



Department of Education & Early Learning (DEEL)
Seattle, WA

2021 Spring Institute on Children, Race, and Racism:
Elevating the Brilliance of Black Boys

We Dare Say LOVE

June 4, 2021

Chris Chatmon
Kingmakers of Oakland





Part Three of the Revolution Remix Film

Too Long

We're Black before we're seen
Weight of the world, I'm on my knees
Thrown in the dirt, but we were seeds
We've been fighting too long...

Chris Chatmon, CEO Kingmakers of Oakland



Chris Chatmon is CEO and Co-Founder of Kingmakers of Oakland (KOO) an award winning nonprofit that supports school districts around the country to improve the educational and life outcomes of Black Boys.

Chatmon served as the founding Executive Director, African American Male Achievement (“AAMA”), Oakland Unified School District (“OUSD”). Chatmon also served as the first Deputy Chief of Equity and Sr. Advisor of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in OUSD, Oakland, CA.

In 2020 Chatmon was awarded Oscar Wright Lifetime Achievement Award from OUSD and Oakland, CA Mayor Libby Schaaf honored Chatmon with The City of Oakland Mayor’s Proclamation July 1st “Chris Chatmon Day”.

Education Week Magazine named Chatmon as a “Leader to Learn From” and Campaign for Black Male Achievement selected him as a “Social Innovation Accelerator” because of his commitment to improving life outcomes for all youth and especially African American males.



Who We Are

Kingmakers of Oakland is a social enterprise born out of Oakland Unified Schools District's Office of African American Male Achievement (AAMA).

Kingmakers is committed to transforming education systems and building the capacity of people to design and implement conditions and culture to improve educational and life outcomes for Black students.





**We fundamentally
believe that all
Black boys are
brilliant, beautiful,
and possess
innate greatness.**





The Seattle Contingent 2016



To any citizen of this country who figures himself as responsible – and particularly those of you who deal with the minds and hearts of young people – must be prepared to

“go for broke.”

...You must understand that in the attempt to correct so many generations of bad faith and cruelty, when it is operating not only in the classroom but in society, **you will meet the most fantastic, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance.**

James Baldwin

“A Talk to Teachers,” 1963



OUR CORE ASSUMPTIONS

Our educational system was not created to educate all children equally and to high standards and therefore results in “inequity by design”

The policies, practices, and cultural representations – or ways of knowing and communicating what is “normal,” “right,” and “valued”- in schools advantages some groups of students and disadvantage others



“We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do this. Whether we do it or not must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we have not done it so far.”

Ron Edmonds

Harvard Professor and Father of
the Effective Schools Movement





We Clean Up The Pond

By Transforming Adults

- POLICY ADVOCACY
- HIRE & TRAIN TEACHERS
- PARENT ENGAGEMENT
- NARRATIVE CHANGE



And We Inoculate the Fish

By Engaging, Encouraging, and Empowering African American Males

THE POLLUTED POND

School Culture & Conditions
Prevent AA Males from Achieving

Harsh Discipline
& Policy/Practices

Unequipped Teachers

Biased Curriculum with
Negative Framing of AAs

Discrimination & Criminalization
From Negative Media Portrayal

THE HEALTHY POND

School Culture & Conditions
Empower AA Males to Achieve

Fair and
Restorative
Justice

Engaged Instruction

Culturally Relevant
Curriculum

Positive Narrative

Fish Suffering

African American Males Cannot Thrive in Toxic Environments

- HIGH DROPOUT RATES
- LOW READING PROFICIENCY
- SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

Fish Thriving

African American Males Achieve

- INCREASED SELF-ESTEEM
- IMPROVED LITERACY
- INCREASED GRADUATION RATES



Design Principles

We Believe

- Root in Unconditional LOVE
- Historical Context Matters
- Radical Inclusion
- Process is the Product

Which Requires us to...

