On May 10, 2016, The Chicago Community Trust convened residents across the Chicago area and Gary, Indiana for the 3rd Annual “On the Table” conversations. The Black Men and Boys Community of Practice (BMB CoP) were invited to host a number of these conversations with black men and young black men. The BMB CoP reached out to partnering organizations whose participants were struggling with success (e.g., unemployment, returning citizens). The Gary Commission on the Social Status of Black Males (GCSSBM) hosted and BMB CoP facilitated two conversations, one with black men and the other with young black men, both events having around twenty participants.

What follows, are comments from participants in the various discussions held at Indiana University Northwest, on August 11, 2016 and January 21, 2017.
### Discussion 1: The most important challenges you have to deal with daily...

#### What Black Men ages 25 and older said...
- Trust
- Burden of representation—example minority versus majority settings
- Doubt
- White privilege that causes institutional racism
- Ignorance of who we are as a people besides our names—example our history
- Whether or not I will end up back in prison again—example apathy versus survival
- Feelings of hopelessness and anger and the lack of humanity toward black men
- Resilience and confidence issue are my challenges
- The transition from street life to work life

#### What Young Black Men ages 16–24 said...
- Being Hungry—Going to bed hungry and waking up hungry leading to anger and frustration
- Lack of motivation—to keep trying and low morale
- Lack of father figure or mentor - lack of representation, no one to talk to
- The responsibility being the best example becomes overwhelming
- Setting a good example, being the person that constantly commits to change can be tiresome
- The pressure of responsibility, of being that example and not having a moment to rest

#### SAFETY
- Early demise—example violence—responsibility of being sore provider—safety

#### SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELL BEING (Emotions)
- Limited opportunity in leadership
- Things don't seem to be improving
- No innovative and forward thinking leadership
- Participation amongst those who are doing well and those who are not doing well
- Lack of emphasis on public service and volunteers and its rewards
- Poor City structure and organization
- Teaching people how to change
- Solutions for the real problems
- Supporting a cause with no follow up—no curriculum or structure to institute change
- Survival skills
- Getting people to take advantage of opportunities
- How felon status impacts other rights—example child visitation rights
- Relationship between older and younger generation
- Passion and empathy for one another
- Lack of guidance

#### EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATION
- Limited options for the youth in schooling
- Limited economic opportunity
- Resources limited with jobs
- Inability to keep resources inside the City of Gary to support Gary residences
- Limited black businesses in Gary that limits self-reliance and employment
- Limited training opportunities and limited businesses to do training
- Employment opportunities
- Black male mentoring and the opportunity to learn from mentors
- Lack of male presence in the schools—example volunteers
- Employment because a felon status—example past mistakes—opportunities then become limited for jobs or advancement—you're either over or under qualified for opportunities
- Skill and ability development - lack of it
- Going to work and choosing to do right and setting a good example

#### BUILT ENVIRONMENT
- Transportation—Lack of transportation, bus passes, lack of support to get to places
- Lack of mobility and limited transportation options

#### OTHER
- Unconstitutionality of the legal system related to felons
### Discussion 2: Of the challenges that you identified, which do we need help with from outside of the community?

#### What Black Men ages 25 and older said...

- The trust that it takes to deal with the issues we have the solutions — artificial barriers, connection with other people
- Lack of trust of stakeholders... example build our own capacity, living not surviving
- Misled by others

#### What Young Black Men ages 16–24 said...

- Human rights violations
  - Federal, the legal system, elected officials
- Surroundings/ Safety Issues
  - Schools, Churches, Businesses, Police/Elected Officials
- Community volunteers, lack of a father figure, mentor
  - Police, Pastors, Teachers, Coaches, Parents
- Discrimination
  - Local Mass media (print and visual), what is being shown
  - Churches—Need to teach how to respect other people

### Exercise 2: List the Public or Private Institutions identified to help with the challenge:

#### What Black Men ages 25 and older said...

- Judicial system
- Health community... example mental illness
- Food systems... example USDA
- Truth and reconciliation councils
- NAACP
- Building brotherhoods
- Creating a platform
- Educational institutions—research, think tanks, K-12 and higher education

#### What Young Black Men ages 16–24 said...

- Responsibility for Education
  - Schools Churches
- Cost of education skyrocketing
  - Government
- Academic
  - Gary Public Schools
  - Deans of Universities
  - Educational Institutions
- Transportation
  - GTPC & NIRPC
Discussion 3: Which of the challenges do we take on ourselves?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Black Men ages 25 and older said...</th>
<th>What Young Black Men ages 16–24 said...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership and volunteering</td>
<td>• Surroundings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Accountability to ourselves</td>
<td>– Ourselves, the black community, Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being more self-reliant and self-sufficient</td>
<td>– Put the guns down</td>
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<td>• More community information sharing</td>
<td>– Clean your yard neighborhood block</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Becoming better advocates for ourselves</td>
<td>– Business owners step up</td>
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<tr>
<td>• More community activity around mentoring and youth development</td>
<td>– Neighborhood dad’s step up</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Getting youth to work in the community and helping them to learn about financial responsibility</td>
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<td>• The community can help young people gain more exposure at a younger age</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The community can develop its own mentoring and apprenticeship programs</td>
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<td>• Support one another in the community and share our expertise with one another</td>
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<td>• Highlight the successes of the Gary businesses</td>
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<td>• Get the word out that the city of Gary is a good place to do business</td>
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<td>• Encourage the people inside and outside of the city of Gary to support local businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Supported youth in life skill development and personal development with a particular focus on them having personal healthy relationships and good communication skills</td>
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<td>• Capacity to do it ourselves… example HBCU and Black curriculum</td>
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<td>• Rebuilding cognitive an analytical skills… example teaching common sense</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bridging the black generation communications gap… example rebuild trust</td>
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<td>• Go out and tell people right versus wrong, speaking up and interacting with each other in our own neighborhoods</td>
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<td>• Identify 10,000 people who will be willing to love one another in spite of being afraid of one another</td>
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<td>• Work to restructure and rebuild our community, then influence our public policy and our public officials</td>
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<td>• Personal responsibility</td>
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Discussion 3A: How do we hold ourselves / our community more accountable?

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<tr>
<td>• Take ownership of informing others about what we have done and what we have learned</td>
<td>• Surroundings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Knowing our history versus their history… example historical greatness. Then using our history to inspire each other and ourselves</td>
<td>– Ourselves, the black community, Parents</td>
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<td>• Supporting one another and our institutions</td>
<td>– Put the guns down</td>
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<td>• Be more courageous and pushing our policy changes</td>
<td>– Clean your yard neighborhood block</td>
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<td>• Being a positive example every day</td>
<td>– Business owners step up</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increasing our personal interactions with one another</td>
<td>– Neighborhood dad’s step up</td>
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<td>• Leadership lives and preaches the truth… example “stop the BS”</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: