



July, 1994

***The African American Strategic
Family-Community
Empowerment Campaign Report***



Goals of the “Reaching Back-Giving Back” Project

- To promote the principles and values embraced by accomplished* African Americans which guide youth in their development into strong, healthy, mature and responsible adults.
- To describe the traditions, values and cultural practices of African Americans in King County which act as protective factors for African American youth.
- To build a stronger and more powerful sense of individual and collective responsibility, among African Americans, for the welfare of African American youth.
- To harness the knowledge, skills, expertise and spiritual power of accomplished* African Americans to create a community strategy designed to rescue African American youth from the juvenile justice system.
- To identify and gain commitments for resources the African American community is willing to pledge to a strategy which reduces the number of African American youth who are detained at the King County juvenile detention facility.
- To involve African American youth in the “Reaching Back-Giving Back” process.

*Accomplished African Americans are those who are successful in their job/career, community service or family life.

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July 15, 1994

Ms. Sadikifu Akina-James, Manager
King County Community Services Division
2020 Smith Tower Building
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dear Ms. Akina-James:

In November of last year, you asked the Black Child Development Institute of Seattle (BCDI-Seattle Affiliate) to undertake the African American Strategic Family-Community Empowerment Campaign, also called "*Reaching Back-Giving Back*". We are pleased to present this report on our completion of the first phase of the "*Reaching Back-Giving Back*" campaign for the County's consideration.

We believe that all of the information concepts and recommendations in this report are necessary to achieve our contracted responsibility, which was to..."harness the knowledge, skills, expertise and spiritual power of accomplished* African Americans to create the principles and values of a community strategy to rescue African American youth from the juvenile justice system and guide their development into strong, healthy, mature and responsible adults."

We are asking that the Department of Human Services (DHS) share this report with County Executive Gary Locke and the Department of Youth Services (DYS). There are recommendations in the report which the County Executive and DHS are asked to implement. We are available to further discuss the information concepts and recommendations in this report with the DHS Director and Executive Locke. Please let us know when these appointments can be arranged.

Finally, we are asking your permission to share this document with other entities including the community, City of Seattle and State of Washington.

We thank the County for its continuing support of innovative projects that reach out to our community. It is our hope that this report will facilitate a productive partnership between King County and the African American community.

Sincerely,

Maggie Majors, President
BCDI-Seattle Affiliate

Tony Orange, Chair
BCDI-Seattle Affiliate Oversight Committee
"*Reaching Back-Giving Back*"

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In December of 1993 the King County Community Services Division contracted with the Black Child Development Institute of Seattle (BCDI-Seattle Affiliate) to conduct the African American Strategic Family-Community Empowerment Campaign (*“Reaching Back-Giving Back”*) in King County. The goals of the *“Reaching Back-Giving Back”* project are:

- To promote the principles and values embraced by accomplished* African Americans which guide youth in their development into strong, healthy, mature and responsible adults.
- To describe the traditions, values and cultural practices of African Americans in King County which act as protective factors for African American youth.
- To build a stronger and more powerful sense of individual and collective responsibility among African Americans for the welfare of African American youth.
- To harness the knowledge, skills, expertise and spiritual power of accomplished* African Americans to create a community strategy designed to rescue African American youth from the juvenile justice system.
- To identify and gain commitments for resources the African American community is willing to pledge to a strategy that reduces the number of African American youth who are detained at the King County juvenile detention facility.
- To involve African American youth in the *“Reaching Back-Giving Back”* process.

The BCDI-Seattle Affiliate views the *“Reaching Back-Giving Back”* project as a continuation of its long standing public policy advocacy on juvenile justice issues. Because of this long term involvement, the BCDI-Seattle Affiliate has developed a set of beliefs concerning African American youth and the juvenile justice system.

- There is an abundance of unconditional love among members of the African American community for African American youth, including those who are detained, or are at risk of being detained.
- Many of our African American youth who come into the juvenile justice system have not had a role model or loving family to nurture and support them.
- The juvenile justice system needs to redirect its goals, values, beliefs and methods from merely custody and punishment to treatment and recovery.
- The juvenile justice system needs to move beyond its exclusively Eurocentric models to include other culturally specific models.
- Treatment and recovery of African American youth calls for the African American community to take an empowered position and establish partnerships with the juvenile justice system to provide a continuum of alternatives.

Using these beliefs as its foundation, BCDI-Seattle Affiliate moved forward with implementation of the *“Reaching Back-Giving Back”* campaign.

Implementation Process

The BCDI-Seattle Affiliate designated a committee of five BCDI members to be responsible for project implementation. This BCDI Oversight Committee selected 34 people as members of a Community Oversight Committee that would provide guidance and direction on the development and implementation of the *“Reaching Back-Giving Back”* campaign.

Specific approaches were planned for achievement of each of the project goals.

- It was decided that focus groups would be the primary means for drawing out the thoughts, beliefs and suggestions of both youth and adults. Separate focus sessions would be held with each of these groups.
- BCDI Oversight Committee members and Community Oversight Committee members would identify the accomplished* African Americans who would be extended invitations to participate in the adult focus groups. Personalized letters of invitation would be sent to potential focus group participants.
- The adult focus groups would identify ways that people and resources in the African American community could strengthen our ability to be more accountable for the positive growth and development of our youth. These groups would use real case studies, interactive conversation, and small groups (“intimate circles”) to draw upon the collective energies, histories, and “mother wit” of the participants. The participants would be encouraged to speak from their heads within the context of their hearts.
- Youth and adult focus groups would move through a discussion of prevention, intervention, and treatment and recovery strategies.
- Youth focus groups would be held in places our youth normally come together in groups.
- To encourage more extensive dissemination of the *“Reaching Back-Giving Back”* concepts, African American community organizations would be asked to cosponsor the campaign. Cosponsors would agree to support strategies that emerged from the *“Reaching Back-Giving Back”* process by signing a declaration of commitment prior to the convening of the focus group sessions.
- Adult focus group participants would be asked to sign a “Personal Commitment Pledge” to implement one or more of the strategies that emerge from the

“*Reaching Back-Giving Back*” process,’ and/or ‘be a role model or mentor’ for a young person, and/or to ‘volunteer directly with a young person.’

- Focus group facilitators would be highly skilled in communication techniques and methods that could draw out the participants’ knowledge and rich experiences.

BCDI-Seattle Affiliate contracted with American Communications Enterprises, Inc. to design and conduct the adult focus groups. Yvonne Ervin Carr, a BCDI Oversight Committee member, and nine members of the Community Oversight Committee assumed responsibility for the youth involvement portion of the project. The BCDI Oversight Committee, with assistance from Community Oversight Committee members, recruited cosponsors.

