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BUILDING A

BETTER BATON ROUGE

CRITICAL AREAS SERIES

An intergenerational view of critical areas impacting our urban communities

MetroMorphosis®
Transforming Urban Communities from Within

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BUILDING THRIVING FUTURES

In 2010, when more than 100 community members came together over a long weekend to have "a different conversation about familiar issues," it sparked an innovative approach to community change. Rooted in the lived experience of Baton Rouge residents, but focused on shifting systemic conditions that hold challenges in place, this approach invited people to imagine a better Baton Rouge, one that not only challenged the status quo, but challenged people and organizations to find their roles in building such a place.

It is in that spirit that we curated this series. At MetroMorphosis, we firmly believe that change happens when a critical mass of citizens are equipped and developed to address them. And in 2012, when the work to imagine a better Baton Rouge became MetroMorphosis, an official social enterprise focused on transforming urban communities, we made sure to keep citizen mobilization as our top priority.

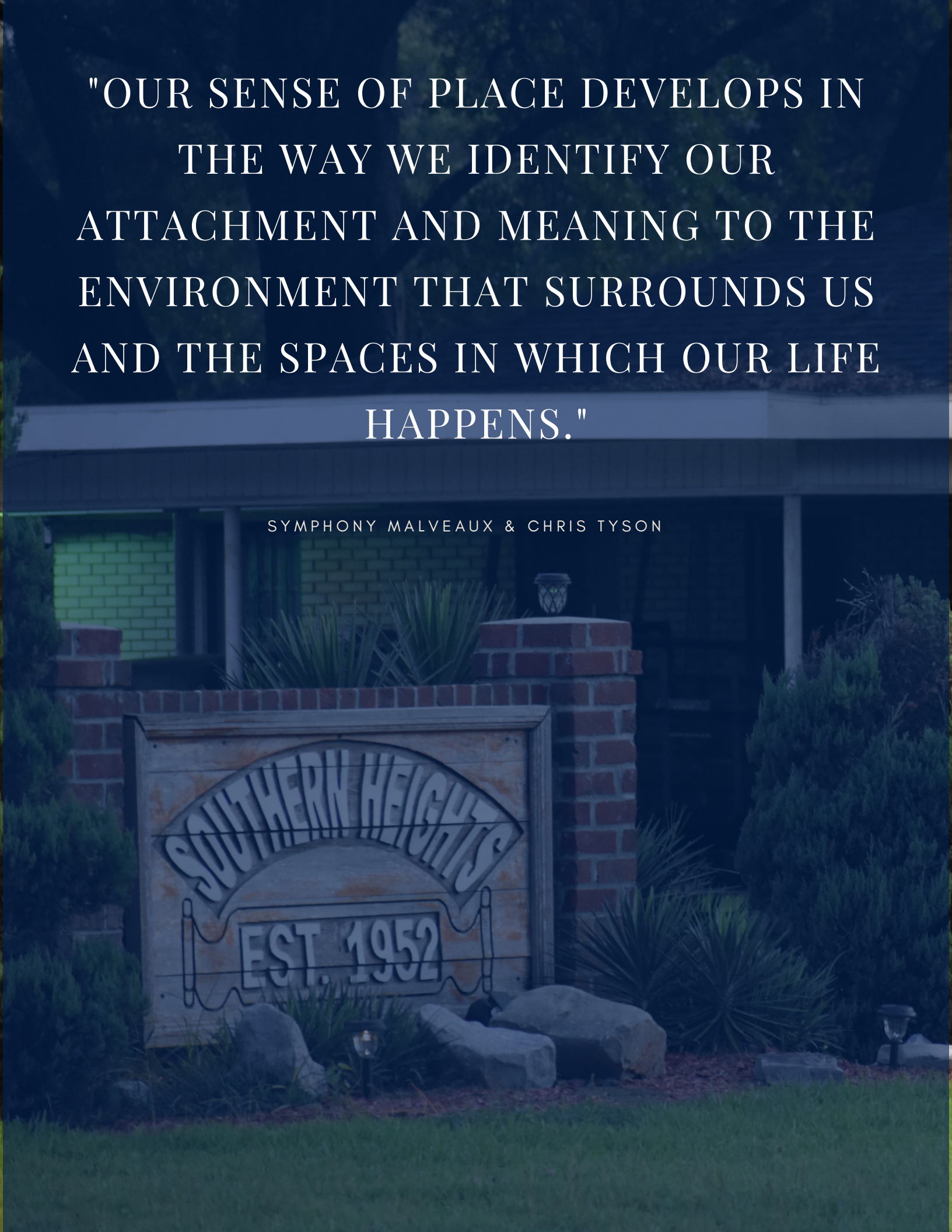
What follows in these pages is one of the highest levels of citizen engagement--a look into the current state of 10 critical areas impacting urban communities and recommendations for how we address them from people who were reared in the very urban communities their work seeks to impact.

Rooted in the principle of Sankofa, the *Building a Better Rouge Critical Areas Series* offers perspectives from 19 people across multiple generations as they grapple with where our community has been and what it takes to build a vibrant, thriving future.

THE METROMORPHOSIS TEAM
SERIES CURATORS

"OUR SENSE OF PLACE DEVELOPS IN THE WAY WE IDENTIFY OUR ATTACHMENT AND MEANING TO THE ENVIRONMENT THAT SURROUNDS US AND THE SPACES IN WHICH OUR LIFE HAPPENS."

SYMPHONY MALVEAUX & CHRIS TYSON



THIS PLACE WE CALL HOME

SYMPHONY MALVEAUX
CHRIS J. TYSON, JD

Our connection to home relates to our relationship with places expressed through the various scopes of human life: emotional connections, personal stories, and shared family and community experiences. Our sense of place develops in the way we identify our attachment and meaning to the environment that surrounds us and the spaces in which our life happens. Cities are such places and understanding a city's historical development is an important component of understanding how individual and collective identity are formed.

Cities have a spatial development history. This history is intertwined with other factors, including social factors such as racial identity, economic status, and cultural identity. The spatial development history of American cities is tied to these social developments, and race is one of the dominant factors shaping the spatial character of places we call home. Therefore, a race-conscious understanding of the city's history, development, and contemporary character is essential to any meaningful or productive contemplation of its current struggles and future.

Baton Rouge's Development

From its founding until the early 1900s, Baton Rouge was a small town that didn't extend beyond present-day Spanish Town to the north, the Baton Rouge National Cemetery to the east, the Mississippi River to the west, and Beauregard Town to the south. Like all southern cities, its economy was rooted in and depended upon the institutions of Black slavery. Its 20th Century development followed the path of Jim Crow with rigid racial segregation and the intentional under-development of Black neighborhoods as its core features. The development of the city's parks, its system of higher education, its system of public transportation, and its interstate highway system all feature design and operational decisions that prioritized race as the dominant organizing principle for the spatial ordering of the city. The city's north-south racial divide is one of many consequences of these development patterns. Those decisions are not in the past - they have all had cumulative consequences which are mapped onto the look, feel, and operation of present-day Baton Rouge.

Within the past two decades, Baton Rouge has experienced substantial spatial and developmental change. Those changes include the rapid, high-end development in the southwestern part of the Parish; downtown revitalization; the closure of Earl K. Long Hospital; and a petition to create a new city out of the southern, unincorporated area of Parish. Additionally, the murder of Alton Sterling, the murders of three Baton Rouge police officers: and the catastrophic 2016 floods have all shaped the spatial character of the city and therefore directly impact the real and perceived sense of place.

Baton Rouge's sense of place differs in large part depending upon what part of the city you call home, and that is heavily influenced by race. Baton Rouge has high rates of blight, crime, homelessness, and disinvestment in many of its core neighborhoods. These dynamics drive neighborhood disparities in

health, adverse educational outcomes, and lack of job opportunities.

