

THE BLOOM  
INITIATIVE

APRIL 2019

BLOOM



**Building a Lifetime  
of Options and  
Opportunities for Men:**

Transforming the Lives of Young  
Black Men in South Los Angeles



California  
**COMMUNITY**  
Foundation

AN URGENT NEED

DEVELOPING A NEW MOI

PROJECT OUTCOMES

WHAT WE LEARNED

THE VOICES OF BLOOMER

MOVING FORWARD

APPENDIX

A. Program Models

B. Interviewees and Sample Interview Questions

MOI  
BLOOMER

expanding opportunities for young people who face steep and entrenched barriers.

As I reflect on this process, I am reminded of President Obama's words at the 2018 Obama Foundation Summit, "One of the mistakes all young organizers make—certainly I did when I was young—is to think that societies will change on our timetable. While we should be impatient about injustice—while we should seek to challenge it at every opportunity—the truth is that creating lasting change takes time. It takes effort. And most importantly, it takes listening to our families, our neighbors, and our friends."

When you're working with young people whose lives are as precarious as BLOOM participants are, patience can be difficult to find. Their windows for getting back on track close so quickly, and so often a few mistakes in childhood will set the paths for the rest of their lives. Still, we must find a way to be patient, because the impulse to jump from trend to trend without gathering all the evidence is one of the biggest reasons why we continue to struggle to give young men the support they need.

We found that patience by listening to our partners and to BLOOM participants. They made clear that tinkering around the edges wouldn't be enough. This was CCF's first effort focused on the juvenile justice population, so we had no choice but to listen to our partners and to the people affected by the work. In retrospect, I am grateful that we came into the initiative with minimal experience, because it freed us to listen and learn humbly, without preconceptions.

I hope you'll spend a bit of time with this report and consider what it has to teach all us about how best to serve our communities. Nearly every major indicator of economic, social, and physical well-being shows that Black men and boys in the U.S. are systematically deprived of the support and opportunities they need to thrive, and when they fail to achieve their potential, we all suffer. I believe that BLOOM can help our field move beyond traditional anti-recidivism and diversion work—work that addresses only the symptoms of the chronic underinvestment in these boys and young men—and toward holistic interventions that help young men graduate from high school, complete post-secondary programs, and prepare for the workforce. If our work inspires you to reimagine what is possible for these boys and young men, then the patience will have been well worth it.

The BLOOM model certainly can't address every barrier they face, but I believe it shows us a path forward, so we can stop thinking of our young men as "problems" to be "fixed," and instead see them as valuable members of our community with essential contributions to make.

Sincerely,

Antonia Hernández

President and CEO, California Community Foundation

Citi Foundation

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## Lead Donors

Erika J. Glazer

The Hanley Founc

Patricia Neuwirth

## Current Advisory Committee Member

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Alberto Refana

Amelia Williamson

Carol Biondi

David Crippens

Karim Webb

Dr. Manuel Pastor

Mark Loranger

Olivia Mitchell

Dr. Terrence Robe

Virgil Roberts

Zaid Gayle

Zakeer Willis

# Summary

This report tells the story of BLOOM, its impact, and the lessons we learned along the way. Through the initiative, BHC and SLLI developed programs that tap into the potential of young Black males through developmental relationships with male mentors along with positive peer relationships and accountability with other young Black men. Since its launch, BLOOM has impacted the lives of nearly 800 young Black men in South L.A. Over the past six years, CCF's commitment of \$500,000 per year, totaling \$3.5 million, leveraged \$3.3 million from other foundations, as well as contributions from individual donors, with an additional \$3.2 million pledged over the next five years.

In achieving these outcomes, we learned several key lessons:

- **Big Change Takes Big Commitments:** It took CCF four years to find partners who were well-positioned to take the lead on this initiative, both because we were still sharpening our own priorities for the work and because the initial grants we offered were too small for the scope of change needed. We would encourage others to be realistic and up front about just how big an undertaking this type of change is and to structure their work accordingly.
- **Empower Your Community:** We believe foundations should not lead by themselves, but rather should enable the success of those who are closest to the community. By setting up a BLOOM Advisory Committee, we were able to engage funding partners, community leaders, grantees, and public agencies such as probation departments and school districts early and give them a meaningful stake in BLOOM.
- **Commit for the Long Term:** Though BLOOM was a pilot, the excitement around working with this population left some stakeholders wanting to scale up the initiative before fully defining and validating the program model. To give BLOOM an opportunity to achieve its full impact, we had to simultaneously resist this urge and also shift our own staffing to ensure the initiative was given its due attention.

- **Build Capacity:** and the population to implement contributions Affairs to ensure compete for
- **Align Programs:** that can be of articulating we faced with internal evaluation proactively.
- **Cultivate Trust:** opportunities and compelling carefully structure time and resources 2018 event, ", donors, community the stories of in meaningful and council

# an urgent need



policies and practices stunted the potential. Although they make up 32% of the population, the fact that 80% are re-entrants is a tragedy. Changing the trajectory of the high school diploma crisis in California has only one solution: we need to ensure that every young person who doesn't graduate from high school is supported until they are at least the age of 35.

Both initial contact and the increased likelihood of other outcomes that support successful re-entrants. Formerly incarcerated individuals face significant restrictions, including limited access to housing, employment, and social networks, and less health care. They also have a mortality rate that is 20% higher than those who are not incarcerated. Their total economic cost to the United States is estimated at \$100 billion to the United States.

According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, the cost of incarceration in California is \$9,000 per inmate annually. When we compare the cost of incarceration to the cost of ensuring that they'll likely find employment, we see that the County's shared challenge is to invest in prevention rather than incarceration.

To date, most interventions have focused on the immediate needs of individuals, but BLOOM sees the long-term benefits of educational and workforce training, addressing the childhood trauma that leads to incarceration, and providing them a real chance at a better future.

BLOOM is designed for men, particularly the pipeline. Rather than with the criminal justice system, it focuses on a positive future.

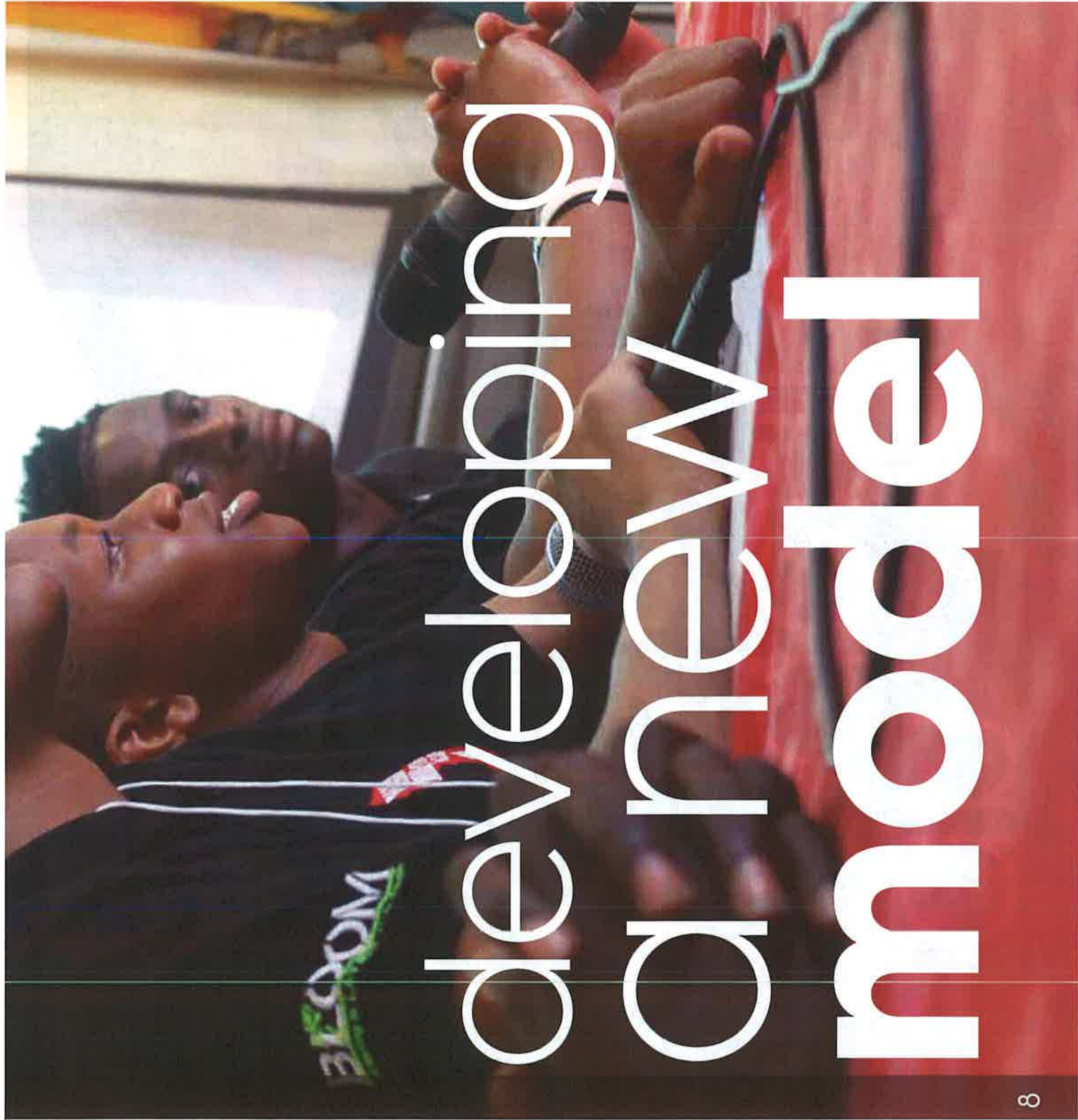
At the start of BLOOM, the focus is on formal services post-development of older

### **BLOOM serves B**

- Probation-involvement
- Reported behavior
- School-credit delay
- Chronic absenteeism

### **BHC and SJLI ea**

- Find meaning, hope
- Cultivate a sense of purpose
- Self-regulate behavior
- Create identity and self-worth
- Develop emotional regulation
- Nurture vulnerability



**BMYA programming for BLOOM youth includes:**

- Educational field trips
- Academic and career counseling
- Life coaching
- Brotherhood activities
- Tutoring
- Leadership development
- Socio-emotional supports

**Brotherhood Crusade Program Model**

Brotherhood Crusade was founded in 1968 to enrich the lives of at-risk youth, seniors, homeless populations, economically disadvantaged families, and underserved individuals in South L.A.

