



INTERFAITH LEADERSHIP COALITION

“Serving a Higher Power by Serving the Least of These”



COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF METROPOLITAN ATLANTA, INC.

MBC ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT & ACTION

“Each tradition teaches us that when we serve and stand with “the least of these,” we stand with and serve God’s deepest desire for transformation of the world. All sacred texts teach in hundreds of places that the God we worship has a special concern for the poor, and that God judges individuals and societies by how we respond to those needs.

-Faith in Communities PICO

“Where is the faith community? The body of believers who might confront this plague rooted in spiritual darkness that partly can be traced to familial dysfunction, to the absence of fathers, a moral void, the loss of community and respect for the sanctity of human life? Does the church even mourn? Or is it instead engaged in hallelujah services, obsessed with praise and worship extravaganzas, consumed by faith conferences, preoccupied with church meetings, where the agenda remains focused on minutiae rather than on the myriad major critical issues afflicting our communities?” - John W. Fountain

“While we may be of different faiths, we have a strong sense of faith, family, community. We hold the values of freedom and human rights very high and I think that those are all a part of a very strong quilt that binds us together.” - Bob Menendez

“In this new century, our commitment to family and to faith, to community and opportunity, to freedom and to hope, will be the light that shines to lead us forward.” - Bill Owens

“If you lift the hand to serve, to help, to console, to encourage another man, you are lifting it for God, for God is in every man.
- Sai Baba

“I believe that for lots of churches and religious institutions, their main focus on the development of faith among parishioners needs to spread to the community.” - Geoffrey Canada

“God is not a Christian, nor a Jew, Muslim, Hindu, God dwells with us, in us, around us, as us.” - Bishop Carlton Pearson

“It is true that going out on to the street implies the risk of accidents happening, as they would to any ordinary man or woman. But if the church stays wrapped up in itself, it will age. And if I had to choose between a wounded church that goes out on to the streets and a sick, withdrawn church, I would definitely choose the first one.” - Pope Francis

“These are the themes in life which are consistent in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism - of being grounded in who you are and being engaged in an unjust world.” Cory Booker

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.

- Isaiah 61:1

“Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.” - Isaiah 1:17

“I have come not to disturb or destroy any faith, but to confirm each in his own faith - so that the Christian becomes a better Christian, the Muslim, a better Muslim, and the Hindu, a better Hindu”. - Sai Baba

“Good works is giving to the poor and the helpless, but divine works is showing them their worth to the One who matters.”

- Criss Jami

“It takes a village to raise a child, but a child of God can help raise a village”. - Norma Joy Barnes



Norma Joy Barnes, CEO/President

On behalf of the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. (CCMA), I invite you to join our ***Interfaith Leadership Coalition***. We have invited religious leaders of churches, mosques, synagogues and temples to join with us in this initiative and hope that you will do so. Although we are of different faiths and traditions, we share core values and a divine commission to serve a *Higher Power* by serving “the least of these”. By working collaboratively, we can more effectively address the critical challenges inflicting the Atlanta metropolitan area.

To say that “we are living in perilous times” is not an understatement or cliché. It is a reality that cannot be ignored. Amid affluence, we are faced with alarming rates of poverty, violence, injustice, and other devastating maladies. Do we cross the streets of our marginalized communities to focus on more “religious” matters? Do we wash our hands of the ‘dirty work’, and leave it to the government, the schools, and non-profit organizations to address these ‘secular’ issues? Do we shut our eyes to the societal ‘mind fields’ that will eventually explode and destroy our own communities? *What should we do? What can we do? What will we do?*

According to *Faith in Communities PICO* (People Improving Communities through Organizing) “*A renewed commitment must be taken to overcome poverty and the many ways it both infects and affects individuals and our community. In obedience to God, in response to our respective sacred scriptures, as well as out of respect for the dignity of every person, and to promote a common good for our society, we choose to organize in ways so as to deal with the pain of injustice in our community.*” This commitment directly coincides with the mission and work of CCMA.