Resident-Led Place Making

Within the last ten years, many organizations and dedicated residents have created and implemented programs that work to address the underdevelopment of so many of the city's neighborhoods.

> Baton Rouge's sense of place differs in large part depending upon what part of the city you call home, and that is heavily influenced by race.

For example, Mid City Redevelopment Alliance works to improve neighborhoods and housing conditions through building and repairing affordable houses and empowering residents to take on leadership roles in ongoing community projects. Engaging residents in community revitalization not only strengthens the bonds of community, but it empowers them to help contribute to a better sense of place in their neighborhoods and throughout the city.

In efforts to directly invest in residents, the Safe Hopeful Neighborhoods Initiative (SHNI) serves as a hub for neighborhood engagement, neighborhood leader empowerment, and community improvement. The initiative trains resident leaders who go on to become community organizers. This program provides grant opportunities that allow participants to fund the issue affecting their community directly. In order to directly improve the city's sense of place, SHNI provides a free tool warehouse that provides residents access to tools to clean up their community, rehab their homes, and create significant events that highlight the pride their neighborhood holds.

Hope for the Next Decade

Our sense of place reflects our historical and experiential knowledge of our community to help us imagine a more sustainable future. We hope that in the next ten years, Baton Rouge residents are well equipped and aware of all resources to successfully advocate for change in systems and disinvestment within their community, to hold officials accountable in efforts to increase their quality of life and sense of place, and to be proud to call Baton Rouge home.

About the Authors

Symphony Malveaux

A Louisiana native, Symphony Malveaux, MPA, holds the position of Community Engagement Manager for Mid City Redevelopment Alliance. She consults, strategizes, and implements community projects that increase the quality of life for all residents and local businesses in neighborhoods throughout East Baton Rouge. To foster her skills in urban revitalization, she's an alumnus of MetroMorphosis ULDI, Harvard Graduate School of Design Summer Program, and NeighborWorks America Institute. Symphony also serves on the board for Mid City Merchants. Additionally, she is the Project Lead for Mayor-President Broome's Safe Hopeful Neighborhood which acts as the one-stop shop for neighborhood engagement resources for the city of Baton Rouge. Symphony finds value in training residents through the Resident Leader Academy, where she challenges participants to think outside the box to create impactful projects that yield the sustainable change they desire. She believes to have inclusive communities; we have to cultivate them.

Chris J. Tyson

Christopher J. Tyson was recently a Newman Trowbridge Distinguished Professor of Law at the Paul M. Hebert Law Center at Louisiana State University. In December 2021 he completed a four-year term as the President and CEO of Build Baton Rouge, the city's redevelopment authority and land bank. Under his leadership the city launched a $50 million Bus Rapid Transit project, won a $30 million HUD Choice Neighborhoods grant, was awarded the highly competitive $5 million JP Morgan Chase AdvancingCities grant, and established Baton Rouge's first Community Land Trust. During that same period Build Baton Rouge acquired and prepared for development over 20 acres of vacant and blighted urban property and administered over $20 million in HUD Community Development grants on behalf of the city of Baton Rouge.

THE UTILITY OF EDUCATION: TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

DR. ROLAND MITCHELL
MOON MUHAMMAD

I insist that the object of all true education is not to make [people] carpenters, it is to make carpenters [people]
- W.E.B Du Bois

The quote above appeared in noted philosopher W.E.B Du Bois' 1903 book the Talented Tenth and reflects Du Bois' assertion that to teach narrowly defined technical skills absent the engagement of one's full humanity is not true education. Concerning the attainment of knowledge, the US educational system has continued to struggle with one question – education for wisdom or education to cultivate workers?

In Du Bois's time, this question had a particular critical import for the four million newly emancipated African Americans, and those who sought to keep them subjugated. Today, the sentiments of Du Bois remain within many in the educational field. Thus, the consideration of education in a city with the racial and socioeconomic make up of Baton Rouge must consider Du Bois' critical musings on education as a means to equity and full inclusion.

Education in Baton Rouge

However, to begin our discussion it is vital that the reader understand key demographic statistics within Louisiana, and particularly Baton Rouge:

- Louisiana has a Black population of 32.4% (third largest in the U.S.)
- 47% of East Baton Rouge Parish (EBR) residents are Black
- 81% of EBR public school students are Black
- 21% of children in EBR live in poverty compared to the national average of 14%
- EBR has a high school graduation rate of approximately 72%
- Louisiana has the fifth – highest percentage of uncertified teachers at 9%; a staggering 49.7% of charter school teachers are uncertified

These related racial and socioeconomic measures provide vital context for understanding the contours of education in Baton Rouge –a history littered with undermining laws, and splintering school districts, that have worked to keep segregated schools in place. Extant research (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2012; Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016) illustrates that this splintering exacerbates school segregation.

Despite the intentional segregation of schooling in Baton Rouge, there has been significant attention paid to the alignment of workforce development needs and educational outcomes. One particularly salient example of this schooling and workforce development alignment can be found in EBR public school's *Pathways to Bright Futures* program. EBR schools describes the program as granting students the opportunity to exit high school with eligibility towards earning a Louisiana

Transfer Associate Degree and/or Industry Based Certifications .

Collectively these programs and innovative types of schools are intended to enhance opportunity for students. However, a prominent complaint is that they join an already crowded field of school types with a wide array of workforce development focused programs, or that they are not accessible to the community members they are trying to serve.

What is needed then is a specific focus regarding education for both cultural wisdom and the attainment of vocational skills. However, in August of 2021 the assistant superintendent for the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunities in the Louisiana Department of Education resigned citing a resistance among colleagues to embrace professional development informed by culturally relevant pedagogy. This lack of diversification only prompts a continuation of ineffective educational programs for certain groups in our community further deepening inequity instead of closing the attainment gap. This, coupled with persistent districtwide leadership changes, causes education within Baton Rouge to be on a crumbled foundation. The goal of these

"...the consideration of education in a city with the racial and socioeconomic make up of Baton Rouge must consider Du Bois' critical musings on education as a means to equity and full inclusion."

programs should be multi - faceted - the attainment of vocational skills coupled with cultural relevancy to enhance self understanding. Baton Rouge has the unique opportunity to elevate individuals through educational programming, but without

implementation through the lens of cultural competence it becomes complicit in certain communities' stagnation.

Points of Focus for the Next 10 Years

As we look toward the future, we are adamant that sustainable change must be driven by a top - down approach. It is vital that Louisiana, and Baton Rouge specifically, cultivate and enforce intentional equity and instructional integrity on a year-to-year basis. It is not enough to be complacent in former change; the Department of Education, with the active collaboration of educational employees, must seek to funnel resources where they are actively needed. Innovative partnerships between postsecondary institutions, pre-college and career readiness pipeline programs, state and local industry, and EBR schools with a particular focus on leveling the educational playing field are critical.

The pervasive dismal educational outcomes for many students from under-resourced racial and ethnic minority communities absent these partnerships is a salient illustration of the fact that schools are being charged with delivering beyond the scope of their funding considering the diverse needs of the students they serve. Consequently, if EBR administrators are advocating for rigorous, safe, and sustainable schools, we argue that the latter cannot be

obtained without a broader group of people at the table. There must be discussions on providing every school, and thus, every student, with the tangible resources needed in order to propel student success.

We are cautiously optimistic in the fact that this particular moment seems ripe with new ideas and possibilities. However, returning to Du Bois' original assertion, we consider this level of change positive, if it goes beyond preparing high paid technicians, and links economic prosperity with the training of a socially just citizenry.

About the Authors

Dr. Roland Mitchell

Roland Mitchell is the E.B. "Ted" Robert Endowed Professor and Dean of the College of Human Sciences & Education at Louisiana State University. Dr. Mitchell's research theorizes the impact of historical and communal knowledge on postsecondary education. Roland has authored 7 books and numerous scholarly works. Roland has a deep passion for impactful community service as evidenced through his membership on the advisory boards of the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, Campus Federal Credit Union, and the Louisiana Governor's Taskforce on Community Policing and Reform. He received the David A. Kahn Award for Exemplary Service from the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition for his ongoing service at meeting the educational needs of underrepresented populations.

