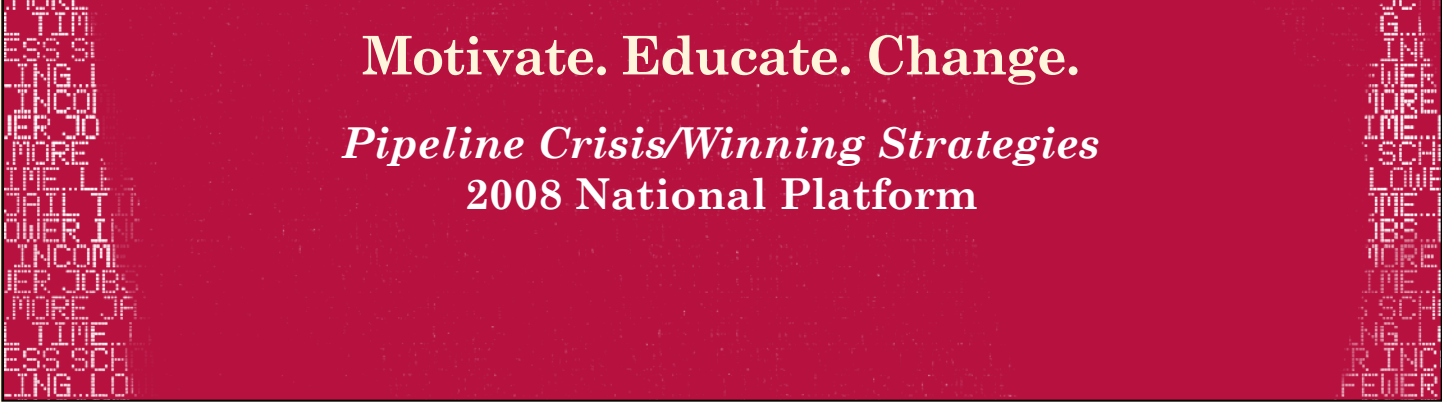




Motivate. Educate. Change.

Pipeline Crisis/Winning Strategies
2008 National Platform







The Winning Strategies

Early Childhood Education

Early education and intervention programs are critical to developing the mind and character of children, giving them the best chance of reaching full potential and ultimately paying for itself by molding productive, tax-paying citizens.¹⁶ Studies show for every \$1 spent on a 3-year old, there is a \$4 return to the individual and a \$13 return to society.¹⁷ One in four U.S. families earn below-poverty wages, and children in these families are far less likely to have an enriching, healthful and cognitively stimulating environment.¹⁸ Neuroscience shows that toxic stress from growing up in deep poverty can cause brain damage leading to lifelong learning, behavior, and physical and mental health problems.¹⁹ Head Start is the longest-running, federally funded national school readiness program for low-income, pre-school-age children and families. Studies show that Head Start works, returning \$9 for every \$1 invested.²⁰ Yet it serves less than half of the eligible children, while Early Head Start serves only 3% of its target. And funding has not kept pace with inflation, leading to cutbacks in critical services.²¹

Money Matters

Provide full funding to make high-quality, early child care and education available to all preschoolers. Provide full funding to develop and retain a skilled workforce, and create incentives for states to increase appropriations for childcare, pre-K, parent education, and early learning strategies. Provide full funding for universal pre- and post-natal care, parenting education, and teen pregnancy prevention.

Parental Participation

Parent participation is critical to early childhood development. Funding of early childhood programs should be conditioned on effective parent training and participation.

Fathers Matter

Fathers with little schooling, poor job prospects and substance abuse problems are more likely to be poor, unmarried and in arrears in child support payments. Many low-income men fall behind on child support because of low-wage employment, unemployment and incarceration.²² Studies show that nearly 40% of unmarried fathers have been incarcerated and nearly 35% are high school drop outs.²³ Fathers who are unable to pay child support should not be uniformly treated like deadbeats. Programs should be instituted to forgive arrearages for fathers who comply with payment plans, work requirements, and other strategies to remove disincentives for non-custodial fathers. The Earned Income Tax Credit ("EITC") for low-income fathers paying child support should be increased, and employers required to notify employees of EITC eligibility. Funding should be provided for training programs that help fathers secure the jobs they need to pay child support and stay involved with their children.