- Design at the Margins
- Start with Yourself
- Cede Power
- Make the invisible VISIBLE
- Create a Conspiracy of Care
- Speak the Future; Design the Future

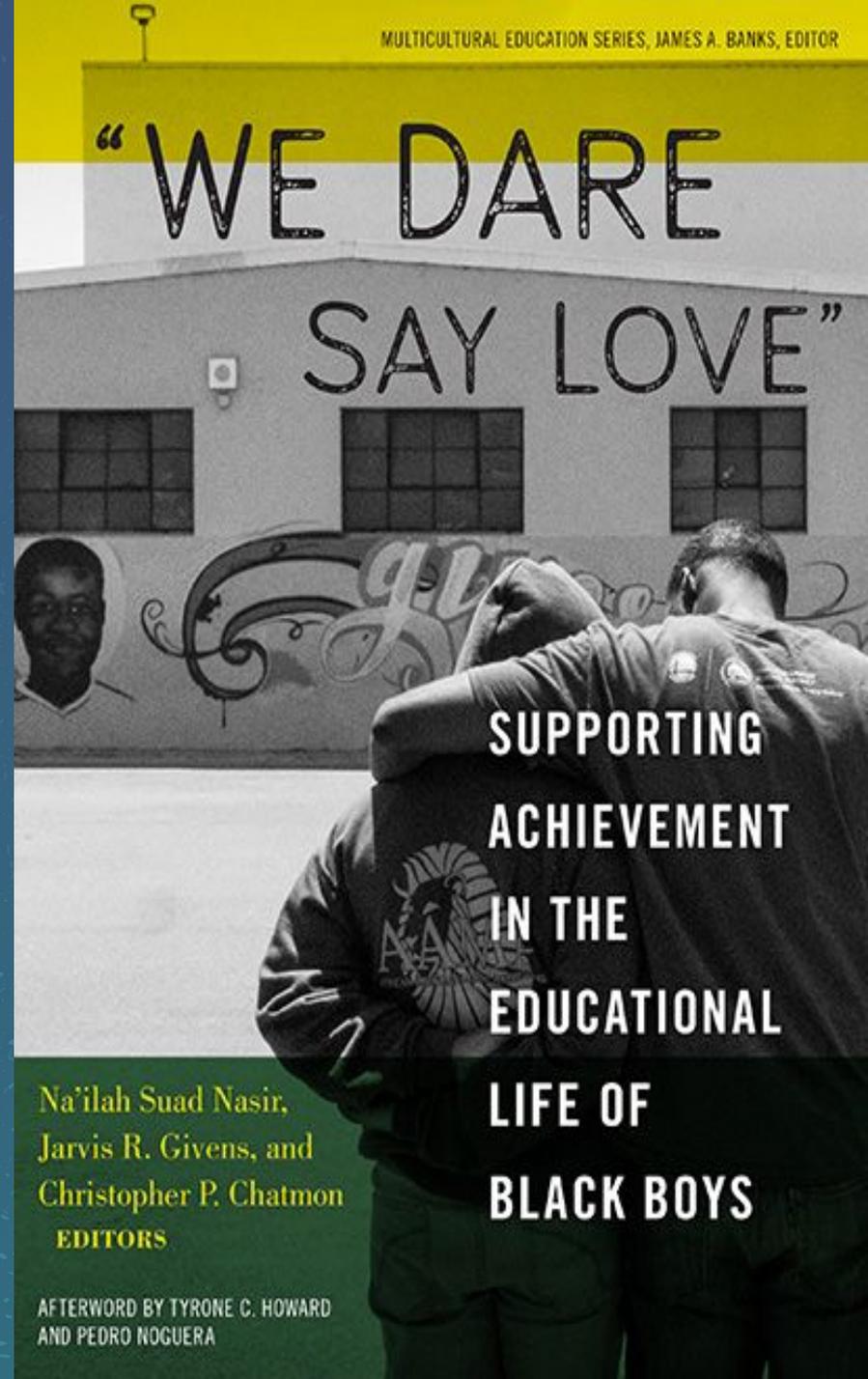


WHY LOVE?

“Society and schools have made love a foreign thing for Black males. It has become difficult to comprehend a sincere relationship between schools and black male students that is predicated on love. The American school is too often a place where Black students come to know that they are despised, feared, and deemed to be of little human value in the world. Those who care deeply for Black children recognize that insisting on love anyhow is of the first order.”