The programming offered as part of the BLOOM initiative through Brotherhood Crusade aims to reduce juvenile recidivism and promote academic advancement through a strengths-based approach that focuses on cultural awareness activities, guided self-discovery, vocational training and job placement, and economic empowerment. Activities include:

- Leadership and career-based mentoring
- Academic support and tutoring
- College and career readiness
- Job placement
- Peer bonding opportunities through events and sports
- Life skills
- Activities based in history and culture

- Include non-credit deficit
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## 2019

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CCF officially launches BLOOM with an initial 5-year \$2.5 million investment and a goal of raising an additional \$2.5 million.

## 2012

CCF releases the initial requests for proposals for BLOOM, and nine organizations are funded.

UCLA begins annual evaluations of BLOOM.

## 2013

BLOOM gains momentum during a White House listening tour in response to the police shootings of unarmed Black men.

After the first donor fundraising event, BLOOM begins to gain traction among other funders, donors, and stakeholders.

## 2014

President Obama launches My Brother's Keeper (MBK), and a set of national and local funder alliances begin to collaborate. This ecosystem helped BLOOM gain attention and allies, including significant donors.

## 2015

Los Angeles County joined the MBK Challenge. To date, the County's MBK Initiative has birthed the following efforts: Youth Diversion & Development (YDD), the County Employee Mentoring Program, and the County Career Exposure Program.

BHC and SJLI demonstrated that their programs most closely aligned with a newly-narrowed focus on comprehensive youth development services geared towards

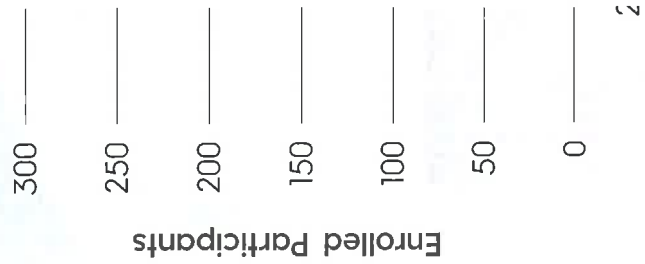




# Project Outcomes

Recognizing that the development, CCF of the program, and Development, and I data. The highlights

**Participation:** Over in BLOOM, with the recent year for which enrolled was almost the first few years c the initial variance,





**Education:** Because of the programmatic shift, for most cases, education data was only collected for the last two years of the initiative (2017 and 2018). That said, nearly 70% of BLOOMers maintained a GPA of 2.01 or higher in at least one of the two years, and nearly 40% of Bloomers maintained this GPA in both years. During the same time frame, nearly 70% of enrolled BLOOMers met A-G requirements.

**70% Maintained 2.0 or Higher GPA**



**70% Met A-G Requirements**



# Outcomes

To supplement quantitative metrics, BLOOMers were interviewed and asked about how their participation in BLOOM has impacted their lives. We have synthesized their reflections into the following key insights.

## 1. The relationship between the youth and their older male mentors is the key to success.

The success of BLOOM is achieved through the unwavering commitment of the BLOOM partners to the youth. Perhaps the most essential ingredient of this is the trusting relationship between BLOOMers and their mentors. Nearly every single interviewee emphasized how important consistency is to helping support better outcomes for Black male youth.

BLOOM mentors to youth are Black male adults who share similar backgrounds to the participants. Mentors sometimes struggle to build authentic relationships with participants when the latter first enter the program. Some BLOOMers require their mentors to have what one mentor calls having “hood capital,” which goes beyond cultural competency to a deeper understanding of the young men’s experiences. For some young BLOOMers, their program mentors are the first and only positive male role model they have ever had.



## 2. Addressing the needs of Black youth living in poverty, and the resilience of these youth to navigate an uncertain future is socio-emotional.

Organizations must address the needs of Black youth living in poverty, and the resilience of these youth to navigate an uncertain future is socio-emotional.

According to Forster, socio-emotional learning is a critical component of a comprehensive education.

- Emotion and self-regulation
- Autonomy and decision-making
- Determination and goal setting
- Self-monitoring and reflection

Both BHC and SBC have implemented programs that address the present trauma, and the long-term realities of gang violence.

### 3. Further wraparound services are needed

Because of BLOOM, many youth have been able to change the trajectory of their lives for the better—but more support is required. These youth have a myriad of challenges that lie ahead, beyond high school and through college graduation. Many of the young men interviewed expressed that wraparound services to address needs around housing, transportation, and food insecurities would be key to their long-term success.

Although BHC and SJLI staff go above and beyond the call of duty, there is still so much more needed to support these exceptional young men. One young man suggested having parenting classes to not only help their family members develop better guidance skills, but also to help BLOOMers who might already be young fathers themselves.

What has become evident is that funders and consultants must take an asset-based approach when working with Black boys and young men and shed the deficit-based thinking that paints them as incapable of leading lives that are productive and meaningful. This population, while desperately needing resources that lead to better outcomes, possesses ingenuity, creativity, and strength. Some BLOOMers aspire to be artists, policymakers, businessmen, or inventors. Many participants want to go on to college before they decide on their chosen career path. But the reality is that for some BLOOMers, the program means the difference between life and death.