Moon Muhammad

Saalihah 'Moon' Muhammad is a transplant Baton Rouge resident and a three - time AmeriCorps graduate. She is an educator with six years of experience implementing and managing elementary and middle school English curricula, as well as performing leadership duties amongst a cohort of English teachers. Moon has assisted teachers in formulating their yearly goals by introducing and enforcing best practices within classrooms in order to maximize student achievement. Currently, she teaches at Louisiana State University instructing undergraduates in English rhetoric and literature.

TOWARD AN EQUITABLE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

DARRELL L. JOHNSON, JR.
JOHN W. MATTHEWS, JR.

Historically, small businesses have competed with first-generation and multi-generational businesses. First-generation companies often begin with an individual having an idea and an innovator bringing it to fruition. In contrast, multi-generational businesses build upon the foundation that has been instilled throughout the life of the business. Looking through the lens of Black Business Development over the last ten years, it is apparent that Black businesses supply quality goods and services but have traditionally lacked capacity, opportunity, and sustainability.

Capacity

Over the years, there have been efforts to increase technical assistance programming to small businesses at the federal, state, and local levels; however, the most critical piece that has been historically inadequate is access to information. Although technical assistance resources existed at all levels of government, those who needed the resources and resource providers were often disconnected from them. Several factors contributed to this disconnect, especially apathy, as business owners were trying to keep their companies afloat instead of working to create a scalable business model.

Business development entities established these capacity-building resources to close the wealth gap, but the resources were underutilized by minority businesses because business owners lacked information (regarding availability) and an understanding of the benefits of using the resources. For these reasons, minority firms have not been able to take advantage of opportunities, regardless of their capacity to compete.

Opportunity

Generally, companies that are ill-equipped to take advantage of opportunities will not survive, making the need for capacity- building a priority. However, the availability of business development resources do not automatically create immediate opportunities, further frustrating those the programs intended to serve.

Although providers offer valuable services to address underbidding, financial management, reinvesting in the business, and other issues facing small business owners, sole provision of capacity building services can create a repetitive cycle within which small businesses complete the program or training, develop the necessary capacity to perform, but have no opportunity for procurement or contracts – thereby diminishing the value of the programs that aimed to aid these businesses. Therefore, the success rate of these firms was sub-par, and most firms could not achieve sustainability.

Sustainability

There has long been a direct correlation between opportunity and sustainability. Simply put, when there is no opportunity, sustainability does not exist. Thus, the entrepreneurship cycle ends, and the rate of unsuccessful businesses increases. Historically, this cycle suggests that

capability, lack of capacity, lack of information and lack of opportunity leads to the limited sustainability and viability of Black businesses.

The Evolution

Today, there is an even greater awareness that the wealth gap must be closed to create a better quality of life and economic vitality. As a result of technological advances, there seems to be a better understanding of resources, and more BIPOC firms can access information about capacity, opportunity, and sustainability. In today's modern economy, Black businesses can better compete due to the accessibility of real-time resources to assist their development. Although there remains a disconnect in the continuum of JIT (just-in-time) resources to move a company as it grows, business owners can conduct research and development and access more programs. Therefore, more African-Americans are entering the arena of entrepreneurship and taking advantage of enhanced capacity building.

Still, nationally, white households generally hold a larger portion of their net worth in business equity (36%) than black households (12%). In a recent review of Census' Annual Business Survey by the Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC) Business Intelligence team, "there are over 302,000 black residents in the Capital region, meaning that there is one black-owned establishment with an employee for every 491 residents. Comparatively, there is one white-owned business for every 42 white residents, meaning that white residents are roughly 12 times more likely to own a business than black residents."

This data indicates the necessity of a more collaborative, concentrated effort to develop micro-enterprises to viable second-stage companies, including access to information on sectors of opportunity which will begin to build a framework for sustainability.

Toward an Equitable Ecosystem

Ultimately, sustainability solely depends on the will of BIPOC firms to look ahead at opportunities that are conducive to growth. Minority firms are lagging at the next levels, such as green infrastructure, coastal restoration, development, and manufacturing - which many consider to be sectors of significant future growth.

To build an equitable, robust entrepreneurial ecosystem, one must connect all these activities - capacity building, opportunity, sustainability and viability. Small business resource providers should develop a strong foundation built on each to ensure the continued enhancement of minority-owned businesses in their development.

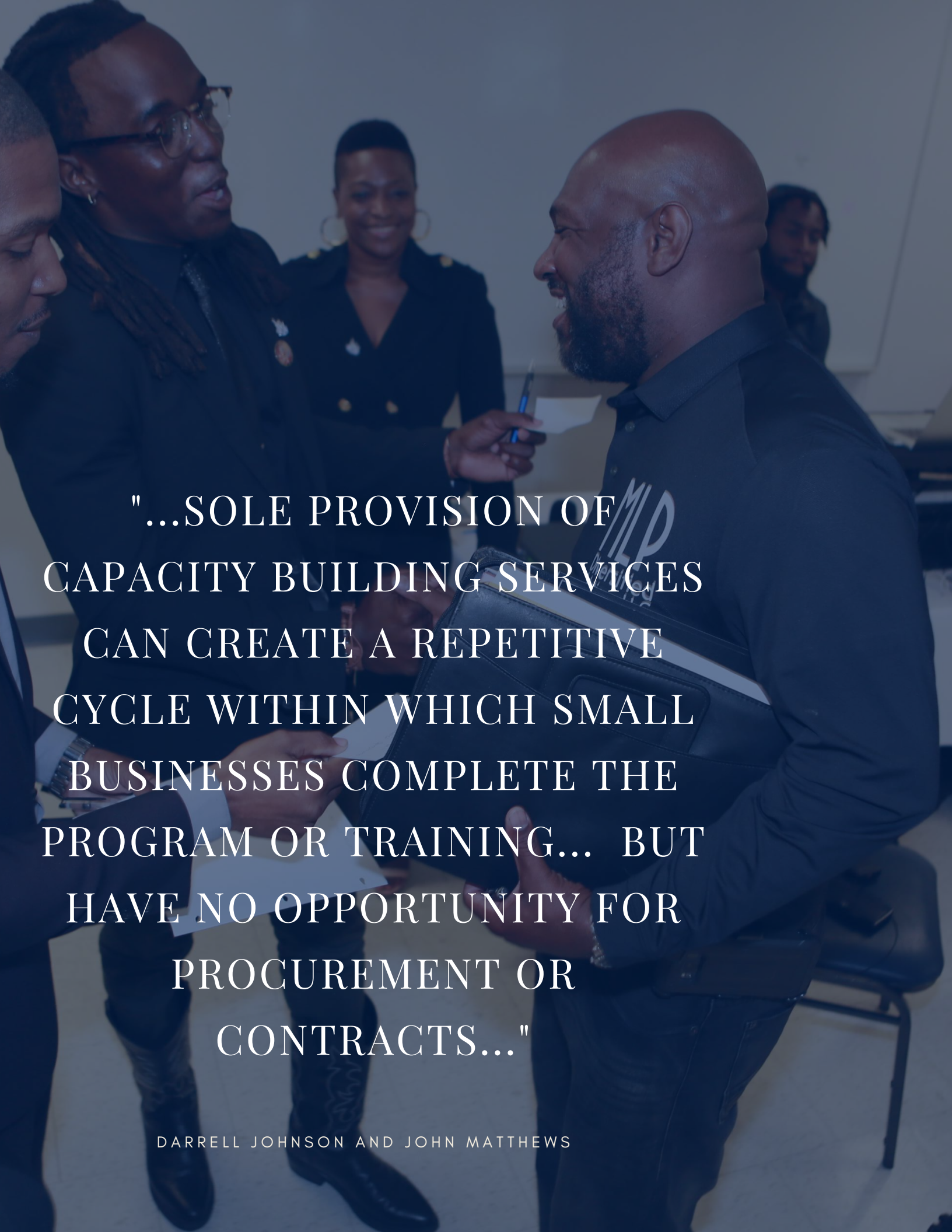
About the Authors

Darrell Johnson

A native of New Orleans, Darrell L. Johnson, Jr. serves as Manager of Diversity & Inclusion Programs at BRAC. In this role, Darrell leads BRAC's diversity and inclusion initiatives including providing business services, advancing corporate and workplace diversity initiatives, and pushing for reinvestment and redevelopment of underserved areas through the efforts of BRAC's business development and quality of place teams. Darrell joins BRAC from Louisiana Economic Development, where he served on the Small Business Services team and was responsible for repositioning Louisiana as one of the best places to start, grow, and sustain a business. He also supported and grew the LED Growth Network - an alumni network of over 500 Louisiana-based small businesses that employ over 15,500 full time employees and represent over $3.3 billion in annual sales.