--Nasir, Givens, & Chatmon, 2019

“We dismiss the study of love to our collective peril.” --Kirkland, 2019



MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION SERIES, JAMES A. BANKS, EDITOR

“WE DARE
SAY LOVE”

SUPPORTING
ACHIEVEMENT
IN THE
EDUCATIONAL
LIFE OF
BLACK BOYS

Na'ilah Suad Nasir,
Jarvis R. Givens, and
Christopher P. Chatmon
EDITORS

AFTERWORD BY TYRONE C. HOWARD
AND PEDRO NOGUERA



TEACHING AS LOVE

Politicized Care Elements:

Political Clarity

Communal Bonds

Potential Affirming

Developmentally

Appropriate

OUSD AAMA video





Empowerment
cannot happen if
we refuse to be
vulnerable while
encouraging
students to take
risks.

bell hooks





Humanizing Black Male Classroom Experience

- Teaching for humanization & love
- Non-punitive discipline practices
- Reframing stereotypes about black males
- Building of community; multi-layered relationships
- Alternative teacher pipeline and training

Developing Kingmakers

- Respect for cultural background & history; understanding of challenges in community
- Asset-based, not deficit-based mindset; ability to support resilience for students and families
- Desire to be a positive force for change
- Stance of being a lifelong learner



“If the candidate does not see the need to love each of our kings as if he were his own child, this is not the organization for him.”



Putting Love at the Center



“I do this because I can, I do this for my people, I do it for those that did it for me, I do this to create men, I do it because we don't see enough Black educators, I do this because I care about young Black folks, I do this for every reason America doesn't want me to.”

“There was one brother for example that was having a tough time. I said uh, you know, he needs some extra love so let's give him a group hug. Of course he ran. And we all caught him. But afterwards, aaww, he was lit up. Like you could just see he was like [makes a huge smile], it just made his day. So, why do I go back to love? Because love works.”



Amin Robinson



Victor Johnson



Kahlil Chatmon



Anthony Johnson

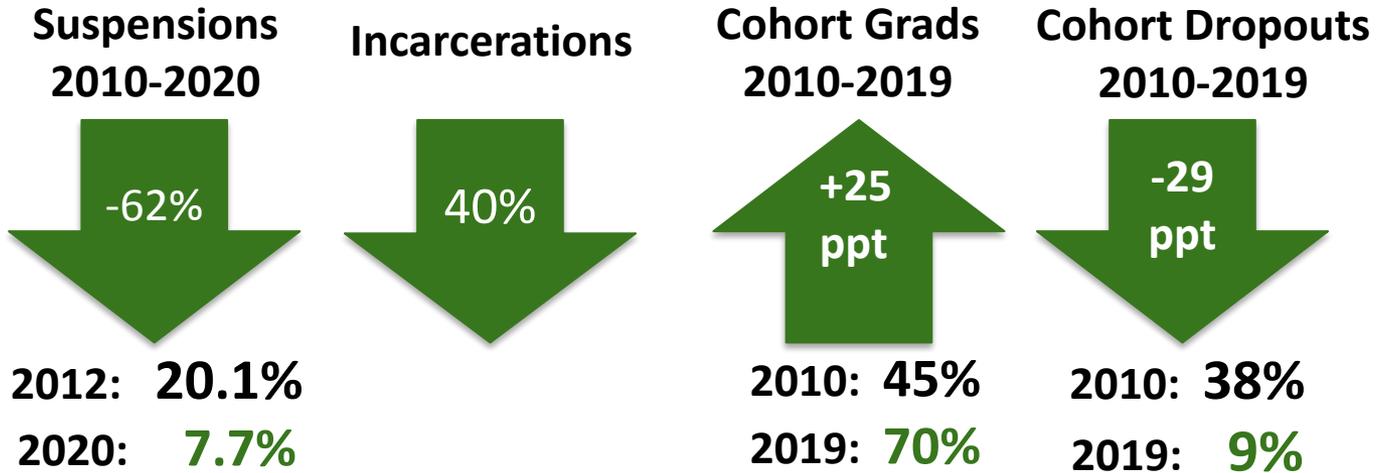


AAMA | A Ten Year Initiative
PROMISING RESULTS

AAMA INITIATIVE RESULTS (2010 baseline)

