

NYCYMI Connection

News, Updates, and Stories

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W. Cyrus Garrett



On January 30, 2015, Mayor Bill de Blasio named Cyrus Garrett the new Executive Director of New York City's Young Men's Initiative. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Garrett served as a political analyst for Everytown for Gun Safety, an organization funded by former Mayor Michael Bloomberg. He arrived at Everytown for Gun Safety after serving as the Deputy Director of Cabinet Planning for President Obama's 2013 Inauguration. Mr. Garrett earned this honor after serving as a Deputy Field Director in Ohio for President Obama's 2012 re-election campaign.

Prior to the 2012 Presidential Election, Mr. Garrett served as a speechwriter to the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) for the U.S. Department of Education. From 2009-2011, Mr. Garrett was the special advisor to Director, Grayling Williams at the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Counternarcotic Enforcement (CNE), and the lead staffer on Western Hemisphere international affairs, congressional relations.

His role was to assess the flow of bulk cash and weapons from the U.S. into Mexico, Central and South America. Prior to his appointment at Homeland Security, Mr. Garrett helped implement the inaugural White House Internship program during the spring of 2009. He holds the distinctions as being one of the first 100 staffers to serve on President Barack Obama's 2008 general campaign as a regional political director at the state of Indiana. Prior to joining the campaign, Cyrus Garrett worked as a gang and drug counselor at the Eldora State Training School for Boys in Iowa.

Mr. Garrett attended both the University of Illinois and University of Northern Iowa (UNI) and obtained his bachelor's degree in criminology from UNI. He is a native of Chicago, where he grew up with two older sisters.

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Photo Courtesy: Ron Antonelli

A Word From Our Director



In his State of the Union address, President Obama boldly stated that the role of government is to make sure "our actions...tell every child in every neighborhood, your life matters, and we are committed to improving your life chances." Mayor Bill de Blasio has made good on his progressive change platform and is "more committed than ever before to build a New York City where we all rise together." As the newly appointed Director for New York City's Young Men's Initiative, I ask you to join me in building a movement across the city that truly honors these sentiments and ensures opportunities are accessible in any zip code.

Launched in August 2011, the New York City Young Men's Initiative (YMI) continues to be

the nation's most comprehensive municipal strategy tackling the disparities faced by young men of color. Under the leadership of Mayor de Blasio, the Young Men's Initiative has aligned itself with the White House's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative. The Mayor has tasked YMI with reimagining the size and scale of the initiatives that we coordinate and fund through the initiative. We stand at the ready to work with our partners in government and philanthropy to expand upon the promising practices and programs that have shown the ability to produce measurable differences in the lives of young men of color. We will embrace transparency and share the lessons we have learned to ensure our young men are supported as they navigate their way to adulthood.

We have a real opportunity to work together to break down silos and advance timely policy reform. But the magic of the Young Men's Initiative is most visible in our ability to engage, support, and provide access to New York City's young men. The time is now.

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**YOUNG MEN'S
INITIATIVE**

Photo Courtesy: Ron Antonelli



My Brother's Keeper Community Convening

YMI 2.0: "It Takes a Village"



In alignment with President Barack Obama's national effort, My Brother's Keeper (MBK), the City of New York—under the leadership of Mayor Bill de Blasio—is expanding its Young Men's Initiative (YMI) to better address the challenges faced by young men of color and to ensure that all young people reach their full potential. YMI is adopting a collaborative approach and place-based programmatic efforts in the pursuit of specific benchmarks aimed at improving the quality of life for young men within the City. The YMI team is working to create networks that include the voices of various stakeholders: from agencies to practitioners to community based organizations to the young men we serve.

To engage the community, YMI hosted its first **My Brother's Keeper Community Convening** in February 27, 2015 to allow service providers, funders, elected officials, community leaders and YMI youth participants to identify solutions to meet the shared goals of both YMI and MBK. To ensure community input, YMI hosted roundtables throughout the day and created an online portal that allowed convening participants to continually provide feedback and solutions. In support of YMI's larger communications goals, we continue to explore smart technological tools to expand our ability to better communicate with our shared communities.