**“My favorite part of BLOOM is the circles.**

**It helps you relieve a lot of stress, you can say anything you want. I’ve heard ‘I don’t wanna be here, I wanna kill myself.’ You just talk about everything.”**

**—BLOOMer, age 14**

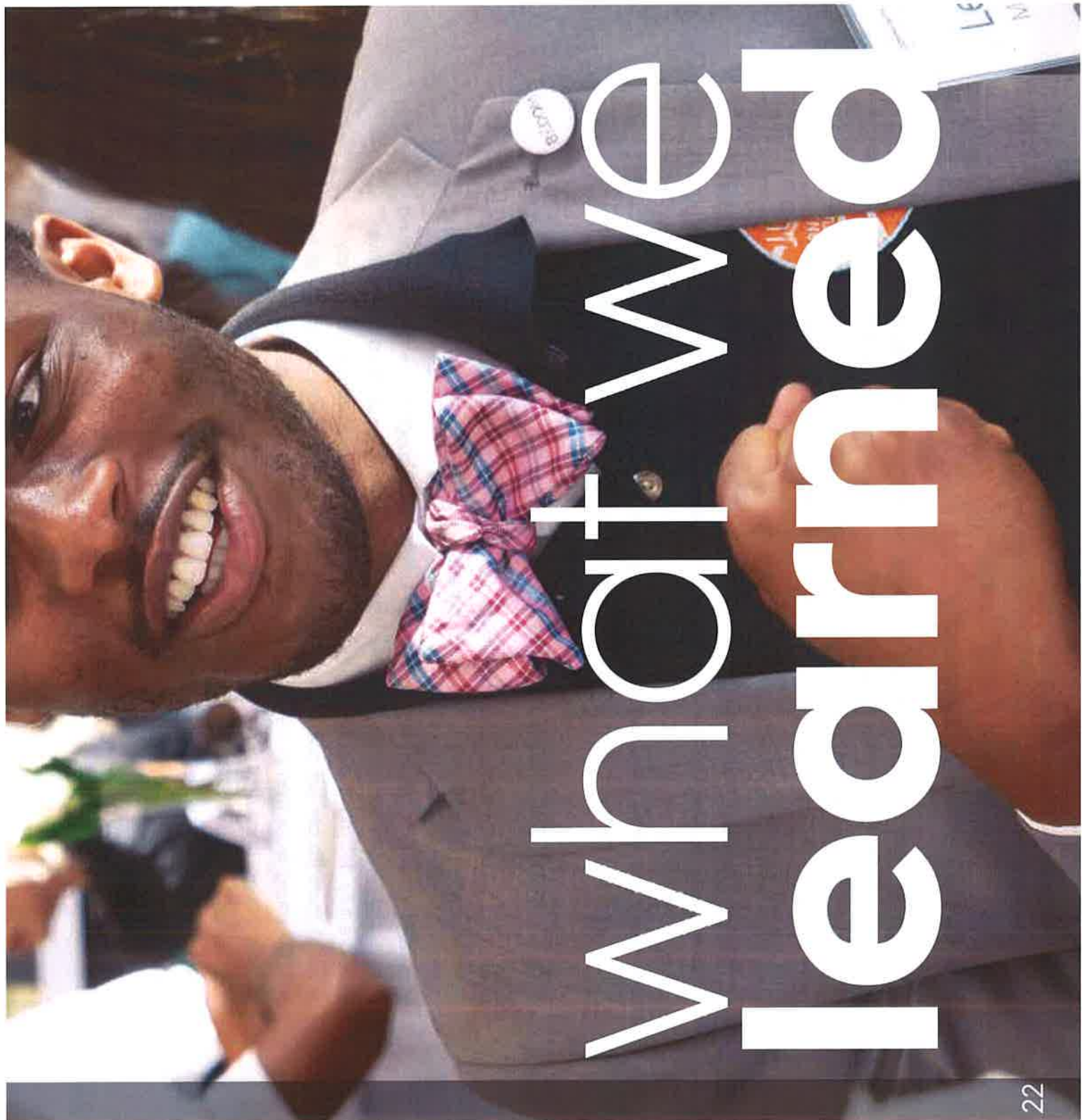
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# What We Learned

refine their visions, yielding the kind of change we were seeking. Instead, we waited until the fourth year to clarify the model around comprehensive youth development services including academic advancement, mentoring, and life skills.

## 2. Empower Your Community

The role of a community foundation should not be to drive an agenda, but rather to bring together stakeholders and establish buy-in on common goals and outcomes. We found that a volunteer Advisory Committee is an effective vehicle for creating accountability and resource sharing, as well as creating internal and external champions of the work.

Committee members have been a constant source of support and insight and have helped keep BLOOM on track. They continue to offer their personal and professional connections to grantees and BLOOMers. Their only major critique has been that they met in person too infrequently, and we would encourage others replicating this model to build in more frequent touchpoints or to use digital technology to facilitate greater involvement.

## 3. Commit for the Long Term

Creating systemic change takes time. Innovation requires trial and error, a willingness to learn, continuous adjustment, and much patience.

BLOOM was CCF's first venture into juvenile justice work. Though the excitement around boys and men of color work left some stakeholders wanting to scale up the initiative before fully defining and validating the program model, the knowledge base simply wasn't there. To cite just one example, the Advisory Committee early on sought to serve 2,000 young Black men in the probation system in South L.A. This was too narrow a focus though, because it failed to capture the sizable population who were "at-risk of being system-involved." Because we had a long-term commitment to the work, we could revise our strategy while maintaining the commitments and momentum that had been established.

