

# National Black Church Initiative

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **THE NATIONAL BLACK CHURCH INITIATIVE DECRIES GRADUATION RATES AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN BOTH HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE**

**NBCI devises plan to increase graduation rates by half  
within ten years**

Washington, DC – A recent study commissioned by the America’s Promise Alliance has shown that the gap between graduation rates in urban and suburban areas is truly large and significant. The study concluded that the national graduation rate in the nation’s 50 largest cities was 53 percent, with said cities’ suburbs coming in at 71 percent. This gap is even more striking in many cities such as Cleveland where 38 percent of inner city youths graduate from high school while 80 percent of suburban youths do. These rates were from 2005, which was the last year information such as this were available, but they show an increasing trend towards urban areas not receiving the necessary funding and support that is required to maintain a productive school system.

This is a disturbing trend that feeds into another equally troubling development concerning African American males on a collegiate level. At historically black colleges and universities the graduation rate is only 37 percent within six years. That is four percent lower than the national average and is mostly based around the struggles that black men are having with graduating. One of the major reasons for this occurrence is that HBCUs educate a hugely disproportionate amount of low-income students. This also has to do with black males not asking for help when they need it and HBCUs not offering the support that is needed. This lack of male graduates from colleges must be fixed in order to prepare black youths to be leaders in the future.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church Initiative stated forcefully, “The Black Church has been the early pioneer in establishing the foundation for education in the black community. This forthcoming initiative is an act of the Black Church to reclaim its original calling besides its theological position as being the moral authority of society. The key motivation here is to help the black community grow spiritually by providing the African American family with the tools they need to sustain itself and education is the only pillar besides the belief in God that would help sustain the family and contribute to civil society. We strongly believe that the characteristics which we have identified in the initiative are the missing links and also the glue with other affinity initiatives from both public and private settings. There is no question that the church has an identifiable and critical role to play in this area.”

Given these two trends together and other negative trends regarding the African American community and family this constitutes a time bomb not only for the African American community but for our nation. There seems to be no one connecting these two issues or coming up with a strategy to address both of them, but the Black Church sees the issue clearly. The question is do we want this type of trend to continue and suffer the consequences in terms of social costs, alcoholism, drug abuse, prison, divorce and broken families or are we willing to devise a structure to cut these two developments in half by pulling together major stakeholders on a preventive early warning level.

The National Black Church Initiative has devised such a plan, and has spent the last year recruiting and listening to key stake holders to help them implement this progressive national initiative with the goal to drastically cut into the dropout rate among young African American males and to show up those males and females in terms of graduation rate at a collegiate level, especially at historically black colleges. We hope to also focus on high school dropout rates among the weakest communities like Cleveland, New York, Detroit and Baltimore. We will integrate this initiative within the present workable best model structure that deals with these two issues. This initiative does not intend to be a standalone project. We believe that this will not succeed without being fully integrated with affinity and key stakeholders. Here are the characteristics of the program:

- The recruitment of up to 250,000 education volunteers from the Black Church over the next ten years with that ability to check their backgrounds before they become any sort of mentor to kids to guard against the issues of abuse.
- After school support programs that are connected to organizations that administer best practice education models
- A mentorship/monitoring program that will track high school and collegiate individuals from entrance to graduation. This will take over 25,000 key volunteers around the country who have agreed to attach that individual to their families.
- Wrap-around social service strategies that will support the individual and his/her family through the educational process
- Spiritual and counseling support for students and their families
- Church based scholarship and financial assistance by connecting all faith based scholarship programs
- Work with historically black colleges to devise early warning systems to identify young African American males who are having a problem adjusting and meeting the educational goal for college

Rev. Mark McLary, Chairman of NBCI Minister Alliance said, “We hope to work with the America’s Promise Alliance and affinity organizations across this country utilizing our huge faith based initiative to transform the numbers regarding drop out, rates especially among African American males, and help to direct this youth energy into some sort of higher education or community service. We refuse to give up on our children. We have been in contact with all of our church leadership and strongly believe that this is the role that the Black Church needs to play in this emerging crisis. We believe that Rev. Evans is correct and all of our churches support his analysis of the issues and these ambitious goals.”

Funding will be a major issue in implementing such an initiative. What is not available is funding to make these parts of the initiative work in tandem with each other for the desirable goal. We have identified such funding as glue funding and we hope to work with all stakeholders, including national foundations to help bring about this Black Church educational structure. Most of the structural funding is in place and there is added help through President Obama’s priority on education and the stimulus package. The fundamental question for the church community is will we receive the necessary resources to help make this a reality. We hope to unveil this initiative by the end of July.

### **About NBCI**

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 16,000 African-American and Latino member churches works to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare. In addition to our member churches, we have 18,000 sister churches. NBCI is a faith-based health organization dedicated to providing critical wellness information and preventive health screening to all of its members. The African-American community ranks first in eleven different health risk categories. NBCI’s purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality healthcare.