Structure of the Report

This report delineates the results of the “*Reaching Back-Giving Back*” campaign through June of 1994. The results are reported in the following order:

- *The Voices of African Americans from King County* summarizes concepts, ideas and solutions that emerged from the adult focus groups.
- *The Voices of our African American Youth* summarizes the results of the youth focus groups.
- *Treatment and Recovery of African American Youth While under the Direct Care of the Department of Youth Services* are recommendations formulated by the BCDI-Seattle Oversight Committee to assist the Department of Youth Services to provide appropriate care for African American youth who remain in detention.
- *Conclusions and Recommendations* reflects the BCDI Oversight Committee’s call for action by the African American community, King County and City of Seattle governments and others who desire to be helpful to the African American community’s efforts to retain and reclaim our youth.

The BCDI Oversight Committee acknowledges that this report contains specific examples of programs and activities that were *identified by focus groups participants* as being of value to our youth and their families. It is by no means a catalog of all the meritorious programs and activities which exist in our community for the benefit of African American youth.

THE VOICES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS FROM KING COUNTY

One hundred seventy five accomplished* African Americans from King County participated in focus groups examining what the African American community can do to retain and reclaim our youth. From May 16, 1994 to June 15, 1994, twenty focus groups were held throughout King County including Central Seattle, Southwest Seattle, Greenlake, Shoreline, Bellevue, Renton, Tukwila, Kent, Federal Way, Burien, and West Seattle.

The accomplished* African Americans who participated in these focus groups represented the backbone, heart and soul of the African American community in King County. These accomplished* African Americans included mothers, fathers, grandparents, godparents, and extended family of African American youth who have developed into healthy, mature, and responsible adults. Many of the participants have achieved success with their families and careers despite severe obstacles such as racism and poverty. Eighty percent of the participants currently work for an employer in King County, ten percent are self-employed, and five percent are retired. On the average, they have lived and worked in King County for 20 years, primarily inside the City of Seattle.

The focus groups were facilitated by the consultant team from American Communication Enterprises, Inc. (Regina Glenn Tyner and Frederick Douglass Alcorn, Jr., facilitators; Bonnie Glenn and Alerisa Williams, co-facilitators). This dynamic team led the groups through a discussion of a series of questions centered around what we as African Americans can do to prevent our youth from becoming victims of negative influences. We want to intervene, treat and recover our youth from the juvenile justice system and other aversive conditions. The focus group participants were fervent and unwavering in their commitment to uncovering and passing on a positive and powerful legacy to our youth. Their passion and caring is deep and strong.

Themes

The following common themes ran through the focus group discussions.

- Our legacy of achievement against the odds intensifies and builds upon our strong tradition of self-help.
- Personal responsibility means being collectively accountable to our youth, family and community.

- Education is the key to self-empowerment.
- Strengthening families means drawing upon and supporting African American values and traditions with respect to adaptability and our definition of family.
- Economic viability is essential to the well-being and stability of African American families.
- Empowerment of the African American Community builds strong institutions, organizations, and alliances to help families love, protect, guide and provide for our children.
- Spirituality is a fundamental, enduring and life-sustaining aspect of African American culture.
- Knowledge and understanding of the juvenile justice system can be a strong incentive for maintaining a positive life style.

Prevention

WHAT CAN WE DO TO ASSURE THAT OUR AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH MAINTAIN HEALTHY MINDS, BODIES, AND SPIRITS IN POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE ways?

TEACH FAMILY SURVIVAL SKILLS

Educate our youth and families to develop the skills they need to survive and thrive in this society.

- Maintain strong families by providing parenting and family support during the child's early years. Families set the foundation for the formative years. ***Effective Black Parenting*** classes and the ***Zion Prep Community School*** are good models.
- Encourage parents, grandparents and godparents to take an active role with our children. There is no substitute for giving our children ***quality time***.
- Teach conflict resolution skills to our youth, beginning with the pre-school level. A ***Rainier Beach High School*** course trains students to handle situations involving their peers.
- Educate children on their feelings and how to handle those feelings.
- Support black-owned businesses as the foundation for our economic independence.

- Challenge our high school and college graduates to return and ‘give back’ to the community. Grant credits or deferrals on loans as an incentive for service to our community.
- Invest in economic and learning opportunities which are designed to teach responsibility to our youth. Set up internships at businesses and corporations. Create frequent opportunities for youth to work with community adults as supervisors. Summer jobs should focus less on recreation and more on rebuilding our community.

REINFORCE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN VALUES

Adults in the school and community must reinforce community values, emphasizing the value of learning and high expectations for our youth.

- Provide formal structures for adults from the community to be visibly present in the schools on a regular basis -- classrooms, halls, etc.
- Set up visits to schools by African American role models. Youth like that you cared enough to come. Schools in King County with African American students should insure that every African American child in their system has the opportunity to interact with an African American role model at least once during the school year.
- Encourage the formation of black parent groups like the ***Renton Black Parents Association***.
- Train parents on how to be effective advocates in the school. ***Parents for Student Success*** provides this kind of training.
- Replicate or expand programs that encourage high school completion and college entrance such as the ***Black College Fair, Upward Bound, MESA***, and the ***Early Scholars Outreach Program***.
- Open schools for family and community activities.
- Reproduce the ***Zion Preparatory Academy*** environment in the public schools.

NETWORK COMMUNITY RESOURCES TO BUILD A SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

Bring all the resources of our community together to create the caring and stability our children need.

- Recreate the vision that we as a people are important.
- Conduct a community assessment to determine community strengths, resources and needs.
- Ensure that all of our children have a safe place to go after school.
- Continue and expand programs and scholarships by African American churches, fraternities, sororities, and other voluntary organizations, such as the **NAACP's ACT-SO** and **LINKS Inc.**, which encourage, praise and recognize our youth.
- Establish an event to acknowledge and show appreciation for every African American high school graduate in King County.
- Organize an on-going campaign among adults in our community to assist and provide resources for *all* children in our community. Black men, in particular, need to be visible and active. For example, members of the **Esquire Club** and the **Breakfast Group** have a wealth of insights, wisdom and skills they can pass on to young boys. Community adults should be encouraged to include our children in positive lifestyles and actions.
- Network the current resources. Don't reinvent the wheel.

BUILD EMOTIONAL SECURITY FOR OUR CHILDREN

Revive family and community activities that create a sense of bonding and connection with our youth.