100% of OUSD schools required to set goals/outcomes for AA males

Student Outcomes



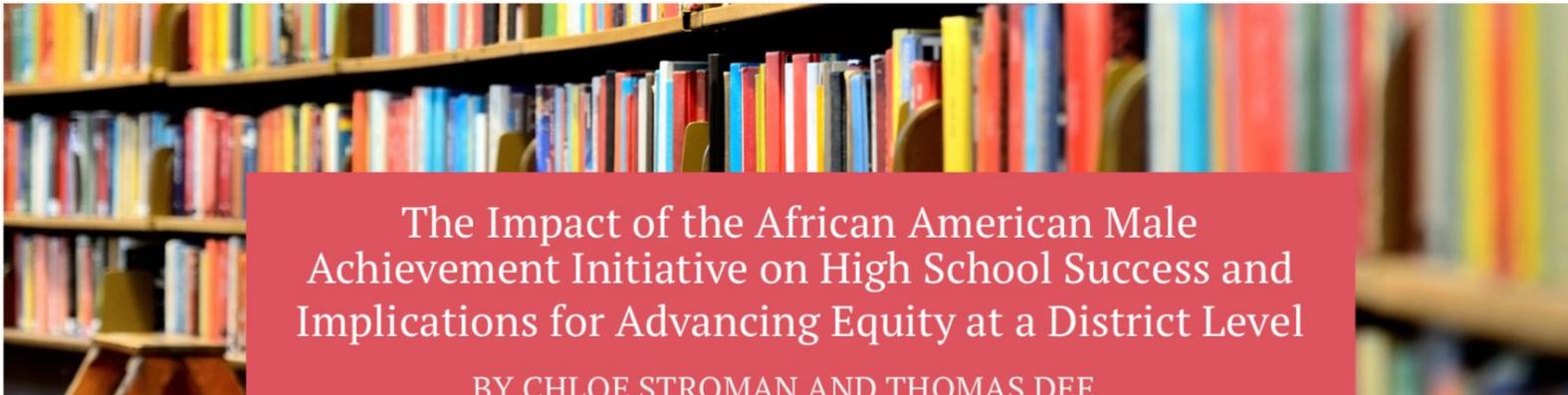
Equipped Teachers

2x More African American Male Teachers

92% retention rate for AA Male Teachers in Manhood Development Program – highest in district

Relevant Curriculum

3rd-12th grade curriculum with black/brown narrative leads to more engaged and inspired students



The Impact of the African American Male Achievement Initiative on High School Success and Implications for Advancing Equity at a District Level

BY CHLOE STROMAN AND THOMAS DEE

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT | OCTOBER 2019

The [African American Male Achievement](#) (AAMA) program, part of the [My Brother's Keeper](#) initiative in Oakland, California, is the first program in the nation to embed a culturally-centered curriculum specifically targeted to black male students at the district level. AAMA launched in 2010 and is a leading example of [targeted universalism](#) in education.¹ Targeted universalism is a concept developed by John Powell that recognizes universal goals for all people, but also acknowledges that people are situated differently in society and therefore emphasizes the need for strategies that meet the unique needs of groups based on how they are situated relative to institutions, resources, and opportunities.²

This study builds on prior qualitative research on the AAMA and related programs. Research by Vajra Watson³ and Jarvis Givens and Na'ilah Suad Nasir,⁴ for example, both informs this study and complements the evidence presented here. Specifically, these reports found that positive changes coincided with the implementation of the AAMA in Oakland, including improved relationships between students and teachers, improved trust between families and schools, and improved grades and lower suspension rates for black males.

KEY FINDINGS

Access to the African American Male Achievement (AAMA) program increased the one-year school-persistence rate of black male students by 3.6 percentage points (i.e., from 91.5 percent to 95.1 percent). This corresponds to a 3.2 percentage point increase in the high school graduation rate for black males who have access to the AAMA in 9th and 10th grade.

Access to the AAMA also seemed to have “spillover” effects for black female students, who saw a 1.8 percentage point increase in their one-year school-persistence rate (i.e., from 93.6 to 95.4 percent).

RESEARCH TEAM

- [Thomas Dee](#), Stanford University
- Emily Penner, University of California, Irvine

SAMPLE

This study utilized records from the California Department of Education that report counts of enrolled students and the number of students who dropped out by the

*Please describe being a young
Black male in America...*

Scared

Underestimated,
Underappreciated

Alone

Dangerous

Humbling

Targeted

Hard

Feared

Not respected - Underestimated,
A Statistic

Ignorant

Horrible – Bad – Sad

Hard, poverty, poor

Hard, Unfair, Scary

Hard, Stereotypical

Hard, discrimination, dangerous

Discriminated against, unfair

Treated differently

Mistreated

Lonely, Broke, Oppressed





Identity Development:
How Do I See Myself...