Many of you are already involved in outstanding community service, and we want to hear from you. Some of you are seeking more effective ways to serve your community, and we want to share viable opportunities with you. The CCMA is committed to addressing four critical issues: 1) *The Challenges of Disconnected Youth*; 2) *The Plight of Young Black Males*; 3) *The Absent Father Syndrome*; and 4) *The Reentry Challenge*. Let us come together, as an interfaith community, to connect, communicate and collaborate, in response to afflictive challenges in our own communities.

We have all heard that “It takes a village to raise a child” but a child of God can help raise a village. There are villages of young people in our community that need our support to live more productive lives. As children of God, we can raise their hope and give renewed commitment to the “least of these”. Won’t you join us?

In Abiding Faith,

Norma Joy Barnes

President/CEO

Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc.



"Changing Lives - Enriching Communities"

ABOUT THE CCMA

"Empowering young others to live better lives" is the motto of the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. (CCMA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. These words are more than an ambitious motto, they represent a mandate to serve the underserved, the disadvantaged, and the disenfranchised, with focus on at-risk youth and young Black males.

Since its founding in 2008, CCMA has provided seventy-one free programs, serving over 3,800 persons through forty-nine outreach workshops, five male empowerment expos, three life enhancing summits for youth, five open forums for community leaders, an all-day conference for males, a health fair for children, five life-skills and job readiness institutes for young males, a GED and literacy showcase for the general public, and two fatherhood luncheons/ forums.

2019-2020 PROGRAMS

1. PROPEL YOURSELF TO SUCCESS WORKSHOPS

Free workshops, "*Propel Yourself to Success*", are held in underserved communities. Each session includes self-assessment exercises, an interactive workshop, a powerful film, resource speakers, an open forum and lunch at no cost to participants. The workshops focus on challenges faced by young Black men 18-28 years of age; however, males of other ethnic and age groups may also attend.

2. PROPEL ACADEMY

The *PROPEL Academy* is a 12-week job readiness and personal development initiative for young black males 18-28 years of age, implemented to replace the 16-week Priority Male Institute. Sessions include personal dynamics, interpersonal skills, communication skills, financial literacy, vocational exploration, job search techniques and other classes. To date, 36 young men have been enrolled in the program.

3. LIVE B4U DIE SUMMIT

The *Live B4U Die Summit*, is a life-saving initiative of the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. (CCMA), that targets teenagers and youth, who are prematurely losing their lives due to homicide, poor choices, drug abuse, risky sexual behavior, and suicide; and was created because of the high number of teenage deaths occurring in the metropolitan area. The summit includes a powerful mock funeral and an interactive "post-mortem" forum that analyzes the challenges faced by young people, engages them in open dialogue, and provides sustainable resources for overcoming these challenges.

4. BLACK MALE EMPOWERMENT EXPO

The annual *Black Male Empowerment Expo* includes interactive workshops, a keynote speech, an open forum, lunch, a resource panel, and service providers offering employment, training, health, and life skills resources for young men of color.

5. PRIORITY MALE EMPOWERMENT NETWORK (PMEN)

CCMA has launched the *Priority Male Empowerment Network (PMEN)*, a collaborative initiative that include screening, counseling, referral, and follow-up for young men who are seeking specialized training, life skills support, employment, and other needed resources, through a collaborative network of local agencies and organizations. Online applications are on the CCMA website for organizations and applicants.