- Families with personal and financial resources should reach out to other families, using a model like the **Kappa Alpha Psi Family Mentorship Program**
- Bring back intergenerational activities, neighborhood picnics and block parties. Through these activities, our children have positive experiences with adults they can trust. Locally, the **Roots Picnic** and **Juneteenth** activities are good examples. A national model is **NCNW's Black Family Reunion** celebrations.

HELP OUR CHILDREN TO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES AND TO STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE

Instill in our youth a strong, positive sense of self, self-acceptance, self-reliance and personal responsibility.

- Implement more youth entrepreneurial programs to reinforce an entrepreneurial spirit among our youth. Examples include ***Be Your Own Boss, Young Minds Inspired, Black Dollar Days Task Force Youth Component and Midas Touch.***
- Provide internships with African American businesses to help our youth understand the black entrepreneurial tradition.
- Hold forums for our youth to express their needs. Adults should listen, encourage open communication and work with the youth to resolve their issues.
- Put in place youth-initiated programs. Examples include ***All Brothers And Sisters Allowed, the Unity Project, and The Black Student Alliance.*** ***Michael Baker*** of ***The Wellington Restaurant*** is an inspiring model of a youth entrepreneur.
- Encourage our youth to have a spiritual component to their lives through participation in church or programs that emphasize spirituality.
- Celebrate our heritage and culture by bringing important celebrations into our homes. Celebrate Kwanzaa and our ingenuity through Kuumba activities (Kwanzaa is an African American family/community holiday centered around the ***Black Value System*** while Kuumba is creativity, the sixth principle of this system).
- Raise our youths' self-esteem by helping them build upon a strength or success he/she already possesses or identify one that the youth does not yet realize he/she has. The ***Delany School*** and ***Mt. Zion Ethnic School*** are excellent examples. Also, help our youth to encourage those personal traits they have used in a negative way and provide practical ways these traits can be redirected for positive growth.
- Teach our youth to manage other people's racism and their own reaction to discrimination. Provide a safe place for them to talk and work through their hurts.

- Explain rules and consequences so that our youth understand how systems work.

STRESS THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

Schools must stimulate and sustain our youths' eagerness for learning and education. African Americans place an extraordinarily high value on education as it is the lifeblood of black achievement.

- Ensure that our history and cultural heritage is highlighted and represented throughout the curriculum using educational materials and techniques approved by Africentric experts.
- Ensure that African American youth have access to high tech and highly interactive learning techniques.
- Match teaching strategies to the cognitive learning styles of students.
- Grant bonus points or extra credit for peer tutoring and mentoring fellow students in school.

UNDERSTAND THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Our youth and their families need ongoing information about the juvenile justice system and should know the consequences of involvement in that system.

- Provide information about changing laws similar to that disseminated by ***Mothers Against Police Harassment***.
- Create a ***“Did You Know”*** handout regarding the impact of new laws (i.e., the three strikes law, sentencing guidelines, etc.).
- Sponsor ***Law and Justice Panels*** for the community. These panels should include knowledgeable judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys who can give basic information and explain details of the criminal and juvenile justice systems. ***Loren Miller Bar Association*** and ***BCDI*** can team up to do this.
- Expose youth to the legal process through tours of the court system and presentations by adult and peer speakers.
- Extend the use of programs that access former ex-gang members and formerly incarcerated youth to “tell it like it is” about juvenile justice system involvement.

Intervention

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP WHEN OUR YOUTH, THEIR FAMILIES AND OTHER PRIMARY SUPPORT SYSTEMS ARE CHALLENGED BEYOND THEIR CAPACITY?

MOBILIZE COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR OUR FAMILIES

When the family, for whatever reason, cannot provide all the support and direction the young person needs, then other members of the community must be there in a supportive one-to-one role for that youth and his/her family. *Any involvement will be to assist the youth's family, not to replace it.*

- Make available an African American adult or peer mentor who can serve as an anchor in a young person's life and stimulate that youth to achieve. A mentor should be accessible to every child who needs one. The mentor must model appropriate behavior and help the youth to understand his/her individual and community importance.
- Make community centers **safe places** to go. Staff them with paid and volunteer role models who will strengthen and preserve community values. The survey conducted by **Miller Community Center** is an example of how community wishes can be determined.
- Reach out to families through community-run, home-based services that focus on self-empowerment, improvement and discipline. A national example is the **Black Family Investment Project** in Los Angeles.
- Offer support for young single women during their pregnancy. **The Birthing Project** is a great example.
- Create extended families for youth in need by using licensed African American foster parents who have had appropriate training.
- Reinforce and encourage all attempts by young people to perform up to their capabilities with public and private praise and appreciation for their efforts. The **Northwest Youth Rally** and **Paul Robeson Awards** are organizational illustrations.
- Mobilize African American community organizations to divide the city and county into zones and pledge to keep in touch with families in their respective zones. Organizations must provide food, tutoring help, racial survival skills or other

assistance so that families are confident they have a support base in their neighborhood.

- Provide at least one place, with non-traditional hours, which our youth and families can go to in their times of need. **CAMP** would be an ideal organization.

PARENT OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN

We must create **alternative parents and/or families** in our community to whom a child can go when the primary family and child are having conflict and either needs respite. Although alternative parents are not foster parents, they can provide a place where the child has someone to confide in, safety and a structured non-judgmental, caring environment. It is essential that alternative parents be committed, consistent and able to respond appropriately in a crisis.

- Establish neighborhood '**safe houses**' similar to those organized by the **Urban Family Institute** in Washington, D.C.
- Locate community **safe havens** for our children where they can speak with someone and get food and shelter. Locally, **John Little, Cooperative Extension Agent**, has been a highly effective alternative parent for many young men.

CHALLENGE OUR CHILDREN TO RECOGNIZE AND TAP INTO THEIR UNREALIZED CAPABILITIES

Encourage our youth to participate in activities that provide them with a sense of identity and purpose.

- *Ensure that every child* in our community has the opportunity to become involved in youth activities which stimulate their talent, create high expectations and encourage aspirations. Examples include: **East Madison YMCA Black Achievers, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Seattle Youth Involvement Network, First A.M.E. Youth Group, Mt. Zion Youth Group, Greater Glory Church of God In Christ Youth Programs, Four Seasons Northwest Ski Club, Boys & Girls Club, Seattle 4-H, Girls Inc., East Cherry YWCA Youth Clubhouse, Adefua Drum & Dance Group, Junior Achievement, CAYA, Madrona Youth Theatre, S.E.L.F.(Portland, Oregon), Ron McNair Science Camp-In, Fir State Golf Club Youth Program, Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center,**

Seattle Parks Department Late Night Recreation Program, South Central Athletic Association as well as **summer camps** and **bible study groups**.