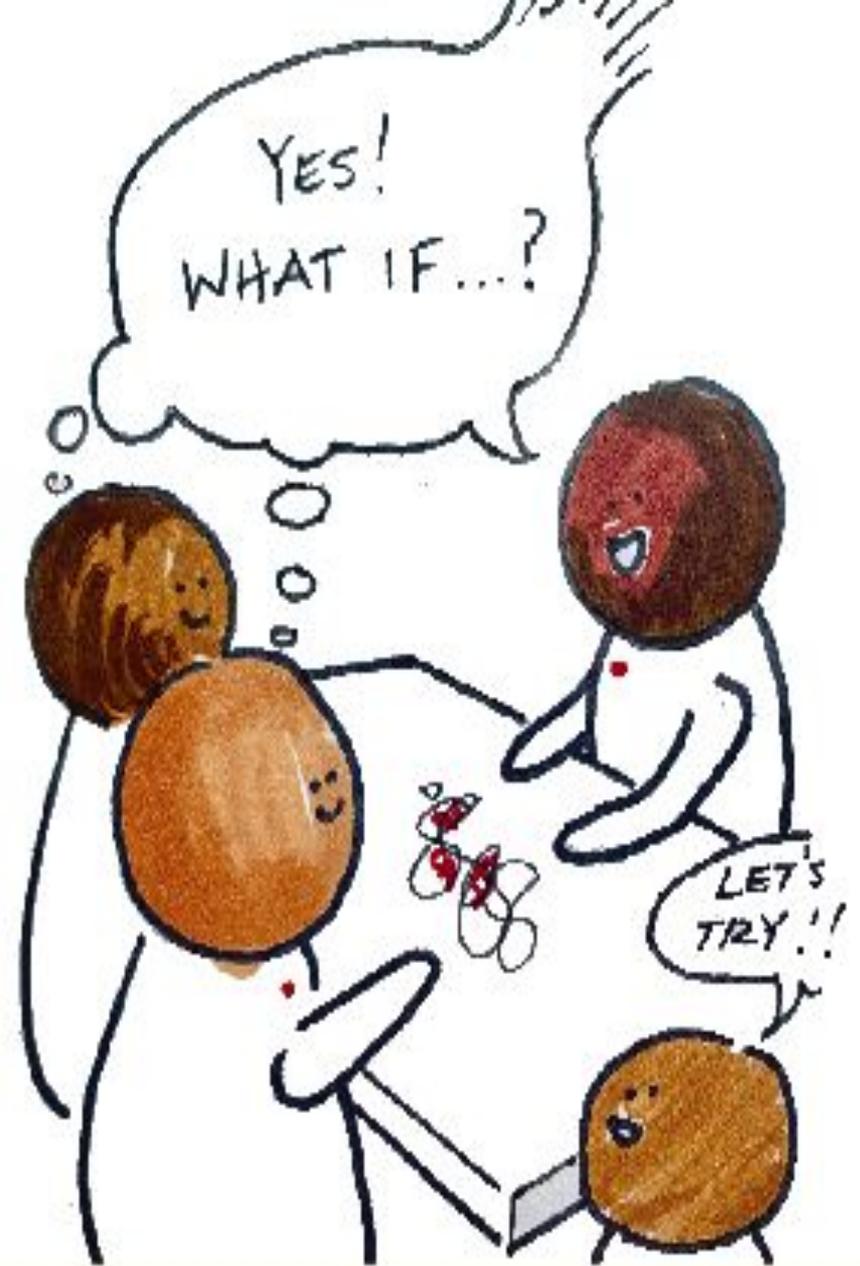
- I am a Diamond in the Rough.
- I am a Miracle in Disguise.
- I am the Essence of Time.
- I am Unstoppable.
- I am the Victorious One.
- I am the Blood that Pumps your Main Artery.
- I am that Breath of Fresh Air.
- I am the Bullet in the Chamber.
- I am the Chosen One.
- I am the American Dream.
- I am a King!



Taking it Forward

- Stay in the struggle & take responsibility for *what matters to you*
- Support others to reflect and connect to *what matters to them*
- Work to build trust and alliances across difference: *start with listening*
- Trust yourself | Communicate your confidence

Taking it Forward



Exercise Your Creative Courage



“

Remember to imagine
and **craft the worlds
you cannot live
without,**
just as you dismantle
the ones you cannot
live within.

Ruha Benjamin

Sociologist, Author, Professor
Princeton University

THANK YOU

Chris Chatmon

kingmakersofoakland.org



@kingmakersofoakland



@Kingmakers



“

Fight for the things you
care about, but do it in a
way that will lead
others to join you.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg
Supreme Court Justice
Gender & Civil Rights Advocate



I for one believe that if you give people a thorough understanding of what confronts them and the basic causes that produce it, they'll create their own program, and when the people create a program, you get action.

Malcolm X

Muslim Minister, Black Power &
Human Rights Activists
1925-1965