BLOOM has also well as the Advisory Committee's stability and continued support. CCF's restructuring would be this piece.

## 4. Build Capacity

Community organizations that set them up. At the outset, CCF Male Institute. The Advisory Committee and to articulate has been essential so they can be funding opportunities. Department functions. Board of Supervisors. County Probation Foundation. The resources for practitioners those in the system. socio-emotional the juvenile justice

Life Course Framework, we provided critical evidence for our shared assumption that high school graduation can prevent incarceration for most people. At the same time, the Life Course Framework also allowed them to bolster their work around additional critical, measurable intervention points such as school readiness, grade-level proficiency, high school diploma attainment, postsecondary education/training, housing, and employment.

This cannot be a one-way flow of information, though. It is critical that the collaborative and the individual grantee organizations be able to track success and demonstrate impact through data collection that occurs internally both to build capacity and to ensure that the data collection is not intrusive or inconsistent with organizational values. To build an evidence-based model that can be replicated, evaluators must engage organizations in articulating and refining goals, metrics, and outcomes so that evaluation is informed through continuous learning and refinement by those implementing the programs.

BLOOM grantees worked directly with UCLA's Black Male Institute and the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs to design the evaluation which included baseline culturally-specific questions to track grantees' success; however, some of the data collected by the grantees was inconsistent. Consistent definitions and coding of key terms were not maintained within the data sets. In discussion and debriefs, grantees were encouraged to use a portion of their unrestricted operating grants to hire program evaluation staff. Though capacity to do this work was difficult initially, the larger grants in years four and five began to address this need.

“Without evaluation, what are our stories? We need to learn who is being enrolled, how they are being recruited, what is their academic progress, who stayed in the programs and why.”

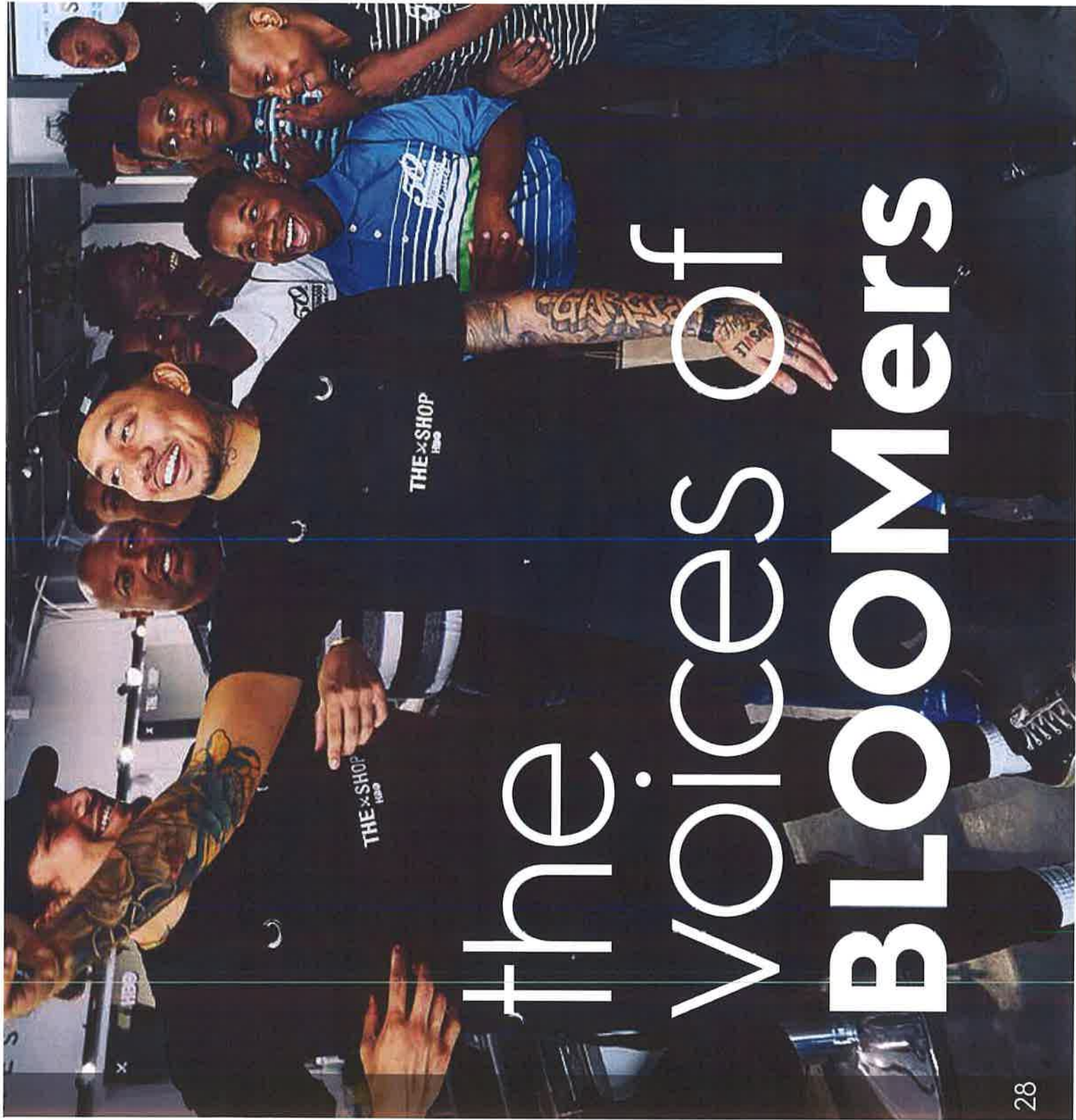
—Advisory Committee Member

or even be untrained and prepared to fund their program's impact. Proves effective

