The State of Emergency for Black Males in Robbinsdale
Questions

1. What are your thoughts about this picture?
2. What is the symbolism in this picture?
3. How is this picture symbolic to Robbinsdale Area Schools Black males?
Courageous Conversations Protocol

Six Conditions:
1. Focus on PERSONAL local and immediate
2. Isolate race
3. Normalize SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS & multiple perspectives
4. Monitor agreements, conditions, and ESTABLISH PARAMETERS
5. Use a “WORKING DEFINITION” for race
6. Examine the presence and role of “WHITENESS”

Four Agreements:
1. Stay ENGAGED
2. Experience DISCOMFORT
3. Speak your TRUTH
4. Expect/Accept NON-CLOSURE
State of the Problem

- Black Males in Robbinsdale Area Schools (RAS) are not currently reaching the highest levels of achievement. Statistically Black males are at the bottom of multiple statistical categories on Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments for reading and math in RAS. Black males have low numbers of participation in AVID, IB, and AP courses. This epidemic is not exclusive to RAS, but is a national pandemic plaguing the American School system.
- Black males are the highest referred out of the classroom, suspended from school, and overrepresented in Special Education.
- If this deadly trend of criminalization of Black males in RAS continues we will continually perpetuate the destruction and demise of Black males and education will not be the liberating tool it should be, rather, education will continue to be an oppressive tool that it has been for many oppressed groups, in particular, Black males.
Agenda

• Statement of the problem
  o National statistics
  o State statistics
  o Robbinsdale statistics

  Cause
  o Historical overview (The making of a villain)
  o Cycle of socialization
  o Niggered/deficit thinking (student, parent, teacher, society)

  Solution
  o Best practices working with Black males
  o Know thyself/breaking the chains of mental slavery
  o Cycle of liberation

  Implementation
  o Boys 2 Men
  o National Urban Alliance
  o Courageous Conversations

  We need more
  o Next steps
  o District commitment
Black Boys Dream Too!
National Statistics

• **Suspension**
  • One out of every six African American students (17%) were suspended at least once in 2009-10, compared to one in 20 White students (5%).

• **Graduation Rates**
  • In 2009-10 the national graduation rate for Black male students was 52%. The graduation rate for White, non-Latino males was 78%.
In 2010, the Dropout rate was 9.9% for Blacks compared to 12.9% in 2006 and 19.5% in 2003 (MDE, 2012).
RAS Stats

• Total Black male population district-wide: 1791
  • P-5 809
  • 6-8 404
  • 9-12 578

• Black male enrollment in AP: 64 Students (4%), IB: 332 (18%), MYP: 282, all courses combined: 678 (37%) of the Black male pop.

• Black student suspension ISS: 942, OSS: 693

• Black male graduation rate (FY2012) 155 seniors, 73 graduated 47% Schools (AHS, CHS, RTC)

• Discipline hearings
  o 11-12 school year we did a total of 119
  o 86 - black students (72%)
  o 26 - white students
  o 7 – Latino students

• 12-13 school year we have done a total of 43
  o 30 - black students (70%)
  o 11 - white students
  o 2 - Latino students
% Proficient on 2012 Reading MCA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elem School</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>HS (grade 10)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Afr Am Female</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Afr Am Male</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afr Am Female</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afr Am Male</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- Not Afr Am Female
- Not Afr Am Male
- Afr Am Female
- Afr Am Male
% Proficient on 2012 Math MCA

- **Elem School:**
  - Not Afr Am Female: 67%
  - Not Afr Am Male: 68%
  - Afr Am Female: 38%
  - Afr Am Male: 41%

- **Middle School:**
  - Not Afr Am Female: 42%
  - Not Afr Am Male: 44%
  - Afr Am Female: 12%
  - Afr Am Male: 15%

- **HS (grade 11):**
  - Not Afr Am Female: 31%
  - Not Afr Am Male: 46%
  - Afr Am Female: 10%
  - Afr Am Male: 5%
• What do we tell parents of Black males who are considering RAS as an educational option?
• How does the mass suspension and referral of Black boys impact future generations of the Black family and economic vitality of Minnesota?
• What is the alternate option for Black males if RAS can’t provide equitable education for them?
• Please share how Black males are performing in your building.
Please Don’t Judge me on my Appearance
Cause

• Humans are the only life form in nature who operate based upon our self-consciousness or what we know about ourselves. We only know what we are taught.

