors which impact stages of change for HIV testing among women 16-45 in Westmoreland, Jamaica, these researchers found that women not only lacked self-efficacy around testing, but also did not recognize its importance outside of being pregnant. These specific findings suggest a need for a more nuanced and aggressive approach in targeting African Jamaican women for prevention messages. The integration of culturally appropriate prevention messages into public announcements and curricula can be more appropriately done if the group African American/Black is disaggregated. Particular attention should be given to increasing African Jamaicans women’s knowledge of the need for HIV testing and the appropriate testing protocol recommended by the CDC.

Although women in the study, used condoms inconsistently or not at all, the majority perceived their risk for contracting HIV from their partner as being very low. Women’s cognitive appraisal of personal risk in relationships take into account several variables along with their fundamental knowledge of HIV/AIDS and prevention methods (Sobo, 1993; Wulfret & Wan, 1993). Women’s cost-benefit analysis is reliant on the social context in which the choice is being made (Sobo, 1993). Variables recognized as important in the literature include a decreased concern for HIV/AIDS in the overall social context, women’s perceptions of whether they are in a high committed/monogamous relationship, as well as men’s self-report (Harvey et al, 2006; Ellen, Bolan & Padian, 1998). These variables align well with the research participants’ perception of low risk in their relationship, which may or may not be correct. African Jamaican women’s perception of low risk may also be directly related to hedonistic desires as well as a fear of a loss of relationship. This loss may be all the more important for African descent women in the U.S, where women far outnumber men in their communities. Researchers note the difficulty of choosing between engaging in risky sex or risking the loss of an eligible mate
(Alleyne & Gaston, 2010; Airhihenbuwa, 2013; Wyatt, Guthrie, LaFranc & Forge, 1998; Newsome & Airhihenbuwa, 2013). Whether a gender ratio imbalance exists among different ethnic groups of African descent populations should be examined further. Specifically, are African Jamaicans more likely to date within their race and even more limiting within their ethnicity? And what, if any, impact does this have on rates of HIV/AIDS among this population?

Four of the six women interviewed desire for no condom use reflected their concern for their partners’ feelings. Women stated overwhelming that their partners did not desire condom use. Comparable findings have been identified among women living in Jamaica. The Jamaican Ministry of Health (2004), found that women’s consideration of their partner’s sexual desire was critical in determining their preference for condom use. Women’s inconsistent or non-condom use was related to men’s dislike for condoms, and women’s perception of familiarity with their partner (Jamaica Ministry of Health, 2004). Non-condom use desires among women have often been cited as a by-product of women’s lack of personal or interpersonal power in the literature (Amora, 1995; Gutierrez, Oh & Gilmore, 2000; Amora & Raj, 2000; Harvey, Bird, Galavotti, Duncan & Greenberg, 2002; Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). This popular understanding hinges on a vulnerability model where women are seen primarily as victims who always want to protect themselves from male perpetrators (cheaters) but are frustrated because of a lack of power (Higgins, Hoffman & Dworkin, 2010; Edstrom, 2010). Findings from this study departs from this understanding, the two non-condom users clearly stated that if they desired condom use it would happen or they would leave the relationships. Importantly, women were not asked about or disclosed any instances of domestic violence in this study. Domestic violence has been cited as a major barrier to exercising self-protective behaviors such as negotiating condom use (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). African Jamaican women’s desire for condom use in their relationship was subverted by negative meanings associated with condom use.

Two specific meanings emerged. Women either lacked specific critical condom negotiation strategies and/or believed that the suggestion and ultimate negotiation of condom use implied unfaithfulness. These factors presented challenges to women’s desire or ability to communicate/negotiate condom use in spite of their initial confidence. Although previous studies note the importance of women’s condom negotiation self-efficacy as mediator to condom use intentions, findings from this study suggests that women’s possession of the knowledge, ability, confidence to communicate/negotiate condom use does not necessarily translate into their desire.
to do so or success at accomplishing that behavior. Women’s condom influence skills (CIS) help to mediate the relationship between women’s condom use self-efficacy and the use of condoms in relationships (French & Holland, 2011; Bowleg, Belgrave & Reisen, 2000; Noar, Morokoff & Harlow, 2002). African Jamaican women may benefit from developing a repertoire of specific CIS’s when faced with challenges. These strategies can include eroticizing condoms, direct request for use, withholding sex, relationship conceptualization, sharing risk information and/or deception (French & Holland, 2013). None of the women interviewed described any strategy besides refusal of sex. An introduction of more CIS’s and opportunity to practice these skills is recommended.

Results from this study also suggest that the maintenance of a “healthy relationship” was of great importance to the African Jamaican women. Condom use conveyed mistrust which could possibly undermine their goal of a healthy relationship. Chimbiri (2007) found that condom use represented a negligible factor in marriages, discussions of condom use were done within the context of extramarital affairs and therefore posed a problem for maintaining relationships. Women’s sense of commitment and emotional closeness can be barriers for condom use. This highlights the importance of targeting dyads for prevention messages, rather than just women, who are often times saddled with the responsibility of relationship maintenance and managing a male controlled technology (male condoms). Prevention interventions that are targeted towards African Jamaican women should also include their partners (whenever possible) and an exploration of commitment and its impact on condom use in relationships.

Overwhelmingly the women interviewed reported successful condom use negotiation rested on either it being done during the beginning of a new relationship, to prevent pregnancy or if there were clear signs of infidelity. Communicating and negotiating condom use was concluded once women developed feelings of being in a committed relationship. Gorbach & Holmes (2003), states with increased feelings of commitment people are less likely than those with limited feelings of commitment to request condom use when their partner is not viewed subjectively as a new partner. Because the likelihood of negotiation becomes diminished over time and African Jamaican women in this study lacked important CIS’s, and in some cases feared the loss of relationship, they may rely more heavily on their ability to detect cheating in their relationship as a means of protecting themselves against HIV risk (Gellespie-Johnson, 2008). All African Jamaican women interviewed reported to this researcher that they had devised
strategies (effective or not) by which they could reasonably detect their partner’s unfaithfulness. Data derived from the six semi-structured interviews can help fill the gap in knowledge around African Jamaican women’s HIV experiences and risks. With the development of a better understanding of this group’s condom use experiences and beliefs, more culturally appropriate strategies can be developed to help curb the spread of HIV/AIDS among all groups of African descent women in the U.S.

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This chapter will contribute to the dialogue about the state of Black Hartford by introducing a tool for assessing the social health of the community. This assessment tool, the Social Health Index of Black Hartford, is similar in purpose to other more recognizable indices such as, the Index of Consumer Confidence and the Index of Leading Economic Indicators. These economic indicators serve to monitor and diagnosis the economic health of the nation by providing a quantitative method of analysis that is easily reportable in numeric form. The Social Health Index of Black Hartford is designed to do the same by providing a composite measure to monitor and diagnosis the social health of Black Hartford, similar to how economists who sample various aspects of the economy to gain insight into society’s economic health. The Social Health Index of Black Hartford will draw from a broad range of social conditions in the form of social indicators to gain insight into the social health of the Black people of Hartford.

The Social Health Index of Black Hartford will offer a holistic reflection of the quality of life in Black Hartford through the development of an annually generated composite measure of social health. By using a composite measure, we gain a perspective on the community that is missed when examining social issues in isolation of each other. For example, if we were to look at teen birth rates in Black Hartford we could only talk about them in terms of rising and falling. By placing social issues, like teen birth rates, into a composite measure it is then analyzed as a component of the communities overall social performance for a given year. Thus, in a given year if some or all of the social issues worsen—for example, if the teen birth rate rises—it will contribute to the composite index score providing an important context to the analysis of disparate social issues (Miringoff, Miringoff & Opdycke, 1996).

The Social Health Index of Black Hartford will measure the combined improvement or decline of 13 social indicators over the period of 2005 to 2012. For comparison purposes, The Social Health of Black Connecticut and The Social Health of White Hartford will also be presented for the same time period. The social health index scores for the three indices will be presented. In addition, the social performance of each of the social indicators will be analyzed to provide some additional insight into the social health of Black Hartford.

The Social Health Index of Black Hartford introduced in this chapter, has the potential of being an additional tool in deliberations about the state of Black Hartford, by providing a method
of analysis for determining the annual success or failure of those in power in responding to the social issues confronting this community.

**Methodology: Calculating the Social Health Index**

The conceptual design and method of calculation utilized in the development of the Social Health Index of Black Hartford was borrowed from Miringoff, Miringoff, & Opdycke (1996) the designers of the Social Health Index of The Nation. Miringoff, Miringoff, & Opdycke (1996) developed the model year construct to resolve the problem of integrating different social indicators into one index. For example, social indicators such as, median household income and teen birth rates, each having a different method of calculation and unit of analysis, can be incorporated into the same index utilizing the model year construct. The model year construct suggests that social issues are to be examined in terms of their social performance. Social performance is determined based on the actual achieved performance of each social indicator relative to how that social indicator performed in prior years. For example, the social performance of the number of teen births would be assessed by identifying the number of teen births for each year under examination. In assessing teen births, the lowest number of teen births would be the best. Once you have identified the lowest number of teen births achieved during the period under examination that then becomes your standard for achieved performance for that social indicator.

The performance standards for the index are represented as a statistical composite of the best performance of each social indicator per year in the context of the time period being examined. Each social indicator is rated on a scale from 0 to 7, with zero being the worst, and seven being the best. The remaining social indicators for that social issue are scored within the 0 to 7 scale based on their relative performance. The final index score is calculated as the total score of each of the social indicators included in the index expressed as a percentage of the model year. The model year is equal to the total number of indicators for a given year if they were all the best they had ever been. In this case, it would be seven, which is the highest rating on the scale multiplied by 13. For the Social Health Index of Black Hartford, the model year is equal to 91. The percentage of the model year is then multiple by 100 putting the index score between 0 and 100. The Index score produced serves as a numerical representation of the year’s social performance relative to past years, moving away from looking at social issues in isolation.
Instead, they become a component of the year’s overall social performance (Miringoff, Mirringoff & Opdycke, 1996).

The Social Health Index of Black Hartford is a composite measure of 13 social indicators tracking their performance from 2005 to 2012. The 13 indicators that make up this index are believed to provide a multidimensional assessment of the social health of Black Hartford, operating within the limitations of the availability of social indicator data relevant to the geographic area under examination that is published annually and broken down simultaneously by race. The following economic and non-economic indicators were identified: 1) female households with no husband present and with children under 18 years of age; 2) population 25 years and older with less than a high school diploma; 3) population 25 years and older with a bachelor’s degree or higher; 4) grandparent responsible for grandchildren under 18; 5) unemployment rates of population 16 years and older; 6) Mean travel time to work in minutes; 7) Median household income; 8) Per capita income of individuals; 9) Families with related children under 18 whose poverty status is determined; 10) individuals 65 years and older whose poverty status is determined; 11) percent of owner occupied units; 12) number of infant deaths; 13) number of teen births.

The social indicator data for infant deaths and teen births were retrieved from the Connecticut State Department of Public Health. The remaining indicators were obtained from the United States Census: American Community Survey (ACS) one year estimates for the years under study.
The Social Health Index of Black Hartford

According to the index scores that appear in Table 2.1, the social health of Black Hartford appears to fluctuate up and down from year to year without making any significant sustainable gains during the period under study. In 2005, the index score reached 53.8 but dropped to 41.7 in 2006, the following year. The index score rose again in 2007, to 48.3 but it did not make up the losses experienced in 2006. The index dropped again in 2008 to 43.3 the second lowest level of the period. The social health of Black Hartford appeared to peak in 2009 with a 30.6% percent increase between 2008 and 2009.

In 2012, the index declined to its second lowest score of the time period. When examining the performance of 2012 there has been a 23.4 point decrease in the social health between 2009 the highest score of the period and 2012. The 23.4 decline between 2009 and 2012 does not completely cancel out the 28.1 gain experienced from 2008 to 2009. Concerning is the only 2.2 point gain between 2010 and 2011 with the 11 point decline between 2011 and 2012. The index performance of 2012 does appear to indicate the possibility of a downward trend in the social health of Black Hartford.
The Social Health Index of Black Hartford versus Black Connecticut

To further assess the social health of Black Hartford, the social health index for the Black residents of Connecticut was developed. The Social Health Index for Black Connecticut utilized the same 13 social indicators and methodology used to construct the Social Health Index for Black Hartford. Also note, that the social indicator data for Connecticut includes the residents of Black Hartford, as well as all other Black residents in the State of Connecticut. As seen in Table 2.2, Black Hartford appears to lag behind that of the index scores for the State. It appears that when the index scores for Black Hartford are on the decline the index scores for Black Connecticut are on the rise. For example, in 2005 Black Hartford experienced a decrease from 2005 to 2006, while Black Connecticut appeared to experience an increase. In 2008, Black Hartford had a decline in their index score just as Black Connecticut seem to achieve its highest index score for the time period under study. Black Hartford achieved its highest index score in 2009 the following year. Also, worth noting is that although, Black Hartford seems to lag behind, the time period seems to be by just a year and overall the scores appear very similar. The highest index for Black Hartford and Black Connecticut are the same at 71.4, and the lowest is also similar at 41.7. The primary difference is that Black Connecticut appears to be trending upwards while Black Hartford appears to be trending down.
The Social Health Index scores for White Hartford were developed using the same social indicators as was used for the Social Health Index of Black Hartford. When comparing the index scores for Black and White Hartford, it appears as though the Social Health of White Hartford is less volatile than that of Black Hartford (see Table 2.3). The Social Health of White Hartford from 2006 to 2008 appeared to trend higher than that of Black Hartford particularly in 2007 and 2008. In 2006, there was a 16.5 point difference in the index scores of White Hartford versus that of Black Hartford, and in 2007 there was a 29.2 point difference in their index scores. White Hartford, similar to Black Connecticut, reached their highest score in 2008 with an index score of 72.5. However, beginning in 2008, there appears to be a steady decline. In 2009, the index score dropped 12.1 points and 2010 dropped another 14.3 points for a total loss of 26.4 points. However, losses from 2010 to 2011 were only 1.1 points. White Hartford experienced a gain of 6.6 points in 2012. White Hartford appears to be trending upwards from 2011 to 2012 whereas Black Hartford appears to be trending downward.

**Examining the Social Indicators Performance**

The years 2005, 2009, and 2012 were examined to illuminate the shift in social performance for each social indicator over time. Disaggregating the indices and examining the individual performance of each of the 13 social indicators can provide some additional insight into the social health of Black Hartford, while comparing it to the Social Health of White Hartford.
Hartford and Black Connecticut. By examining the performance of particular indicators, we can identify the areas of strength and challenges.

The social indicators appear on Table 2.4 according to their ranking on the index scale for that year. The performance of the social indicators were categorized as good if they scored a 6 or 7; fair if they scored between 3-5, and poor if they scored between 0-2.