John W. Matthews, Jr.

John W. Matthews, Jr., a native of New Orleans, Louisiana, graduated with a B.S. from Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana and obtained his Master of Business Administration Degree from Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana. After completing twenty successful years with Texaco, Inc., John accepted an appointment and was commissioned by the Governor of Louisiana to the Governor's Office of Urban Affairs and Development in August 1993. In February 1997, John transitioned to Louisiana Economic Development (LED) as Manager of the Small Business Bonding Assistance Program to assist small contractors with greater access to construction related projects. Since 2003, and until retirement in 2018, John served as Senior Director of Small Business Services for LED which offers a comprehensive array of programs and resources that build capacity, cultivate opportunities, and accelerate growth of small businesses.



"...SOLE PROVISION OF CAPACITY BUILDING SERVICES CAN CREATE A REPETITIVE CYCLE WITHIN WHICH SMALL BUSINESSES COMPLETE THE PROGRAM OR TRAINING... BUT HAVE NO OPPORTUNITY FOR PROCUREMENT OR CONTRACTS..."

DARRELL JOHNSON AND JOHN MATTHEWS

TRANSFORM US: THE INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTHCARE

RONALD ANDREWS, M.D.
MARIA SHANTELL WILLIAMS, PHD, LMFT,LPC-S

Healthcare is dynamic and affected by a multitude of variables including but not limited to current political policies, organized systems, community access, interpersonal beliefs, and individual decision making. Historically, conversations centered around wellness primarily focused on physical health while neglecting the importance of mental health.

Mental health was once considered to be taboo, often affiliated with both shame and embarrassment. Individuals who had difficulties with their mental health were often discriminated against and struggled behind the scenes too embarrassed to seek help. Traditionally greater emphasis was placed on physical health and as a result proper attention was not given to mental health and its correlation with total wellbeing as it related to overall chronic physical condition.

Louisiana's Health Care System

Louisiana has a two-tiered health care system that dates back to 1736 with the opening of Charity Hospital in New Orleans and was originally designed to provide care for the uninsured population while the other tier more closely resembles modern day healthcare for those privately or publicly insured through various federal and state programs, namely Medicare and Medicaid. This two-tiered system existed in our state uninterrupted for over 250 years until flooding from Hurricane Katrina closed Charity Hospital in 2005 and the remainder of the state-owned hospital system began to be dismantled and shuttered in 2013 in favor of privatization.

Many transformations have occurred over time in our health care system as it pertains to physical and mental health. The largest transformation of the American healthcare system since the creation of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 however occurred more recently in 2010 with the signing into law of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) which has three primary goals, to make health insurance more affordable, expand Medicaid, and support innovative medical care delivery methods designed to lower overall healthcare system cost. The ACA since its passing remains one of the most important and controversial legislative policies in American history.

The most drastic of the transformations that have occurred in our society, however, have pertained to overall mental health and wellbeing.

In Louisiana, residential long-term inpatient facilities have been minimized and mental healthcare has expanded to include community programs and initiatives with more emphasis and resources being placed on prevention which has resulted in more people gaining insight and becoming more comfortable discussing stressors, challenges and issues surrounding mental health. Mental health has evolved more holistically from an individual issue to one that takes into consideration other systems and overall wellbeing.

Considering these transitions over the last several years, mental health is no longer an optional form of care but a necessity and just as vital as our physical health. Societal crises such as COVID-19, fatal police shootings of unarmed black men, and life's uncertainties have contributed to greater attention being given to the interrelatedness of mental and physical health care.

Transforming Healthcare

The delivery of health care has morphed, remains dynamic and has spawned new organizations and entire industries. However,

> "...mental health is no longer an optional form of care but a necessity and just as vital as our physical health."

despite all of the dramatic changes and the increased budgetary spending mentioned, our health outcomes in Louisiana have suffered and have slipped from 48th in the nation abysmally to 50th.

Social Determinants of Health

Source: Healthy People 2030

Moving forward, greater strategies are needed to intentionally interconnect physical and mental wellbeing by having primary health and mental health providers working collectively together navigating wellness from a holistic perspective. Integrating physical and mental health care can improve overall outcomes and work to reduce stigma. These transformations in our healthcare system could lead to the greatest gains in health access and improved outcomes for inner city urban areas both physically and mentally over the next ten (10) years.

Fortunately, the current new innovative model of healthcare delivery includes federally mandated quantitative measuring of both Social and Cultural Determinants of Health which contribute to overall wellness but are not confined to doctor's offices, pharmacies and hospitals. The Social Determinants of Health measure the impact of inner city urban areas greater than they do suburban and affluent communities as the latter frequently have access to safer housing, healthier food options, more reliable transportation, better paying jobs and typically receive more culturally competent care than other BIPOC groups.

The current policies in place should allow the

transformation of healthcare in the near future to be more inclusive and diverse allowing for the building of new systems that address mental and physical health in a culturally competent manner while concurrently decreasing healthcare disparities and improving overall outcomes in an economically sustainable manner.

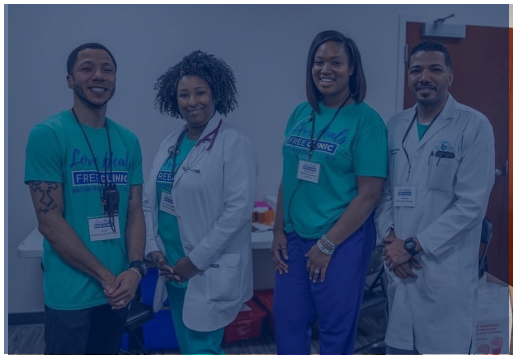
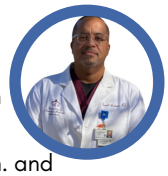


Photo: Baton Rouge Free Clinic on Facebook

About the Authors



Ronald Andrews, MD

Dr. Ronald Andrews was born in Houston, Texas and is an Honors graduate of Hampton University. He obtained his medical degree from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tn. and completed his residency in both Internal Medicine and Pediatrics from LSU Health Sciences Center and Children's Hospital of New Orleans, La. Dr. Andrews is Board Certified in Internal Medicine by The American Board of Internal Medicine and has over twenty years practicing Internal Medicine and Pediatrics in multiple inpatient and out patient settings.

In addition to his primary care medical practice, he was recently appointed as the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of Bring Back Louisiana by Governor John Bel Edwards in response to the global Covid19 pandemic. He also serves as Medical Director of ReliefTelemedicine, a virtual remote telehealth provider and also actively provides Medicated Assistance Treatment (MAT) for Opioid Abuse patients in his community.