INTERFAITH PARTNERSHIP DONORS

The Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. is profoundly grateful for the following churches, organizations and ministries that have donated financial or in-kind assistance to support our efforts to empower young people to live more productive lives:

Ben Hill United Methodist Church (In-Kind)
Black Methodist for Church Renewal (Financial)
Cascade United Methodist Church (In-Kind)
Central United Methodist Church (Financial & In-kind)
Churches Home Foundation (Financial)
Ebenezer Baptist Church (In-Kind)
Friendship Baptist Church (Financial & In-Kind)
Gammon Theological Seminary (In-Kind)
Greater Deliverance Baptist Church (Financial)
Headland Heights United Methodist Church (Financial & In-kind)
Hillside International Truth Center (Financial)
Interdenominational Theological Center (In-Kind)
Turner Theological Seminary (In-Kind)

“It takes a village to raise a child, but a child of God can help raise a village.” – Norma Joy Barnes

PRIORITY MALE EMPOWERMENT NETWORK (PMEN) SERVICE PROVIDERS

African American Rock, Inc.
Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta
Boyz to Men of Honor, Inc
**Brother2Brother Team Mentoring Method
Construction Ready**
Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority
Fulton County Division of Community Service
Georgia Department of Labor
Housing Authority of Fulton County
Juma Ventures
Manly Deeds, Inc.
Metro Atlanta Crime Commission
Office of the Fulton County Solicitor General

Noble Man Enterprises, LLC
R.O.B.E. Inc. (Saving Our Brothers Everywhere)
**SOSSI. Inc. (Saving Our Sons & Sisters
International)**
United Youth of America
University for Parents
Urban League of Greater Atlanta
Visions Unlimited, Inc.
WorkSource Atlanta
Wholistic Stress Control Institute
Young Adult Guidance Center
Year Up Atlanta
Youth Development and Capacity Building, Inc.



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APPENDIX

The following fact sheets provide information on the four challenges addressed by the Interfaith Leadership Coalition of the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc.:

- 1. DISCONNECTED YOUTH FACT SHEET**
- 2. THE PLIGHT OF BLACK MALES FACT SHEET**
- 3. THE ABSENT FATHER SYNDROME FACT SHEET**
- 4. THE REENTRY CHALLENGE FACT SHEET**



FACT SHEET: DISCONNECTED YOUTH
SOURCE: MEASURE OF AMERICA

Disconnected youth are people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working. Young people in this age range who are working or in school part-time or who are in the military are not considered disconnected.

The period of young adulthood is critical to developing the capabilities required for a full and flourishing life: knowledge and credentials, social skills and networks, a sense of mastery and agency, an understanding of one's strengths and preferences, and the ability to handle stressful events and regulate one's emotions, to name just a few. Measure of America is thus concerned with youth disconnection because it stunts human development, closing off some of life's most rewarding and joyful paths and leading to a future of limited horizons and unrealized potential.

The **Atlanta metro area** is composed of twenty-nine Georgia counties. The rate of youth disconnection in Atlanta is 16.8 percent. This rate translates into over 126,000 young people ages 16 to 24 who are falling through the cracks—a group comparable to the entire population of the cities of New Haven, Connecticut or Cedar Rapids, Michigan.*

• **Youth Disconnection by Race and Ethnicity**

Despite Atlanta's relatively high overall rate of youth disconnection, the rates among both African Americans (21.1 percent) and Latinos (16.5 percent) are slightly lower than the national average for these groups. Atlanta's white disconnection rate of 14.1 percent, on the other hand, is higher than the national average for whites. Seven percentage points separate the rates for whites and African Americans.

• **Youth Disconnection by Gender**

Following the national trend, males are more likely to be disconnected in Atlanta than females, 17.5 percent of young men and 16 percent of young women. The Atlanta Metro area is home to roughly 58,000 young women and 68,000 young men disconnected from school and work.

• **Youth Disconnection by Neighborhood**

The Atlanta metro area is made up of thirty-nine neighborhood clusters. The leadership rate of youth neither in school nor employed ranges from 33.1 percent in Southeast Atlanta, to just 5.1 percent in Northeast Cobb County—more than a six-fold difference. This range is one of the widest among the twenty-five most populous US metro areas and speaks to stark geographic inequalities within the city. In addition, there is a notable gap of almost 7 percentage points between the neighborhood with the highest rate of youth disconnection and that with the second highest rate—the Fulton County areas of Cascade Heights, West End, Bankhead, and Vine City.