### Table 2.4: Social Indicators Performance Tracking 2005, 2009, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Hartford</td>
<td>White Hartford</td>
<td>Black CT</td>
<td>Black Hartford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good Range 6-7</strong></td>
<td>Less than high</td>
<td>Less than high</td>
<td>Less than high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median House</td>
<td>Child Poverty</td>
<td>Child Poverty</td>
<td>median house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita</td>
<td>Infant death</td>
<td>Infant death</td>
<td>Mean travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fair Range 3-5</strong></td>
<td>Less than high</td>
<td>Less than high</td>
<td>Less than high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Female Household</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>median house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent</td>
<td>Grandparent</td>
<td>Grandparent</td>
<td>Grandparent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor Range 0-2</strong></td>
<td>Less than high</td>
<td>Less than high</td>
<td>Less than high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly Pov</td>
<td>Elderly Pov</td>
<td>Elderly Pov</td>
<td>Elderly Pov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female House</td>
<td>Female House</td>
<td>Female House</td>
<td>Female House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>median house</td>
<td>median house</td>
<td>median house</td>
<td>median house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita</td>
<td>Per Capita</td>
<td>Per Capita</td>
<td>Per Capita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant death</td>
<td>Infant death</td>
<td>Infant death</td>
<td>Infant death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 2.4, a preliminary examination of the social performance of the indicators shows that for Black Hartford, 10 of the 13 social indicators’ social performance were rated as either fair or good in 2005. In 2012, the number earning a rating of fair or good dropped down to 7 of 13 rating. Among the remaining six social indicators for Black Hartford in 2012, six performed poorly and four of the six had a zero rating on the scale. This indicates that that social indicator performed the worst ever for this time period. For Black Connecticut and White Hartford, the opposite was true. The social performance among their social indicators appeared to improve by 2012. In 2005, six of the indicators in White Hartford and seven of the indicators in Black Connecticut performed poorly whereas, both Black Connecticut and White Hartford had 8 indicators whose performance were rated either fair or good in 2012.

For Black Hartford, White Hartford, and Black Connecticut, 2009 was the best of the three years under examination. For Black Hartford, all 13 of its indicators were rated either fair or good. For White Hartford, nine were rated fair or good, and for Black Connecticut 11
indicators were rated fair or good. To further analyze the Social Health of Black Hartford in comparison to White Hartford and Black Connecticut, it would be helpful to examine the shift in social performance of each of the Social indicators over time.

**Economic Related Indicators**

The economic indicators included in the index are child poverty, elderly poverty, median household income, per capita individual income, owner-occupied housing. An examination of the social performance of the economic related indicators over time reveals a troubling pattern of poor performance for both Black Hartford and Black Connecticut. Black Hartford and Black Connecticut saw a similar downward shift in the performance of economic indicators between 2005 and 2012. For Black Hartford, five of the six economic related indicators earned a social performance rating of fair or good in 2005. In 2009, elderly poverty, the only indicator to earn a score of poor in 2005, rose in 2009 to a rating of fair. However, by 2012, circumstances changed drastically for Black Hartford. In 2012, five of six economic indicators earned a performance rating of poor.

For Black Connecticut, the economic related indicators took a slightly different path in 2005, when four of the six social indicators earned a social performance rating of poor. In 2009, all of the economic indicators ranked as fair. By 2012, the gains made between 2005 and 2009 were lost. In 2012, five of six indicators earned a social performance rating of poor. The social indicator per capita income was the only social indicator that maintained its social performance from 2009 to 2012, continuing to rate as fair.

White Hartford experienced a different social performance pattern among its economic indicators. In 2005, per capita income and median household income were the only two indicators to perform poorly. Between 2005 and 2009, child poverty dropped to a social performance rating of poor and median household income continued to be rated as poor. The other economic indicators earned a rating of fair or good. In 2012, four of the six economic indicators earned a rating of fair or good. In 2012, child poverty continued as poor. Owner occupied housing declined from good in 2009 to earn a rating of poor in 2012. Elderly poverty and unemployment in White Hartford maintained their fair rating from the previous year and per capita income and median household income rose to a social performance rating of good.
Education Related Indicators

When examining both of education indicators, the number of individuals with less than a high school diploma and individuals with a Bachelor’s degree or higher, all three indices seemed to perform well. For Black Hartford, the education indicators rose from fair to good in 2009 and remained rated as good in 2012. For both Black Connecticut and White Hartford, the education indicators had a social performance rating of poor in 2005. For Black Connecticut, the indicators split in 2009 with the number of Bachelor’s degree or higher rising to fair and less than high school diploma rising to a social performance rating of good. By 2012, both indicators were categorized as good. For White Hartford, the accent was gradual with both education indicators rising to a ranking of fair in 2009 and then to good in 2012.

Family Related Indicators

There were five social indicators related to family: teen birth, infant deaths, grandparents responsible for children, female headed households with no husband present and children under 18 years of age, and travel time to work.

The social performance of teen births appears to be positive for all the indices. For Black Connecticut and White Hartford in 2012, the teen birth indicator had achieved its best rating for the period under study. For Black Hartford, the teen birth indicator achieved a rating of fair. In 2012, the infant deaths indicator performed the worst ever for both Black Hartford and White Hartford. The infant deaths indicator for Black Connecticut improved from poor in 2009 to good in 2012.

The number of grandparents with responsibility for related children followed a unique pattern for each of the indices. For Black Hartford, it remained fair in both 2005 and 2009, and improved to good in 2012. For White Hartford it was rated as good in 2005, dropped to fair in 2009, and remained fair in 2012. For Black Connecticut, it rose to a rating of good in 2009 and dropped to fair in 2012.

The social performance of the female headed household also followed a unique trend among the three indices. For Black Hartford, it rose from a ranking of poor in 2005 to that of good in 2009 and remained that rating in 2012. The female headed house indicator for Black Connecticut rated poor in 2005, but rose to good in 2009 and declined to fair in 2012. For White
Hartford, the female head house indicator rated as fair in 2005 and dropped to poor in 2009. It remained with a rating of poor in 2012. When examining the issue of mean travel to work, for Black Hartford and Black Connecticut the indicator rose to a rating of good in 2009 and remained there in 2012. Whereas for White Hartford, it rose to good in 2009 and dropped to poor in 2012.

The Analysis of Indices

The overall social health of Black Hartford is reason for concern. Although the scores appeared to fluctuate up and down during the period under examination, the average index score for Black Hartford is 52.3% out of 100, which demonstrates a below average social performance. The average index score of Black Hartford falls below both that of White Hartford which is 54.1% and Black Connecticut at 54.8%. The fluctuating social performance of Black Hartford may allude to challenges in sustaining gains previously achieved.

Desegregating the index allowed the areas for optimism and areas for concern to be better illuminated. Based on an analysis of the Social Health of Black Hartford Index, it appears that there is reason for some optimism. The optimism is connected to the improved social performance of the educational indicators. In 2012, both the less than high school diploma and Bachelor’s degree or higher indicators scored a six on the ranking scale, indicating that they achieved the second highest performance for the period under study. The highest performance was in 2009. It is possible that the educational policies of both Governors Rell and Malloy may have had a positive impact on the educational outcomes of Black Hartford. The consistent improvement in the social performance of these the social indicators during this time period may be revealing a positive trend.

On the other hand, the economic indicators are cause for alarm. The fact that four of the five economic indicators ranked poorly in 2012 may be revealing a larger issue. The owner occupied, child poverty, and median household income scored a 0 in 2012. This means that the social performance of these indicators were the worst ever achieved. Although unemployment was ranked fair on the social performance achievement scale, it was the third lowest performer overall in 2012. It does not appear as though there is a correlation between the education indicators and economic indicators as one might assume. The economic indicators appear to be trending downward while the education indicators appear to be trending upward. Thus, as the
politicians congratulate themselves about the economic recovery following the recession of 2007 and 2008, the people of Black Hartford appear to have less reason for enthusiasm.

When examining the family related social indicators for 2012, the results are mixed. The grandparent responsible for related children, female headed household, and mean travel to work indicators performed well in 2012. The social performance of the grandparent indicator was the best ever achieved and the female headed house was the second best ever achieved. The reality that fewer grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren and fewer children are being raised in single homes, and individuals are spending less traveling to work say something about the structure of families in Black Hartford. We know that if children are being raised by their grandparents that means that there has been a disruption in attachment with the parents. We also know that single parenting experiences offer a number of unique challenges for the caregiver and the children. If people are spending less time getting to work there is the potential that they are more available to family and have more time for themselves, so the potential for engaging in self-care exists. Therefore, one could cautiously interpret the social performance of these indicators positively.

The apparent correlation between the number of teen births and the less than high school diploma appears to be one that would be expected. Similar to the education indicators, the teen birth indicators appear to be on a positive trend upward in 2012. The indication that the social performance of the infant deaths indicator is poor and performed the worst ever in 2012, it is puzzling in the age of increased health coverage at both the state and national level. However, the infant death indicator appears to be correlated with the median house income indicator. This reality may provide some insight into the social performance of infant deaths indicator.

**Implications for the Future**

Black Hartford is an ethnically diverse community with a rich cultural heritage and a proud history of resilience and activism. The people of Black Hartford, like other members of society, live in a context that is ever changing and evolving. They are interconnected to the society in which they live, both impacting on and being impacted by the times. The only constant being that of their desire to survive, to thrive, to connect with other human beings and to find some pleasure in their journey through life as individuals, as members of families, communities, and as residents of Connecticut and the United States.
The community of Black Hartford because of social location could serve a larger purpose for the state. Guinier and Torres (2002) present a convincing argument in regards to the diagnostic value of those who occupy the margins of society. The two illustrate their point by using the metaphor of the role of the canary in the coal mines: like the canary who alerts the miners of poisons in the air, marginalized groups can alert society as to the perils that exist in the social structure. Black Hartford could be the canary in the coalmines for Connecticut.

The Social Health Index of Black Hartford provides a method for easy monitoring and reporting about the status of Black Hartford that could be used as an advocacy tool for those interested in bringing about meaningful social change. It can assist in holding policy makers and politicians more accountable to the community. However, there are some challenges ahead as we consider the utility of this instrument of assessment. The concept of social indices has not truly grasped the attention of the nation. The goals of the social indicators movement remain unrealized in terms of their ability to influence domestic policy. Access to social data is also an issue that needs further attention, particularly in relation to the significant time delay between collection of data and access to data that can be as much as two years. As improvements in the collection and access of social data takes place, the ability to further refine the Social Health Index of Black Hartford will be possible.

References


The ABC MAN: An Artist, Muralist, Playwright, and Cop Speaks

Clyde Santana, MA

I grew up during the last of the years when segregation was still legal, a 13-year-old teenager when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed. I attended college during the Vietnam War conflict. I saw the rise and demise of the Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam and the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., a great leader for social justice.

During this time, I studied the visual arts and play writing and worked to create large murals, edited a University, African-American publication and wrote children’s and adult musical stage play, but struggled with the question that many educated minorities ask themselves over and over. With over 400 TV channels and thousands of movie houses nationwide, why are there so few images and stories that promote a spiritually uplifting, family-friendly image for African Americans? And so many struggling brothers and sisters, who as artists, struggle with their dedication to careers that receive little to no support in a country whose racial face for African Americans is now the face of a burning Ferguson and a burning Baltimore, and the words, “Burn the bitch down,” ring out in our sleep as the primary image that our children see and live with as the dominate image of who the majority white society perceives them to be.

The African American cultural arts movement of the 1970’s was filled with beautiful music, thought-provoking theater, live poetry recitals and visual images that promoted a mystical beauty once concealed from the masses now alive through the constantly evolving media, shows, large community murals and other public art expressions. During this time, our “Peoples’ Artists” spoke, sung played their music and created beautiful images. Although not widespread, their efforts were reaching out to the masses.

Fast Forward to the 1980’s

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s had produced a generation of trained professionals, graduates of a huge number of once whites only higher education institutions, who felt left behind, those who felt that the establishment had missed their voice. And so an old oral expression form, using new recording and presentation techniques began to surface. The voice of rap. The raw expression of what life was for those whose families were broken, those whose families still lived in a rural or urban segregated society, where economic, social mobility engines were to their residents either permanently broken or never existed.
Now communities of the disenfranchised had a voice. Strung together with poetically rhyming lines and a catchy beat, the words shout out phrases that confirmed to the world that “I’m here.” Initially a more dominant movement, it defined the roles of women as men were renamed dogs and women, bitches, then hoes. And these recordings have sold in the millions. You reap what you sow.

“Art in Our Urban Life”

Do you know what it’s like to journey into the land of make believe? From 1988 to 2013, I was involved in two worlds: the world of the cultural arts and the world of the disorderly bawdy houses and buildings. I remember transiting, in one day, from holding training for the privileged downtown Norfolk Fest Events Group planning an Op Sail International event for Tall Ships to buying drugs and alcohol inside places where the suspects would have beaten me up or shot if they knew that this scruffy-looking, short, grey-haired Negro was a special agent out front undercover for a local task force operation ready to drop arrest warrants on the next 50+ seasoned warriors once the probable cause was secured.

In these communities, apartments and homes, people, “Us”, raise our kids. If we were married, our husbands or wives were still their living with us. However, in this modern world, the future of the new Village baby’s world may exist somewhere between the sale of the next bag of dope, crack or reefer. In some cases, a lap dance followed by a trip to the corner hell, in an old, smelly bedroom that also functions as a brothel, and the price to fake love is dirt cheap. Fifty dollars could feed a family of three, mom and two kids for a week. So, if five tricks were executed in a four to six hour period at $20.00 a trick, the young baby mama could feed herself and her babies sired by men, either dead, long gone or locked up waiting to be released for two weeks. And it’s just another day in the village to enjoy a cultural legacy created by the living sculpture of the unknown Baby Mamas’ creative thigh and breast work taught to her by the thousands of DVD’s played on cable TV’s seven days a week broadcast, or sold on the black market as cheap sex Triple XXX porn films that glorify how sexy the Black Urban Baby Mama is. These videos are dark. Only the light shining on the lingerie, if it is worn is bright.

The background of this visual arts image did not display a beautiful painting or sculpture, but a crude, cheaply made video displaying a pants hanging down, “hinee showing” rapper comparing the sizes of one unknown, silent female’s exposed buttocks to another’s standing next to her. The Slave Auction Block has taken a new face. The face of a silent, “thong wearing”
young woman or girl whose only calling in life as an artist was to show her extremities, especially her buttocks. They were displayed as if she were a “Dog in Heat” in a Kennel Show.

I walked into the living room where liquor bottles were scattered around the room. Sometimes, I heard babies cry. I had to remind myself that this is the world of vice, and I, like any other red-blooded American, found it very exciting. Human beings engaged in rough sex on the large TV screen. The image of how we should look. Keep alive by the top singers in the business that compete by wearing less and less in their videos. The role models for our young women. Yes, eventually wear nothing and keep silent.