Maria Shantell Williams, PhD, LMFT, LPC-S

Dr. Maria Shantell Williams is the author of "She's a 10: The Black Woman's Guide to Embracing Personal & Professional Greatness." She is the founder of The Relationship Institute, a solution-oriented counseling, coaching, and consulting firm located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Dr. Maria is a licensed therapist and certified organizational & leadership consultant trained under John Maxwell.

With 16 years of experience in mental health and leadership development, she consults with organizations using a systemic, solution-focused perspective to help develop programs and services to strengthen employee and consumer relationships.

Dr. Maria has worked with education systems, mental health agencies, and community organizations. Additionally, she specializes in helping women of color heal from trauma, implement self-care practices, and unapologetically embrace personal and professional greatness.

BEYOND POLICING: HOW BATON ROUGE BECOMES A SAFER CITY

MAYOR- PRESIDENT SHARON WESTON BROOME
SAM WASHINGTON

In 2020, driven by the Covid-19 pandemic, America saw a 30% increase in murder rates, with an additional 7% increase in 2021. Baton Rouge mirrored (and surpassed) this national trend. There were 83 people murdered in East Baton Rouge Parish in 2019, 136 people in 2020 (a 63.9% increase from 2019), and 170 people in 2021 (a 25% increase from 2020). This is an obvious crisis in public safety, and we must take immediate action to reverse this alarming trend and work intentionally to restore trust between neighbors and between residents and local government institutions.

Even before the crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, Baton Rouge was grappling with significant public safety challenges. In the past ten years, one of the most pivotal seasons in Baton Rouge was the summer of 2016. It represented the boiling over of numerous systemic issues that have long simmered around us. That summer, both citizen and law enforcement lives were lost. Clashes between the public and the police were exacerbated by outsiders who cared more about politics than the real people in our parish. Catastrophic flooding multiplied our collective trauma. Although the natural disaster prompted a great coming-together of neighbors, as it always does in Louisiana, the unity was oriented around short-term survival more than long-term healing.

A safe Baton Rouge is a community where everyone has the opportunity to prosper and where basic needs are met, including healthcare, mental health, childcare, nutritious food, affordable housing, early childhood education, job training, etc. It looks like a Baton Rouge where kids have after school programs that didn't limit you to sports. A Baton Rouge where your corner store owner knows your mother and father by name. A Baton Rouge where parades and college football homecomings are a safe haven and not a place of fear. A Baton Rouge where you don't have to move to the outskirts to feel like you escaped some of the violence.

But, how do we achieve this? It starts by being bold in our community engagement and real about our issues. Many of the actions we have taken over the past several years have addressed infrastructure and institutional issues that are foundational to having a safe city where everyone can prosper but none of it works without community partnership. This is especially true when it comes to policing. It has

been shown time and time again that we cannot arrest our way out of the issues facing our nation or our city. The public must be engaged in public safety, and individuals must take ownership in their families and communities to make them safer.

But that's not all. An important key to achieving a safe Baton Rouge is addressing generational trauma, which is an underlying cause of violence. When the adults around them grapple with untreated substance abuse and mental health issues, and when violence escalates in our neighborhoods, children absorb trauma and carry it into adolescence and beyond. These young people go on to repeat the cycles of violence that they themselves have been harmed by, which pulls the next generation into the cycle. In lieu of over-policing, we must bring trauma informed therapy to bear on this cycle and citizens must work together to provide positive outlets for children and young adults to develop their talents and reach their potential. As these cycles are broken, we have to create opportunities for building generational wealth, replacing a pattern of grief and despair with one of hope and prosperity.

In the next ten years, we must develop people and programs into an ecosystem that emphasizes the tearing down of silos and the growth of collaboration across individuals,

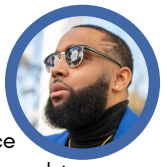
It has been shown time and time again that we cannot arrest our way out of the issues facing our nation or our city.

organizations, and institutions. The Mayor's Office is only one part of this ecosystem, which also includes the District Attorney's Office, the Baton Rouge Police Department, the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office, local nonprofit and neighborhood organizations, philanthropic organizations, education institutions, and numerous other entities and leaders. This collaboration has already begun with the Summer of Hope Initiative in 2022 that included 8 weeks of community events in neighborhoods that have seen some of the highest rates of violence. We focused on restoring joy and hope while also having honest conversations about violence and connecting people with resources to meet basic needs. I believe this is only the beginning of the next decade of life in our city. We can take what we have learned in the past ten years and move forward in the right direction in the next ten years, but we can only do this if we prioritize long-term healing that leads to a true sense of trust and unity so that, wherever we go, we go together.

About the Authors

Mayor- President Sharon Weston Broome
Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome is the Chief Executive Officer of the city and parish.

Sharon Weston Broome was sworn in as the Mayor-President of the City of Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge Parish on January 2, 2017. She is the first woman to be elected as the leader of the capital city of Louisiana. Since the campaign trail, her focus has been to unite the citizenry around the common goals of equality in education, economic development, justice, housing and other quality ways of life.



Sam Washington
Sam Washington, the owner of, It's Your Choice, LLC, a company all about training individuals, companies, schools, etc. on resilience and transitional thinking. I offer several services revolving around resilience, leadership, team building, success habits, etc.

Photo: Drawing the Line at Legacy on 14th St. by Bryson Boutte

"FOR THE DESCENDANTS OF ENSLAVED AFRICANS IN AMERICA, ART HAS LONG BEEN A TOOL FOR LIBERATION."

LUKE ST. JOHN MCKNIGHT AND NAYYIR RANSOME

THE ART OF LIBERATION

LUKE ST. JOHN MCKNIGHT
NAYYIR "NAY" RANSOME

Practicing an art form reminds us that we are—as the church folk would say—made in the image of God; simply meaning we are creators. Whether it is a painting, performance, pottery, or poem, we decide where the work begins and where it ends. Like God in the book of Genesis, from nothing—a blank canvas or an empty page—we craft a new universe.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that all movements have and need artists. Artists are the keepers of our collective imagination, illustrating and shaping that which was previously inexplicable and amorphous. For the descendants of enslaved Africans in America, art has long been a tool for liberation.

Out of the shackles of chattel slavery came spirituals. From Reconstruction came Blues. From The Great Migration and Harlem Renaissance came swing. From Jim Crow came Jazz. From the poetry of The Harlem Renaissance came The Black Arts Movement. From the Black Arts Movement came Hip-Hop. This culture centered around the compulsion to create and grew to become the largest commercial music genre on the planet!

Black Americans and their struggle for equity has always evolved in tandem with new and innovative forms of creative expression, frequently developing alongside and/or in response to the sociopolitical landscape of the time. With its unique mix of culture and brutal racial history, it is no surprise that Louisiana is credited with producing both Blues and Jazz. Much like its soil, Louisiana's social landscape provided fertile ground to create art—not as a luxury, but as a necessity. What follows is a brief exploration on the past, present, and future of Black Arts & Culture in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. While this brief foray is not designed to serve as the complete and exhaustive retelling of every Black creative expression recorded in our city, it is rather a "broad slice" of Black Baton Rouge's creative contributions, its significance, and its critical role in transforming community.

Historical Reflection

Historically, African-American culture influences American culture at large which influences world culture. This macro-proliferation of creative capital also takes place on a local scale here in Baton Rouge. Whether through the oratorical prowess of Sunday sermons, crafting spirit-nourishing meals, or matriarchs quilting their family's origin stories, Blackness informs much of our past and present understanding of Baton Rouge's culture and formation.

> "...we experienced moments where the arts brought an elevated identity to communities and neighborhoods."

Swamp Blues blossoms in and around Baton Rouge through musicians like Slim Harpo. Frank Hayden, a pillar of Black American Art, traces significant aspects of Baton Rouge's history using his work. Located at Southern University A&M College, his "Red Stick " is a remembrance of Baton Rouge's founding on

the Mississippi River. Hayden's "Lift Every Voice," honors Denver Smith, and Leonard Brown, two students shot and killed by law enforcement during a 1960s campus protest. His "Oliver Pollack " and "Marcha de Galvez" trace the history of the territory during the American Revolution.

