

NEWS RELEASE

COMMUNITY COUNCIL
OF METROPOLITAN ATLANTA, INC.
"Helping others to live better lives"
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For Immediate Release: November 12, 2009

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PROPEL CONFERENCE FOR MALES

"Providing Resources, Opportunities and Priorities to Empower Lives"



November 12, 2009 - Atlanta, GA – The *PROPEL* Conference, one of five programs developed by the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. (CCMA) to help empower and improve the standard of living of underserved individuals in the multi-county area, was sponsored by the CCMA and Morris Brown College on Thursday, November 5, 2009. Approximately 340 persons attended the conference held in the Hickman Student Center located at 715 M. L. King J.R. Drive SW in Atlanta, Georgia. The conference included workshops, a community resource panel, lunch, a job bank, a dramatic presentation, vendor exhibits, and a true “rap-up” session with a special celebrity rap artist.

“The black male crisis has been deemed the leading socio-economic challenge facing our society today. School drop-out rates, unemployment rates, incarceration rates and income levels are clear indicators of the odds that black males face. The good news is that these odds can be overcome by putting constructive strategies to work,” said Norma Joy Barnes, Executive Director of the CCMA and founder of the Priority Male Program. *“Our goal is to provide black males with the resources to become successfully employed individuals and productive members of our society, in spite of the odds that they face.”*

The opening session was hosted by Dr. Stanley J. Pritchett, Acting President of Morris Brown College, and Norma Joy Barnes, Executive Director of the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. and Founder of the Priority Mail Initiative. Swain Watters, Media Services Coordinator, for CCMA presented the “WHY PROPEL?” video. The video explains the need for constructive resources to address the issues of the black male crisis in our communities.

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Robert E. Johnson Esq., of Morris Brown College moderated the Empowerment Panel. Panelists Dr. Carlton Brown, President, Clark-Atlanta University; Gene Washington, Georgia Department of Labor; Michael Hill Esq., Office of the Public Defender, Atlanta Judicial Circuit; Dr. Marvin Crawford, Morehouse School of Medicine; Nathaniel Mathis, former Director of Corrections Programming, National Fatherhood Initiative; and Thomas W. Dortch, Chairman Emeritus of 100 Black Men of America, Inc. and President of TWD, Inc., focused on education, employment, criminal justice, health, fatherhood, entrepreneurship and social responsibility. Making good choices was a common component of the presentations.

Dr. Bryant Marks, Director of the Black Male Initiative at Morehouse College, led his workshop using the Priority Male Institute's model of "Five Steps to Success" (1) Assess Yourself, (2) Set Goals, (3) Identify Resources, (4) Plan Your Strategy, (5) Implement Your Plan, along with his powerful message of male empowerment. A second workshop, Mo' Money: Financial Literacy was led by Willie Yancey, Group Vice President of Capitol City Bank.

Exhibitors participating in the conference included the Atlanta Urban League; Atlanta Civil Liberties Union; Georgia Department of Labor; Atlanta District Office, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; Families First; Live Healthy Fulton, Fulton County Department of Health; Fulton County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA); the U. S. Census Bureau; and other organizations. Each exhibitor provided valuable information and resources for the male audience.

The provocative and timely drama, "Make the Right Choices: Choose Freedom," was performed by the Atlanta Transitional Center Choir, ex-offenders who are working to re-enter the community at the Atlanta Transitional Center. Their performance ended with each giving a personal testimony, resulting in a standing ovation. The "Choose Freedom" is a special collaboration between the office of the Governor, the Children's Youth Coordination Council, the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, the Georgia Department of Corrections, local schools, and other community groups across the state focused on keeping Georgia youth out of prisons.

Lavert Forrest, the brother of slain boxer Vernon Forrest, spoke to the young men about the inspirational life and tragic death of his brother. The Forrest family presently works to help young black males avoid acts of violence.

The conference ended with rap artist Aival Ture' singing his composition, "Ain't No Sunshine."

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Please contact us at propelconference@live.com or 404-935-5859 for more information.