- Provide more community based programs structured to teach values, offer direction and foster personal responsibility. Examples are **CAMP's Rites of Passage Program (ROPE)** and the **New Hope Baptist Church Male Program**.
- Replicate some of the model youth activities in places where our youth are channeled such as alternative schools.
- Utilize existing groups, such as youth sports programs to educate our youth on a variety of issues -- health, law and justice, etc.
- Take the necessary steps to enable the African American community to purchase a camping facility for youth-centered retreats and workshops that teach collective responsibility and educational skills to better prepare our youth for society's challenges. **The African Village** already exists in Yakima -- perhaps we can begin to utilize that facility.
- Create opportunities for our youth to develop fortitude and be successful. The **Ropes Course** at Bonny Lake is an example.
- Support expansion of the **Urban Lock-In Program**.
- Teach our youth the social context into which they have been born and our history of struggle and triumph. There is no easy road.

HOLD SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The school system must change policies, behaviors, and attitudes that have a negative impact on our community.

- Push for a change in policies that suspend and expel our children from school for questionable reasons and significant periods of time.
- Teach teachers how to effectively manage their classrooms and respond to behavior concerns. Incorporate a team approach to behavior concerns involving administrator, parent, teacher, student, counselor and professional support services staff.
- Implement courses that yield preparation for meaningful employment and basic life skills.

- Review school policy regarding training school personnel in learning styles, culture, language, interaction and respect.
- Assess every child for learning abilities and require regular monitoring of learning progress. Schools must be accountable for increasing the child's academic achievement.
- Mandate in-service training on appropriate attitudes toward African American parents.

PRODUCE POSITIVE AFRICAN AMERICAN IMAGES

Increase utilization of multi-media for the benefit of the African American community.

- Cooperate with public access TV or community based agencies like **CAYA** to provide our youth with the opportunity to write, produce and direct shows in a variety of formats,.
- Challenge each African American organization to schedule one annual program or meeting featuring our African American youth.
- Replicate the **Urban Newspaper Workshop** established by **Don Williamson** of the Seattle Times.
- Solicit opportunities for youth involvement in print and broadcast media through community based agencies and schools.
- Schedule regular youth forums with listener call-in on **KRIZ** radio.

USE MEDIA TECHNOLOGY FOR OUR BENEFIT

Share information regarding access and alternatives for law, media, health and economic issues. Maintain information on other opportunities in our community.

- Build upon the work that has been done by the **Black Dollar Days Task Force** with the publication of the **African American Business Directory**. Develop a database and directory of African American professionals, service organizations, agencies and resources available to youth and their families. The directory must be printed and monetarily supported by us.
- Increase our ability to match volunteers, resources and talents with our community needs.
- Begin a community bulletin board to help our youth find responsible positions with pay.

- Strengthen partnerships with community media for the dissemination of information.
- Create a “media watch” to monitor fairness in the coverage of African American related issues.
- Network with the **Black Journalist Association** to discuss strategies for promoting more positive media coverage of African Americans.
- Go on-line with the **Community Linkage** project.
- Organize neighborhoods to get neighbors talking to one another so that we can eliminate our sense of fear. Facilitate discussion of ‘what will make you feel safe?’

ADVOCATE FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Promote an understanding of the police’s role in our society.

- Create networks with police to help them become more accountable to our community and our children. Locally, the work of the **Garfield Community Council** and the **youth-police forums** organized by youth workers are good examples.
- Extend the work and philosophy of the **Seattle Police Gang Unit**. They build rapport with “gang” affiliated youth and find innovative solutions to defuse tensions.
- Increase the number of community-based specialists who work with “gang” involved youth. **Central Youth & Family Services** provides an excellent example.
- Implement more of the **Community Policing** concept.

Treatment and Recovery

WHAT CAN WE DO TO TREAT AND RECOVER/RECLAIM OUR AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH FROM THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND OTHER NEGATIVE INFLUENCES?

INVOLVE THE WHOLE FAMILY IN TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

Individual treatment programs must be for the whole family. Often a child’s “acting up,” is a symptom of a bigger problem. The entire family has to be a part of successful recovery.

USE HOLISTIC APPROACHES FOR TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

Treatment and recovery programs must build upon successful prevention and intervention programs with a holistic approach which includes family support, church and spirituality, counseling and therapy (including 'understanding racism'), job training and meaningful employment. Treatment and recovery programs should emphasize opportunities to change and success stories of others who are recovering.

CREATE INCENTIVES FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS TO PROVIDE SERVICES

Create incentives for African American professionals and therapists to use sliding scales or alternative fee schedules to the extent their businesses allow. These professionals could receive recognition or certification from **BCDI** or another community organization for their community service contributions.

OFFER AN ARRAY OF ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION

Offer a continuum of alternatives to detention for African American youth. The alternative selected for any individual youth must take into account the circumstances leading to the youth being taken to detention, any prior involvement, the youth's history and individual needs. All alternatives must involve appropriate treatment and recovery.

- Move resolution of minor offenses outside the court system by establishing **Community Justice Councils**, composed of community people. Restitution and rehabilitation would take place at the community level.
- Establish a **Community Guardian** program for African American youth who are going through the juvenile justice system. They need to know our community cares.
- Encourage more churches to visit youth detention facilities and talk with our youth. Ensure that these youth are taught job skills, critical thinking, analytical skills and responsibility.
- Release young people to a church or community group that will assume active responsibility for oversight of these youth and their timely return to court.

- Release the youth to mini group homes, group homes, staffed foster homes, churches or other receiving homes supported by community groups. Common desirable elements are the opportunity for these youth to participate in groups with others and the opportunity to be accountable to a group of community adults.
- Release said young people to a secure community group care facility that would determine the appropriate alternative.
- Implement an alternative based on the ***Civilian Conservation Corps*** idea. Corps, run by a community based agency, would undertake “serious” or urgent restoration projects in the African American community.
- Implement a modified ‘boot camp’ concept. A community-based agency must run the camp. The camp emphasis would be hard work and discipline, values, spirituality; team-building, humanity, the relationship between action and consequences; opportunities for mastery and recognition and building community responsibility and accountability.
- Implement these strategies and programs through professionals, lay persons, organizations and agencies certified and trusted by recipients and the African American community.

PERSEVERE

Never give up on our children. When we give up, we automatically lose.

The Voices of Our African American Youth

The Youth Involvement component of the "*Reaching Back-Giving Back*" Campaign consisted of focus group sessions with African American youth from diverse backgrounds. The purpose of these sessions was to guarantee a youth perspective of the juvenile justice system. BCDI-Seattle Affiliate wanted to provide young people with an opportunity to express their concerns and identify issues they deemed important.