There is a simple reason why I keep coming back to reflect on the magnitude of the problem of absentee, jailed or unemployed fathers and baby mommas as the central problem is because it is. Also, because one of the most dominate images in our villages on the big screen of our SAFE PLAYGROUNDS are the available locations for young Black high school age males to take young high school age Black females to bed. Guess you can’t get shot if you’re inside a locked environment, so unless a stray bullet pierces the window and accidentally strikes you, you’re pretty safe. The only death is that of both teenagers, “youths” and the creation of a new playground that is filled with mounting financial problems and newly created parental problems, KIDS RAISING KIDS! Did we miss training our children about the consequences of these actions during their formative life in the village because now we are a kids village raising the village’s babies. One can see the outcome. You only have to wake up and journey into any village and see the number of strollers and babies strapped to teenage mother’s backs to understand that this is a social problem that has no solution in sight. Unless we can institute a Village Building 101, Go to school and get an education…and leave the baby-making to responsible adults. In less than two decades, can you see in the future the beautiful communities that we would begin to develop if our children received “As” in this course? Reinforced by our artists and filmmakers painting pictures and making movies that show how responsible and socially progressive our Villages are. And all the children would not think of “Burning the “B” down” but by their positive actions, “Make the Village shine.” And “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” would be replaced with “Hands Down, Have Fun!” And in the Museums of Natural History, a lone set of prehistoric bones with a placard posted beneath it would be the only memory identifying this skeleton as “The Unknown Urban Gangbanger.” A nameless creature that died out after the Village became inhabited by positive, responsible families.
Is there a positive solution in our future? Will we see the need to develop real work skills required for us to compete in a world becoming smaller and smaller globally? Will the “Anti Education / Decadent Pop Culture Expression” that currently exists in our communities continue to celebrate the greatness of “one note beat” composers who embellish this creative image with looped expletives, scenes that glorify carnal actions and an auction block that turns men and women into mindless beasts of carnal burden?

A Mind-Slavery that reduces today’s Black Woman to become the image of a mindless sex object displayed on these technologically savvy auction blocks. Also, as the symbol of some of our wealthiest night club owners’ success stories occurring inside the Black Owned Gentleman’s Club where young, impressionable women pour cooking oil on their private parts. And the scientific advancement will be to discover how we can show more with less resistance because some of our leaders may condone this lewd and lascivious behavior once their political or religious contribution made by these very successful businessmen are received.

On the technologically advanced cave paintings that will record the cultural achievements of this millennium, will our people help create the transportation and habitation systems that will send manned space craft to the outer limits of our solar system and unmanned spacecraft even further into the universe? Will we create food farms capable of sustaining the entire global population? Will the historical records show masses of African /American youth developing a deeper understanding of the new breakthroughs in Quantum Physics, Engineering and Medicine? Or will our young men and women continue to be borderline illiterate in the sciences and technology while their most popular documented images display them walking down the decaying streets of a dying, burned down neighborhood as they search visually and auditory stimulating images while they scream to each other, “Black Lives Matters and Burn the Bitch Down” in the same breath?

Still trying to convince themselves, with their I-phone in hand, that their greatest contributions to them becoming part of a technologically proficient and advanced global culture should be them recording the next hard core rap CD or DVD million sellers filled with the nasty, expletives and lascivious images that define whose butt is bigger on the mindless soon to be baby mama village auction block that baby mamas and fatherless families will listen to and watch as the I-phone paintings of another society record a great and powerful global culture moving further and further away from their decaying, burned down villages. As a lone Griot
yells out in the wilderness to a state of emptiness. Screaming words that once meant something in the distant past, “it takes a village to raise a child.”

But there is a future. Like any people who take pride in the success of their cultural expressions, we as Americans will develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the role that our artists, educators and leaders play in creating a positive image, achievement focused, make a better world direction that will remedy the ills and shortcoming that plague today’s African American communities nationwide.

Yes, there will come a time when we as a people will reach the realization that what is perceived is not always true, the media is not always right but sometimes fuels a fire that is set to blow our best thought out intentions and actions in the wrong direction. And we must take responsibility for what have become the failures in our villages because the simple fact is that we kill each other in greater numbers than the police, and left to our own devices would we sink to a world where child soldiers would eventually track down their absentee fathers and shoot them down in the streets because the children only feel hatred toward their own blood? A family that they do not identify with because over the many hungry days and nights they have experienced, those children have grown bitter and filled with hatred for the very person that helped to create them. When will we understand that “Black Lives Matters” starts in healthy, responsible homes not in some dark, long abandoned building now in the possession of the urban street gang made up of baby mamma teenage girls and fatherless teenage boys? The novel, “Lord of the Flies,” was a warning to the white culture from another century. Who will write our warning?

Who will say that most successful part of the very culture that we celebrate and glorify is the very part that is slowly destroying us both as a village and a wholesome person because what it says to our young people is “Bitches matter for one night stands.” And African America’s new slave auction block is how to buy a baby mama using a recycled condom so that the invisible male baby daddy “dog” can live at one of those baby mama’s apartments rent free. And drive a late model Lexus or Mercedes, while he spends his hard earned cash on the next baby mama he plans to get pregnant and live with. And spend the rest on dope and liquor consumed at the local gentlemen’s club or neighborhood nip joint that “his boy” owns? While placing dollar bills in the g-string of the next baby mama prize that he will soon impregnate because he has something that his street rapping, walking dead don’t have. The illusion of available cash saved from the rent that he doesn’t pay for, or dollars that he now takes from somebody else’s children and the SSI
deposit that the baby mama that he live with receives using the old “Whimpie” line, “I’ll gladly pay you back tomorrow for some dead presidents that I can use today to increase the population of my village tomorrow. It’s a “Black Lives Matter” thing and yes, it takes a village to raise a child. The inverse, it takes an upside down village to raise a gangbanger.

I still remember supervising the agents that raided an unlicensed nightclub on the Eastern Shore of Virginia several years ago. My statement to the patrons who were illegally frequenting this establishment on the eve of Father’s Day, “You’re free to go. Go home and spend the dollars that you didn’t put on the gambling table or get arrested for buying drugs on your kids.” That night we seized drugs, guns, gambling paraphernalia and illegal liquor. That night the cash that should’ve been spent on the village kids ended up confiscated as unclaimed gambling money. That night, for over 100 patrons, mostly young Black males, “Black Lives” only mattered to them breaking the law. And as for the fathers, spending their money on the gambling table or on the small crowd of young women available to console and have sex with them later, the “Village” or “Black Lives Matter” didn’t win in this scenario. But the question remains, did someone write, draw or make a film about this human tragedy that would accurately educate the masses to recognize how these divisive behaviors have made many of our working class communities dangerous to live in because love had left this village long ago. And its art only reflects sadness and doom. So I begin, as an artist, to see more material for my new screenplays, “Angels in Hip Hop Land” and “A Playground Miracle” while the Eastern Shore Drug Task Force and the Virginia State Police SWAT Team execute the legally obtained search warrant for this disorderly place.

We as a national African American community must reach an understanding that black lives will only matter when they become a respected part of their communities and realize that the all lives matter perspective is one that our young people must embrace. Then this must be followed by the desire to pursue real academic study and intellectual pondering that will replace the young “vision deficient” undisciplined rapper strolling around today’s urban graveyards holding in his hand their million dollar invention, a phrase infused with a nursery rhyme beat and cuss words and a perspective that encourages destruction not building. And our millennials will create new systems, new technologies and beautiful, safe urban, suburban and rural sustainable communities where residents will take pride in the villages where they live and work. And our kids will enjoy having a safe place to play, every day. And safe passages are accessible for them
to take to school or work. These passages will be lined with recreational facilities where the
village children can enjoy themselves and or develop their physical / athletic skills after a hard
day at school or work. And spiritually uplifting places also exist in these villages where
responsible adults can come together to worship and explore what it means to be a respectable,
law abiding citizens who are role models for their own children and the children residing in their
community.

So, the challenge is simple. Do we complain about violence then use violence to address
complaints against us, or do endeavor to eliminate the community based violence and Black on
Black crime by exposing the perpetrators for what they really are, even if they are our family
members? So that most of the visits conducted daily by police patrols are friendly and only
require those in law enforcement who enter the village to be greeted by a friendly and welcoming
“Good Morning.” A greeting that encourages friendly, peaceful interactions with the positive,
family friendly village residents these outsiders are sworn to protect.

At this point, the Term “Lifestyles” begins to jump out at me as I enter these unknown
Villages. In my mind I see modern day Edward Munch style paintings with two images existing
side by side. One showing those who wake up, head to work next to those who wake up, loiter
on the corners and may become the focus of the next 911 call that local agents like myself may
have to respond to if we were in the area and in a position to assist.

They are the “Walking Dead Gangbangers” living inside these desperate to survive,
disadvantaged villages. Creatures that prey on those hard working parents, relatives and their
children stranded in a world that challenges their safety and security and the very peace and
privacy that they should be able to enjoy in their homes. As their Lookouts, preteens and young
teenagers, yell “Five O” upon spotting an unmarked police car or a strange new vehicle just
entering their village. A lifestyle that has its roots in a negative counter culture that replaced the
past civil right victories made on the backs of peaceful actions of committed civil rights activists
with “impulse driven” youths rioting, looting, robbing, maiming and murder while yelling, as
they walk away with the entire convenience store’s beer and edible items inventory, Black Lives
Matter! The “Dark Side” of a very spiritual movement that was supposed to make our
communities safer, not more dangerous. Now a place where “Black Lives DO NOT Matter” if
you’re on the wrong side of today’s street gangbangers’ guns and WVD, “Weapons for Village
Destruction” that destroy the villages we once tried to build as safe places to live.
But through understanding these communities, we can replace the “thought decayed” walls filled with ugly “gangbanging graffiti newspapers” with professionally designed and executed public art that enhances the environment. And artistically conceived sculptural forms that create beautiful fantasy horizons on playgrounds constructed for “well cared for” children who look forward to spending their free time playing, exercising their young minds in these playground fantasies filled with beautiful shapes, colors, textures and designs that excite them and their surrounding villages. Villages filled with wholesome families who believe and support the SAFE PLAYGROUNDS FOR ALL concept. It is a simple concept. One that begins with repairing immediately anything defaced or broken. Then removing all the garbage that lies on the curb or in the streets. Finally, picking up the broken bottles and litter so that beautiful lawns can be appreciated. It is a story, a simple stage play with a few songs,” Phantom of the 87th Street Playground” that my wife and I wrote many years ago when we believed that our communities were heading in a culturally rich direction. Yes we longed to say to our communities that we can achieve greatness once we create safe places for our children to play. We said it in this musical stage play, but sometimes simple answers are, most of the time, overlooked.

It is time to stop supporting artists who bring out the worst in us. Golden Calf Artists whose vile, lascivious “Straight Outta Compton” imagery promotes more use of profanity, violence, murder, illegal drug use, felonious assaults and gang raping of young women who during the worst moment in their lives become lost in this carnal world because they were just looking for a safe place to play and feel beautiful playing in it. Now this new reality has made them ugly and begun their journey into the dark side of the force. And Hollywood says it’s a work of art because they used the top of the line Red Camera to film it. And most of all, it made a ton of money at the box office. I was in a military base movie house when I saw this movie. Across the aisle, sitting with their parents, were several little African American children under the age of five. I wondered for a second what positive image they were enjoying watching this movie?

I thought for a second. My screenplays and stage plays are too wholesome. And not what the Black and Latino communities want to see. Why do I waste my time? Who wants to see a play about an old dead slave who believes in positive images visits a decaying playground and teaches kids how to believe in themselves? And at the moment when they begin to try, he vanishes as if he had never been there but leaves imbedded in their minds their need to follow
their dream to succeed and be a positive image for all to look at. That’s a corny story but to my surprise the few communities in Norfolk, Virginia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Florence, South Carolina loved them. ET only exists for White Children. DVD images created by EPMD, NWA, and a very large cast of “Hard-core” rappers are our ETs. And what’s amazing, nobody sees it. So I venture out another evening in my unmarked police vehicle riding through a world whose kids will never believe that they could see ET come into their village and the reformed gangbangers would help them to get safely home. Yet I keep writing and working with other African American writers in this underfunded environment. Christian Writers who believe that one day they will make a change and out of the “Straight Outta the Attucks Theater Writers Workshop” will emerge beautiful, family friendly, spiritually uplifting screenplays and stage plays destined to play side by side with the “Straight Outta Compton” lewd and lascivious images providing those parents who came with their families a choice. A movie that the whole family could enjoy and leave the theater with a message that yells at the top of its lungs, that we are a beautiful people and we love wonderfully crafted, beautiful fantasies that fill us with wholesome images that our children can enjoy.

So, as an artist who teaches other aspiring artists and writers, we must do better.

We must provide alternatives for our villages. For if we shower them only with superficial, hollow images and a successful gangbanging, hardcore lifestyle, then these culturally deficient images will create newer and more violent NWA type images totally devoid of even one player who sees that the forest is filled with darkness, a hell whose loudest player’s battle cry is “Burn the Bitch Down.” And the Bitch burns down not once but twice in the same 12 month period. So the choice is simple. We must see in the dream a brand new world filled with positive images, wholesome songs and raps and very creative, exciting and family friendly literary and filmic works infused with positive images. A clear sense of worth and beauty that teaches us how kind and responsible we can truly be.

If we do not create this world, then surly there will be many more disorderly houses, gangbanging shooting galleries, brothels and fencing operations that chase our grocery stores, pharmacies and convenience stores out of the very villages that need them. Also, sex and human trafficking operations, easily accessible / available porn and pedophiles lurking around every corner. Corners overrun by teenage pregnancy and more single baby momma births that are not immaculate conceptions but the results of one night stands and failed attempts to build families
that stay together and pray together. Is this the America that we want for our villages? So, to
satisfy both the liberal and conservative agendas, should we send a couple of short Negroes like
me occasionally into this “Other America” so that we can document politically that we are doing
something?

And when this whole plan backfires, will our family friendly media will broadcast more
examples of police brutality? And this culturally starved, now “handout dependent” younger
generation taught by the “school of low esteem” now muster their gangbanging family of “The
Children of no Beasts” born in the “Other America” side by side with our talented tenth from our
most prestigious colleges and universities. Yes, gangbangers and college students together,
chanting “Black Life Matters” and “We Shall Overcome” and in the next instance, together they
burn a city down then return to their communities to ensure that tomorrow’s paper will state on
the front page, one more innocent child or adult murdered by a drive by. One more violent
painting added to the village’s “Colored Museum of Black Life.”

We are a people who claim to say that we support the arts. But do we question why there
are less than 20 professional (Equity) Black Theaters nationwide? And for laughs and giggles,
we have the oldest African American Theater in the country that supports no season of plays
written and produced by African American playwrights. The sad reality is that even though the
theater has 8 African American playwrights giving up two weekdays a month to train to write
wholesome, family friendly stage plays and screenplays.

It is a sad state of affairs when most of our cultural expression is more focused on a
quick, “get rich” mentality that promotes the use of the word “Bitch” to describe our scantily
clad actresses from time to time and “Dogs” to describe the men who many White Americans in
Middle America come to believe that these “Dogs” only gangbang and shacking up with
unemployed baby mommas. In their minds they see these “Dogs” racing from nip joint to
nightclub trying to conquer the next baby momma in bed, or a couch or a chair if the
surroundings dictate that that is the best place to see if this urban actress can play a convincing
love scene without getting pregnant. A scene that has a fifty-fifty chance that Social Services will
be left footing the bill for the next arrival. A child whose first name is given to him by his mother
and a last name that is hers too. Our Guernica is not the artistic interpretation that shows the
horror of the bombing of a Spanish village in the 1930’s but the invasion of irresponsible baby
daddies who randomly drop their sperm bomb during the one night bombing missions fueled by
a shot of whiskey, can of beer and or a joint. And these night bombing attacks result in the men disappearing from the community long before the baby arrives.

And these same baby daddies will stand on the street corner face to face with the media and demonized police officers who haven’t shot or abuse anybody and yell “Black Lives Matters.” Did someone forget to tell them that “Black Lives Matters” from the time of conception to the day that young man/woman becomes an adult and is able to survive on his or her own because they had a supportive, responsible, intact family? Or will the event be changed to show a “father-absent” son just killed at the hands of a White Police officer who just heard the message that this young male robbed a store clerk by force or intimidation or was selling dope on the street. Now running through his mind the question, will I rush to respond as quick as I can. Or will I take my time and avoid being accused of using excessive force? Let wait and see how many murders resulting from Black on Black crime will remain unsolved because to respond is to spin the Black Lives Matter roulette wheel which sometimes is right, but can be sometimes wrong too.

Who wants to paint this on the canvas? Or capture it on film? Is there something more aesthetically pleasing that one could create for a people whose past culture was filled with negative beginnings? Yet all who suffered from the crimes associated with slavery, segregation and violence lie peacefully at rest. And those who are here either remember a time when drinking fountains, restaurants, bathrooms and movie houses were separate for Negroes and Whites or never experienced any of these sad practices.

Isn’t it time for us to create something beautiful and affordable? Images that can instill in a broken people a sense of hope, pride and family?

The challenge for our next generation of artists, Will their descent into the modern day “MAD MAX” villages change into pyrite or gold? Or just continue to project and embellish the mentality that holds us back and influences the positions of caring Whites who once supported our causes, now to reach the new conclusion that we are a violent, undisciplined group of people who take the lead from violent street gang leaders and unruly kids who, at the first impulse, will “Burn the Bitch Down!”

Are these the digital paintings that we as a people wish to leave the future generations? The images of mob violence, senseless looting and assaults on hard working owners who sacrifice everything to build a business in our communities? An Apocalyptic fire and a city left
in ashes? And all the ministers from the houses of prayer surrounding this mayhem are powerless to put the fires out or stop them from happening. Can we actually come to the conclusion that a destructive match is more powerful than God’s words of peace? These are the images that live in one black artist’s mind. Images I hope that I will never paint.

Thoughts on The Images that define us to the World, our USA Made Movies

As the year, 2015, draws to a close, I search my e-mails to see what SAG Awards online digital screeners or DVDs I might be receiving to watch and vote on for the upcoming SAG Awards. For the past three years the selectees have been interesting. For Whites, well written and funded comedies, thought provoking dramas, crime stories, thrillers and wonderful coming of age fantasies both animated and using a human cast. For us, one year, it’s The Butler, and The Help and the next two years, Selma, 12 Years a Slave, Straight Outta Compton and The Beasts of No Nation. I ask myself, if I’m a young African American preteen or teenager, what movie can I go to and enjoy that actors are playing fun loving, content character who have a flaw but aren’t being killed, beaten or abused throughout the whole movie by actors who are of the same race as me.

The images that we ingest into our minds influence the way we think. Watching two hours of how Black African Child Soldiers and their gangbanging adult commanders effectively employ genocide against their own defenseless people or celebrating a successful Gangsta Rapping group whose cultural pastimes include occasional gangbanging, using and selling dope and hosting orgy type parties filled with scantily clothed women whose only acting talents are their semi clad breast and constantly focused on butts. And the music industry that supports this imagery will certainly not attempt to develop other forms of expression that will instill in the young impressionable minds and sense of worth or dignity especially in the lead roles. M.F. will introduce the next “heavy thought” and “that “B” is the sexy truth” are the themes that give these screenplays their right to make a whole lot of “dead presidents” and prompt our leaders to celebrate the success of our cultural demise and quality and a positive aesthetic are chipped away little by little by this increasing new stereotype of the penis thinking, gangbanging workforce that puts a whole new spin on what are careers for the new Black male are. A male destined to either be killed in the street, mostly by his own people, not the cops. if the truth be told , he’ll be thrown in jail for killing, stealing, robbing, raping or burglarizing in the name of Black Lives Matters his own community.
So, I begin my vote. And yes, there are some quality moments in all these films. And I must vote on quality not content. But as a stage playwright / screenwriter / visual artist my mind begins to wander. I ask myself, “Why does Hollywood fund no African American Fantasy “ET” type movies? Why are all our attempts at writing family friendly, spiritually uplifting fantasy passed on? Is it because we, as a people, are not perceived as being “Family Friendly”? And “Spiritually Uplifting” only applies to how many laughs our very successful comedians can get out of poking fun at the way the Holiness Churches celebrate something clean and spiritually uplifting?

The question, is there a Peter Pan, Fantastic Four, Star Wars type movie that our writers and filmmakers create in the future for our families and their children to watch and not have to cover their children’s eyes when a “A” List Actors displays front nudity?

Or the next movies for the SAG nominations in 2017 will be “Snoop”, “SNAP” and “The Whip”? And in 2020, these will be the primary images that White America, and our cultural leaders too, will discuss, defend and justify documenting as our great aesthetic culture that in the 1970’s and 1980’s our leaders professed would develop into wonderful creative masterpieces.

This is the mission that our Millennium writers and artists must address. For it will be their children who will either be consumed with positive, wholesome images whose humble beginnings carried our ancestors through the darkest of times in a segregated, racist, apartheid type slave culture and from these tumultuous beginnings emerged as the golden era of the Harlem Renaissance then on to be the focal point for creating America’s Great Society. Or will images controlled by a stereotype supporting WGA who see no farther than encouraging the development of writers who use the “How many females can a Gangsta put in his bed” approach to getting their screenplays green-lighted. As these writers continue to control the front and center of our pop cultural movement? And “Burn the Bitch Down” will be the number one DVD on the national Hip Hop Charts accompanied by a screenplay that promotes the same image. And image filled with a “one note” looped drum beat and several loud cuss words that will keep our people aesthetically numb for the next fifty years…if we survive that long?

I heard and saw some of this imagery in the disorderly, bawdy house and licensed businesses that I investigated over a 25 year career. I was paid by the Commonwealth to frequent these places so can someone tell me that what I saw was a nightmare? And when I wake up I’ll
see what we really are, a beautiful people creating peaceful, positive images for villages filled with family friendly people. We can. I know because I know ten African American women and two African American men who are writing quality products in the Attucks Writers Workshop and I hope that our villages will come together to support the development of these images in their villages and through the media outlets that they watch. Several HBCUs are doing the hard work to make this dream come alive so there is hope.

Some Final Thoughts

Sometimes you’ve got to go inside. Light up that corner that is dark. So my colleagues and I entered those dark places where vice, prostitution, illegal narcotics and gambling, the fencing and selling of stolen goods to rogue convenience stores, sex trafficking, unlicensed sale of moonshine and lewd and lascivious behavior festered. And sometimes, people and kids got shot, stabbed, assaulted or robbed in these places, either licensed as legitimate businesses or not licensed at all. For 25 years, until I retired in 2013, I received an education contrary to the one that taught me in the early 1970’s how to paint beautiful paintings and murals, write beautiful fantasy plays and enjoy life frequenting upstanding, quality restaurants and nightclubs. In surgery, you cut out the infected part, remove it from the body. With these types of crimes, you shine a light on it, go inside. Take action and prosecute the offenders who know what they’re doing. Eventually, you hope that you can establish what is needed to shut down the operations permanently and not get sued.

Whenever we challenged these places’ illegal operations, their money brought the best lawyers and politicians / lawyers from all political parties to defend why these places should keep their licenses or if unlicensed, the violators should walk free. The representation went all the way to those who occupied elected positions as Speaker of the House and Senate Majority or Minority Leader in the Commonwealth where I worked. But still my committed colleagues and I went out, night after night, year after year, investigating and bringing to the criminal state courts and hearings the perpetrators of these crimes. And many of these place existed around or inside our villages. Some cases we lost but many we were able prove to get rid of the problems. A few examples were:

1. One Location where a young man had been shot to death inside became a church.
2. One location where sex trafficking and lewd and lascivious conduct occurred became a vacant lot.

3. One location where oral sex was performed on a Black Female patron became an upscale restaurant.

4. Several housing establishments where illegal liquor sales, gambling, prostitution and illegal narcotics sales were ongoing are now new strip shopping centers that citizens can safely patronize.

5. One location where the restrooms had the appearance that prostitutes were running tricks on their menstrual cycles, drugs were being illegally sold, and guns with scratched serial numbers were carried by patrons who discarded them when the place was raided is now a normal law abiding business.

6. One licensed location where a prostitute was having sex with a male patron and when the Police raided the restaurant and she jumped off of him, her condom fell on the floor. This location is now a School for the Arts.

There are many other stories but all of these places were owned and / or operated by us for us. The question we have to ask ourselves, is this also a testimony to “Black Lives Matter” when our dedicated law enforcement officers take action against these crimes? The statement, “Evil prevails when Good Men do nothing” is why, in spite of poverty, mistakes made and even some prejudice exhibited by a few law enforcement officers, one thing is clear, those who took action cared and I was there. A village without a commitment for ensuring that public safety is always present is a village where child soldiers and genocide perpetrating thug leaders take charge. And sometimes they scream “Black Lives Matter” the loudest. We must beware how evil comes, and the forms that it comes in.

A Vision for our Future, In Our Communities, the Arts Are Positive Images!

We will know as artists and educators when we have turned our culture tide positive because:

1. Our children don’t blast offensive, profane, rap CD’s wherever they go to make their presence known in a negative way.

2. Families headed by responsible grownups will replace fragmented families created by Baby Mamas left alone in public housing and Baby Daddies in jail and both blaming the White Man for the problems that social services must now handle, in mass.
3. Well-fed gangstas no longer need to express their manhood through gang violence and killing “TANF,” “SNAP,” and “WIC” feed 9 year old children and young girls just walking in their neighborhoods trying to enjoy life, while their absentee daddies gangbang.

4. The curb, sewers, and streets are not the final resting places for our empty candy wrappers, fast food bags and liquor, wine and beer.

5. We no longer participate in the illegal sale of drugs or Black on Black violence while shouting “I can’t breathe” and “Black Life Matters” in the same breath, our urban Guernica.

6. Our religious leaders and elected officials can step out, see a problem developing, raise their hands and say “Stop, and be peaceful,” and we stop.

7. “Hands up. Don’t shoot” are replaced by “Hands down. We work with you” because young and old, we will all pitch in to keep our communities safe and beautiful.

8. Most of all, we don’t harbor criminals in a community, especially in our homes, where people struggle to survive working hard only to be derailed by the criminal that is their next door neighbor supports.

These are Eight Beatitudes for building peaceful, safe Villages. If we do what they ask, we will have a litter free / crime free community and a safe place for our children to play. A village filled with “family-friendly families,” parents who work and children who study and respect others’ property, and a community where the citizen resources can be applied to building beautiful libraries, recreation centers, schools and industries that support a thriving national economy especially in and around our villages.

Finally, our artists can, once again, create positive images in films, theater, the visual arts, poetry, the spoken word, storytelling, dance, music, sculpture, public arts all in our communities using our resources and children.

For now, for me, it’s only a dream. Hopefully, one day it will be a reality. I can see it happening with our young people because they care.
Police, Race, Mass Incarceration and Resilience
Trevor Johnson, Ph.D.

Blacks, particularly young males in cities like Hartford, are overrepresented at every stage in the criminal justice process beginning with rates of arrests, conviction, convictions resulting in prison sentences, as well as the length of those sentences. In a state that is roughly 80% White and has one of the highest per capita income levels in the country, Hartford, which is approximately 80% minority remains one of the poorest cities in the nation and a major feeder of the state’s prison system. This chapter begins by exploring the circumstances that have contributed to growing distrust between Blacks and police followed by strategies to improve police community relations. It then highlights some of the legislative strategies and policies which, though well-intended and race-neutral on their face, led to mass incarceration of Blacks in America and Connecticut, with Blacks in Hartford being impacted the most. Finally, it looks at some of the promising justice reform strategies initiated by the legislature and Governor Malloy over the past few years that are helping to reduce the prison population and give second chances to those impacted by mass incarceration.

Police and Race

The absence of crime is not the final goal of law enforcement. Rather, it is the promotion and protection of public safety while respecting the dignity and rights of all. And public safety and well-being cannot be attained without the community’s belief that their well-being is at the heart of all law enforcement activities. It is critical to help community members see police as allies rather than as an occupying force and to work in concert with other community stakeholders to create more economically and socially stable neighborhoods.¹

The War on Drugs initiated in the 1980s has produced some very damaging results for Blacks. Two of the major tactics of this war, stop and frisk on the streets and motor vehicle stops, have strained relationships between Blacks and the police in several communities around the country. This is especially true for young Blacks in poor urban cities like Hartford for whom the drug war and mass incarceration are the norm. In 1999, Connecticut enacted legislation (The Alvin Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act) requiring police to document police stops in an effort to determine the extent to which racial bias factored into police behavior.² Alvin Penn was
an African American state senator from Bridgeport who, after being stopped and questioned by police while in neighboring Trumbull, brought his complaints of racial profiling (Driving While Black) to the Capitol. Not long ago, Connecticut Treasurer Denise Nappier, also African American, made headlines when she was pulled over and ticketed in Hartford prompting similar complaints of racial profiling. Subsequent amendments to the Alvin Penn Act resulted in a more comprehensive data process and the requirement that the data be analyzed and published regularly. The Alvin Penn amendments were enacted around the same time that the federal government was conducting a major investigation of some members of the East Haven police department following complaints by members of the Latino community that they were victims of racial profiling and police brutality.