Lastly, YMI has the privilege of being supported by Deputy Mayor Richard Buery, an Advisory Board and YMI Equity Committee (formerly know as the Executive Steering Committee), who play an instrumental role in developing YMI's policy, programmatic and partnership exploration.

Photo Courtesy: Ron Antonelli



My Brother's Keeper Community Challenge

Accepted by Mayor Bill de Blasio

New York City Young Men's Initiative/ MBK Alliance:

My Brother's Keeper Goals	YMI 2.0
Ensuring all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally ready	Collaborating with NYC Children's Cabinet and FLONYC on their efforts to engage Black and Latino parents to support "Talk To Your Baby" campaign
Ensuring all children read at grade level by third grade	Increase Tutoring: provide direct support through reading programs for 10,000 children in grades K-3
Ensuring all youth graduate from high school	High-school Mentoring: Engaging and coordinating existing providers, with the goal of engaging 5,000 young men of color by 2017 Teacher Recruitment & Retention: Create education pipelines opportunities, with a goal of 1,000 additional Latino & Black teachers within 3 years
Ensuring all youth complete post-secondary education or training	Supporting First Deputy Mayor Shorris's CUNY access and affordability efforts
Ensuring all youth out of school are employed	Supporting bridge training opportunities
Ensuring all youth remain safe from violent crime	Focus on improving community and police relations



YMI Milestones

1. Increasing Tutoring: Providing direct support through reading programs for 10,000 children in grades K-3 by 2017

2. Teacher Recruitment & Retention: Recruiting 1,000 Black and Latino male teachers to NYC DOE schools by 2017

3. High School Mentoring: Engaging and coordinating existing providers, with the goal of engaging 5,000 young men of color by 2017

4. NYPD & Community: Improving NYPD and community relations



What Does It Take?

Teacher Recruitment & Retention

Dr. Travis J. Bristol, a former high school English teacher in New York City public schools and teacher educator with the Boston Teacher Residency program, is currently serving as a research & policy fellow at the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE). His research examines how policy levers used by local, state, national, and international actors influence teacher workplace experiences and retention, as well as student learning. "I am unapologetic in my belief that a quality education allows the economically disenfranchised to become socially mobile." Dr. Bristol is playing a vital role in shaping YMI's policy of adding 1,000 male teachers of color in NYC classrooms by 2017. His teaching inspiration comes from his experiences as a student in New York City public schools. "I continue to teach because I know that all students can learn if we, teachers, create the conditions for learning; I feel deeply the moral imperative to create such conditions." In 2013, he conducted a yearlong study on the school-based experiences of 27 Black male teachers in a northeastern urban school district, who accounted for approximately 10 percent of Black male teachers in the district. Specifically, the study included two types of schools: seven schools with one Black male teacher and seven schools with three or more Black male teachers.



One finding was that Black male teachers felt responsible for improving academic outcomes and creating environments that were socio-emotionally supportive for students of color. However, Black male teachers described feeling socially alienated and pedagogically not supported in their schools. Given the potential parallels between the experiences of Black male teachers and Black boys, how might officials respond? Dr. Bristol suggests, "PD for male teachers of color that would serve as a measure of support for a Black male teacher, for example, attempting to navigate a challenging work environment; however, if the culture of the school remains the same any potential benefits from a PD session might be lost." He highlights the urgent need of re-imagining the culture for the schooling experience of students of color that would positively influence the social interactions between many of the Black and Latino males in the classroom and their teachers.

Dr. Bristol attempted to address this issue through an afterschool program he started in 2007 as a New York City public school teacher, "Eviscerating Emasculation." The program's focus was to give male students tools to navigate successfully through school. His program was successful, but what led to these improved outcomes? Dr. Bristol believed the program's success was a result of the care he demonstrated to the young men in his program and his belief that his students were born to succeed.