Homes, schools, universities, churches, lodges and community centers provided incubators for creativity to flourish, ensuring some level of protection and the sustenance needed to cultivate art and shift culture. Many of these contributions are archived at the Baton Rouge African American Museum, created by late activist Sadie Roberts-Joseph in 2001. This site includes soon-to-be sacred artifacts, and biographical information about numerous Black leaders, artists, and inventors.

10 Years of Transformation

While much remains to be accomplished, we have much to celebrate regarding the transformations of the Black arts landscape in Baton Rouge within the last 10 years. The start of the decade saw a substantial level of top-down disinvestment from the arts, leaving a vacuum filled by organic community participation and creativity. Through these new grassroots efforts, we experienced moments where the arts brought an elevated identity to communities and neighborhoods. Public art projects led by black creatives all throughout the city made the arts more ubiquitous. While the volume of work increased during this period, there remains a need for a sophisticated infrastructure to support emerging artists to ensure they are cultivated beyond the novice level and empowered well into the professional realm. As we progressed further through the decade, creative placemaking activities led by the Renoir Cultural District, The Walls Project, Museum of Public Art, and many others are now explicitly reflecting the sensibilities and interests of Black life in a manner both tasteful and respectful.

In addition to increased art production, emerging Black arts leaders are taking on influential positions throughout the creative sector. In many cases, art administrators serve as the connective tissue for art production. A position of such consequence benefits when there is someone reflecting the sentiments of the community occupying the role, rather than the siloed fine-arts professional. While this trend of arts leaders of color grows, what becomes more noticeable is the sometimes disjointedness of the leaders' collective efforts. There is an opportunity for artists and arts leaders to connect, share ideas, and collaborate on a scale not previously seen in Baton Rouge.

Recommendations for Our Future

Black arts leaders must remain strategic about their vision and understand what is necessary to sustain their impact. The business of leading arts organizations and accelerating transformation requires competency in managing assets, navigating structures, and fiscal responsibility; otherwise, efforts of great promise do not last.

Consider a bridge from arts programs in high schools to professional arts programs for students committed to a career in the creative sector. This initiative would give students and teachers concrete objectives and standards as well as illustrate the next steps to continue their crafts as legitimate careers.

Camaraderie among artists and arts administrators must be cultivated regularly, generating their power and collective action. Our local Arts Councils are uniquely positioned to intentionally support the Black arts landscape through regranting, professional development, and advocacy.

Creative Place Making and public art are proven force multipliers in fostering a deeper sense of place within our communities. It would serve our city well to further invest in this field of work. The intersection of Place Making, City Planning, and Urban Design can unlock greater levels of vibrancy for all to enjoy.

About the Authors

Luke St. John Mcknight

Luke St. John McKnight is an artist turned creative consultant and social strategist. His work prioritizes cultivating community-centered initiatives intended to multiply the individual and collective capacity for vibrancy, enrichment, and livability within Baton Rouge and its surrounding areas. A proud alumnus of innovative social enterprises such as The Walls Project and MetroMorphosis, St. John now serves as The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge's Community Impact Manager developing creative placemaking strategies throughout its 11-parish region.

Nayyir "Nay" Ransome

Nayyir "Nay" Ransome is a multifaceted artist, educator, and cultural commentator dedicated to using their voice on behalf of undervalued communities. They're work focuses on creative storytelling and crafting intentional language to empower and support those whose communities have historically been divested of power and resources. They're currently working with local and national organizers and organizations at the intersections of climate justice, creative placemaking, and economic development in hopes of finding innovative and sustainable solutions to current challenges facing South Louisiana.

Photo: Courtesy of STEM NOLA on Facebook

THE GREAT CONNECTOR DOESN'T HAVE TO DIVIDE US

DR. CALVIN MACKIE
SEVETRI WILSON

Starting in early 2020, as COVID-19 spread, Black and Brown communities in the United States suffered disproportionately. Higher percentages were infected and died. And, in urban areas, such as Baton Rouge, the pandemic brought out of the shadows another phenomenon: vast disparities in technology between under-resourced communities and wealthier ones. As schools and jobs became home-based, it became a challenging scenario for households without access to Wi-Fi. In fact, LSU reports that at least 400,000 households across the state cannot access the internet.

Technology is the great connector, particularly over the last 10 to 20 years, but in many ways, it can be the great divider. When we think of the enormous wealth gap between Blacks and Whites, (census data shows median net worth for Black households is $24,000 compared to $188,000 for White families), technology has quietly played a significant role in holding back communities of color.

> From New Orleans to Baton Rouge a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) corridor is blossoming that will generate quality jobs and careers.

Our communities have had unequal access to job listings, online education, personal health data, banking functions, lower rate mortgages, and so many other services and goods. This prevents people of color from reaching their full economic potential. Moving forward, technology must be available to empower all communities, and not be a party to holding some back.

In Baton Rouge, we urge the public and private sectors to come together as they have in other cities to provide Wi-Fi service to entire communities. This has begun in the downtown area, but it must expand throughout the region. We must prevent children from being schooled in parked cars to access internet from a nearby free feeds or parents losing jobs because they could not work remotely. Big Tech, with its multi-millions in profits, must play a role; the cost is not prohibitive, and benefits are enormous.

Having internet access is a core component in creating a strong, technology-based economy in Baton Rouge and across the state. Powered by the education centers, LSU and Southern University and A&M College, technology can be the foundation for a major transformation in Baton Rouge. We can create a technology ecosystem, where a steady flow of educated college students can be the workforce for new industries and seed technology-based startups that launch and thrive in the area.

We want to be more than just consumers of technology; we want to be builders of it.

Through the decades, Louisiana has struggled with adopting critical innovations and translating it into jobs and economic stability.

Centuries ago, when agriculture fueled the economies of the South, cotton and sugar cane were the backbone of the state's economy. With rich soils and the highest annual rainfall in the continental U.S., the state's economy through the centuries also featured rice, livestock, and forest products. As the nation developed steam and water powered trains, farmers and producers were able to get commodities to market and Louisiana kept pace with other state economies. But as the Industrial Revolution pushed into the early 1900s, electricity was an instrumental facilitator. Louisiana began falling behind. Manufacturing plants and factories were not built at a high enough rate, as other regions sped ahead. The same trend was repeated as computers, technology, and knowledge became drivers of state and regional economies.

Today, however, Louisiana is striving towards a resurgence, with technology as its catalyst. Last year, Patrick Comer sold Lucid, a New Orleans-based startup, for more than $1 billion. Further, Levelset, a software company launched by New Orleans native Scott Wolfe, sold for $500 million. As a child, Wolfe was enamored with software and developed apps as a student. These successes demonstrate that Louisiana can be an incubator for generations of entrepreneurs. From New Orleans to Baton Rouge a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) corridor is blossoming that will generate quality jobs and careers. Over the next 10 years, Our Lady of the Lake and LCMC Health are investing $245 million in LSU to revamp healthcare in the state. LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center is at the forefront of research in obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and dementia.

With the help of public-private partnerships, technology and innovation are empowering communities. Public and private sector leaders recognize that supporting tech-based startups is the wave of the future. Louisiana can emerge as a new center for technological advancement. We can bolster Black and Brown entrepreneurs, helping them launch startups and be trained for jobs in STEM. We need continued commitment from public, private, and non-profit leaders to complete this transformation.

About the Authors

Dr. Calvin Mackie

Dr. Calvin Mackie founded STEM NOLA, a non-profit organization to expose, inspire and engage communities in learning about opportunities in STEM. Since 2013, STEM NOLA has engaged more than 100,000 students—mostly in under-resourced communities—in hands-on STEM project-based learning. Based in New Orleans, STEM NOLA is at an inflection point, taking much of what they've learned in New Orleans to expand their work by managing operation of their model in 47 cities and 5 countries. In 2021, Mackie launched STEM Global Action, a network and campaign that pursues the advancement of STEM education for children and communities everywhere.