In May 2016, the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy at Central Connecticut State released a report (available at www.ctp3.org) detailing its analysis of 586,000 police stops that occurred in Connecticut during the period October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015. Some of the major highlights of the report were:

- Statewide 14% of stops by police involved Black drivers; Blacks make up 9% of the state’s driving age (16+) population;
- Statewide Blacks are more likely to be stopped during daylight hours than at night when police are less likely to be able to see the race and ethnicity of the driver; and
- Statewide once stopped Blacks were more likely to receive infractions and have their vehicles searched when compared to Whites.

The 2015 report identified five municipal departments (Bloomfield, New Milford, Norwalk, West Hartford and Wethersfield) and one State Police department (Troop H which covers the Hartford area) that showed a "statistically significant racial or ethnic disparity that may indicate the presence of racial and ethnic bias." Such a designation triggers further examination including reviewing data down to the individual officer level.

While the analysis of Hartford police stops didn’t place it in the “statistically significant disparity” category, it should be noted that three of the five towns that were in that category border the City of Hartford. Blacks and Latinos in Hartford were more likely to be stopped by the police but the disparity did not rise to the level warranting closer scrutiny. What stood out for Hartford Police was the fact that once they stopped someone, the likelihood that the person would be cited for an infraction (given a ticket as opposed to a warning) was the second
highest rate of any municipal police department in the state.\textsuperscript{9} Disparity does not mean discrimination thus there are some legitimate criticisms and limitations to drawing conclusions from this data. On the other hand, the authors assert that collecting, analyzing and publishing the data is “an important step toward developing a transparent dialogue between law enforcement and the public.”\textsuperscript{10}

While stop and frisks and motor vehicle stops have become a routine tactic of the war on drugs, claims of excessive force have dominated the headlines over the past couple of years based on some high profile incidents where Africans were killed by police. The names Tamir Rice, Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray and Philando Castille evoke strong feelings of racial injustice. However, the names Aquan Salmon and Jashon Bryant have quickly disappeared from the minds of many in Hartford. Accounts of their deaths are well documented but unlike Rice, Brown, Garner, Gray and Castille, there is no video footage that calls into question the accounts provided by the officers involved. Aquan Salmon was a 14-year-old African American boy who died following a police involved shooting in 1999. Activists protested and rallies were held demanding justice on behalf of the Salmon family. Following an investigation that included local, state and federal authorities the officer involved was exonerated and the use of force he deployed was deemed appropriate.\textsuperscript{11} In 2005 Jashon Bryant, a 19-year-old African American male, was shot and killed by a Hartford police officer. Again there were small protests and rallies and a thorough investigation. However, in this case, the officer involved was charged with manslaughter, which is rare in police involved shootings. In 2009 that officer was acquitted of the charge of manslaughter following his trial.\textsuperscript{12}

At the national level, following a wave of protests in cities like Ferguson, Missouri, President Obama convened a task force in 2014 comprised of a wide array of leaders from groups that included law enforcement, academia, and civil rights organizations and charged them with identifying best practices and recommendations on how policing practices could promote effective crime reduction while building trust.\textsuperscript{13} In May 2015 the Task Force released its final report which highlighted recommendations for effective policing in six key topic areas (pillars) and strategies for implementing them. The pillars include:

- Building Trust and Legitimacy;
- Policies and Police Oversight;
- Technology and Social Media;
Community Policing and Crime Reduction;
Training and Education; and
Officer Wellness and Safety

In total, the task force generated 59 recommendations related to the six pillars along with 92 specific action items.\(^{14}\) In addition to the final report, there is also an implementation guideline that spells out the role of stakeholders, including the community, when it comes to moving from recommendations to action. The full Obama Task Force Report and the Implementation Guide are available online at:


In 2015, Connecticut passed legislation that dealt with issues of police accountability. It provided all state troopers with body cameras, mandated efforts to increase recruitment of more minority officers, and required the assignment of independent investigators to cases where the police use deadly force.\(^{15}\) Though the use of body cameras by municipal police departments is voluntary, those utilizing them are required to follow certain guidelines. While the Obama Administration identifies body cameras as an important tool for effective policing that helps to build community trust, there are still funding challenges beyond the equipment itself for local departments as the requirements that they store recordings can prove costly.\(^{16}\) The police accountability law also requires municipal departments with significant minority populations to make every effort to hire, retain and promote individuals who reflect the community’s racial and ethnic makeup.\(^{17}\) This is especially important for Hartford as the city was cited in a 2015 report as having the 7\(^{th}\) highest rate of disparity of cities greater than 100,000 people when it comes to whether the police department mirrors the city population. The authors looked at 2013 data which showed that the minority share of the population of Hartford was 84\% yet the minority share of the Hartford Police Department was only 35\%.\(^{18}\) While it’s important for citizens to get to know the police it’s equally important that city residents and racial minorities are reflected on the Hartford police department.

Locally, some of the strategies mentioned in the President’s Task Force Report (i.e., CompStat, where crime data is collected and made public during regular meetings, collaborative efforts like Project Longevity that seek to reduce gun violence, and police prosocial engagement with city youth) were already in place in Hartford while others like citywide community policing
requires funding to hire and train more officers, funding the Mayor says the city doesn’t have given its current economic woes. When announcing his decision in 2016 to recommend reappointment of Police Chief Rovella, Mayor Bronin lauded Chief Rovella’s “ability to manage the department with a steady hand through challenging times and called him a strong voice for transparency and community engagement.” Many of the effective policing strategies that the city hopes to full implement align with National Urban League’s “10 Point Justice Plan for Police Reform and Accountability” below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10-Point Justice Plan for Police Reform and Accountability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Widespread Use of Body Cameras and Dashboard Cameras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Broken Windows Reform and Implementation of 21st Century Community Policing Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Review and Revision of Police Use of Deadly Force Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Comprehensive Retraining of All Police Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Comprehensive Review and Strengthening of Police Hiring Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Appointment of Special Prosecutors to Investigate Police Misconduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mandatory, Uniform FBI Reporting and Audit of Lethal Force Incidents Involving All Law Enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Creation and Audit of National Database of Citizen Complaints against Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Revision of National Police Accreditation System for Mandatory Use by Law Enforcement to Be Eligible for Federal Funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. National Comprehensive Anti-Racial Profiling Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Race to Incarcerate

“What has changed since the collapse of Jim Crow has less to do with the basic structure of our society than with the language we use to justify it. In the era of colorblindness, it is not socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion and social contempt. So we don’t. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color “criminals” and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all of the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you’re labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination – employment, discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, denial of educational opportunity, denial of food stamps and other public benefits, and exclusion from jury service – are suddenly legal.”
When *The New Jim Crow* was published in 2010, it quickly rose up the ranks of the *New York Times* Bestseller List. Though not the first author to declare the War on Drugs and Mass Incarceration as tools of institutional racism, Alexander’s book fueled the conversation at the national level and challenged folks to place mass incarceration at the forefront of a new movement for racial justice in America.\(^2^2\) While Alexander’s work cloaks the issue in historical racial terms and calls for major reforms to the criminal justice system, some states, including Connecticut had already arrived at the conclusion that building prisons and locking up large numbers of non-violent drug offenders was no longer smart policy. A slow recovery from the 2007 economic recession prompted Connecticut to consider strategies that would reduce the high cost of incarceration without compromising public safety.

The devastation of crack cocaine on communities of color in the early 1990s is undeniable. As a nation, we had a choice about how to respond to the crack epidemic and we overwhelmingly chose arrest and incarceration over drug treatment, prevention, education and economic investment in crime-ridden communities.\(^2^3\) Today, cities all across America, like Hartford, are dealing with an opioid epidemic. In many places the casualties of this opioid epidemic are largely White and the response has been a call for a gentler war on drugs that emphasizes treatment over punishment prompting some to welcome the shift, but question why earlier calls by African Americans for a more empathetic approach were largely ignored.\(^2^4\)

While Americans have countless things to be proud of, our rate of incarceration compared to rates in other countries is not one of them. Though constituting nearly 5% of the world’s population, more than 20% of those incarcerated in the world are behind bars in America.\(^2^5\) From 1925 to around 1970, the incarcerated population in America remained rather steady before rising significantly during the last 45 years. The incarcerated population in America went from around 200 thousand in 1970 to around 2.3 million at its peak in 2008.\(^2^6\)

What caused this massive increase? Most would think that rising crime rates was largely responsible for the explosion in the prison population, however, crime rates alone do not tell the whole story. While rising crime rates may have been the genesis for a punitive tough on crime approach, long after crime rates peaked in the 1990s, states around the country, including Connecticut, continued to lock up thousands of offenders, many for drug possession charges. Sentencing reform efforts in the 1970s followed by the War on Drugs crackdown in the 1980s reshaped the justice system leading to more drug arrests, mandatory minimum sentences, and
requirements that sentenced offenders serve much longer portions of their sentence before being eligible for release. Like many state level initiatives, the war on drugs was heavily financed by the federal government which offered states incentive grants to build more prisons and put more cops on the streets if they agreed to certain sentencing and policy changes like requiring those convicted of violent offenses to serve at least 85% of their sentence behind bars (Truth in Sentencing law or TIS).\textsuperscript{27}

Crime rates in Connecticut pretty much followed national rates and the approach Connecticut took was not all that different from what the feds did. By the end of the 1980s, Connecticut’s incarcerated population had more than doubled, the staffing levels tripled, and the Department of Corrections budget quadrupled as Connecticut spent approximately $1 billion dollars to build 12 new prisons and renovate existing ones.\textsuperscript{28} By 1992, Connecticut ranked third highest on the list of states spending the most per capita on corrections (total corrections budget divided by the number of people in the state).\textsuperscript{29} Connecticut’s incarcerated population increased an average of 5% per year from 1985 to 2003 going from 5,422 inmates in 1985 to 19,603 in 2003.\textsuperscript{30} Interestingly enough, a report produced by the State Office of Policy & Management in 2007 which examined crime rates in the state during a similar period (1985 and 2005) indicated that total arrests and violent arrests were way down, 29% and 46%, drug arrests were actually up 23%.\textsuperscript{31} Arresting minorities for drug offenses had become the norm throughout the country and Connecticut was no exception.

Tough on crime efforts in Connecticut such as new laws in 1987 mandating minimum sentences for drug dealers, changes to the prison release process which limited DOC discretion, and enacting Truth in Sentencing laws in 1995 contributed greatly to the massive increases in state prisoners.\textsuperscript{32} In 1993 those convicted of violent offenses in Connecticut were serving a little more than half (54%) of their sentence behind bars before being released. By 1997 violent offenders in Connecticut were not only serving longer sentences than they had just four years earlier, they were serving even more of their sentence (68%) behind bars.\textsuperscript{33} Although truth in sentencing became the law in Connecticut in 1995, time served for violent offenders would take a while to get up to 85% as the averages included those sentenced prior to 1995 and thus not subject to the TIS requirements which could not be applied retroactively.

When it comes to race and incarceration, Connecticut stands out. A 2016 Sentencing Project report entitled \textit{The Color of Justice, Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons}
indicates that despite comprising only 10% of the state’s population, Blacks are 41% of the state’s prison population. Moreover, Connecticut has the 5th highest rate of incarceration of Blacks (1 in 19) in the nation and the 6th highest rate of Black/White incarceration differential. For every 100,000 Whites in Connecticut, there are 148 behind bars, whereas for every 100,000 Blacks, there are 1392 Blacks incarcerated (this equates to a 9.4 to 1 rate which is nearly double the national rate which is closer to 5 to 1).\textsuperscript{34} Although this particular information (Black/White differential and rates per 100K) presents negatively, a similar review done a decade earlier showed even greater disparity. In that review (for the year 2005) the Black to White incarceration rate differential was 12 to 1 and the number of Whites incarcerated for that year was 211 per 100,000 Whites in the state compared to 2532 Blacks per 100,000 Blacks in the state.\textsuperscript{35} What the report shows is that even with steep declines to its prison population, serious racial disparity problems exist with respect to who goes to prison in Connecticut. The charts below reflect the racial composition of the CT DOC population on 1/1/16 for females and males.\textsuperscript{36}

The group hit hardest by the massive incarceration buildup during the late 1980s and 1990s was young poor Black and Latino males living in Hartford. The places that felt it most were the large housing projects (i.e., Bellevue Square, Charter Oak Terrace, Stowe Village, Dutch Point) where the city’s poorest people were concentrated and where hopelessness was contagious. Suddenly, many young people struggling through the ills of poverty and underperforming schools were drawn into the dangerous but lucrative world of crack dealing as street level outlets popped up everywhere. Increased gang activity and gang warfare escalated
during the early 1990s. The Department of Correction increasingly had to shift further away from rehabilitative approaches as the gang problem was taking hold in the prisons. On the streets of Hartford rounding up gang members, arresting drug offenders, and investigating shootings and homicides became the priority actions of law enforcement. Drug arrests, particularly for possession, went way up resulting in a disproportionate number of Black drug users being arrested and sent to prison despite data that showing that drug use rates for Blacks and Whites in America are similar. Inner city drug users and young people were caught up in the police sweeps and raids aimed at disrupting drug networks. Many residents supported the efforts of police but over time began to view the drug situation as a never ending battle which could not be resolved by the police. In less than 15 years beginning in the late 1908s the total prison population more than doubled with the total number of Blacks behind bars exceeding the total prison population in 1989.

Connecticut’s prison population has been steadily declining since 2008. This downsizing coincides with the economic recession from which Connecticut has been slow to recover. From January 2007 to January 2016, the statewide DOC population totals for Blacks, White and Hispanics went down. The rate of decline was greatest for Blacks and Hispanics. The same is true for Blacks and Hispanics from Hartford (the number of incarcerated Hartford Whites, male and female, increased slightly).

### Incarcerated Population Statewide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Male 2007</th>
<th>Male 2016</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>Female 2007</th>
<th>Female 2016</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4981</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>-9.7%</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7606</td>
<td>6099</td>
<td>-19.8%</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>-39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4828</td>
<td>3722</td>
<td>-22.9%</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>-35.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: CT DOC*

### Incarcerated Populations

**Hartford Residents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Male 2007</th>
<th>Male 2016</th>
<th>% Change</th>
<th>Female 2007</th>
<th>Female 2016</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1365</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>-24.5%</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-57.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The individuals entering prison have many deficits, especially when it comes to education, work skills and other factors that increase their likelihood of returning to prison once released. The Connecticut DOC offers a full compendium of programs, operates a unified school district, and annually awards over 500 GEDS and countless vocational certificates. While the services provided by CT DOC are commendable, they likely are insufficient to meet the needs of the prison population, especially if individuals leaving prison are expected to desist from future criminal activity. One of the goals of justice reform has to be reducing recidivism rates for justice involved adults. The latest DOC recidivism study of over 16,000 men and women released from incarceration in 2008 found that within 2 years of their release, 56% of the study group had picked up at least one new arrest (57% of men and 47% of women). At the 3-year mark 65% of men and 57% of women had a new arrest. The need for more in depth studies of Connecticut recidivism is critical to understanding how to best prevent the revolving prison door.