Comprehensive Early Care & Education System

Our early care and education system requires governance and coordination by a central office responsible for a wide range of programs and services to meet the range of children's needs. Financing strategies should include adequate financial aid to assist needy families. The programs and workforce should be required to meet quality assurance and accreditation standards.

Public School Education

Quality public school education is essential to the success of our democracy and global competitiveness, and remains the only sustainable vehicle by which the poor can lift themselves out of poverty. Studies

“Every black male child born in the U.S. today has a 1 in 3 chance of spending time in prison.”



Platform Overview

“We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal...”

Yet, young black men are falling behind the rest of society by virtually every economic and social measure. They are dropping out of school in droves, facing staggering unemployment rates and being imprisoned in record numbers.¹

The problems confronting young black men are too many and too complex to succumb to a single solution. We offer this comprehensive slate of policy proposals to address them. These remedies are evidence-based strategies that have been proven to be effective. The pipeline crisis—acute for young black men but not unique to them—threatens the security of our families, our communities and our nation. We can no longer afford to ignore glaring inequities in who is punished and who is helped. The only missing ingredient is political will. Heed our call to action.

The Consequence of Poor Choices and Neglect

There is an evolving national consensus that misguided criminal justice policies of past decades have taken an enormous toll on society, and young black men and their children and families have borne the brunt of this. We imprison too many, too quickly and for too long. While this is partly due to crime, it is also a function of policy choices. Research shows that two factors account for most of the decline in the employment of young, less-educated, black men: high incarceration rates and vigorous child support enforcement.² The entrenched racial disparity in who gets jailed is well-documented, with young black men bearing the brunt of disproportionate imprisonment despite the ineffectiveness of harsh mandatory sentences, “three-strike” policies, and jailing for technical parole violations.³

The collateral damage from two decades of policies that failed to stem the tide of drugs has hit black men and urban communities hardest, separating men from families and reducing their job prospects. Some African-American communities have wallowed in decay while the country has enjoyed the greatest wealth accumulation in its history.

It Costs More to Jail Than to Educate

The massive U.S. prison complex costs \$60 billion a year to sustain,⁴ with some states spending more on corrections than on higher education and nearly three times more per prisoner than public school pupil.⁵ Prison costs are crippling state budgets, while barely making a dent in crime control. More than half of offenders are back in prison within three years of release.

What happens to young black men affects the well-being of children, families, neighborhoods and communities. Studies show that marriage, family structure and involved fathers have a positive impact on a child’s well-being. Thirty-four percent of children, however, live without their biological father, and nearly half of all single-mother families live in poverty.⁶ Seven million U.S. children have fathers in the criminal justice system. This is 9 times more likely for black children. And children with

a parent in jail are 6 times more likely to wind up in jail themselves, thus repeating a perpetual cycle of poverty, joblessness and incarceration.⁷ Children of fatherless families have higher substance abuse, more behavioral problems, achieve less in school, earn less and are more likely to be juvenile delinquents and to commit crimes. This exacts an enormous toll. The federal government spends nearly \$100 billion annually to support homes without fathers.⁸

The Later the Investment, the Smaller the Return.

School-age black children are more likely than others to repeat grades, score poorly on standardized tests and be suspended from or drop out of school.⁹ Educational inequality begins before children enter grade school. Many poor children start school without the early lessons needed to succeed, and most black children (60.8%) are born into poverty.¹⁰ Poor children enter school with a fraction of the vocabulary of middle-class students. Studies show that high-quality early childhood programs will benefit the nation’s neediest children the most. Earlier dollars yield higher returns. As poor children age, the potential returns on investments in education and intervention exponentially decrease.¹¹ All children need access to high-quality early childhood programs: quality counts, quality costs, and quality pays. Investing in high-quality, early childhood care and education will pay tremendous societal returns.