Sevetri Wilson

Sevetri Wilson is the Founder and CEO of Resilia, a SaaS technology platform that helps nonprofit organizations increase capacity, and enables funders to scale impact and provide on-demand technical assistance to their partners. Headquartered in New Orleans with a second office in New York, Resilia was named to Venture Beat's top startups to watch out for in 2019.

Sevetri was named in Inc. Magazine's 100 Female Founders building world-changing companies and in PitchBook's 27 leading Black founders and investor list in 2019. In 2020, Sevetri became one of the only 50 Black women in the U.S. to have raised over $15M in venture funding and was named a Rising Star on the Forbes Cloud 100 List. Sevetri's second book, Resilient: How to Overcome Anything and Build a Million Dollar Business With or Without Capital was released in 2021 and became an instant Wall Street Journal bestseller.
Prior to Resilia, Sevetri founded Solid Ground Innovations, LLC., a nonprofit management and strategic communications agency. Sevetri is a 2010 recipient of the Nobel Prize for Public Service and the Jefferson Award, and her work was featured in the U.S. Senate report to the White House on Volunteerism in the U.S., under President Obama.

A CRITICAL LOOK AT MODERN LEADERSHIP

EUGENE COLLINS
TAMIERA "TC" NASH, MPA

For decades individuals, groups, and organizations in Black spaces have found themselves discussing the critical issues impacting their lives. Leadership within the Black community never fails to find its way onto the list. Conversations around the topic describe what some call a lack thereof and others the "failures" of those who claim or were considered "leaders." What is rarely discussed in the Black Community is how the desire for change is the people's will and yet only viewed as the leader's responsibility. Shifting our understanding of leadership as a position to leadership as a practice that each of us has the right and ability to do changes how individuals see themselves in the fight for change. The power to enact change is something that we all have access to, and by shifting our understanding of the responsibility, we give ourselves permission to learn and practice those skills that create the reality we wish to see.

From Dr. King organizing with local leaders through gaining buy-in and amplifying issues on local stages that became national issues, leadership in the Black Community has always moved in concert. At times not seemingly, Black Leaders have typically presented a defined unity. Even when at odds, our work lines up. From Gus Young to Joe Delpit, here locally has been no different. Black Baton Rouge leadership was once anchored by a strong/sizable middle class, which has been replaced in recent years with strong advocates and political leadership. Although seemingly ineffective at times, the success and gains around issues that affect people that look like you and I couldn't have been accomplished without some form of strong black leadership—centered around a unifying point that doesn't always happen in rooms. It's almost atmospheric, it's there and understood.

Becoming a leader in name, but not by practice has become easier in recent years. With the rise of the internet and by consequence social media anyone can create a platform for themselves, and they have. However, many of them have not begun to master the skill of moving people from following online to becoming mobilized citizens in their communities offline. However, individuals alone do not carry the burden of Black leadership challenges in the community. Previous experiences have caused us to be protective of our communities, and as a result less trusting. If members of the community do not recognize you, they will not support you and this weakens an individual's ability to practice leadership which can and has led to a stalemate in some instances.

Today we see leaders who have many great self-accomplishments that often don't relate to the thought of collective success. We have too many revolutionaries with government contracts. If you step in a room and you're the only person that wins, that's more of consulting than leadership. With that said, success and progress can be seen in some areas. From body cams to entrepreneurship, gains can be seen.

For the Black community to begin to solve the leadership challenge there needs to be a fundamental shift in the way that we approach leadership. Leadership is not something you get when you have a title. The power and platform needed to practice leadership can be created by anyone. Every person in the Black community can exercise their power, share their experience and learn to practice leadership for the betterment of themselves and their communities. We must make a conscious effort to teach existing and emerging leaders to tools that will support them in their practice including the art and science of mobilization. There is a part of our history where we knew that strength in numbers was real. There is no leader if there aren't followers, supporters, and mobilized people working towards the goal.

About the Authors

Eugene Collins
Eugene Collins is the current president of the Baton Rouge branch of the NAACP.

Tamiera "TC" Nash
Tamiera (TC) Nash is the Communications Catalyst at MetroMorphosis and works in partnership with team members to fundamentally shift the deficit-based narrative around Black and other POC's communities. Nash's work at MetroMorphosis is directly tied to influencing, creating, and supporting narrative change in the communities that the organization serves. Outside of their work, Nash is a community advocate and organizer who works with local non-profits to coordinate engagements to learn from those with lived experience. Previously, she sat on the Foundation for Louisiana's Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Advisory Board and the Baton Rouge Gun Violence Prevention Steering Committee. Currently, Nash is the owner of Twenty-Four Nineteen, LLC, a consulting agency focusing on branding and marketing for change making people, organizations and businesses. She also co-owns Mix-Her the Brand, LLC which is a small business dedicated to the celebration of Black women of all orientations and presentations including trans and masc. presenting. Nash obtained their Masters of Public Administration from THE Southern University A&M College and a Bachelor's of Arts from Spring Hill College.

MENTORING IN BATON ROUGE

BRANDON SMITH

Mentorship is as timeless as civilization itself. The human condition is not merely defined by our individual presence, but our collective experience. Like biological or physiological discovery, anthropology helps us appreciate how people co-exist, share history, and form culture. In this regard, Baton Rouge has been well-positioned as a case study on various peoples coming together to build a unique community. Our city is infused with Native, African, and European influences. Our regional economy – from petrochemical to hospitality – brings professionals of diverse backgrounds to the area. Baton Rouge in 2022 reflects more than two centuries of people, brought together by exploration, slavery, and industry alike, who have built one of this nation's most enduring capital cities.

We would like to think of mentoring as the education of life's classroom. Though ancillary to curricular instruction, mentoring is a necessary complement to build pipelines of engaged, civic-minded citizens. In one case, mentoring connects one generation to another – bridging gaps of understanding and perspective. In others, it connects individuals from the same generation, where the expertise or experience of one is catalyst for engagement. In either case, mentoring is critical to healthy sociocultural and socioemotional health, community norming, and ultimately promotes self-efficacy and personal resilience.

Our story is not unlike the story of countless young, Black men of Baton Rouge. We understand the challenges presented by absent or under-engaged fathers, and the disappointment it creates. We also know the fulfillment that comes from authentic relationships with uncles, aunts, older cousins, teachers, church leaders, and pillars of the community. These bonds help to frame how young citizens understand and appreciate our instinctive desire for interconnectedness. In our heart, we all want a mentor – someone who sees us deeply, someone who is invested in our development without ulterior motive.

In the last 10 years, there are several examples of mentoring that makes a difference. We'll highlight three. I (Brandon) work as Director of Community Partnerships at LSU. One the efforts with which I have worked closely is the Black Male Leadership Initiative, or BMLI. The fellows program is designed to improve the retention, graduation and participation rates for black male students through mentoring, leadership development and academic support, while connecting these students with faculty, staff and the campus community. BMLI uses a cohort model, which increases the opportunity for mentorship within a generation. As an LSU alum, seeing this program established and flourish takes on special meaning. While blessed to have "a village" of faculty and staff who supported my endeavors, there was no BMLI to connect me with other Black male students. BMLI and other programs that support underrepresented populations have pivoted the institution's narrative of past resistance and contemporary struggles toward inclusion.

Dadrius works as Executive Director for the 100 Black Men of Metro Baton Rouge, an organization that mentors through a myriad of programs and initiatives. "We're here as anchors to not only start and have conversation but also to drive impact across the board. We are the people who... if you can't talk to the mayor, we go and talk on your behalf. We're the people that if you can't reach out to your local school system, we go and do that on your behalf," Lanus is quotes as saying on BRProud.com.

