

Operation HOPE
707 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 3030
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Black Professional Men Incorporated
P.O. Box 13362
Baltimore, MD 21203

Dear Brothers and Friends:

The past year since my graduation from North Carolina A&T State University has been a season of opportunity and fruition. The seeds that were deposited in me beginning back in early 2005 when I began my relationship with Black Professional Men have grown and blossomed. The support and influence from the brothers of BPM have encouraged me as I pursue my life's passion and purpose.

The purpose and presence of a mentor in the life of a young man is absolutely crucial to development. Parents simply cannot do their job alone; they need the assistance of the community to successfully raise their children. In his book *The Tipping Point* Malcolm Gladwell writes that a community stabilizes when it has an active level of positive roles models of five percent or greater meaning that civic health, well being, and vitality dramatically increase. Indicators like student school attendance, drug use, youth pregnancy, etc all significantly improve. This is a phenomenal yet tragic juxtaposition. It is absolutely phenomenal that it does not take much positive action to produce so much good; however, it is tragic that many of our communities evidently do not have that five percent level of active engagement.

The average high school dropout rate in the United States is thirty percent. In economically underserved communities it is fifty percent. For black males the dropout rate is an astronomical seventy percent. This is a crippling problem for the lives of the young people who drop-out, their communities, and this nation, and something must be done to combat it. If we want our children to aspire to succeed and excel we must be the ones that show them how to do so. Quincy Jones says it takes twenty years to change a culture, and over the last twenty years we have made dumb the cool thing to be. In September 2009, Operation HOPE launched the FIVE MILLION KIDS (5MK) Initiative, a powerfully dynamic five year initiative designed to combat the high school dropout rate by rebranding education and "make smart cool and sexy." The program is active in cities all around the country, including Baltimore, and we look forward to working with Black Professional Men to help us achieve our mission.

Brothers of Black Professional Men, thank you for everything that you stand for and for everything that you do. Your reward lies in the lives of young men like me that you have touched and changed for the better and who are now paying it forward by making positive change in their families and communities.

With HOPE,

Jonathan McCoy
Operation HOPE
5MK National Program Manager