To close the achievement gap, poor children also need access to high-quality education. A recent study shows that black and white children entering kindergarten with similar personal and family backgrounds achieved similar math and reading test scores.¹² Once in school, however, black children almost immediately began losing ground relative to other races.¹³ Empirical evidence suggests that differences in school quality play an important role in explaining the gap.¹⁴

The Pipeline Crisis

For more than a decade, U.S. colleges and graduate schools have suffered precipitous declines in the enrollment of young black men.¹⁵ This is due partly to the high rates of high school drop outs and the growing number of graduates unable to successfully transition to college. The steady stream of dire reports on the social and economic conditions of black men suggests the crisis will continue to reverberate until policymakers adopt a comprehensive plan to solve these problems. This is a call to action, and the private sector must let its rising voice be heard on these important matters.

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show that drop-outs are far more likely to be a burden on society than high school graduates.²⁴ Uneducated black men work less, earn less and are more likely to serve jail time.

More School, Better Results

U.S. children are in school an average of 6.5 hours a day, 180 days a year—fewer than in many other industrialized countries.²⁵ Some schools have improved test scores for students by increasing the instructional time they receive. Funding and other incentives should be provided to support extending the school day and year; and making full-day programs available to young children, particularly poor youth. These programs should have tutoring and mentoring components.

Re-engage Those Already Left Behind

Nationally, over four million people age 16 to 24 have either dropped out of high school or failed to successfully transition to college or work.²⁶ We need to reengage “disconnected” young adults in GED and skills programs so they can participate in the workforce. In communities with high unemployment rates, we must invest in high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that offer disconnected youth the skills that they need to connect education to the real world.

Quality Matters

Good teachers matter. A growing body of research shows that the quality of teaching is the single most important factor in scholastic achievement, and teachers achieve better results when they are rewarded for doing so. Other spheres of public policy use incentives to achieve results, but teachers are mostly rewarded for qualities unrelated to performance—certification and longevity. Moreover, rules governing U.S. education policy are too frequently dictated by workplace concerns, not by the quality of education or educators. We must elevate educational priorities and policies above the fray of workplace concerns. Other nations have improved education by making it a national priority, recruiting the right people and providing them with the resources to become effective teachers. Financial incentives should be provided to encourage highly effective teachers to serve in schools with a high concentration of disadvantaged children.

Promote Equity

A recent General Accounting Office study of per-pupil spending, factors influencing spending, and other differences between high-poverty inner city schools and suburban schools found that “inner city schools generally had higher percentages of first-year teachers, higher enrollments, fewer library resources and less in-school parental involvement.” To break the cycle of poverty, children who need more educational resources should receive more. Incentives and resources should be provided to states to equalize school funding, to lower class size, and to increase supplemental services and after school programs in schools serving disadvantaged children.²⁷

Full Service Schools

Increase access to health, nutrition, recreation and social services in high-poverty schools. Research has shown that this comprehensive approach is effective in mitigating the effects of poverty. Full-service schools curricula should include discipline policies and practices aimed at re-connecting students to learning while addressing the development of ethics and character. Successful programs have shown that when we address the basic social needs of children it is easier for schools to meet their academic needs.

“For these are all our children. We will all profit by, or pay for, whatever they become.”

Criminal Justice

The historically high U.S. incarceration rate leads the world in both the number and percentage of citizens imprisoned. The 2.3 million U.S. prisoners dwarfs even China’s prison population, a nation which is four times more populous than the U.S.²⁸ Every black male born in the U.S. today has a 1-in-3 chance of spending time in prison.²⁹ Virtually all prisoners return home. In 2006, nearly 750,000 people were released from U.S. prisons and jails.³⁰ For decades, the education and vocational training provided to inmates has inadequately prepared them for re-entry into the workforce. To break an insidious cycle of poverty and recidivism, we need to better educate and train prisoners for a productive life after their release. We must summon the political and public will to reverse long-standing policies that have contributed to a boom in our prison population and failed to prepare offenders to return home and become productive members of their communities. As a nation, we must re-examine the social value of an increasingly privatized criminal justice system over its financial profitability and incentives. Since 1968, Congress has provided financial and technical support to encourage state and local jurisdictions to adopt stricter crime and drug policies, with federal funds paying as much as 75% of the costs of crime prevention programs.³¹ Some states have shown that criminal justice policies can be moderated and still protect communities, punish offenders and reduce costs. Federal incentives should be used to encourage states and municipalities to reform their laws and policies.

Provide Funding

In many cases, we lock up the same people over and over again. Thirty-nine percent of prisoners have served three or more sentences. Congress took an important first step toward curbing recidivism in adopting the Second Chance Act, which attempts to break the cycle of re-incarceration by helping released prisoners reintegrate into their communities. No resources are available for the Act’s programs, however, until Congress votes to allocate funding. Congress should vote to fully fund the Second Chance Act now.

Treatment Works

Lengthy sentences for non-violent drug offenses disserve society and require re-examination.³² In New York, nearly 14,000 people are incarcerated under the Rockefeller Drug Laws, which require harsh sentences for possessing or selling small quantities of drugs and cost the



“Our 2.3 million prisoners dwarf even China, which is four times more populous.”

State \$500 million a year. Virtually all (90%) are black and Hispanic men.³³ Sentencing laws and guidelines should be revised to divert low-level, non-violent offenders to community-based treatment programs and incarceration alternatives, which are not only less expensive and more effective, but afford offenders an opportunity to pay taxes, restitution and child support.

Disparities Hurt

The Supreme Court ruling that judges can sentence below the guidelines, and the Sentencing Commission's vote allowing drug offenders to seek reduced sentences, are both steps in the right direction, but they have not eliminated the 100-to-1 sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine or the long mandatory sentences that many black men are unfairly serving. Congress must end this 20-year injustice by recalibrating drug laws to surgically target high-level distribution, and not high numbers of low-level, non-violent offenses.

Incarcerated Fathers

Most incarcerated men are fathers, jailed for non-violent offenses. Once released, employment and family ties are critical to staying out of prison.³⁴ Most of these fathers lack literacy and marketable job skills, and need services to support their transition to their homes and communities. Support should be provided for pre- and post-release programs to help prisoners get training and jobs.

Working Works

People with jobs commit fewer crimes. As wages go up, crime goes down.³⁵ By virtue of their race, criminal convictions and want of education and skills, disconnected black youth face stiff barriers to employment. Federal tax credits should be used to encourage private employers to train, hire, retain and advance disconnected youth and provide employers who responsibly hire formerly incarcerated people with a safe-harbor from tort liability.

Education Works

Education significantly decreases the odds of repeat offenses.³⁶ Prisoners who take college courses are less likely to return, and offering them courses makes prisons safer by inducing good behavior and improving morale and self-esteem. Funding should be restored for prison higher-education programs and educational achievement should be used as an incentive for non-violent offenders to “buy-down” lengthy prison sentences.

Juvenile Justice

Many young people are in the juvenile justice system for low-level, non-violent offenses, and often pose little or no threat to public safety. Black children are punished more often and more harshly. They are more likely to be treated as adult offenders and more likely to be committed for their offenses.³⁷ Black children are over-represented in the juvenile justice system; they are 16% of the U.S. population

but nearly 40% of the children in juvenile justice.³⁸ In New York City, for example, black children are approximately 32 times more likely than white children to be placed in a detention facility.

Treatment for Kids Who Need It

Treating troubled teens like adult offenders doesn't work. Treatment-based programs do. Missouri pioneered successful reforms, based on small home-like rehabilitation centers, which other states have been replicating.³⁹ New York State has an 80% re-arrest rate.⁴⁰ States that have replaced remote, prison-style, juvenile detention facilities with community-based, therapeutic centers have drastically cut the rate of repeat offenses from well over 50% to fewer than 10% without jeopardizing public safety.⁴¹ Housing fewer juveniles also costs less. Over-incarcerating teens has a disproportionate impact on black boys.⁴² Provide funding and incentives to support states that shift juvenile justice systems away from an incarceration-based model to more cost-effective and productive alternative programs.

Employment & Economic Development

Based on one analysis, black families have lost more than two trillion dollars in income during a ten-year period due to the earnings gap, excessive unemployment and over-incarceration.⁴³ To increase the likelihood of young black men becoming self-sufficient, contributing members of society, we must create vocational training and job opportunities for sustainable employment in under-served areas.