High school graduation rates for incarcerated Blacks and Hispanics statewide are lower than the rates for Whites. For many Hartford Blacks and Latinos, the pipeline to prison can be traced to poor education experiences at an earlier age. January 1, 2016 data obtained from CT DOC revealed that 77% of incarcerated White females in Connecticut have at least a high school diploma compared to 68% for Blacks and 52% for Hispanics. When it comes to incarcerated males, 73% of Whites have at least a high school diploma compared to 59% for Blacks and 43% for Hispanics. When you look at incarcerated residents of Hartford, the numbers are as follows: 55% of White females have at least a high school diploma compared to 67% for Black females and 43% for Hispanics; 67% of White males have at least a high school diploma compared to 51% for Black males and 38% for Hispanic males.

While the spotlight for justice involved adults typically focuses on those incarcerated, the majority of adult offenders under justice supervision are either on probation or parole. Like the prison population, the number of individuals being supervised in the community by Judicial Branch’s Adult Probation System and by DOC/Parole has also been declining since 2007. In January 2007 there were over 4,000 offenders being supervised in the community statewide by DOC/Parole with 516 of them being Hartford residents. By January 2016 the statewide total was down to approximately 2400 and the total of Hartford residents was down to 229. One of the challenges for systems coordination when it comes to community supervision is the fact that in
Connecticut parole is within the executive branch of government whereas probation and bail are in the judicial branch thus you have two different state agencies working with offenders in the community.

On July 1, 2016, there were 41,432 people on adult probation in Connecticut down nearly 15,000 from 2009 when there were 56,293 on probation. Some of the factors contributing to the decline during this period was the implementation of Connecticut’s raise the age legislation which moved 16 and 17 year olds out of the adult system and into the juvenile system, continued decline in statewide arrests, and use of a legislative mechanism that allows the courts to terminate probation early for select individuals who are in compliance with their conditions and have completed a significant portion of their probation sentence. The declining probation population has resulted in lower caseloads for probation officers which in turn allows them to spend more time assisting clients in need.

As part of the probation intake process evidence based assessments are administered to each new probationer to determine the appropriate level of supervision and services they will need to successfully complete probation and reduce their likelihood of future new arrests (recidivism). One of the main service interventions provided to probationers is a community based program known as Alternatives in the Community (AIC) where probationers can get substance abuse, attend cognitive behavioral groups, and receive employment assistance. The following charts reflect statewide and Hartford AIC completion rates* by race. Blacks in general have lower completion rates than Whites and Hispanics. When you look at Hartford specific data you see declines for all three groups. The same is also true when it comes to recidivism rates. (*It should be noted that completion rates only include those individuals who had an opportunity to complete the entire service. Some individuals are withdrawn from services as they need a higher level or care or a different service. Those individuals are not captured as completers or non-completers).
Although declining, recidivism rates for probationers in Connecticut are still pretty high. An individual on probation who recidivates is one who picks up a new arrest after the start of his or her probation. The charts below reflect declining recidivism rates from 2007 to 2015 by race and ethnicity. What the charts tell you is the percentage of probationers who picked up a new arrest within two years of their probation start date. Although not shown in the charts, the majority of those who picked up a new address did so in the first 12 months of their probation. While recidivism rates for Black probationers declined the most, they still remain higher at the statewide, county, city, and 06120 zip code level.\textsuperscript{45} Drug arrests continue to be a problem for people on community supervision. Although these arrests count for recidivism purposes recent drug law changes should result in fewer people being sentenced to prison as some drug crimes that were once felonies are now classified as misdemeanors and not subject to mandatory prison sentences.\textsuperscript{46}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|}
\hline
Race & 2007 & 2015 & Percent Change \\
\hline
Black & 56\% & 49\% & -11.9\% \\
Hispanic & 46\% & 41\% & -11.5\% \\
White & 39\% & 37\% & -5.0\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{24-Month Statewide Re-arrest rate}
\end{table}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>-13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>-12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>-10.5%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
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<table>
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<th>Race</th>
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**Collateral Consequences of Mass Incarceration**

While the justice system was expanding nationally and in Connecticut, the federal government and many states adopted policies making it difficult for people with criminal records to access things like housing, employment, education, vocational licenses, social services and public benefits.47 These barriers or collateral consequences have long term implications even though convicted individuals have successfully served their sentence. Nationally, it’s estimated that over 70 million people (nearly 1 in 3 adults) have a record of arrest or conviction.48 Employers are not supposed to use an arrest record against individuals as an arrest that did not result in a conviction is not proof of criminal conduct and thus is not a criminal record in Connecticut. Unfortunately, arrest information is public and is easily available on the internet.
forever when captured as part of a news story and on official websites while the arrest is still pending. Occupational licenses and certifications are another challenge for people with criminal records. For example, becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) is often viewed as a first step for some seeking a job in the growing healthcare field. Unfortunately, getting jobs in the healthcare field is difficult for those with a criminal record, especially if the conviction is for a felony.

In Connecticut, there are a variety of occupational license requirements across a range of fields. Uniform standards and state regulation would help to sort out questions like “why can I be denied a license to become a barber due to a felony drug conviction years ago?” Consideration of criminal records in the employment and licensing process should be narrowly tailored and done on a case by case basis taking into account the potential for harm to the employer, the nature of the conviction, how long ago it was, and whether or not the person has undergone rehabilitation.  

Poor Blacks disproportionately bear the burden of criminal records operating as barriers to employment. This is especially true for individuals returning to Hartford after release from prison. Hartford already has an unemployment rate that is nearly twice the state rate and even higher for Blacks in the city, especially for Black youth ages 16-24. It should also be noted that official unemployment rates do not include those incarcerated as they are not available to work. Also excluded from official rates are those who have given up looking for employment thus unofficial unemployment rates are actually much higher.

In 2010, the City of Hartford became a “ban the box” employer in its efforts to help Hartford residents returning from incarceration obtain employment. In effect, ban the box provisions remove questions about an applicant’s criminal history from job applications so that all candidates are considered on the strength of their qualifications. In the Hartford ordinance, the City noted that large numbers of adults return to Hartford from prison every year and that obstacles to employment for people with criminal records and other barriers contributed to the likelihood of future recidivism. The State of Connecticut is also a “ban the box” employer and on January 1, 2017 a “ban the box” law will go into effect that will apply to all employers in the state, public and private, making Connecticut one of the few states to ban the box for all employers. Ban the box doesn’t ban inquiry into one’s criminal record—it simply delays it until after the interview process. While the City of Hartford and the State of Connecticut are both
ban the box employers, it’s not clear what if any impact this has had on the workforce. In other words, are people with criminal records getting jobs at higher rates with the City of Hartford and the State after ban the box? Ironically, the mass incarceration era produced a lot of job opportunities for some while contributing to employment exclusion for countless others.

While ban the box, in theory, gives people with criminal records a better chance at an interview and an opportunity to impress an employer, there may be some unintended consequences. Two recent studies have some advocating that ban the box should be banned. In effect both studies found that in states where ban the box was implemented, discrimination against Blacks and Latinos actually increased. Employers restricted from looking at an applicants’ criminal record simply avoided the people they believe were most likely to have such records. In one study by Agan and Starr, thousands of fictitious applications were submitted before and after ban the box. Prior to ban the box, call back rates for Whites and Blacks were similar with Whites have a slightly higher callback rate. After ban the box the gap between the two grew four times larger with Blacks on the low end. The greatest beneficiaries of ban the box were White males with criminal records. Something as simple as a name (i.e., Tyshaun) or where you live might suggest a person’s race which is then used as a proxy for criminality and rejection. In the second study Doleac and Hanson found that Black and Hispanic men without college degrees were less likely to get jobs after ban the box. According to one of the authors, if you take information about criminal records away some employers will simply use other information that is even less perfect to guess who has a criminal record. Banning ban the box is not the solution as it is not the problem. The problem is persistent employment discrimination against racial minorities.

Beyond ban the box is the issue of expungement or erasure of criminal records. The Governor has made pardon reform a part of his second chance society and the state recently implemented changes to expedite the process for non-violent, no victim pardon applicants. In Expungement of America’s Rap Sheet in the Information Age, author Jenny Roberts argues that the urgency to make changes in this area is driven by (1) mass criminalization, (2) mass collateral consequences of criminal records, (3) technological advances that make criminal records easily accessible, and (4) a national obsession with viewing all aspects of people’s pasts. She argues that the urgency applies more so to those currently impacted and should be part of a comprehensive approach to educate the public about low recidivism rates after a certain
period of time and the lack of a connection between many convictions and ability to perform many jobs safely and effectively.\textsuperscript{57} In Connecticut the Board of Pardons and Paroles and CSSD Probation have the authority to issue Certificates of Employability. Certificates don’t erase a person’s record but are designed to help individuals overcome employment barriers as they attest to the individual’s suitability for employment and/or an occupational license based on good behavior since their last conviction.

Beyond the barriers mentioned above there are other “invisible” consequences to mass incarceration. Not enough attention is paid to the impact that incarceration has on families, particularly children with an incarcerated parent (CIP). As the nation’s prison population exploded, so too did the number of children with an incarcerated parent. According to the National Resource Center on Children & Families of the Incarcerated, it’s estimated that more than 2.7 million children in the US have an incarcerated parent. Overall, that equates to 1 in 28 American children having an incarcerated parent with African Americans leading the way at 1 in 9 compared to 1 in 28 for Hispanic children and 1 in 57 for White children.\textsuperscript{58} This problem has greater impact when the incarcerated parent is the mother as 90\% of children remain with their mothers when the father is incarcerated whereas 50\% of children with an incarcerated mother live with their grandmothers.\textsuperscript{59}

Although it’s difficult to determine the actual numbers of children in a particular community or city that are impacted by parental incarceration, communities with high rates of incarceration like Hartford undoubtedly have much higher numbers of children suffering the adverse effects of parental incarceration. Most people understand that children who live in communities with high rates of violence experience trauma based on overexposure. The same can be true of incarceration as separation from a parent can be a very traumatic experience. While there are agencies in the community that provide family support services and parenting education in the community and within CT DOC, the issue should be studied further to better understand the needs of children as well as the those of the incarcerated parent. Incarcerated parent does not necessarily mean bad parent or poor parent child relationship. Expanding existing family support programs and designing and implementing new ones that address family well-being are critical to north Hartford’s revitalization.
A Second Chance

The President, Connecticut’s Governor and Hartford’s Mayor all seem to be on the same page when it comes to the role that government must play in helping to remove barriers to successful reentry for returning citizens. The Federal Interagency Reentry Council, formed by former Attorney General Eric Holder in 2011, brought together more than 20 executive branch agencies to leverage existing federal executive branch resources and direct them towards efforts that promote successful reentry in areas such as housing, employment, education, public safety, and youth development. While billions from Congress funded the war on drugs which left millions with criminal records, the approach by the federal executive branch makes the most of what is currently available. The Obama Administration has leveraged funding to support reentry initiatives at the state and local level. What remains to be seen is whether Congress in the future will write the check for the kinds of justice reforms that are underway in Connecticut.

In 2015, Connecticut passed Second Chance legislation that reduced drug possession from a felony to a misdemeanor (unless there was intent to sell) and eliminated mandatory minimum sentences. Earlier in the decade (2011) Connecticut had decriminalized small amounts of marijuana changing it from a crime to an infraction. The drug possession change was significant as many of the people sentenced to prison in the past couple of decades were there on drug possession charges. The 2015 Second Chance legislation also made changes to expedite the parole and pardon process in non-violent, no victim cases. During the signing ceremony the Governor stated “the cycle our system currently encourages - one of permanent punishment - hurts too many families and communities. When we should have been focusing on permanent reform, we focused on permanent punishment. For too long, we built modern jails instead of modern schools. Because this bill passed, Connecticut has taken a giant step into the future.”

Recently, the Governor suffered a couple of Second Chance setbacks when two 2016 legislative proposals he put forth failed, one via withdrawal and the other by legislative defeat. The one defeated by the legislature would have prohibited judges from imposing cash bail on many misdemeanor offenses notwithstanding victim and public safety issues and/or a history of failure to appear by the arrestee. The governor had hoped that this initiative would further reduce the incarcerated population and cited poverty as the main reason many non-serious accused individuals remained incarcerated while their cases process through the courts. The other proposal, which was withdrawn by the governor, would have raised the age of adult court
jurisdiction from 18 to 21 over a three-year period. The governor took the position that young people (18-20) should not be burdened for the rest of their lives with a criminal record for committing a non-violent, non-serious offense. Had this proposal succeeded it would have removed hundreds of non-violent misdemeanor criminal cases from the adult court and moved them to the juvenile court where once adjudicated they wouldn’t have a criminal record – something that could hurt them for years to come. Whereas Connecticut was one of the last states to raise the age of adult court jurisdiction to 18 (from 16) in 2009, the legislation proposed by the Governor would have made Connecticut the first state to raise the age of adult jurisdiction to 21. Although both failed, policies and practices that disproportionately impact poor people and young minorities should remain a part of the justice reform conversation thus it’s likely that these proposals will appear before the legislature in some fashion in the future.

Other state level Second Chance initiatives have been implemented in Connecticut’s Department of Correction. In addition to opening job centers in several prisons, the DOC established it’s first Reentry Prison, the Cybulski Community Reintegration Center which houses individuals nearing release and provides them with intensive reentry services including vocational training and certificates, employment readiness, and education services. DOC also established a re-entry unit at Cybulski specifically for veterans and as well as one for DUI offenders which allows them to advance and go on home confinement. The people entering DOC are disproportionately poor, disproportionately Black, and have lower levels of education and marketable job skills. Prisons that fail to offer services for people to grow can actually increase criminality and cause greater harm in the future when these individuals leave. Under the leadership of Commissioner Semple, Second Chance has become an operational philosophy that will only continue to get better as new rehabilitative options are implemented. Recently the Connecticut Department of Correction was chosen for a Pell Grant Pilot program that will allow inmates at a few prisons to take free college courses taught by instructors from area community colleges. Connecticut’s selection shows the confidence that the federal government has in Connecticut’s Second Chance program.

While Hartford residents undoubtedly reap some of the benefits of the Governor’s Second Chance initiatives reflected above, in 2015 a section of north Hartford was designated a promise zone by the federal government which will partner with local officials, community groups and private business to revitalize the zone by creating jobs, attracting businesses,
reducing serious and violent crime, increasing the high school graduation rate, providing families with access to quality and affordable housing, initiate efforts that enhance the emotional and physical well-being of high risk residents. Although promise zone designation doesn’t guarantee funds, it does position the city to get priority consideration for economic projects via grants that address the many issues facing people living in the zone. Helping Hartford’s youth in the aforementioned areas should hopefully slow down what for years has been a school to prison pipeline and once in, a revolving door for zone residents.