• As one scholar writes, the mode of the academy is at the base of social control. Black and White minds alike are therefore guided/enslaved by the excessive and distorted information about white people and the absence of information about black people.

• Dr. Akbar warns that it will be difficult for all of us to acknowledge our slave mentality because "the very nature of mental slavery creates an illusion that we are free."
Historical Overview (The making of a villain)

- Over 260 years of slavery and its effect on the African American community cannot be wiped away so easily.
- Black boys, 12 and older, are removed from their classes, given referrals, and suspended at a much higher rate than White boys.
- Not finding and creating ways for academic and social engagement handicaps learning.
- Black boys who manage to achieve academically pay a heavy price for success.
The Negro: A Beast or in the Image of God? Charles Carroll 1900
**Cycle of Socialization**

**Roots (1977): "Kunta Kinte Torture Scene" - YouTube**

- **The Beginning**
  - We have no choice in our initial identity.

- **First Socialization**
  - Our families or adults closer to us begin to shape us right after we are born.

- **Actions**
  - One decides to go along with or fight the system.

- **Institutional & Cultural Socialization**
  - People learn their role in society or from stereotypes.

- **Enforcements**
  - People who go along with the social norms.

- **The Core of the Cycle**
  - Fear
  - Ignorance
  - Confusion
  - Insecurity
Perceptions and Stereotypes

• Perceptions and stereotypes of African American boys may facilitate the perpetuation of the Black/White achievement gap, even if they arise from a process that is largely race natural—“I don’t see color.”

• In-depth studies have shown that Black boys are generally viewed with a widespread notion of academic inferiority and lax diligence. (Studies going back 20 years)

• Teachers’ perceptions independently influence performance by way of self-fulfilling prophecies and perceptual biases.
DeCoy (1967) contends that beyond its insult function, Nigger is an actionable term employed to categorically subordinate Black persons. Put differently, a Black male student could be ‘niggered’ in various ways (e.g., being told that he is unlikely to accomplish much in life; that he is no good, just like the rest of them; and that being successful in school is an anomaly for people like him).

Another example is how a White teacher responded to Malcolm X’s articulation of his aspiration to pursue a career in law – she encouraged him to consider carpentry instead, a profession that was more realistically accessible by Niggers (Kennedy).

Malcolm was niggered by his teacher’s avowal of low expectations for his goals. A third example could be derived from Jenkins’ (2006) article, ‘Mr. Nigger: The Challenges of Educating Black Males within American Society’, wherein she notes the following contradictions in education policy and practice:
On one hand, the society espouses rhetoric of concern and desire to elevate Black males, but on the other hand, practices a policy of oppression, prejudice, and disregard. Put differently, the experience of the Black man in America seems to be one in which he is called ‘mister’, but is treated with a ‘niggardly’ regard. And the result is the positioning of Black males at the lower rungs of society and their experiencing underachievement in almost all aspects of life. (127)
Beyond Love: A Critical Race Ethnography of the Schooling of Adolescent Black Males

- However, Derrick Bell (1995), like W. E. B. DuBois (1935) before him, critiques desegregation policy for its failure to encompass the complexities of what it means for black students to achieve a quality education.

- Thus, he argues, remedies that fail to attack all policies of racial subordination almost guarantee that the basic evil of segregated schools will survive and flourish, even in those systems where racially balanced schools can be achieved (1995, p. 232).

- The incessant characterization of blacks in demeaning terms means that the average member of society virtually equates any one of us with trouble. We come to be seen as absent fathers, welfare mothers, lazy office worker quota queens, and so on. Once this sets in, we have little chance of appealing to the better natures of persons who hold this unconscious image of us. The image renders us “Other”. It means people simply don’t think of us as individuals to whom love, respect, generosity, and friendliness are due. We are beyond love (Delgado, 1996, p. 51).
Black Boys are Resilient
Solutions

• The need for staff development in intercultural competence and responsiveness:

• Becoming knowledgeable about aspects of diversity such as students’ culture, community and family life; learn about culture general and specific aspects, i.e. structures (racism, ethnocentrism, self awareness, and specific structures of culture such as values, beliefs and customs that influence behavior)
Know Thyself/
Breaking the Chains of Mental Slavery

• Black males’ state of ill-behavior and inability to perform academically is not their fault. These boys have been birthed into a community of centuries of oppression and deliberate assault by their government.