Job Creation

Provide federal tax credits to encourage private employers to create jobs and training opportunities and to hire a local workforce in economically depressed communities. The federal job training program should be updated to reflect best practices, and reauthorized. To bridge the gap between training and employment, the funding should be directed to workforce development programs and partnerships that train employees for jobs that exist—linking trainees directly to employers—and that provide employers with a skilled labor force. Policymakers should create targeted tax credits that encourage training and employing “disconnected” youth and young adults who have been incarcerated. Incentives should also be created to encourage states to invest in disconnected youth and to stimulate private sector philanthropic efforts in workforce development, including expanding not-for-profit workforce intermediaries and providing tax credits for charitable contributions to youth workforce development programs. In addition, policymakers should pursue opportunities to leverage public sector projects to train and employ young adults.



Make Work Pay

Make employment steady and provide incentives to encourage the creation of jobs that pay a living wage to anyone who wants to work. We need to expand the Work Opportunity Tax Credit to create incentives for employers to invest in their employees and for employees to stay employed.

Increase Vocational Training

Provide funding for expanding high-quality career and technical training in high schools and community colleges. Career Academies are a widely used high school reform initiative that have been found to improve labor market conditions for young men. They are organized as small learning communities, combine academic and technical curricula around a career theme, and create partnerships with local employers to provide career-related work skills.⁴⁴

Improve Services

Provide funding for grant programs for state and local jurisdictions to offer services for ex-offenders returning to their communities, including services for housing, employment, drug addiction, health care and mental health treatment.

Remove Work Barriers

Provide funding to reward states that remove legal barriers to hiring the formerly-incarcerated that are unrelated to job performance.

Poverty Hurts

The EITC has a bigger impact on raising the income of poor working families than any other federal program. Many families who qualify do not claim the credit. Other low income families use commercial preparers, despite the free preparation services available to them. More than half of EITC filers take out refund anticipation loans to get quicker payments, paying estimated annualized interest rates of 70% to 700%.⁴⁵ In 2005, this cost poor families \$1 billion.⁴⁶ Tax loan preparers should be regulated to ensure that fair business practices are followed, that consumers know what they are buying and what it costs. Eligibility for EITC credits should be expanded to include childless young adults who also face difficulties finding work.

Promote Community Benefit Agreements

Support the use of community benefit agreements—private partnerships between community groups and developers—to produce equitable and sustainable development in economically depressed areas.

Spread the Wealth

Provide federal funding to create incentives for private employers to retain minority-owned vendors and professional service companies.

Opportunities for High Potential Youth

Too few black men make up the applicant pool for college admissions. Among those who do, too few graduate. Only 16% of African Americans earn a bachelor's degree.⁴⁷ Very few colleges, universities and professional schools have taken proactive steps to increase the matriculation of black men. The first step in solving problems is acknowledging they exist. We must identify, acknowledge, support and direct investments to increase the number of black men in the pipeline to higher education and professional endeavors.

Be Proactive

Provide incentives and funding for elementary and secondary school systems, community colleges and universities to proactively address the declining number of black men graduating from high school, college and graduate schools.

Defray College Costs

College costs have grown 40% in the past five years with no end in sight.⁴⁸ Most college students graduate with a mountain of debt. Many poor students drop out because they cannot afford tuition. Provide funding for a national program to finance college education based on community service, allowing students to earn financial credits toward higher education by serving needy communities.

Promote Public Service

Provide loan forgiveness for college graduates who enter public or governmental service.

Incentives

Provide funding for matriculation programs between two- and four-year colleges, which expand educational opportunities for socially and economically disadvantaged students. Provide funding to support college readiness, advanced placement and dual enrollment programs between high schools and colleges, in which high school students earn college credits. These have proven successful in deterring drop-outs.

Adopt Apprenticeship

Provide incentives for private-employers to create internship and apprenticeship programs for high-achieving youth from distressed and low-income areas.

“The first step in solving problems is acknowledging they exist.”

About the Pipeline Crisis/Winning Strategies Initiative

Pipeline Crisis/Winning Strategies is a private sector collaboration of persons and organizations committed to addressing the stark divide between America's promise and the social, economic and political realities of young African-American males. Our mission is to pool the talent, knowledge and resources of the legal and financial service communities to help reverse the rising rates of school drop-outs, joblessness and incarceration among young black men, and to increase their representation in the pipeline to higher education and professional endeavors. www.pipelinecrisis.org.

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