

NEWS RELEASE

COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF METROPOLITAN ATLANTA, INC.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PREPARED FOR SUCCESS

Seven Young Black Males have a Bright Future after Graduating from the Priority Male Program

ATLANTA (GA) —March 19, 2009 – Seven young black males are prepared for success after graduating from the Priority Male Institute Saturday, March 14, 2009, at Bishops' Chapel, Turner Theological Seminary in Atlanta. Dressed in white shirts, black ties and black trousers with kente cloth scarves draped around their shoulders, the proud graduates received framed certificates and stipends for completing the free 26-week life skills and job readiness program.

The Priority Male Institute is part of the Priority Male Program that is designed to help at risk young black males age 18 to 28 improve themselves academically, economically, vocationally and personally. The graduates included Larry Bishop, Lonnie Cheeks, Cameron Coles, Lee Elliott, Demarco Harrison, Lawrence Moore, and Alton Pitts. Three additional graduates were unable to attend the ceremony. To a standing room only crowd, the seven young men gave reflections of how the Priority Male Institute has helped them make positive changes.

Lonnie Cheeks said, "For us young black males, it's tough out here in the community. I hope the next class goes on to become strong successful young men."

Cameron Coles said, "I wasn't in school so I signed up for the Priority Male Institute. I think this program is an excellent program. It helps you achieve goals and stay out of trouble. The program helped me get back into the GED program. I'm looking for a job now. I think many young males should go to the program."

Lee Elliott said, "I was heading down the wrong direction. My life has been a whole lot better. I learned to respect others. You have to respect others and learn respect. I plan to go to school for Business Management and own my own business."

Lawrence Moore said, "I served five years in a Florida prison. I had to fight to protect myself. I started to read the Bible. I was released from prison in 2007. Since joining the PMI (Priority Male Institute) program, I have started college as a freshman at Morris Brown College with a 3.0 grade point average. I want to be a spiritual motivational speaker in the music business."

Alton Pitts said he finished high school in 2008 and was spending all summer playing video games when he started the Priority Male Program and traveled from Marietta to Atlanta for class. "I learned valuable skills and the communications skills helped me out a lot. I really enjoyed being in the PMI course. I am going to take the science portion of the test to get my high school diploma."

Larry Bishop said he is going to join the National Guard now that he has graduated from the program.

Demarco Harrison, President of the PMI Chapter, talked about how the Priority Male Institute changed his life for the better. He wrote a heartwarming poem about the benefits of the Priority Male Institute and received a standing ovation after reading it.

The Keynote Speaker, Nathaniel B. Dyer, Founder and Executive Director of Atlennium, Inc., and CEO & Creative Director of Natbo-The Edge, Inc., gave a motivational and inspirational message to the young men to stay on track. The celebration culminated with a graduation dinner at Murrell's Café @ Scholars.

Norma Joy Barnes, Executive Director and Founder of the Priority Male Institute said, “We are so proud of these young black males. They are very talented and have such a bright future ahead of them. We are so glad that the Priority Male Institute was able to give them the knowledge, motivation, and resources necessary to help them become successful individuals and productive members of society.” Barnes encourages employers to contact the CCMA if they are seeking employees who have been aptly prepared for success in the workplace. “This is a win-win for, both, local employers and the PMI graduates,” she said.

The Priority Male Program is part of the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. (CCMA), a non-profit organization whose mission is to develop, coordinate, convene, and utilize programs and resources that empower and improve the quality of life for individuals and communities in the metropolitan Atlanta area. The Priority Male Institute was launched in September 2008 and focuses on young black males, 18-28, who are underserved and more at-risk, with higher unemployment rates, higher high school drop-out rates, and a higher percentage of convictions for non-domestic crimes. The program components include assessments, classes, workshops, field trips, internships, mentoring, coaching, employment referrals, and other job readiness resources over a 26-week period. Turner Theological Seminary, under the leadership of the Reverend Dr. John Green, partnered with the CCMA and provided classroom and meeting space for the 2008-2009 school year.

For more information about the Priority Male Program, please call 404-935-5859 or contact the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta at ccmacorp@aol.com

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