The Road Ahead…

Reforming Connecticut’s criminal justice system is the focal point of a 2014 book published by the Malta Justice Initiative entitled The Justice Imperative: How Hyper-Incarceration Has Hijacked the American Dream. The authors state that mass incarceration “costs the taxpayer too much, fails at rehabilitation, exacts a life-long toll on offenders and does not yield corresponding societal benefits. They identify four desired outcomes; (1) reduce Connecticut’s prison population by half within five years; (2) reduce Connecticut’s recidivism rate by 30 percentage points within five years; (3) Close half of the state’s correctional facilities within five years; and (4) reduce state spending on the prison system by half within five years, with two thirds of the savings being redirected toward drug and mental health treatments, education and vocational training and post-release support and supervision. The goals are laudable and Connecticut is off to a good start when it comes to downsizing the correctional population but justice reform efforts cannot occur outside of the larger social justice movement to address persistent structural inequality.

Although the war on drugs that has hovered over Blacks in Hartford for at least the past 30 years appears to be lifting, the road ahead will be difficult and one that folks in Hartford should not have to travel alone. More than dollars from the state and federal government, a renewed sense of community within Hartford and the region must also take place. Increased accountability for Hartford citizens as well as for those who govern and enforce the laws is imperative. Interracial and intercommunity dialogue, though difficult, must occur as ignoring growing tensions will only further isolate Black and brown people from Whites, and the have from the have nots.
While there may be excitement within the city, that same enthusiasm and sense of optimism may not be shared by those in the region. Connecting seemingly different worlds is no easy endeavor especially when the prevailing views of each group are worlds apart. A recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center found that Blacks, far more than Whites, say Blacks are treated unfairly in many realms of life including treatment by the police and the courts. While both groups agree (Blacks more so than Whites) that the country needs to continue making changes for Blacks to have equal rights with Whites, 4 in 10 Blacks are skeptical compared to 1 in 10 Whites that the needed changes will ever take place.69

The countless barriers those leaving prison and those with criminal convictions face overshadows the frustrations of many young Blacks who’ve done well in school, avoided the justice system and work hard to help lift Hartford as they themselves climb. Young Black college educated millennials like Jamil Ragland, whose recent article in the Hartford Courant reflected countless positive efforts on his part to support his beloved home city of Hartford, a city that he says doesn’t love him back but instead gives him and others more reasons to leave.70 A better Hartford is better for the region, better for the state and better for the country. However, a Hartford where Black, brown and poor people are continually looking up from the bottom of the well and who increasingly feel shut out when it comes to access to meaningful employment and quality housing will only widen the divide that exists today. To be successful, a true Second Chance society must embrace all of its members and offer access to opportunities without regard to residence, race, ethnicity, class, and yes, a criminal past. President Obama said it best when he stated that “when any part of the American family does not feel like it is being treated fairly, that’s a problem for all of us. It means that we are not as strong as a country as we can be. And when applied to the criminal justice system, it means we’re not as effective in fighting crime as we could be.”71 As we head into the next era with a new head of household in Washington, possibly even a female, we can only hope for the continued unification of the family we call Connecticut.

**Acknowledgements**

*I’d like to thank the Urban League and Dr. Battle for taking on this project at this critical point in time. I’d like to acknowledge the following people who in addition to providing me with data, helped me to understand it: Andrew Clark, IMRP, and my data team at CSSD Judicial -- Susan Glass, Peter Kochol, and Bryan Sperry. Special thanks to Susan whose*
patience, extra set of eyes, and chart making skills were invaluable and to Peter for falsely thinking that he could teach me Excel. Lastly, Troy Brown, Manager of the CSSD Multi-Cultural Affairs Unit whose honest feedback and encouragement kept me on task and State Representative Douglas McCrory whose advocacy at the state level on behalf on north Hartford is beyond compare.

Endnotes


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7. CT Traffic Stop Analysis

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Conclusion

Hartford, Connecticut is known as the city that welcomes all races and income groups. When surrounding communities do not provide services to the homeless, they come to Hartford. If a family is in need of public housing, Hartford will help you. If a family is in need of health care at the tertiary level, Hartford will help you. To a greater extent, Hartford is the safety net for Metro Hartford. This great responsibility presents challenges in terms of economic development, public education and public safety. Hartford is a city that is challenged to address its multicultural and multiclass characteristics. The mix of languages is unique, but each one requires an understanding of the culture in order to meet the needs of each ethnic group. Hartford’s population explodes during the day with an influx of professionals and skilled talent who work in the city. By 7:00 p.m., that talent heads home, leaving a void in the city. Hartford is faced with the reality of rebuilding the city with youth and addressing the long-term challenges that continue to exist today.

Hartford has decided to make significant investments in downtown Hartford with the goal of attracting young millennials to reside in the downtown area. The attraction of universities and colleges like the University of Saint Joseph, the University of Connecticut, Capital Technical Community College and Trinity College provide a foundation for the new downtown Hartford. There is wonderful energy and this is the future of the city. The challenges of the North and South Ends of Hartford present the reality of what Hartford has experienced and the need for support. The West End of Hartford is more affluent and provides greater economic stability. Hartford has the flavor of a small village with big-city problems.

The challenges that confront Hartford include the overarching issue of poverty. While some efforts to address economic development, crime, and financial stability have been discussed in this book, education is the ultimate determinate of success. In order for Hartford to excel, the population must be educated. The emerging majority must be able to support itself and children require cutting edge educational opportunities.

Today, we measure success in our country by reporting economic growth, not by reporting poverty. We celebrate academic achievement when students attend four-year institutions and are rewarded scholarships. Our country is excited by the push to educate our students in the new Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) area. What is our responsibility to provide an appropriate foundation for a STEM or Science, Technology,
Engineering, ARTS, and Math (STEAM) education? Frequently, urban youth can’t afford to attend community colleges, so how will they be able to earn a four-year degree? Hartford has the right idea to focus on education and economic development. Children need their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and the community to be successful. There is no way we can ignore the challenges in the North and South End of Hartford—they are part of the present and the future.

Frequently, we look to experts from very prestigious universities to provide detailed assessments of the problem populations and intervention strategies followed with recommendations for the future. There are some great assessments on health objectives developed by public health commissions 1995 to the present. However, the themes do not change—the outcomes and affected populations remain stagnant. Our society is driven by wealth and income, and there is no way to ignore it. We need family stability, livable wages, economic development, and education to fully bridge the achievement gap.

Quality of life and respect is a good place to start. Crime and homicide rates must be addressed at the community level. There are families who have lived in Hartford for over 30 years and all of their children graduated from the Hartford Public school system. Their children are successful. How did they do it and why don’t we ask them? Sometimes we need to learn from the parents and build on a coalition of respect. It is very difficult to speak in terms of rates, ratios, and proportions. We must come down from Mount Olympus and engage the community with clear expectations and outcomes. The more work that can be done in the community, by the community, with benefits for the community and with very tight outcomes and controls, will be a bonus. Hartford is a great place to work—the Greater Hartford community is aware of this fact. It is important to make sure that Hartford residents receive some of those benefits.

Economic growth and business development are the foundation for Hartford’s survival. With downtown development and the presence of universities, it is time to develop new business incubators in the arts, home repair, healthcare, biotechnology, and business. Capital Technical Community College, in concert with University Connecticut School of Business, can provide business training. With support from current business leaders, we can put people to work. On a larger scale that is what President Roosevelt did, as well as Leon Howard Sullivan, the architect of Opportunities for Industrialization Centers (OIC).
Education in Hartford has been a priority for many years. Leaders with great intentions have tried, but it is time to require and invite the involvement and participation from parents and families as partners in their children’s education. There is no other way to address the needs of children. Our society has made it very clear it will not take care of them.

There are a variety of educational models that we should consider to educate our children. They include hybrid models that provide face-to-face instruction over a 24-hour period. We should also consider education from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the evening, with Saturday sessions and required summer participation. Boarding schools, like SEED, must be included as an option for some children because their homes are not stable. SEED is the only urban boarding school in the United States, and currently operates in Washington, D.C. and the state of Maryland. Four-year universities can play a vital role in educating children from urban communities. Boarding options can be created in a number of ways, including working with institutions of higher education which have empty beds. These universities also have education majors who could provide instruction for children after school Monday through Friday. The children could return to their homes over the weekend to be with their families and return to the boarding school on Monday. More specifically, an Academy for high school students could be developed where students live on campus two days a week. They could be tutored by university students and work on technology and foreign language skills. An Academy would be no larger than 25 children. There are many four-year colleges that have the space. When we consider the level of funding for prisons, the investment in education cannot be compromised. New models must incorporate existing funding. The real challenge is not existing funding or additional funding, but an assessment of how funds are being utilized.

The state of Connecticut is one of the most progressive states in the country. However, if we do not educate children from urban school districts, the future of this state will be at serious risk. The achievement gap continues to expand with little improvement. It is true that there has been some improvement in graduation rates. However, many graduating seniors from urban school districts must endure remedial work if they decide to attend a two or four-year institution. Fifty years ago, people with less than a high school education were not doomed to a life of limited economic success. Over the past few decades, information and service-based industries have become the norm and skill management jobs have virtually disappeared. The reality is that the world has become digital. This requires preparation and skill development beyond high school.
Post 2020, the emerging majority school-age population will be the majority. This new generation of employees must be prepared to help lead Hartford in the future. If we do not reduce the achievement gap, the future of Hartford and the Capital Region will be bleak.

The challenges facing Hartford and the state of Connecticut are stark. How will urban children fit into the new focus on STEM and STEAM without appropriate educational preparation? We do not need to study this problem or throw money at it anymore. We know that integration works in the classroom, however, our country will only integrate to a certain point. The miseducation of children is a human rights struggle. Children of color are our children and the thousands that are failing can no longer be tolerated. We have a moral, ethical and economic responsibility to educate children in Hartford. Hartford’s future is our children and they deserve an opportunity to compete and survive.
About the Editors

Dr. Stanley F. Battle, educator, author and civic activist is currently Director/Professor of the MSW Program in the Department of Social Work and Latino Community Practice at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford, Connecticut.

Previously, Dr. Battle was the Interim President at Southern Connecticut State University. During his tenure he raised $1.4 million dollars for the campus, developed and implemented the Southern Academy, an academic enhancement program for rising 4th graders in preparation for college.

He was previously the Chancellor at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NCA&T). While at NCA&T, he re-centered the institution’s academic excellence by enrolling the finest freshman class in 25 years. In the fall of 2008, NCA&T was the first Historically Black College or University (HBCU) to receive the prestigious Engineering Research Center (ERC) grant awarded by the National Science Foundation, a cornerstone award of $18 million over 5 years with a 10 year life span. During his tenure he implemented the Dowdy Scholarship program, a four year scholarship for outstanding scholars.

As President of Coppin State University in Baltimore, Maryland, Dr. Battle led Coppin to new plateaus from the outset of his administration, including an increase of $300 million in capital support from the state, and a fifty percent increase in operating support. Dr. Battle was the brainchild of several pioneering educational initiatives that are demonstrative of thoughtful attention, energy and resourcefulness to the development of young people. These included the creation of the urban educational corridor, a partnership with an elementary, middle and high school. The University managed the Coppin/Rosemont Initiative – the only higher education institution in Maryland, at the time, to manage a public school that was failing and help raise it into the ranks of the very best city schools. In 2005, he established The Coppin Academy – a 400 pupil, on-campus model high school, which was funded in part by the Gates Foundation and the Thurgood Marshall Fund.

In addition to serving as President/Chancellor of several universities, Dr. Battle earned academic administrative experience working as Vice Chancellor for Academic and Multicultural Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at Eastern Connecticut State University and Associate Dean for Research and Development at the University of Connecticut, School of Social Work.

Dr. Battle has authored ten books and over 50 referred journal articles. He is the Editor of Social Work in Public Health, a journal published by Taylor and Francis.

Dr. Battle earned a Bachelor's in sociology from Springfield College in 1973, an M.S.W. from the University of Connecticut in 1975, an M.P.H. from the University of Pittsburgh in 1979 and a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh in 1980. He also attended Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities Millennium Leadership Institute in 2002.
Ashley L. Golden-Battle served as the Content Editor of *The State of Black Hartford 2016*, and is the Associate Director of Admissions at Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston. She previously worked in college admissions at Northeastern University and Mills College. Before beginning her career in higher education, she worked as a journalist in various positions at *Mother Jones, Essence Magazine, and The Hartford Courant*. She received a Bachelor's degree in African-American Studies from Mount Holyoke College and a Master's degree in Journalism from Columbia University. Currently, she is writing her dissertation to complete her doctoral degree in Higher Education Administration from Northeastern University, where she is studying the self-perceptions of college readiness of first generation, African American students.
About the Authors

Rev. Dr. Shelley D. Best is a visual artist, community developer and social media provocateur whose fearless commitment to changemaker development has exponentially impacted the lives of thousands. As the President & CEO of The Conference of Churches, her creative peacemaking venture is “The 224 EcoSpace where educators, entrepreneurs and artists work, create and lead. A 2014 recipient of The Hartford Business Journal’s Women in Business Award and a nationally recognized expert in faith-based community development, her education includes; a Master of Arts from Hartford Seminary, a Master of Divinity from Yale University, and a Doctorate in Ministry from Hartford Seminary. Dr. Best travels internationally as a human rights and interfaith ambassador. With a passion for yoga found after the age of 50, she devotes her practice to the mission of personal and community transformation believing like Mahatma Gandhi we must, “be the change we wish to see in the world.”

Maris Dillman was born and raised in Mansfield, Connecticut, where as a teen she was an active volunteer in area shelters catering to children and other teens. Dillman is a graduate of the University of Colorado at Boulder with a B.A. in Communications and is a four year letter winner as a Division I Scholarship soccer player. Dillman is currently a graduate student in the Masters of Clinical Social Work program at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford, Connecticut. Dillman left a successful career as an Insurance Broker to dedicate herself to working with children and adults with developmental disabilities, mental illness, autism and emotional difficulties. She has been an active member of the LGBTQ community speaking out for fairness and equal rights in the social, educational and political arenas. She is currently a member of the Human Rights Campaign as well as the West Hartford Public Schools LGBTQ committee. Dillman also contributed to Mayor Pedro Segarra’s reelection campaign by canvassing and listening to the concerns of Hartford residents. Dillman hopes to grow her support and activism in the LGBTQ community through her future Clinical Social Work working with teens and young adults struggling with the political, social and family climates they have to face in this world. Dillman resides in New Britain, CT with her wife, Cheryl.