Grantees like BH appropriate for long-term relationships. BLOOMers over donor site visits on how to interact

For example, in together more than 100 foundations to help were sifting with for key policy recommendations for serving South Los Angeles to practice their which powerful leadership young men who individual programs

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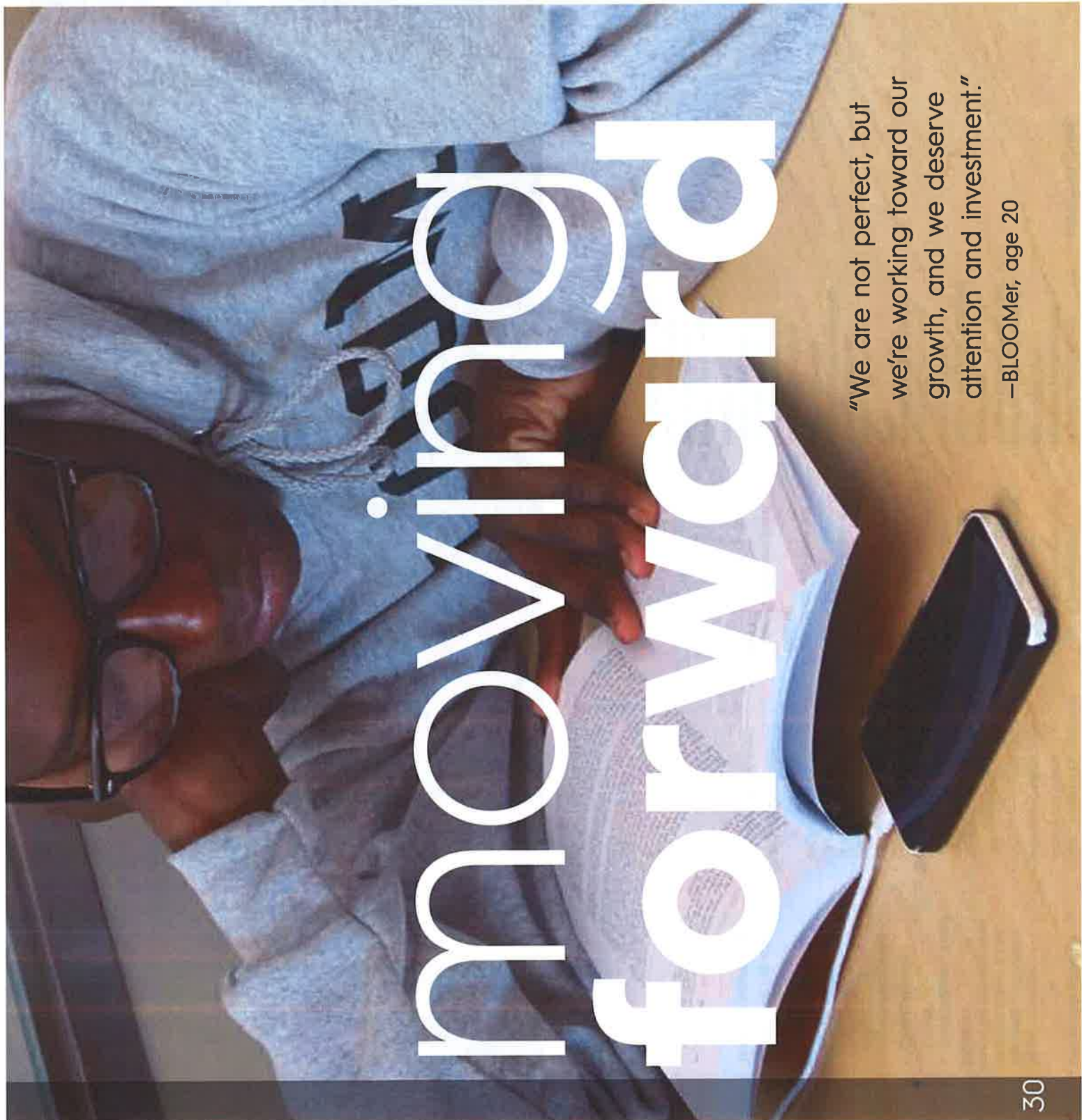
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me, I'm fighting  
others, too.”  
—BLOOMer, ag

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# moving forward

“We are not perfect, but we’re working toward our growth, and we deserve attention and investment.”