Ten members of the "*Reaching Back-Giving Back*" Oversight Committee were volunteer facilitators for these youth focus groups. Facilitators wrote a summary of their discussion and shared their observations in a report to the coordinator. The discussion for each session focused on responses to the following questions:

1. Who or what has the most influence in your life? Why?
2. Why do you think young people get into trouble?
3. How would you change your community environment to make it a better place for young people to live?
4. How can adults prevent young people from getting into trouble?
5. What do you think adults should be doing to help young people who are in detention?
6. Instead of detention, what kind of sentencing programs would you give a young person who has been arrested or convicted of committing a crime.

One hundred youth, 46 males and 54 females, ages 12 to 21, participated in the youth focus groups. Their experiences with the juvenile justice system ranged from no direct contact to those currently incarcerated at Green Hill School. Focus group sessions were scheduled with the Black Student Union at Roosevelt High School, Central Youth and Family Services, Green Hill School in Chehalis, Marshall Alternative School, Rights of Passage Experience (R.O.P.E.) with the Central Area Motivation Program, Youth Education Alternative Program—Alaska Building, and Sisters In Common Support Group Project-DYS in collaboration with the Atlantic Street Center.

The voices of these youth were emphatic and convincing as they cited examples of increased violence in their neighborhoods. All had been impacted, directly or indirectly,

through family members and friends. Their vulnerability to violent crime—child abuse and neglect, domestic fights, rape, homicide, robbery, aggravated assault, gang warfare—is a reality documented in reported statistics for King County.

These young people were acutely aware that African American youth were detained disproportionately in a juvenile justice system they described as both apathetic and ineffective on one extreme to hostile and racist on the other. Overwhelmingly, they attributed the lack of caring adults and positive role models in their community as reasons for this situation.

A consistent theme expressed by every facilitator was the need for adults to **listen** to our youth and make **time** to "**be there**" for them. If no other message is heard, know that all of our youth are pleading for attention, guidance, assistance and mentorship from nurturing adults in the African American community.

The assumption was made that that which has the most influence in the lives of our youth, whether positive or negative, would be the most powerful resource when considering the following categories for the Youth Questionnaire responses: Prevention, Intervention, Treatment/Recovery and Alternatives to Detention. Here, then, are the voices of our African American youth.

INFLUENCES

1. FAMILY -- MOTHER, grandmother, sisters, brothers, grandfather, father, aunts, uncles, cousins.
2. FRIENDS
3. COMMUNITY/THE HOOD
4. MATE -- girlfriend/boyfriend
5. NOTHING/NOBODY/NO RESPONSE
6. FRIEND'S PARENT
7. MYSELF
8. GOD/CHURCH
9. EDUCATION
10. Police, Law, Media, Image, Drugs/Alcohol

PREVENTION

WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE GET INTO TROUBLE? WHAT CAN ADULTS DO TO PREVENT YOUNG PEOPLE FROM GETTING INTO TROUBLE?

1. Help our parents provide for us
2. Sponsor more recreational programs and activities
3. Teach us skills to get meaningful employment
4. Have educational programs that meet our needs
5. Show you care and quit treating us like untouchables or felons—Build our self-esteem
6. Don't wait until we are teens to help; start earlier
7. Help us survive in a biased society by teaching us how to deal with racism, hurt and rejection
8. Educate us about addiction to alcohol and drugs, early
9. Eliminate gang warfare
10. Get rid of guns and shops that sell them

INTERVENTION

WHAT CAN ADULTS DO TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE IN DETENTION?

1. Get Involved! Encourage us . . . Talk to us . . . Support us . . . Teach us . . .
2. Change our Environment: Get us away from gangs, drugs, abuse, crime
3. Work with our Family so they won't be scared and give up on us
4. Show us how we can do something better with our lives by helping us deal with our anger, problems and negative feelings
5. Improve our Education and hire more African American staff to teach us
6. Give us positive **Role Models** to serve as elders for mentorship program
7. Have more recreational activities for us to do
8. Give us effective legal counseling from concerned staff
9. Sponsor **Support Groups** with our peers and good counselors/advisors
10. Do a **personal Assessment** to find out why we are here and develop an individual program for each offender to help us stay out of here

TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

HOW CAN ADULTS HELP YOUTH IN DETENTION?

1. Have us do **Community Service** in a field we have an interest
2. Provide comprehensive **Family Counseling** on a regular basis - parenting skills, spirituality, health, housing assistance, economics/jobs, community resources to help solve problems
3. Enroll us in **Job Training** programs to learn a skill for pay
4. Assign us **Adult Mentors** for **Community Parenting**
5. Establish an Individual process to learn who we are and why we are here
6. Educate us about life skills and offer **Career Planning**
7. Provide intensive **Drug and Alcohol Recovery Treatment** programs
8. Place us in **Group Homes/Shelters with Support Groups** run by former juvies who have made positive changes in their lives
9. Lock us up until we get right or put us in jail with the big guys so we know what prison life is like
10. Do nothing; we must change on our own

Alternatives to Detention

INSTEAD OF DETENTION, WHAT PROGRAMS WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED OR CONVICTED OF COMMITTING A CRIME?

1. Give us **Community Service** -- Neighborhood clean-up projects, painting over graffiti with youth art, working with younger children, interning at a police station or hospital emergency room, working in a community business
2. Get us out of The Hood until we change our behavior -- send us to **Boot Camp, Military School, Navy Ship, Shelter, Group Home**
3. Have a positive family or church adopt us
4. Give us a job with security guards to watch us
5. Mandate court ordered **Family Counseling** and activities
6. Hold **Teen Support Group** sessions with former juvies
7. Send us to Africa to learn more about our ancestors and culture
8. Put us in jail and make us talk to inmates to teach us a lesson
9. Put us in solitary confinement to think about our crime

Ninety-five percent of the youth identified a family member, most often the mother, as an influential force in their lives. Any solution, therefore, must embrace the entire family unit and build upon its strengths. The family is our youth's first link to the world. Friend and community ranked second and third, respectively. These influences echo an African proverb we all too often ignore: "It takes a whole village to raise a child."

