

## Morehouse School of Medicine Prevent Research Center Nationally Recognized for Community-Engaged Research and Collaborations

By Tabia Henry Akintobi, PhD, MPH

We thrive through the collaboration and co-creation with the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC) Community Coalition Board (CCB) and other community leaders, whose preeminence in community engagement research continues to scale locally-, state- and nation-wide. We expect this year to be even more purposeful and prosperous!

Reflections on Fall and Winter 2017 bring us renewed purpose for 2018. First, in December 2017, LaShawn Hoffman, MSM PRC CCB Chair and Neighborhood Planning Unit V resident, accepted the nomination and seat as co-chair of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Community Committee following a nomination process that spanned the 26 Prevention Research Centers. In this role, Mr. Hoffman will work with other community leaders and representatives across the United States to ensure the equitable positioning of community leaders in research that matters to them. Second, The MSM PRC will lead the newly funded Georgia Clinical and Translational Science Alliance (GaCTSA) Community Engagement (CE) Key Function. The Alliance's

CE key function represents a robust collaboration designed to advance community engagement approaches, resulting in evidence-based clinical and translational research that is broadly disseminated to and adapted in communities. A community steering board oversees the CE and is modeled after the MSM PRC's CCB. For more information on the GCTSA visit <http://georgiactsa.org/community/CERP.html>.



Samaha Sayyadd:  
H.A.P.P.Y. *Unsung Hero*

Finally, The National Community-Based Organization Network awarded the Morehouse School of Medicine PRC the 2017 Lucille Webb Award in recognition of "exemplary dedication and commitment to building and sustaining effective, relationship-oriented, and community-engaged partnerships, collaborating with communities and other institutions locally, to advocate for community interests, solve community problems and promote health nationally." CCB members Evonne Perdue (Thomasville Community resident) and Yvette Daniels, JD (Georgia Department of Public Health) and Samaha Sayyadd, member of the teen advisory for Project H.A.P.P.Y. (HIV/AIDS Prevention Program for Youth) were also among 2017 *Unsung Hero* Award recipients!



From Left to Right: LaShawn Hoffman, MSM PRC CCB Chair, Tabia Henry Akintobi, PhD, MPH, MSM PRC Director, Juanita Booker-Vaughns, EdD, Community Faculty, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, David Collins, MSM PRC Assistant Director, Community Liaison and Development, Tandeca King Gordon, EdD, MSM PRC Associate Director

Be on the lookout for notices on capacity building workshops, funding opportunities, and other forums to learn strategies to advance research in communities. To learn more about learning opportunities with the MSM PRC, please visit our website ([www.msm.edu/prc](http://www.msm.edu/prc)), like us on Facebook (@msm.prc), or find us on Twitter (@msm\_prc)!MS

# Academic & Community-Based Partnership in Action: The Community Based Participatory Research Partnership Academy

*By Thomas Cotton and Latrice Rollins, PhD, MSW*



*Thomas Cotton, MSM PRC CCB Member, NPU-Y*

In April 2017, Mr. Thomas Cotton, MSM PRC Community Coalition Board Member and Dr. Latrice Rollins, MSM PRC Assistant Director of Evaluation were accepted by the Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Partnership Academy. They were awarded a mini-grant from the CBPR

Partnership Academy to expand their partnership and develop a committee focused on improving the lives of the justice-involved population in Atlanta.

The CBPR Partnership Academy is an integrated one-year research education program, in which they had the opportunity to join with 11 other community-academic teams from across the country to engage in an intensive week-long CBPR course at the University of Michigan in July 2017. They also receive ongoing mentoring from a community/academic team and participated in virtual learning activities throughout the year.

Their participation in this opportunity aligned with the work of the MSM PRC to train minority community-based researchers as well as build and support community capacities to identify, implement, and evaluate research and programs targeting local health issues.

One of the main goals they hoped to accomplish was to promote a co-learning and empowering process that strengthened relationships between partners. This integrated knowledge was used and guided by CBPR principles that led to actions, such as the dissemination

of up-to-date data, which mutually benefits all partners and those we serve. To learn more about the CBPR Partnership Academy, please visit <https://www.detroiturc.org/expertise-programs/cbpr-partnership-academy.html>

They were also invited to present on a panel about CBPR approaches for the MSM Satcher Health Leadership Institute Community Voices Division and the Healthy Communities Initiative.