Learn more of Dr. Bristol's work here: <https://profiles.stanford.edu/travis-bristol>

On The Ground

Expanded Success Initiative (ESI): ESI Week 2015

In August 2011, Former Mayor Bloomberg, Former Chancellor Dennis Walcott, and George Soros announced Expanded Success Initiative (ESA) as a pledge to “transform the lives of New York’s most vulnerable children.” They articulated the challenge that “fewer than half of all Black [and Latino] males finish high school and a mere 18 percent of Black [and Latino] males aged 18 to 21 are enrolled in college. Since the launch of ESI, over 40 NYC public schools, their staff, and students have passionately committed to changing that narrative for young men of color. From **May 18 – May 22, ESI Week**, the ESI will celebrate the conclusion of the initiative’s direct investment to schools and bring together students, school leaders, administrators, partners, and friends—all those committed to the work of improving outcomes for black and Latino young men. ESI Week is an opportunity for participants from across New York and beyond to engage and advance the conversation about our students and communities.

HHC Adolescent Health Program (AHP)

The HHC Adolescent Health Program (AHP), formerly the Teen Health Improvement Program, works to systematically enhance HHC’s services for adolescents. AHP has a special focus on increasing access to quality care for adolescents including sexual and reproductive healthcare and behavioral and mental healthcare services. AHP recently held their second annual conference at Baruch College on April 15, 2015. This year, the conference theme was “The Emotional Life of Adolescents: Integrating Behavioral Health Care into Primary care Services” and covered an array of topics including the emotional healthcare needs of LGBTQ teens, addressing mental health care issues among adolescents from immigrant families, adolescents’ experience with community violence and fostering well-being in stressed youth. To meet their goals, AHP has engaged in a number of activities to improve adolescent health including cultivating place-based relationships between CBOs and HHC clinics and working with clinics to implement best practices in adolescent-friendly care to enable those entities to better serve the healthcare needs of young adults.

Cultural Sensitivity Plus (CSP)

The purpose of Cultural Sensitivity Plus (CSP) training is to drive a systemic change in city agencies by increasing the awareness of disproportionality in communities and identify its root cause within institutions. NYC YMI is interested in effectively integrating a disparity lens within each city agency that touches the lives of boys and young men of color and create, partner, or identify a constituency in each city institution to recognize inequity, and provide opportunities for deeper dialog, and foster intentional corrective practice around agency policies that negatively affects communities. Effective training enhances institutions programs, skills and behaviors. In March 2015, NYC YMI began offering its first city-wide training, of “Undoing Racism”, that included a two day training exercise targeted toward raising awareness of diversity issues, revealing unexamined assumptions and tendencies toward stereotype for 40-50 cross city agency personnel. The initial training was followed by an opportunity for debrief and identifying next steps within each respective city agency for best informing strategy and approach.

Unsung Hero

Charles Dotson III



"When I speak about the Arches program, I always like to say it's full name, Arches: a transformative mentoring. It literally transforms the lives of young men," says Charles Dotson III, program coordinator of NYC Young Men's Initiative's *Arches*, a group mentoring program that helps justice-involved young adults transform the attitudes and behaviors that led to their criminal activity. As a program coordinator, he works with young adult probationers in a Parent Support Program that works with caregivers whose children have encountered the Juvenile Justice System. Over the course of his career, he has supervised men and women, who have abused drugs have had anger management or were gang affiliated. A number of these clients were deemed "high profile" due to the nature of their crime.

Mr. Dotson often likes to speak about Tyree Hicks, one of his "Star Participants," who Mr. Dotson says, "significantly changed his life. Tyree was once an active gang member and has now become actively involved in the life of his son, works two jobs and publicly speaks in the community about the effects of violence and strategies to improve the community." Tyree Hicks was recently featured in a CBS article title, in which he says, "I came from Jersey to New York in '09, around the time I had my son, pampers and stuff was coming up, I felt like my back was against the wall, so I went back into the street, selling drugs...playing with guns, selling them.."