Common Themes Expressed By Our Youth

FAMILY SUPPORT

- Strengthen the family unit because that is where I first learn things about life. You have to start early. Make sure I have the basics—food, shelter and clothing.
- Get my parents involved in my life so they can be there for me before I get into trouble. I need my parents to teach me values, listen to me, keep me home at night, discipline me and provide rules. I don't want to be left alone; please take me places.
- My parents are important because they are the example I will have learned from when I have my own children to raise. I want a stable and loving home that teaches me how to be responsible and take care of myself.
- Remove the violence from homes and bring our family together.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- People in the community need to visit us on a regular basis to see what it is like in detention so they will know how to help us. We need education, spirituality, recreation and counseling about our legal rights.
- Many of us are bitter, angry, insecure and unmotivated. Often we feel so isolated and alone with only our peers to confide in. We need to see and feel your presence and support.
- We want you to work with our families and help them make wise decisions about our future.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMS

- I am curious and like to take chances for the thrill of it. I am easily bored because there is nothing to do where I live. I have limited adult supervision and often act before I think which sometimes leads to trouble.
- I wish there were more activities just for youth in the Hood! I would like to see more community centers with lots of fun activities—movies, arcades, art classes, hoops, clubs, dances, swimming, computers. I would like to go on field trips that expose me to other parts of the world. Give us positive things close to home.

JOBS/VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS

- I don't have any skills. I want to work, but not at Mickey D's. I want to earn money to buy a car, clothes, jewelry and other material things. I'm a 90's kid and I need stuff, now.
- If I can't get a job that is meaningful, I will try the fast life—sell drugs, take what I want or just kick it and hang out with my homies which usually means more opportunity for trouble with the cops.
- If there aren't enough jobs for adults with skills, I'll never get a break so I make my living on the street.

ENVIRONMENT

- If you could care enough to improve our neighborhoods and get us in a safer environment, we would have a better chance when we leave detention. The greatest threats to that happening are violence, drugs and gangs. Our economic base is poor and we are influenced by a society that values material possessions. Again, we need to upgrade our skills so we can get a decent job or continue our education.

COMMUNITY SERVICE/SUPPORT GROUPS/COUNSELING

- Help us feel a part of the community we live in by giving us things to do to make it a better place. Work with us and our families in group situations. INSPIRE . . . MODEL . . . LISTEN . . . TEACH . . . ENCOURAGE . . . SUPPORT . . . COUNSEL.

CULTURAL IDENTITY/RACIAL PRIDE

- We want to be connected to elders willing to be role models for us. We want more African American teachers, counselors, nurses, probation officers, judges, police officers and staff to work with and for us. Teach classes about our history and culture from an Africentric perspective to help build our pride and sense of worthiness. Give us roots.

“The fruit must have a stem before it grows.”

For our children,

Yvonne Ervin Carr, Youth Involvement Coordinator

Walter Atkinson

Barbara Butler

Edith Chambers

Dr. Darlene Conley

Gregory Davis

Judge Judith Hightower

Dr. William James

Joanne Scott

Helena Stephens

Treatment and Recovery of African American Youth While Under the Direct Care of the Department of Youth Services (DYS)

BCDI-Seattle Affiliate believes that all youth within the juvenile justice system, regardless of race or national origin, should receive the best available treatment. We recognize that DYS is only one of the entities making up the juvenile justice system in King County. DYS, by itself, cannot ensure fair and equitable treatment and outcomes for youth throughout the system. However, DYS *does* have a responsibility to develop practices and programs that are socially conscious, inclusive and sensitive to the racial and cultural differences of the youth at DYS. Management practices with regard to staff create an environment in which our children can either absorb pro-social values or learn disregard for human life and dignity. BCDI-Seattle Affiliate believes that breaches of human life and dignity are unacceptable in any setting. With these principles as our guide, BCDI-Seattle recommends that DYS take the following actions:

1. Evaluate the needs of African American youth detainees and put in place culturally appropriate treatment strategies to meet their needs.
2. Train DYS staff on the design and implementation of ***Africentric treatment strategies***.
3. Devise methods to educate and empower family members of African American detainees by providing the family members with information and resources to negotiate all phases of the judicial process.
4. Respect the youth's and community's definition of family, which may not always be blood relatives.
5. Implement a monitoring and review mechanism to prevent African American youth from receiving harsher punishment than their peers.
6. Examine the current philosophy and guidelines for diversion to ensure that the process does not exclude African American youth.

7. Establish a Rites of Passage Program, with the assistance of African American community based organizations.
8. Establish transition/treatment homes that include Africentric approaches to treatment.
9. Recruit, hire, retain and promote African American staff at all levels of the department. It is imperative that African American professionals be represented in positions with significant policy decision authority.
10. Initiate an internship program that will attract African American college students and provide them with the opportunity to gain work experience while earning a salary.
11. Examine and amend personnel policies that hinder the recruitment and hiring of African American staff.
12. Establish mentoring/coaching programs for existing and newly hired African Americans to assist with their professional growth.
13. Establish partnerships with African American businesses, community organizations, think tanks, colleges and universities to learn new treatment concepts and improve recruitment strategies.
14. Institute standards for African American participation in policy groups, review boards, task forces, planning efforts, interview boards and the development and implementation of training programs.
15. Significantly increase the quantity of services contracted to African American and minority vendors through a deliberate process of identifying these services.
16. Identify administrative staff in decision-making positions to act as liaisons to the African American community.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The beliefs we set out at the beginning of this report were reinforced by the results of the “*Reaching Back-Giving Back*” process. An example is how African American adults continually reaffirmed their love and concern for *all* African American youth. Likewise, our African American youth reaffirmed their need for this love and support. Adult and youth focus groups themes and suggestions mirrored each other. In this section, we provide conclusions and recommendations to support the needs of African American youth.

AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH HAVE CULTURALLY SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

African American youth share development needs (self-worth, sense of belonging, etc.) with all other youth of their age group. The interplay of African American culture and the effect of racism with these needs creates distinct risks and opportunities for the development of African American youth. For example, ‘verve’ is an African American cultural trait that is evident in many young African American males. This energy and exuberance can be negatively labeled as “hyperactive,” thereby decreasing the young person’s self-worth; or it can become a basis for building the young person’s self-esteem through positive feedback and structured opportunities for expression.

‘PROTECTIVE FACTORS’ MUST BE REINFORCED IN ALL SETTINGS

Three of the *essential ingredients* of successful efforts to develop African American youth, including youth in ‘at risk’ and ‘high risk’ circumstances, are:

- High expectations.
- A caring environment and consistently caring interactions.
- Empowerment of our youth (opportunities to participate and assume responsibility).

These three essential ingredients transcend the particular activity and program content.

AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEEDS ARE BEST MET BY A COMBINATION OF SELF-HELP AND OUTSIDE RESOURCES

The African American community in King County has a long history of self-help. One indicator is the high number of voluntary organizations and organizations using volunteers who engage in family support, youth development, youth scholarships and fund raising activities. Focus group participants continually spoke of deepening and broadening these efforts. *However, the complexity and severity of our youths' and families' needs are beyond the capacity of the African American community to fulfill without additional assistance.*

PRACTITIONERS AND FUNDERS LACK AGREEMENT ON THE EFFICACY OF SOME AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

A number of the programs identified as successful efforts by focus group participants are underfunded and undervalued outside the African American community. In part, this is due to:

- Lack of proficiency, by some organizations serving African American youth, in the ability to articulate *high expectations, caring, and youth empowerment* in their program content.
- Lack of expertise, on the part of some funders, in the identification, contract language, and evaluation of *high expectations, caring, and youth empowerment*.

CURRENT SERVICES FOR AFRICAN YOUTH ARE FRAGMENTED AND UNCOORDINATED

Fragmentation of services contributes to our youths' sense of estrangement from our community. There is no comprehensive vehicle for ensuring that youth in need of services or adults who are willing to volunteer are connected with the appropriate activity or organization. Services and activities should link together for the benefit of our youth.

Recommendations

RENEW OUR COMMITMENT TO TRADITIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN VALUES

Renew, in the African American community, our commitment to the values and beliefs that have been the underpinnings of our survival - family unity and mutual support, love of learning, strong achievement orientation, commitment to self-help, spirituality, self-governance, service to others, black-owned private enterprises and institutions, cooperation with other people for economic, political, and social goals, and racial pride.

IMMEDIATELY IMPLEMENT THOSE IDEAS REQUIRING FEW ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Augment current African American youth development activities through the immediate implementation of those concepts and ideas that require few additional resources from outside the African American community.

CONVENE A SUMMIT ON BLACK YOUTH

Convene a ***Summit on Black Youth*** in King County that would bring together African American youth, their families, and organizations serving African American youth to accomplish the following:

- Provide a forum for African American youth to express needs, ideas and initiate solutions.
- Articulate African American youth development strategies.
- Formulate minimum expectations for African American youth development services and activities.
- Establish a network of organizations serving African American youth that clarifies organizational responsibilities for providing different components of African American youth development services and activities.
- Explore the addition of technical assistance and resource development capacity to support the network's services and activities.

SUPPORT THE CONCEPTS, IDEAS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT THROUGH POLICY INITIATIVES

Establish policies, for funding and the provision of resources in support of African American youth, families and community, which are consistent with the themes, principles and ideas delineated in this report. An example is services that rebuild rather than replace the family and community. King County and the City of Seattle should give detailed attention to this recommendation.

SUPPORT THE CONCEPTS, IDEAS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT WITH CONCRETE RESOURCES

Initiate an inventory of departmental policies, programs and other resources that can help the African American community to implement the ideas in this report. The King County Executive and Mayor of the City of Seattle should take the lead for this recommendation.

REMEMBER THAT THE MAJORITY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH, INCLUDING THE MAJORITY OF YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES, COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL, ARE CRIME FREE AND ARE FREE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE.

NOTES ABOUT THE ADULT FOCUS GROUPS

Occupations

Participants in the adult focus groups are engaged in the following occupations:

Air Traffic Control Specialist	Drug & Alcohol Counselor	Private Consultant
Agency Administrator	Educational Consultant	Probation Counselor
Bailiff	Electronics Technician	Professional Volunteer
Bartender	Emissions Inspector	Public Defender
Broker	Employment & Training Specialist	Publisher
Building Manager	Engineer	Real Estate Agent
Business Owner	Family Support Worker	Recreation Coordinator
Case Manager	Firefighter	Rehabilitation Specialist
Cashier	Food Packer	Research Manager
Child Care Worker	Forest Service Manager	Researcher
Child Psychologist	Furniture Restorer	Retiree
Children's Advocate	Government Administrator	Revenue Agent
Clerical Worker	Home Repair Technician	School Principal
College Student	Housewife	Secretary
Community College Dean	Judge	Social Services Administrator
Community Organizer	Legal Interviewer	Social Worker
Contract Compliance Specialist	Licensed Practical Nurse	Solid Waste Inspector
Contract Manager	Maid	Speech Pathologist
Counselor	Marketing Manager	Teacher
Customer Services Representative	Medical Doctor	Teacher Assistant
Day Care Director	Minister	Trainer
Day Care Worker	Nurse Practitioner	Transit Operator
Deputy Prosecutor	Planning Specialist	University Professor
	Police Captain	Utility Line Supervisor
	Postal Clerk	Writer
		Youth Counselor

Personal Commitment Pledge

Eighty focus group participants signed a *Personal Commitment Pledge*. By signing the *Personal Commitment Pledge*, these participants agreed to at least one of three actions:

- Implement one or more of the strategies that emerge from the “*Reaching Back-Giving Back*” process.
- Serve as a mentor or role model for a young person.
- Volunteer directly with a young person or group.

In addition to the *Personal Commitment Pledges*, participants identified 23 individuals and 13 organizations which they personally recommended as being interested in providing resources to this effort.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Black Child Development Institute of Seattle (BCDI-Seattle Affiliate) gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of the following individuals, agencies, organizations, and institutions in the development and implementation of the African American Strategic Family-Community Empowerment Campaign.

The Community Oversight Committee

The BCDI-Seattle Affiliate acknowledges the many hours and valuable knowledge contributed by the following individuals:

Walter Atkinson

City of Seattle Department of Housing
and Human Services

Andre Branch

African American Reconciliation Project

Barbara Butler

King County Department of Youth
Services

Portia Carter

Seattle Vocational Institute

Edith Chambers

Atlantic Street Center

Dr. Darlene Conley

University of Washington Department of
Sociology

Gregory Davis

CAMP - Rites of Passage Program

Alan Garrett

King County Prosecuting Attorney's
Office

Rev. LaVerne Hall

Mt. Zion Ethnic School

Honorable Judy Hightower

Seattle Municipal Court

Tony Hodge-Kinnard

YMCA Black Achievers Program

Dr. William James,

Cocaine Outreach and Recovery

Lt. Emmett Kelsie

Seattle Police - Coordinated Criminal
Investigation Section

Dr. Dorothy Mann

City of Seattle Anti-Violence Project

LaMar Mills

Northwest Defenders Association

Patricia Mouton

King County Division of Alcohol and
Substance Abuse

Rickie Robinson

Renton Area Youth Services

Joanne Scott

Sisters In Common

Helena Stephens

Drugs: Draw the Line!