—BLOOMer, age 20

CCF exemplifies what community needs, at Los Angeles County partnering with CCF replicating youth dev change when comm

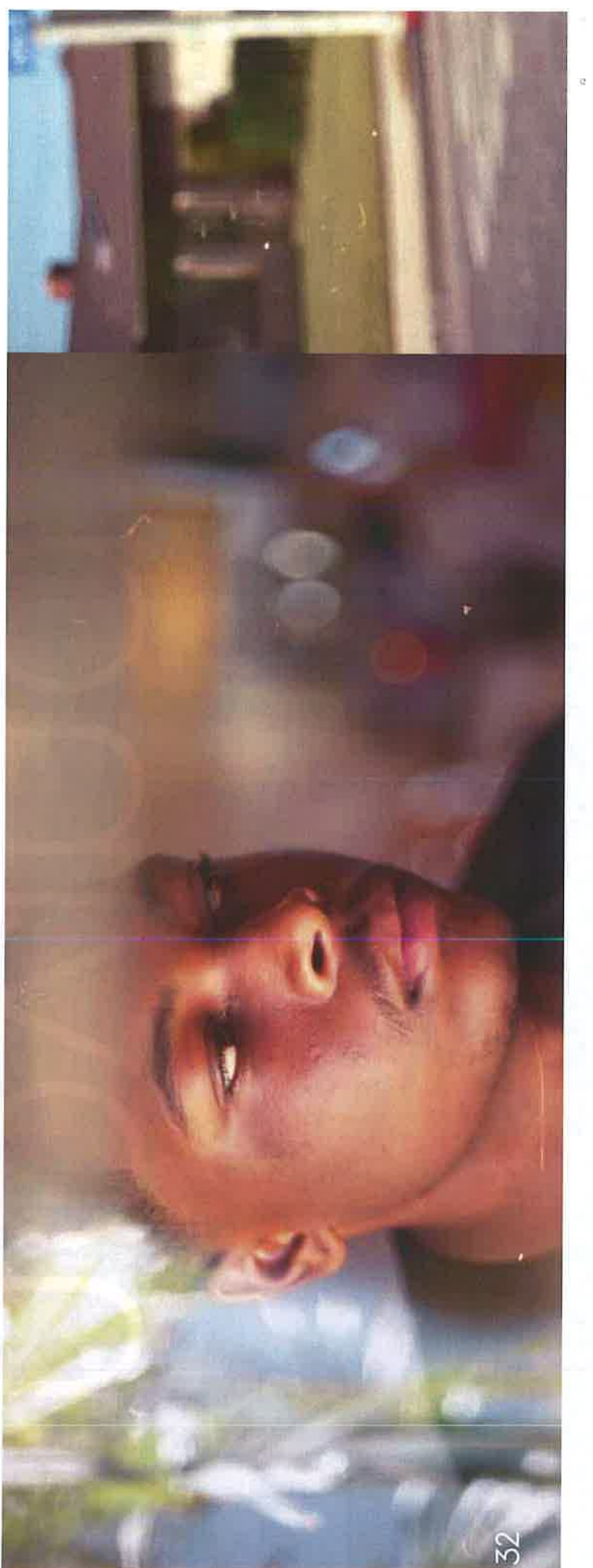
This new public-private historically been risk traditional structures healing, learning, and critical work to stren while also benefiting

Although BLOOM’s inequities must be a existing efforts within realized the work of attempt to redress r BLOOMers in partic

CCF now knows—the outside research—the people are most effi comprehensive, com of building out these commitment to both

Though BLOOM as will endure. If we ap partnerships, and im improve the prospec benefit from their ta

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• research presentation</li> <li>• Unit 1 lessons 4-15; Lessons on identity and trauma</li> <li>• Individual academic plan</li> <li>• College application support</li> <li>• Unit 3 lessons 10-35 on identity and critical consciousness</li> </ul>	<p><b>efficacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of belonging in schools, as a scholar and with new peers</li> <li>• Increased critical reasoning skills about history, schooling and their place within both</li> <li>• Changed belief in realistic possibility of attending college</li> </ul>	<p><b>college application submitted OR gainful employment obtained</b></p>	<p><b>WITH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past or present involvement with juvenile probation</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• At least one of the following three indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credit Deficient / Failed Classes</li> <li>• Chronic Absence</li> <li>• Reported Behavioral Incidents</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Modality/Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-based classroom instruction</li> <li>• Off-campus group activities</li> <li>• One-on-one counseling</li> </ul>
<p><b>increased understanding of social, political, and economic processes that impact their lives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will have increased levels of classroom and adult engagement</li> <li>• Students will exhibit increased computer literacy</li> <li>• Students will demonstrate improved public speaking skills</li> <li>• Students will exhibit an increased desire for advocacy in their immediate ecological context</li> <li>• Students will exhibit an increased awareness of themselves and their relationship to their communities</li> <li>• Students begin to take an asset-based approach to understanding their communities and themselves</li> </ul>	<p><b>increased understanding of social, political, and economic processes that impact their lives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will have increased levels of classroom and adult engagement</li> <li>• Students will exhibit increased computer literacy</li> <li>• Students will demonstrate improved public speaking skills</li> <li>• Students will exhibit an increased desire for advocacy in their immediate ecological context</li> <li>• Students will exhibit an increased awareness of themselves and their relationship to their communities</li> <li>• Students begin to take an asset-based approach to understanding their communities and themselves</li> </ul>	<p><b>increased understanding of social, political, and economic processes that impact their lives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will have increased levels of classroom and adult engagement</li> <li>• Students will exhibit increased computer literacy</li> <li>• Students will demonstrate improved public speaking skills</li> <li>• Students will exhibit an increased desire for advocacy in their immediate ecological context</li> <li>• Students will exhibit an increased awareness of themselves and their relationship to their communities</li> <li>• Students begin to take an asset-based approach to understanding their communities and themselves</li> </ul>	<p><b>increased understanding of social, political, and economic processes that impact their lives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will have increased levels of classroom and adult engagement</li> <li>• Students will exhibit increased computer literacy</li> <li>• Students will demonstrate improved public speaking skills</li> <li>• Students will exhibit an increased desire for advocacy in their immediate ecological context</li> <li>• Students will exhibit an increased awareness of themselves and their relationship to their communities</li> <li>• Students begin to take an asset-based approach to understanding their communities and themselves</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Treatment Agents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SJLI Programs Manager; SJLI Program Instructor; Urban Scholars Teacher; Academic &amp; Career Support Coordinators; College Access and Persistence Counselor</li> </ul>	<p><b>Treatment Agents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SJLI Programs Manager; SJLI Program Instructor; Urban Scholars Teacher; Academic &amp; Career Support Coordinators; College Access and Persistence Counselor</li> </ul>	<p><b>Treatment Agents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SJLI Programs Manager; SJLI Program Instructor; Urban Scholars Teacher; Academic &amp; Career Support Coordinators; College Access and Persistence Counselor</li> </ul>	<p><b>Treatment Agents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SJLI Programs Manager; SJLI Program Instructor; Urban Scholars Teacher; Academic &amp; Career Support Coordinators; College Access and Persistence Counselor</li> </ul>
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### BLOOMERS