Dr. Kimberly Hardy served as an Assistant Professor at the University of Saint Joseph in the Social Work and Latino Community Studies Department until May 2016, when she joined Fayetteville State University's School of Social Work as an Assistant Professor. Prior to joining the USJ faculty, Dr. Hardy was an Assistant Professor & Chair of the Black Studies Substantive Area at the UConn School of Social Work. She earned her BSW and PhD in social work from Morgan State University and her MSW in clinical social work from The Ohio State University. Prior to entering the academy, Dr. Hardy was a clinical school social worker specializing in work with adolescents in urban school settings. Dr. Hardy currently studies critical issues related to the social-emotional functioning of African-Americans with a particular focus on the use and meaning of religion/spirituality and the Black Church in problem alleviation.

Trevor Johnson has worked for Connecticut’s Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division, for 20 of the past 22 years, most recently as a Regional Manager overseeing Adult Probation Services throughout southwest Connecticut. He currently oversees two key probation
initiatives: (1) managing the Division’s Certificate of Employability program, which is designed to help individuals overcome barriers to employment as a result of past criminal convictions; and (2) managing the Division’s Forensic CBT staff development program, a collaborative effort with CCSU designed to enhance and quality assure probation officers’ client interaction skills.

Past positions with the Judicial Branch include Manager of CSSD’s Training Academy, Supervisor of Contract Compliance Monitors, and Contract Compliance Monitor. He is also an Adjunct Instructor in the Criminology/Criminal Justice Department at Central Connecticut State University. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice from Alabama State University and a juris doctor from Tulane University Law School. His professional interests include evidence-based practices for community corrections workers, public and private partnerships in Criminal Justice, race and justice issues, increased use of alternatives to incarceration, and the impact of correctional policies and practices on communities and families.

**Eunice Matthews, Ph.D., LCSW** is a professor of Social Work and Program Director of the Social Work Program at Eastern Connecticut State University with 21 years of teaching experience at the graduate and undergraduate level. She has post graduate training in psychotherapy, dialectical behavioral therapy and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). Although Dr. Matthews been a professor for several years she continues work in the field. She has more than three decades of social work practice experience and has spent the last 15 years working in private practice. Over the course of her career she has published papers, developed workshops and presented at national conferences on such topics as; the impact of absent fathers on women, reflective supervision, diversity, minority student retention, and Black women’s issues. Dr. Matthews is currently beginning work on a research project to examine the impact of technology use on emotional intelligence and social identity among the millennial generation.

**Christopher Murphy**, the junior United States Senator for Connecticut, has dedicated his career to public service as an advocate for Connecticut families. Senator Murphy has been a strong voice in the Senate fighting for job creation, affordable health care, education, sensible gun laws, and a forward-looking foreign policy. As a member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) Senator Murphy has worked to make college more affordable and ensure that our public education system works to serve all students. Senator Murphy also led a bipartisan effort to reform our mental health system, working across the aisle to craft the first comprehensive mental health bill in the Senate in decades. Senator Murphy has laid out a forward-thinking foreign policy vision for the United States. As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, he has been an outspoken proponent of diplomacy, international human rights and the need for clear-eyed American leadership abroad. Following the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in 2012, Senator Murphy became one of the leading proponents of commonsense reforms to reduce gun violence. He has championed a number of bipartisan bills aimed at expanding background checks and keeping guns out of the hands of criminals. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Murphy has fought to increase investments in Connecticut manufacturing and promote procurement of world-class national defense products made in the state. He has fought to expand American manufacturing and create jobs through his Buy American initiative, which urges the U.S. government to spend taxpayer dollars on American-made goods. Additionally, Senator Murphy has worked in partnership with
local city and town leaders to rehabilitate former brownfields and factory sites so that they can be
developed into new community spaces and businesses. Prior to his election to the U.S. Senate,
Murphy served Connecticut’s Fifth Congressional District for three terms in the U.S. House of
Representatives. During his time in the House, Murphy worked to improve access to housing for
homeless veterans, foster job creation and advocate for affordable healthcare for all Americans.
Murphy authored the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act to revitalize housing
programs for people with disabilities. The bill was signed into law by the president in 2010.
Before getting elected to Congress, Murphy served for eight years in the Connecticut General
Assembly where he was the author of the state's historic stem cell investment legislation and the
state's workplace smoking ban. Senator Murphy grew up in Wethersfield, Connecticut, and
attended Williams College in Massachusetts. He graduated from the University of Connecticut
School of Law and practiced real estate and banking law with the firm of Ruben, Johnson &
Morgan in Hartford, Connecticut. He is married to Catherine Holahan, an attorney. They have
two young sons, Owen and Rider, and a cat, Ramona.

**Dr. Yvonne Patterson** is currently an Associate Professor at Eastern Connecticut State
University. She has worked as an educator since 2008. Dr. Patterson was long term resident of
Hartford, Connecticut. She migrated with her family from Jamaica in 1978. She earned a
bachelor’s degree in Political Science in 1999 as well as MSW degree from University of
Connecticut in 2003. Her professional career covers the *research, education, government and
non-profit/public health and wellness* fields, working primarily in social work positions. Dr.
Patterson has also been actively engaged in the community. Some of these activities include
work for Connecticut state agencies- Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of
Mental Health and Addiction Services (DHMAS). She has also worked with nonprofit agencies
such as Martin Luther King Junior Soccer League, The Boys and Girls Club of Hartford and
Community Renewal Team. Dr. Patterson graduated from the University of Connecticut in 2014,
where she earned a PhD in Social Work. The title of her dissertation work is *African Descent
Women: Ethnicity and Condom Use*. She continues to write and publish in the area of
implementation science as well as HIV/AIDS and African descent population. Her research
interest also includes culture, cultural appropriate services and health disparities among
Caribbean populations in the United States. In her spare time, Dr. Patterson enjoys spending time
with family. She is the mother of two boys, ages 20 and three years old. For more information
she can be reached at: **pordow@yahoo.com**.

Currently in his second year as The Principal of Opportunity Academy, **Rodney L. Powell** is
originally from Manchester, CT and has been involved in academics since 1999. Prior to
Opportunity High School, Mr. Powell was the Principal at The Children’s Guild, a school for
students with emotional disabilities in Baltimore, Maryland for four years and the Co-Founder &
Director at ConneXions Community Leadership Academy, an arts-based charter school with
Baltimore Public Schools for seven years. His other academic experience includes special
education at schools in Timonium and Baltimore, both in Maryland. In addition to his academic
endeavors, Mr. Powell is also involved with leadership & empowerment programs, including
founding Sonofasuperhero: Feed the People Project and co-founding The Cultural X-Change
Program. Mr. Powell earned his Certificate in School Leadership Administration from Goucher
College, his Masters in Leadership in Teaching from the College of Notre Dame, and his Bachelor of Arts in Social Thought and Political Economy from University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

**Dr. Quintin L. Robinson**, is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Policies Studies at Southern Connecticut State University. Dr. Robinson holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership with a Concentration on Policy, Management and Organization from the University of Oregon at Eugene, a Master’s in Public Administration from California State University, Dominguez Hills and a Bachelor of Science in Political Sciences and Urban Politics from the University of California at Irvine. His research focuses on the academic achievement gap, mentoring and discovering ways to engage parents as part of the educational process.

**Peter Rosa** is a senior program officer with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Prior to joining the Foundation, he worked for over 30 years in various roles within higher education, including a college admissions officer, higher education policy analyst, university lobbyist, counselor, professor, vice president for student affairs, and a university system student services executive officer. He also was chief author of the state’s higher education *Strategic Plan for Racial and Ethnic Diversity*, a policy document that resulted in the establishment of CONNCAP, the first state-funded program of its kind in the nation. As an admissions officer, he was accorded the opportunity to serve as a summer “dean” for the Hampton University Institute for Admission Officers of Color where he taught workshops on enrollment management. Rosa also introduced and implemented the College Board’s “Spanish SAT” to Connecticut Spanish speaking college applicants who, while proficient in English, preferred to take a standardized test in their native language. Among his professional organizations, he was a founder and president of the Connecticut Association of Latinos/Latinas in Higher Education (CALAHE). A community activist, Rosa was named Connecticut’s first honoree as “Latino Citizen of the Year” by the Latino/Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (1999). Also, Rosa was elected to the New Britain Common Council where he was named Assistant Majority Leader. Later in his brief political career, he was elected to the Board of Education and eventually to the Board’s presidency. After retirement from higher education, Rosa was appointed to the Board of Trustees by then Governor Jodi Rell for the Connecticut State University System. Pete holds Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from Central Connecticut State University and a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut. He and his wife, Pam – formerly an academic advisor at the University of Saint Joseph - are the proud parents of two grown children and grandparents of five.

**Clyde Santana** has worked in state and local government for more than 30 years. He retired at the rank of Commander, Surface Warfare Qualified, from the United States Naval Reserves. He has worked as a police officer, youth counselor, track coach and visual artist / muralist. After 25 years of service Clyde retired as an Assistant Special Agent in Charge with the Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Bureau of Law Enforcement. For the past 20 years, he has co-authored plays for 3 community children's theaters with his wife, Gail Davis, and has co-written two Equity-produced plays presented at Bushfire Theater in Philadelphia, Pa. "Phantom of the 87th Street Playground" and "Bo!" and was the co-recipient of a National
Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Creation and Presentation Award in 2000 for the musical theater play, "Bo!" Currently, he is a member of SAG-AFTRA, having worked in over 60 productions to include many DuPont Coastal Technologies training films, several episodes of New Dominion Pictures' FBI Files, Psychic Investigator, M2's Wicked Attractions, American Monsters and Myths, The Bureau and several CBN 700 Club shorts aired on TBN. He has been featured in several regional commercials. Clyde co-wrote two episodes of Atlanta Investigations HD which were aired on the Colours Television's Network. Since 2009, Clyde has taught the Attucks Theater, Norfolk, Va. Writers Workshop. Recently, The screenplay, "A Playground Miracle" co-written by Gail Davis and Clyde was a Top 100 Finalist in the 2011 Sundance "Read My Screenplay" Competition. Teleplay / Short Film projects co-written and co-produced by him have been screened in the Capital Black Film Festival 2013 (The Way) and the Capital Black Film Festival 2015 (Welcome Home Daddy Seal). Since February 2009, Clyde has founded and taught the Attucks Writer Workshop as its lead instructor. In June, 2014, Clyde was appointed by Governor McAuliffe's administration to a four year term as a State Board Member of the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Yan Searcy is the Associate Dean of the School of Health and Human Services at Southern Connecticut State University. With 22 years in higher education his areas of research and interest are urban poverty, community economic development, race and diversity, and social work with youth and adolescents. He is a columnist on family issues for Ebony.com. He has been actively involved with urban youth for over 25 years. He the Co-founder of 8th Round - a youth life-skills/decision-making development group that works with at-risk youth. He is also the Co-founder of the Brotherhood of Scholarship and Excellence (BroSE) a university-based mentoring program aimed to increase the retention and graduation rates of Black and Latino males. Most important to Dr. Searcy is his active role as husband and father.

Amos L. Smith has served as the President and CEO at the Community Action Agency of New Haven, Inc. since May 2006. He manages a budget of $13 million for an organization that serves approximately 35,000 individuals covering 25 towns across the New Haven regions with 50 employees. Mr. Smith currently serves as the President of the New England Association of Community Action Agencies. This group is composed of approximately 62 Community Action Agencies across the six New England states that serve nearly two million clients and customers annually. He also serves as the 1st Vice President of Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA); and as Community Advisory Member of the Connecticut Health Foundation, the largest health foundation in the state. Mr. Smith was appointed by Governor Daniel Malloy in 2014, to be a member of the Health and Human Services Cabinet. In addition, Mr. Smith is a member of the Yale/Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Advisory Committee and the Yale (C.O.R.E.), Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation. Mr. Smith serves as a non-scientific member and statewide advocate on the Connecticut State Health Department Human Investigation Committee. He is a former board member of the Friends Center for Children in New Haven; and, former Board Chair of Planned Parenthood of Connecticut, now Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. Before joining Community Action, Mr. Smith served as Director of Health Grantmaking at The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven (TCF). During his 7 ½ years at TCF, he was responsible for overseeing health related projects and
presented 100s of grant applications before the board. In addition to his grantmaking duties, he served as the Principal Investigator for the New Haven Healthy Start project, whose focus is to improve maternal and child health outcomes in New Haven. He and his colleagues at TCF were often called on to write and participate in activities sponsored by the National Community Foundations for Youth in connection with its work on Policy Matters Youth and Fatherhood. He has frequently demonstrated the capacity and the temperament for addressing uncommon challenges and working within cross-disciplinary and highly complex environments.

Mission Statement of the Urban League of Greater Hartford

To reduce economic disparities in our communities through programs, services and educational opportunities.

About the President

Adrienne W. Cochrane, J.D. is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Urban League of Greater Hartford. The Urban League of Greater Hartford is an affiliate of the National Urban League, whose mission is to promote the self-empowerment of individuals in the Connecticut Capital Region to achieve educational, occupational and economic equality for themselves and their families. Founded in 1964, the Urban League is a community based, not-for-profit organization.

Since assuming the leadership role of the Urban League of Greater Hartford in September 2010, Cochrane has built successful partnerships and strategic alliances, chief among them a multi-year, renewable lease with Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center to house The Curtis D. Robinson Center for Health Equity in 5800 square feet of the League’s first floor; stabilized agency operations and revamped the organizational structure; secured new, multi-year funding from diverse sources to fund programs and operations; and increased operating net revenue over prior years. Additional partnerships include the YMCA REACH Coalition; Greater Hartford Technology Collaborative; and the Community Action Network of New Haven (CANNH) Manage Your Future (MYF) initiative.

Among other honors in 2011 and in 2015 Cochrane was honored by the Connecticut State Conference of NAACP Branches as one of the 100 Most Influential Blacks in Connecticut; and in 2013 received the Trailblazer in Community Service Award from the Greater Hartford Branch of the NAACP. She currently serves as a Corporator for Hartford Hospital; Corporator and board member of St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center; Advisory Board member for The Curtis D. Robinson Center for Health Equity at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center; board member for Metro Hartford Alliance; board member for American Red Cross, Connecticut; and board member for Teach for America, Connecticut chapter. In 2015, Cochrane was appointed to the Governor’s Youth and Urban Violence Commission.

Prior to assuming her current position, Cochrane was the Chief Programs Officer for the Urban League of Broward County, where she oversaw 22 youth development, wealth building, juvenile justice, education, and workforce programs. She was formerly the Vice President and Chief
Operations Officer for Quad County Urban League located in the western Chicago (Illinois) suburb of Aurora.

Cochrane is a well-regarded, results oriented leader with extensive experience in program design, development and implementation, fund development, budgeting and community building. She possesses a natural ability to team build and motivate high performance. Her business savvy and financial acumen contribute to her success in both non-profit and for profit sectors. Cochrane earned both Bachelor and Master degrees from Tuskegee University in Political Science and Counseling, respectively. She received a Juris Doctoris (Doctor of Law) from Saint Louis University School of Law, St. Louis, MO.