**Note: Youth disconnection rates in this report are calculated by Measure of America using employment and enrollment data from the 2011 American Community Survey (ACS) of the US Census Bureau.*

HOW YOU CAN HELP . . .

We invite you to join us by becoming an interfaith partner; making a financial gift; serving as a mentor; or working as a volunteer. You may also visit us online at www.communitycouncilma.org to select a service provider through the Priority Male Empowerment Network (PMEN).



FACT SHEET: THE PLIGHT OF YOUNG BLACK MALES

"From the schoolhouse to the courthouse, the odds seem to be pervasively stacked against the Black male. Unemployment rates, school drop-out rates, income levels and incarceration rates of Black males, as compared with White males and Black females, are clear indicators of the challenges they face. This is particularly true for young Black males 18-28 years of age. Too many young men in this age bracket are caught in the gap between youth & full manhood, with no hands-on support to help them succeed in life. The good news is that these odds can be overcome by putting constructive strategies to work." - Norma J. Barnes, Priority Male Initiative Founder

According to the U. S. Census, there were 4.5 million Black men between the ages of 15 and 29 living in the United States in 2004, approximately 14% of all men in this age group and 12% of all Black in the U.S. Their high rates of death, incarceration, and unemployment disclose significant disparities, when compared to white males: Young Black men are less likely to graduate from high school than young White men; Fewer than 8% of young Black men have graduated from college compared to 17% of White males; The unemployment rate for young Black men is over twice the rate for young White men; Unemployment rates for Black males are twice the unemployment rate of White males, and significantly higher in Fulton and DeKalb counties; Over 20% of young Black men live in poverty compared to 10% of White men.

Black men are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. The percentage of young Black men in prison is nearly three times that of Hispanic men and nearly seven times that of White men. While Black men represent 14% of the population of young men in the United States, they represent over 40% of the prison population. According to Georgia Department of Corrections, African Americans represent 27% of Georgia's population, while representing 68% of Georgia's prison population. The Georgia prison population rates are even higher in Fulton (87.1%) and DeKalb (87.3%) counties. In the state of Georgia, Black males between the ages of 18-28 represent 19.45% of the total prison population, excluding the large number of young Black men on parole. Upon release from jail or prison, most young Black males encounter problems obtaining employment. Studies disclose that the risk of incarcerated males returning to prison as repeat offenders increases rapidly with the duration of their unemployment status.

The challenges facing young Black males must be addressed with positive and constructive resources. "Society pays in numerous ways when the potential of these men is left untapped, including paying exorbitant costs for social safety nets and crime deterrents," says Timothy D. Goler, coauthor of *Untapped Potential*. Goler maintains that if Black males cannot obtain and sustain adequate legal employment, they do not pay income taxes to contribute to the overall economy. Thus, the welfare of our country is at stake.

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FACT SHEET: THE ABSENT FATHER SYNDROME

“Fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation. It is the leading cause of declining child and adult wellbeing in our society. It is also the engine driving our most urgent social problems.... If this trend continues, fatherlessness is likely to change the shape of our society.”

- David Blankenhorn

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children in America – one out of three – live in biological father absent homes. Teenage pregnancy is often a contributing factor in fatherless homes. Research has shown that the absence of the father in the home affects the health, education, and emotional well-being of children. Typically, children in absent father homes experience the following:

1. Higher suicide rates;
2. Increased rates of depression and anxiety;
3. Involvement in gang activity;
4. Significantly higher rate of incarceration;
5. Decreased education levels;
6. Increased drop-out rates;
7. Lower than average income levels;
8. Lower job security;
9. Increased rates of substance abuse; and
10. Increases in social and mental behavioral issues.