• The little Black girl will grow up with three options regarding her attitude about being in relationships with Black men:
Cycle of Liberation

Model Adapted from Maurrine Adams

Maintaining
- This needs to be cultivated and debugged, and modified as need be over time.

Waking Up
- When a change happens within oneself.

Getting Ready
- Consciously dismantling and building aspects utilizing new knowledge.

The Core of the Cycle of Liberation
- Liberation is the practice of Love!

Reaching Out
- We act differently and see how others react to our new world views.

Building Community
- Start having active dialogue with others and include others.

Coalescing
- Taking Action!

Creating Change
- Creating a new culture and sense of identity.

Maintaining
Dr. William T. Cross
Black Identity Development

Pre-Encounter
Encounter
Immersion/Emersion
Internalization
Internalization/Commitment
Stages of Black Identity Development

• **Encounter**
  o Has absorbed many of the beliefs and values of dominant White culture. The internalization of negative stereotypes may be outside of his conscious awareness, the individual seeks to assimilate and be accepted by Whites, and actively or passively distances himself from other Blacks.

• **Encounter**
  o This phase is typically precipitated by an event or series of events that forces the individual to acknowledge the impact of racism in one’s life. Instances of social rejection by White friends or colleagues may lead the individual to not be seen as equal. The individual is forced to focus on his identity as a member of a group targeted by racism.

• **Immersion/Emersion**
  o This stage is characterized to surround oneself with visible symbols of one’s racial identity and an active avoidance to symbols of Whiteness. This stage is also characterized by a tendency to denigrate White people and glorify Black people. White focused anger starts to dissipate because so much energy is directed towards self-exploration.

• **Internalization**
  o The internalized is willing to establish meaningful relationships with Whites who acknowledge and are respectful of his self-definition and ready to build coalitions with members of oppressed groups.

• **Internalization-Commitment**
  o At this stage the individual has found ways to translate their personal sense of Blackness into a plan of action or a general sense of commitment to the concerns of Blacks as a group, which is sustained over time. Whether at the fourth or fifth stage, internalization allows the individual, anchored in a positive sense of racial identity, both to perceive and transcend race more proactively.
Are you committed to my success?
Implementation

• It is important that teachers realize that we are not only preparing our students for their futures in education and careers, but also in their development into fatherhood and motherhood.

• Teachers: if we elevate what a great job the Black males are doing, every time we reward them, we are contributing to the revitalization of the Black family.
Best Practices Working with Black Males

• "Oakland Unified School District (Oakland, CA) is the first district in the nation to have an African-American Male Achievement Office.

• This district is tackling the achievement gap head-on as well as reducing the suspension and incarceration rate of our boys."
Boys 2 Men

Boys 2 Men is a support system at both of our middle schools and high schools with the goal of supporting our African-American males academically, emotionally, and socially. The group serves as a safe place for young men to discuss issues they face from school and society.

Strong emphasis is placed on reaching High Academic Success. This is carried out in various ways such as attending study tables, peer tutoring and teaching young men how to advocate for themselves to assure their needs are being met in Robbinsdale Area Schools.
Courageous Conversations

• “Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed?... And this fight because of the purpose given it by oppressed, will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors’ injustice even when clothed in false generosity.”
Recommendations/Suggestions

- The creation of a task force solely dedicated to the success of Black males in Robbinsdale Area Schools.
- Research conducted on successful and non-academically successful Black males in the district.
- Collaborating with districts nationally and domestically that are addressing this issue and having proven success.

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Summary

- Booker T. Washington High grad Deonte Bridges' Valedictorian speech - YouTube
Questions

1. What if these stats were reversed and White males were not achieving in RDALE?
2. What are major factors leading to low academic achievement within Robbinsdale Area Schools?
3. How do we hold the district accountable to ensuring Black male success?
4. Is there or can we develop a task force dedicated to Black males’ success in Robbinsdale?
   A. Who would be on this task force?