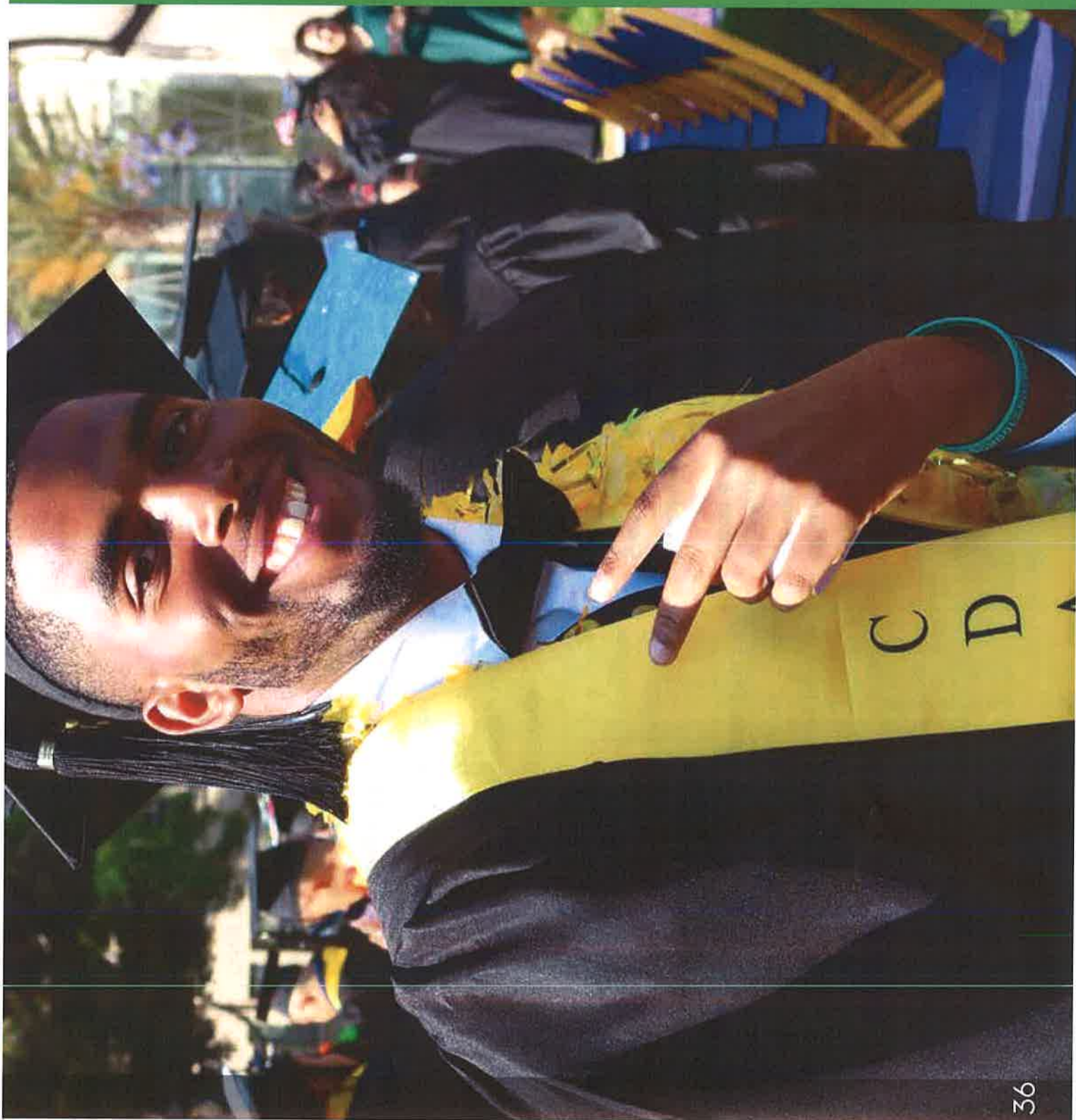
Ahmir, 18  
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Davon, 14  
Joaquin, 19  
Kevin, 19  
Marcus, 22  
Rufus, 15  
Samuel, 16  
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### INTERVIEW QUI

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- What else is i "lessons learn future donors



**BLOOM**



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