The most rewarding part of Mr. Dotson's work is having the opportunity to inspire young men like Tyree to serve as a mentor and give back to the youth in their communities. For over twenty years, Mr. Dotson has counseled and trained a diverse population of clients with the goal of helping them achieve personal growth and to improve overall social functioning. As a father, he believes "these young men need someone in their life who can serve as a role model. They did not have that growing up. They can not have somebody who would give up on them." With Mr. Dotson's lifelong commitment and passion to educate and affirm young men and women, he has helped many individuals in New York State to re-envision their lives and behave in accordance with their new found sense of pride and self assurance.



In The Spotlight



Daniel Gaskin is a graduate of Gilford College, and a community organizer for Goodwill Industry's workforce development team. He joined Goodwill Industry through his participation at YMI's Jobs-Plus program, a public housing-based employment program designed to increase the level of earnings and employment among residents of public housing. As a community organizer, Daniel helped individuals who were struggling to find work gain employment through marketing the benefits of goodwill to them and teaching them resume writing, basic computer skills and other various methods to help them get back into the world

of employment. His passion is helping people. He wants to get involved in non-profit organizations in the city and as well as international organizations. Daniel participated in YMI's Annual Community Convening's youth panel in February 27, 2015. We had an opportunity to speak to Daniel about his hopes and aspirations, and here's what he has to say:

What makes you excited about learning?

"I became inspired to study political science because I saw a lack of civic engagement among my peers. It's an urgent need in my community. I want to engage young men so that they make decisions for themselves. In order for them to change their narrative, they will have to allow themselves to rise above their circumstances."

What would you say you learned or gained as a result of participating in Jobs-Plus ?

"As a Job-Plus participant, the most valuable thing I gained was my confidence. I was tired of failures and wanted to give up. I was afraid that I won't be able to land a job. As an undergraduate, I wrote a 30 page thesis, but I was afraid that I would not be able to conduct menial tasks like copy or faxing documents. I am grateful to the mentors at Jobs-Plus. They gave me the guidance and mentorship, that I needed. They helped me realize that I can succeed and achieve my goals."

Given your experiences, what would you change to make New York City a better place for all young people of color ?

"I think the city has a large role in the path that men of color are on. For example, recidivism for people who are in the justice system, I think we need to forgive more in our neighborhoods. I got exactly that, I talked to many people in the housing developments. The reason many people resort to failure, is because they have a record that follows them their whole life. Because of one mistake, their lives are forever marked. The city has a role to play in forgiveness and letting people have a second chance."

Photo Courtesy: Ron Antonelli



YMI In The News

TOP STORIES

"New Leader Rolls Up Sleeves at New York City Young Men's Initiative"

"...Mr. Garrett, a 31-year-old relative newcomer to New York City and its politics, landed the top job at the Young Men's Initiative, an umbrella organization of some 45 city programs to equalize the disparities facing the city's young black and Latino men."

Full Article: (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/new-leader-rolls-up-sleeves-at-new-york-city-young-mens-initiative-1429313671>)

"They're not adults": N.Y. seeks new approach to juvenile justice

Tyree Hicks was in and out of the system until probation officers referred them to a mentoring program that was part of the city's Young Men's Initiative. He was subsequently hired as peer mentor at Community Connections for Youth, a grassroots nonprofit organization based in Mott Haven that champions diversion programs, engaging youth involved in the criminal justice system in productive neighborhood activities.

Full Article: (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/theyre-not-adults-ny-seeks-new-approach-to-juvenile-justice/>)

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Thank you

The NYC Young Men's Initiative would like to thank our Executive Steering Committee, Advisory Board Members, and Youth Panelists for their attendance and contributions at our My Brother's Keeper Community Convening on February 27, 2015.

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