MetroMorphosis is a local nonprofit that believes that urban communities must be transformed from within. Through its mission, the organization mobilizes engaged citizens to design and implement sustainable solutions to persistent community challenges. That takes mentorship! From their Urban Congress on African American Males in Baton Rouge to the Urban Leadership Development Initiative (ULDI), MetroMorphosis has been a catalyst for mentorship between men and women who want to make demonstrative impact in the place called home.

In the next ten years, we can make lasting change on today's and future generations through the power of mentorship. Leaders within the public and private sector, as well as education leaders from early childhood to postsecondary, should explore the endless opportunities mentorship provides including:

- Pipeline programs for entry and mid-level employees to fortify organizational integrity and demystify succession planning;
- Cohort-based programs for pre-college and college students, which build networks and systems of support for those most vulnerable; and
- Family-centered resources that empower everyday citizens to move beyond "kitchen table" conversations to discussion that prioritize generational wealth.

Baton Rouge's next 10 years will hinge on our ability mentor the city's greatest resource – its people. Sustained mentoring will to stronger communities and a brighter future for us all.

About the Author

Brandon Smith

Brandon M. Smith is a native of Zachary, LA. He serves as Director of Community and Education Partnerships at Louisiana State University (LSU). In this role, Smith is the primary contact between LSU and several local stakeholders including the Mayor's Office, Metro Council, nonprofits, K-12 districts, and interfaith groups, among others. He also the inaugural Program Director for the LSU President's Millennial Scholars Program, an initiative that supports high-achieving students from underrepresented populations.

Before LSU, Smith was an educator in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System through Teach for America.

Smith is a two-time LSU alum, having received a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a Master's in Public Administration. He was an active student leader in many capacities, but most notably became the Speaker of the Senate in LSU's Student Government—the first African American in the university's history.

Smith is also an ordained minister and serves as Pastor of Grace Covenant Community Church in Baton Rouge, LA. He is married to Rachanda Wilson Smith; they have one daughter, Katelyn and two sons, Wilson and Brennan.

Photo: Courtesy of STEM NOLA on Facebook

THE MISEDUCATION OF PHILANTHROPY

George Bell
Lauren Crump

Philanthropy has two parts—education and participation. There are, of course, many sub-activities. But essentially, these are the two. And the order is important.

Think back to grade school. Before you began sounding letters, you were introduced to people, places, things by name. Someone who cared about your learning, pointed you to something that held shared value and said its name—likely many times. This repetition reinforced definition. Those definitions coordinated to form ideas. Those coordinated ideas would become the lens through which you understood "appropriate" interaction and participated in your world.

Words are important. And when we feel confident in their use, they become a regular part of both our speech and identity. Not convinced? Try, "Worcestershire". While you may know its purpose, the mental twists to articulate its name might've been a bridge too far. At first sight, maybe you decided this word isn't for me. Perhaps, you even visualized someone who could use it with ease. How did they look? How were they educated? Where might they live?

Philanthropy poses a similar challenge to people in urban communities who use it every day yet feel disconnected from the term.

EDUCATION

There's a widely held belief that philanthropy is the practice of infusing large sums of money into charitable organizations. While that definition is true, it is also incomplete.

Philanthropy is the love of humanity, expressed through financial support. Note: A gift with that true intention can be any size. The objective is for giving to align with the giver and recipient's mutual goals. And philanthropy matures from the emotional response of charity when it's tethered to a plan.

Black and brown communities know this practice well.

In 2020, the Washington Post reported that "nearly two-thirds of Black households donate to community-based organizations and causes, to the tune of $11 billion each year." The publication cited a joint study from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. What's more, Black "households on average give away 25% more of their income per year than Whites."

The study also recognized that Blacks largely give to three strategic causes—"Cornerstone (giving to higher education and the arts), Kinship (donating to organizations serving the Black community) and Sanctified (supporting Black churches)", where the expected return on investment is the increase of mutual aid.

Moreover, because of historic exclusion, Black communities have become very creative about

how knowledge is collected and resources are distributed. That sort of gathering and testing isn't always labeled as philanthropy. But the types of solutions that arise from that testing become institutionalized within organizations. When those organizations are nonprofits and are funded by charitable dollars, that becomes philanthropy as we know it. But the motivation, in many cases, was how marginalized communities first attempted to "make it work."

Giving, in this way, helps to somewhat relieve some of the socio-economic pressures of structural racism. Dating back to emancipation, this activist philanthropy would pave the way for how government would define nonprofit organizations.

> "Philanthropy poses a [...] challenge to people in urban communities who use it every day yet feel disconnected from the term."

APPLICATION

One organization that helped shape and now weathers philanthropy's definition is the United Way. Over the last 10 years, United Ways, including Baton Rouge's Capital Area United Way, have seen a shift in their donor demographics. As baby boomers who have given generously to United Ways via workplace campaigns retire, younger workers have not closed the gap. This shift to younger workers has placed pressure on United Ways to be more creative in how they engage, attract and retain younger donors from diverse demographics.

In addition to demographic changes, technology-driven access to information has helped inform donor opinions and preferences, requiring organizations to make cases that pierce the digital noise.

These challenges are exacerbated for small, grassroots organizations that may be well positioned to fulfill their mission but lack the resources and platforms to tell their story in a compelling way.

Therefore, many urban or community-based nonprofits struggle to deliver effective messaging.

RECOMMENDATION

So, what advice do we offer under-resourced —typically Black—organizations and those looking to fund them?

For urban and historically disinvested communities, philanthropy raises more questions than answers. Primarily, what's in it for the donor? How urban communities see themselves in strategic giving points hard to how they participate in philanthropy.

A person's contribution to a nonprofit is essentially a fee for service, a gift that returns value for the common good. In this way, both nonprofits and donors receive something.

As a recipient, you're too often relying on someone to anticipate your needs. And what you receive is subject to their understanding of your condition.

Take the time to understand your value.

When you establish or join a group of givers, you've decided that you're capable of articulating for yourself. In that way, giving becomes a language for social action that you tell yourself and community you're equipped to address.

About the Authors

George Bell
George Bell is the current President & CEO of Capital Area United Way.

George has been active in the Baton Rouge community, having been presented the Camelot College Community Award of Excellence in 2015, and the 2016 Medical Professional of the Year Award by Mu Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. He currently serves or has served on a variety of boards, including: Salvation Army Board of Advisors; Mid City Redevelopment Alliance; Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX); Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge; BR Transit Coalition; Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra; Urban Congress; Mid City Merchants; and Kid's Orchestra. In addition to his professional calling, George maintains his lifelong passion for music, playing the trumpet regularly as a member of the music ministry at his church and occasionally performs and volunteers in local schools to promote and support music education. He has also produced and performed over 12 concerts at the Manship Theatre with his George Bell and Friends ensemble.

Lauren C. Crump
auren Crump is a strategic consultant for Baton Rouge Area Foundation a philanthropic agency created to enhance the quality of life in south Louisiana. Crump pursues this mission by advising nonprofit organizations on board development, strategic planning, and fundraising program design. She also assists with grantmaking for emergency assistance funds, which are established through the Foundation's supporting organization —Employees 1st.

As a development professional, Lauren has worked in director and volunteer roles, advancing early childhood education options in disinvested communities. She has also facilitated dialogues on institutional racism and evaluated generational wealth-building opportunities for African American males.

Before joining the Foundation, she managed booking, public relations and charitable activities for professional musicians, and created the framework for a micro music festival.

She earned her Bachelor of Science in Human Resource Development from Louisiana State University.

She resides in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and completed a Master of Arts in International Business and Policy through Georgetown University's Executive Education program.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

MetroMorphosis is a Baton Rouge- based social enterprise focused on racial, social, and economic justice. At the heart of our mission of transforming urban communities from within is our work to mobilize citizens, create equitable systems, and create narrative change.

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