Although these statistics paint a bleak picture, the CCMA believes that the odds faced by economically marginalized young males and their children can be overcome by putting constructive strategies to work. With viable programs, we can help fathers strengthen relationships with their children; improve long-term economic stability; and overcome obstacles and barriers that prohibit them from being effective and nurturing parents.

In a study examining father involvement with 134 children of adolescent mothers over the first 10 years of life, researchers found that father-child contact was associated with better socio-emotional and academic functioning. The results indicated that children with more involved fathers experienced fewer behavioral problems and scored higher on reading achievement. This study showed the significance of the role of fathers in the lives of at-risk children, even in case of nonresident fathers. See *Fathers' influence in the lives of children with adolescent mothers. Journal of Family Psychology, 20, 468- 476* by Howard, K. S., Burke Lefever, J. E., Borkowski, J.G., & Whitman, T. L.

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REENTRY FACT SHEET

SOURCE: The United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia, Community Outreach 75 Spring Street, SW, Ste. 600, Atlanta, GA 30303 Phone: 404-581-6000

- Each year, more than 700,000 individuals are released from state and federal prisons.
- At least 95 percent of all inmates in America will ultimately be released and returned to the community. Another 9 to 10 million more people cycle through local jails annually.
- Roughly 40% of former federal prisoners and more than 60% of former state prisoners are rearrested within three years of release.
- The costs of imprisonment and jail in the past 20 years have grown at a faster rate than nearly any other state budget item.
- It costs an average of \$78.95 per day to keep an inmate locked up.
- The U.S. now spends more than \$68 billion annually on federal, state and local corrections.
 - High rates of recidivism (the act of reengaging in criminal behavior that results in being rearrested, reconvicted, or returned to custody within three years of release from prison or probation) means more crime, more victims and more pressure on an already overburdened criminal justice system.
- Studies indicate that high quality jobs diminish the likelihood of recidivism.
 - Research suggests that ex-offenders who maintain a steady job and have close ties with family are less likely to renew their involvement in criminal behavior.
 - Most ex-offenders lack a competitive resume, employment credentials, are under-skilled relative to the general population of job-seekers, have the added stigma of an arrest or prison record, and by virtue of their record, face an especially narrow range of job opportunities; which are all considerable barriers to employment.
- Studies have found that employers were unwilling to hire ex-offenders even when they exceeded the qualifications for the position. Nearly 60% of employers surveyed in 4 large U.S. cities reported that they would “definitely not” or “probably not” hire an ex-prisoner.
- By reducing the rate of offenders who return to prison, we keep communities safer, families more intact, and can therefore, begin to reinvest incarceration dollars into other critical areas.
- Those of us with social capital have the ability to influence individuals who have the authority to hire an applicant, despite their criminal record, based on inside knowledge about the applicant’s character that may be gleaned from a third-party source.
- Successful reintegration into the workforce translates into: a) safer neighborhoods, b) stable families, c) prosocial structured activity for an ex-offender, d) reduced taxpayer costs for reincarceration, e) living wages for an ex-offender to support himself/herself and family, and f) income for restitution to victims, court and correctional supervision fees, continued mental or behavioral health treatment, and child support, when necessary.

This information has been provided to you by The United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia, Community Outreach 75 Spring Street, SW, Ste. 600, Atlanta, GA 30303 Phone: 404-581-6000



“ CALL TO ACTION” WORKSHEET FOR FAITH MINISTRIES

This worksheet is provided to assist faith ministries in the evaluation of challenges existing in their communities

1. What are the challenges faced by disconnected youth, young black males, fatherless relationships?
2. What is being done to address this issue in the community?
3. How can this issue be addressed by the faith community (churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, etc.)?
4. What can I do to address this issue?
5. How can my congregation respond to this issue?
6. What will I commit to do?

Issue:	
Challenges:	
Recommendations:	



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For additional information, please contact:



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