

Written by

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"I'm reaching out to some of America's leading foundations and corporations on a new initiative to help more young men of color facing especially tough odds to stay on track and reach their full potential."

– President Barack Obama, January 28, 2014

"There are a lot of kids out there who need help, who are getting a lot of negative reinforcement. And is there more that we can do to give them the sense that their country cares about them and values them and is willing to invest in them?"

– President Barack Obama, July 19, 2013

President Obama is taking action to launch *My Brother's Keeper* – a new initiative to help every boy and young man of color who is willing to do the hard work to get ahead. For decades, opportunity has lagged behind for boys and young men of color. But across the country, communities are adopting approaches to help put these boys and young men on the path to success. The President wants to build on that work. We can learn from communities that are partnering with local businesses and foundations to connect these boys and young men to mentoring, support networks, and skills they need to find a good job or go to college and work their way up into the middle class. And the Administration will do its part by helping to identify and promote programs that work.

That starts by using proven tools that expand opportunity at key moments in the lives of these young people. The President believes this includes ensuring access to basic health, nutrition, and to high-quality early education to get these kids reading and ready for school at the youngest age. But that's not enough. We need to partner with communities and police to reduce violence and make our classrooms and streets safer. And we need to help these young men stay in school and find a good job– so they have the opportunity to reach their full potential, contribute to their communities and build decent lives for themselves and their families.

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New Presidential Task Force to Expand Opportunity. President Obama will sign a Presidential Memorandum establishing the My Brother's Keeper Task Force, an interagency effort, chaired by Assistant to the President and Cabinet Secretary Broderick Johnson, that will help us determine what public and private efforts are working and how to expand upon them, how the Federal Government's own policies and programs can better support these efforts, and how to better involve State and local officials, the private sector, and the philanthropic community in these efforts.

The Task Force will work across executive departments and agencies to:

- Assess the impact of Federal policies, regulations, and programs of general applicability on boys and young men of color, so as to develop proposals that will enhance positive outcomes and eliminate or reduce negative ones.
- Recommend, where appropriate, incentives for the broad adoption by national, State, and local public and private decision makers of effective and innovative strategies and practices for providing opportunities to and improving outcomes for boys and young men of color.
- Create an Administration-wide "What Works" online portal to disseminate successful programs and practices that improve outcomes for boys and young men of color.
- Develop a comprehensive public website, to be maintained by the Department of Education, that will assess, on an ongoing basis, critical indicators of life outcomes for boys and young men of color in absolute and relative terms.
- Work with external stakeholders to highlight the opportunities, challenges, and efforts affecting boys and young men of color.
- Recommend to the President means of ensuring sustained efforts within the Federal Government and continued partnership with the private sector and philanthropic community as set forth in the Presidential Memorandum.

Investments from Leading Foundations and Businesses to Advance the Achievement of Boys and Young Men of Color. Leading foundations and businesses have long worked with others in philanthropy to create opportunities for young men and boys of color and today are committing significant resources to research critical intervention points in the lives of boys and young men of color; change the often-damaging narrative about them; and catalyze coordinated investments to seed, replicate, and scale up effective community solutions.

The foundations supporting today's call to action have already made extensive investments, including \$150 million in current spending that they have already approved or awarded. Building on that, today these foundations are announcing that over the next five years they seek to invest at least \$200 million, alongside additional investments from their peers in philanthropy and the business community, to find and rapidly spread solutions that have the highest potential for impact in key areas, including: early child development and school readiness, parenting and parent engagement, 3rd grade literacy, educational opportunity and school discipline reform, interactions with the criminal justice system ladders to jobs and economic opportunity and healthy families and communities.

The foundations will work over the next 90 days to design a strategy and infrastructure for coordination of these investments, which can be aligned with additional commitments from a

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diverse array of actors from other sectors.

These foundations, who are joining President Obama at today's announcement, include The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The California Endowment, The Ford Foundation, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Open Society Foundations, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and The Kapor Center for Social Impact. Many of the foundations are members of the Executives' Alliance to Expand Opportunities for Boys and Men of Color – a coalition of philanthropic institutions committed to leveraging philanthropy's role in improving life outcomes for boys and men of color.

In addition to the leadership from the philanthropic community, the My Brother's Keeper initiative will leverage participation from the business community and elected officials to support this cross-sector effort.

Data shows that boys and young men of color, regardless of socio-economic background, are disproportionately at risk throughout the journey from their youngest years to college and career. For instance, large disparities remain in reading proficiency, with 86 percent of black boys and 82 percent of Hispanic boys reading below proficiency levels by the fourth grade – compared to 58 percent of white boys reading below proficiency levels. Additionally, the disproportionate number of black and Hispanic young men who are unemployed or involved in the criminal justice system alone is a perilous drag on state budgets, and undermines family and community stability. These young men are more than six times as likely to be victims of murder than their white peers and account for almost half of the country's murder victims each year.

The effort launched is focused on unlocking the full potential of boys and young men of color – something that will not only benefit them, but all Americans. The Task Force and new private sector partnership will take a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach to building ladders of opportunity. Both the Task Force and the partnership will take action immediately while planning for long-term success.