*L-R: Dr. Latrice Rollins and Thomas Cotton, PRC CCB Member*

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# Using Community Engaged Approaches to Reduce Unintended Pregnancy

By Natalie Hernandez, PhD, MPH



L-R: Dr. Natalie Hernandez, MSM PRC and CERC member Keri Pridgeon, Center for Black Women's Wellness

In 2013, the MSM PRC community health needs assessment was conducted with community residents to gather their perspectives and uncover issues of local relevance. Residents identified unintended pregnancy (UIP) as a priority health concern. In response, a Community Engagement Research Committee (CERC) was developed to establish a research plan to: 1) conduct focus groups with Black and Latina women between the ages of 18 and 29; and 2) develop a culturally sensitive instrument to assess factors related to high rates of unintended pregnancy in Atlanta. The CERC was instrumental to the Unintended Pregnancy (UIP) project and was involved in all aspects of the research. This type of research provided a process to perform research in a way that is useful for, and respectful of, the communities that are both partners and participants in the study. The CERC consisted of MSM PRC Community Coalition (CCB) members Melissa Kottke (academic representative),

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# Health & Wellness Programs at Atlanta Housing Create Community Impact

By Howard Grant, PhD

Creating a sense of community where people can come together to live, work, and thrive has been the force behind the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA). While AHA is known throughout the city for providing safe, affordable housing to more than 23,000 households, what many do not know is the success the agency has in providing wraparound services to its residents. In addition to workforce training that helps its families become self-sufficient, AHA also offers programs aimed at promoting higher education, helping seniors age in place and others that focus on the same goals as the MSM PRC. AHA began to focus on health and wellness programming when it was realized that, in addition to providing affordable housing, stabilizing families also means fostering growth and offering incentives that promote health and wellness. Many of the residents have limited access to food retail resources and because healthier foods and services lead to healthier people, the agency hosts events such as its signature Senior Farmers Market and Return to Community Farmers Markets, through the Choice Atlanta initiative. By allowing opportunities to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, these fun-filled events help AHA-assisted seniors and residents eat healthier and make changes that lead to a greater quality of life. With MSM PRC as a partner in the dissemination of information and providing supportive services, AHA continues to educate, engage and empower its residents.



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LaVina Johnson (community resident representative), Ruben Burney (community resident representative), James Freeman (federally qualified health center representative), long-standing community partners such as Keri Pridgeon of the Center for Black Women's Wellness, and women with previous unplanned pregnancies. Like the MSM PRC CCB governs the center, the CERC oversees and guides the research project. The CERC has been engaged since the conception of the research plan and has developed research questions, a focus group guide,

eligibility criteria, and demographic survey. To-date, interviews with 10 women and 12 providers have been conducted. Women in the study expressed lack of access (i.e., finances, transportation) to family planning appointments or birth control as well as lack of exposure to other opportunities outside of the immediate community. Community conversations on UIP will engage the community and provide future data collection resources for the project.

## Community Coalition Board Member Shares Best Practices with Beyond Flexner Conference Participants

*By Christina Muhammad, EdD*

On Tuesday, April 10, 2018, the MSM PRC welcomed 18 participants from the Beyond Flexner Conference for a site visit at our East Point, GA location and a community tour of Neighborhood Planning Units X, Y, and Z. Hosted by Morehouse School of Medicine, the Emory University Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, and the Beyond Flexner Alliance, the Beyond Flexner Conference provided a comprehensive learning opportunity for professional health educators, students, community residents, clinicians, and community partners committed to increasing equitable health care. The conference's broad themes of social mission included social determinants of health, community engagement, disparity reduction, diversity promotion, and value-based health care. The 2018 conference theme, *Community, Diversity and Equity*, provided a unique opportunity to learn more about the movement and how to integrate social mission into teaching, learning and practice.

The MSM PRC served as one of 10 community sites for Beyond Flexner participants to augment their conference experience, given the Center's national reputation for community-based participatory research (CBPR). Conference participants self-selected into a tour and meeting with MSM PRC administration and Community Coalition Board members to garner a practical understanding of CBPR and its benefit to academic and community-based organizations.

Questions from the tour participants focused on best practices within the community engagement partnership and how the relationship positively influenced health education outcomes. In a collaborative conversation, MSM PRC professionals shared their experience working with community-based participatory research and administration. We were fortunate to have MSM PRC Community Coalition Board member Ruben Burney join the discussion to provide further insight to the realities, complexities, and benefits of CBPR work. One of the participants remarked that, "[this meeting] was a great mix of community, academicians, students and other health professionals in the room. It was refreshing to hear the passion behind what drives everyone to do the work that we do, in the communities that we serve!"



*Ruben Burney, CCB Member, shares best practices with Beyond Flexner conference participants.*