Willis Tate

Blacks In Government - Seattle Chapter

Dr. Bettylou Valentine

Central Youth & Family Services

Harriet Walden

Mothers Against Police Harassment

Sheryl Whitney

King County Children & Family
Commission

Leslie Wright,

Wright Custodial Institute

Campaign Cosponsors

African American Reconciliation Project
African American Child Care Task Force
Black Dollar Days Task Force
Blacks In Government - Seattle Chapter
The Breakfast Group
Central Area Motivation Program
Cocaine Outreach and Recovery
Cultural Diversity Associates
Diversity Business News
Four Seasons Northwest Ski Club
Holiday Festival of Black Dolls
Jackson State Alumni Association

Kappa Alpha Psi
Koininia Outreach Community Service
LINKS Inc. - Seattle Chapter
Mt. Zion Baptist Church Brotherhood
Mt. Zion Ethnic School
NAACP, Seattle Chapter
National Forum of Black Public
Administrators
Seattle Black Firefighters
Seattle Urban League
Staples & Associates
Zion Preparatory Academy

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*James Kelly, Washington State
Commission on African American
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Juvenile Justice Information*

*Joe Jones, Impact Communications
Campaign Development*

Youth Involvement Committee

The BCDI-Seattle Affiliate extends special thanks to the following individuals who volunteered their time to facilitate and write up reports on the focus groups for our youth.

*Yvonne Ervin Carr, Youth Involvement
Coordinator
Author, "Voices of Our Youth"*

*Walter Atkinson
Barbara Butler
Edith Chambers*

*Dr. Darlene Conley
Gregory Davis
Judge Judith Hightower
Dr. William James
Joanne Scott
Helena Stephens*

Focus Group Participants

Our deepest appreciation to the 100 African American youth and 175 accomplished* African American adults whose voices speak out in this report. We also acknowledge the special recruitment efforts of *Dawn Mason* and *King County Councilperson Larry Gossett*.

Caterers

Mary's Kitchen & Catering

Valerie Fisher

Funders

BCDI-Seattle Affiliate thanks the following county agencies for their support.

The Community Services Division, King County Department of Human Services for initiating the *“Reaching Back-Giving Back”* project as part of a larger effort to reduce the disproportionate detention of African American youth.

The King County Children and Families Commission for funding *“Reaching Back-Giving Back.”*

The following agencies and organizations provided meeting space:

Seattle Vocational Institute
Central Area Motivation Program
Good Neighbor Center of Renton
United Way of King County - Kent Office
Highland Community Center - Bellevue
Seattle Public Library - Rainier Beach Branch
Greenlake Community Center
Seattle Public Library - West Seattle Branch

Greenlake Community Center, Seattle
Parks Department
Tukwila Senior Center
Klahanee Lake Community Senior Center - Federal Way
Shoreline Branch - King County Library System
Burien Branch - King County Library System

BCDI Oversight Committee

BCDI-Seattle Affiliate gives a special tribute to the BCDI Oversight Committee - BCDI members who unflinchingly agreed to take responsibility for making the *“Reaching Back-Giving Back”* project happen. They spent many hours meeting, recruiting, guiding, reviewing, editing, and working on this project.

Tony Orange, Chair
James Staples, Project Administrator
Yvonne Ervin Carr, Youth Involvement Coordinator

Garry Owens
Kikora Dorsey

BCDI-Seattle Affiliate acknowledges *Sadikifu Akina-James*, the originator and driving force behind *“Reaching Back-Giving Back,”* for her work throughout all phases of the project, particularly her assistance with the recruitment of adult focus group participants and her aid in the writing of this report.

We also thank *E.Carolynn Daye* for her support in the review of this report.

***WAKE UP!! FOR THERE IS NO TIME TO SLEEP**

Growing up in a small country town, I can recall the times I used to go outside and play with my friends while my mother stayed inside to sleep. I also remember the times when I called myself “doing my OWN thang,” but my own thang was something I had NO business doing! I just knew I was slick and had gotten away with mischief until Bell, the neighbor from across the street, just happened to be looking out of her window. Lord, she would come outside, grab me by my ear, and take me straight to my mother. And yes, you can believe, mother started right where Ms. Bell left off! Those were the good old days.

Well, mothers and fathers, the “good old” days have changed, and my lord have they changed drastically. No longer do we live next to neighbors like Ms. Bell, but they sound a little more like “Mr. I’ll Sell” drugs to your kids if you are not watching. Or Miss. Cozy, for life is irrelevant, I’m not choosy.

There are so many children in today’s society crying out for some image or form of positive direction; but because we sleep, the children teach themselves. And the worse thing about their self-taught education is it is a teaching of genocide. It is a teaching of self-hatred, crime, and misunderstanding of self.

We, as parents and a community, must once again take our rightful positions as teachers and mentors. We must begin to live by the rules of each one-teach one. Teach your kids what I call “The Laws”:

Number One: Love Thyself

Number Two: You are SOMEBODY!

Number Three: (which is my mother’s favorite), When you do wrong there’s going to be a price to pay, because I Love You, and will not let you go astray.

Number Four: Last, but not least, respect your elders; listen to them, because they were here before you, and if you disregard them, they will be here when you leave!

Wake up mothers and fathers, communities, and society. For the playgrounds we played on are no longer friendly, but WAR ZONES waiting to be destructive. Our only defenses for ourselves and our youth are education, knowledge, and a sense of self. Education, for it is liberation; knowledge, for it is power; and a sense of self, because baby when you know you come from a great powerful people, you can’t do anything but stand proud and tall.

Wake up, wake up, for if you decide to sleep until tomorrow, all you are saying is you don’t care enough to wake up for the generation of today. We can’t forget, that without them, there is not future! So Wake up! WAKE UP! For as we sleep, the children teach themselves.

-Toyia Tynae Taylor

BCDI-Seattle Affiliate Scholarship Recipient

**Reprinted with permission from Toyia*

NBCDI'S Vision for African American Children

- **Every child has the right to a home--not a hotel, not a shelter, not a hostel, or half-way house--but a home.**
- **Every child has the right to grow up in a family with an adequate income, secure in the knowledge that there will be a roof overhead and food on the table.**
- **Every child has the right to be enrolled in National Health Care System with access to quality health care and caring health professionals.**
- **Every child has the right to safe, affordable quality child care while his/her parents are at work.**
- **Every child has the right at birth to undivided attention of his or her parents through material and parenting leaves.**
- **Every child has the right to grow up in a drug free environment and right to a safe place to play.**
- **Every three-and-four-year-old child has the right to early education emphasizing developmentally appropriate practices, parent participation, and African American values and heritage.**
- **Every child has the right to achieve academically, regardless of income or family background, and the right to a quality education in a public school setting.**
- **Every child has the right to a role model--a parent, a relative, a tutor, or a mentor whose task it is to open the door and show the way.**