

# SYMPOSIUM



Black Alliance for Educational Options

## DOCUMENTATION REPORT

March 1-3, 2012  
Grand Hyatt, Washington, DC

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[www.baeo.org](http://www.baeo.org)



# A Dozen Years of Advocacy: What's Next?

Dear BAEO members and allies,

BAEO pulled off yet another phenomenal Symposium in 2012. The meeting, held in our nation's capital, was highlighted by the merger of the Symposium and the Annual Seminar for Educational Policy and Parental Choice into one dynamic and empowering event. It was truly a remarkable occasion.

More than 500 advocates gathered to celebrate hard won victories for our families and their children. But in acknowledging the progress, participants also were cognizant of the huge challenges that still exist in the struggle to close the achievement gap in this country.

This year's theme was ***A Dozen Years of Advocacy: What's Next?*** As we asked that question throughout the Symposium, a unifying response emerged in each discussion . . .

"Continuing the struggle!"

We have to continue the fight which began 12 years ago with two objectives in mind: to ensure that all Black children have access to high-quality educational options and their families are empowered to access those options. We must continue to raise our voices and bring even greater focus on our work to reach these objectives.

As usual our annual meeting gave some participants the opportunity to visit high performing schools led by Black people. Attendees met with brilliant students and their teachers in several charter schools in D.C. Visit the BAEO website, or [click here](#) to see pictures that speak volumes about the school tour. Additionally, those in attendance met old friends engaged in networking sessions, attended thought-provoking workshops, and participated in action-inspiring conversations.



When the curtain came down on Symposium 2012, it was clear that BAEO must double down on its work to:

1. Create, protect and expand the laws, policies and procedures that empower low income and working class families to be able to choose the best educational environment for their children.
2. Support such systemic reforms as improving teacher quality; increasing the use of data to drive decisions; eliminating employee practices that place seniority ahead of competence; establishing accountability measures that hold adults accountable for student achievement; and not only stressing the importance of graduating students, but making sure that when they do graduate, they are college ready.

We invite you to read this Documentation Report about the three action-packed days at Symposium 2012. The pictures and quotations will give people who did not come a sense of the excitement and positive results produced at the meeting. It will remind those of you who were there about the friendships that were made, the networks that were established, and the inspirational sessions that gave you new insight into the work of BAEO and its allies.

As we now look to Symposium 2013 which will be held in Orlando, Florida. March 14-16, we hope this report will inspire you to not only be there but to bring others. We look forward to seeing you in Orlando!!

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# Engaging from Near and Far



## EDITORIAL TEAM

Jacqueline McGriff Cooper  
Deborah McGriff  
Robert Pavlik

## PHOTOGRAPHER

Marissa Weekes Mason

## DESIGNER

DeVigal Design

**528** Registered Participants from **30** States

Educators  
**30%**

Low-Income and  
Working Class  
Parents  
**21%**

Emerging  
Leaders  
**21%**

Board, Staff  
and Other  
BAEO  
Supporters  
**17%**

Elected  
Officials  
**6%**

Clergy  
**5%**



# First-Time and Repeat Participants Share BAEO's Vision

*"Parental Choice is not an end, but a means to the end of every child having access to a high quality school. If you are going to do this work, you have to be willing to fight."*

Howard Fuller  
BAEO Founder and Board Chair



**528** Registered Participants

First-Time Participants  
**58%**

Repeat Participants  
**42%**



*"This is my first experience meeting so many highly professional Black people all in one place."*

*"I've had my questions about school choice, but now I understand why it is important and why I need to get involved."*

*"BAEO somehow balances being intensely focused on the quality of its operations while seeing big pictures of hope and possibility for its mission. I need to learn how to do that."*

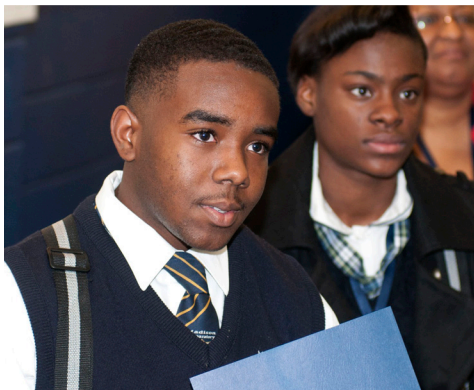
*"As an educator and parent, I always find our Symposium uplifting and informative. Thank you."*

*"I am energized again about parental choice. I will organize a school expo in my community."*

*"With all of the research and thinking that has been accomplished in the area of education, we know what needs to be done. Yet, we still struggle mightily with the execution of what we already know. BAEO is vital for the struggle for our children."*



# Visiting High-Quality, Black-Led Charter Schools



Four high-quality, Black-Led charter schools hosted Symposium participants:

- **Achievement Preparatory Academy**  
Shantelle Wright, *Founder and Head of School*
- **Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School**  
Linda Moore, *Founder and Executive Director*
- **Friendship Collegiate Academy and Friendship Southeast Elementary Academy**  
Donald L. Hense, *Founder, Chairman and CEO*

*"This is a great start for changes to come in education."*



*"I am actually considering opening a school in the future and being a part of a charter school's administration in the near future. This was never a consideration before."*

*"Now that I know that really good schools exist, I have more questions about how to start building such schools."*



# BAEO Thanks the Symposium Sponsors

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# Opening Ceremony and Dinner

Symposium Program Chair Deborah McGriff hosted the Opening Ceremony and Dinner. Board Chair Kevin P. Chavous presented Kelley Williams-Bolar with the Chairman's Award for her strength and determination to obtain a high quality education for her two daughters.

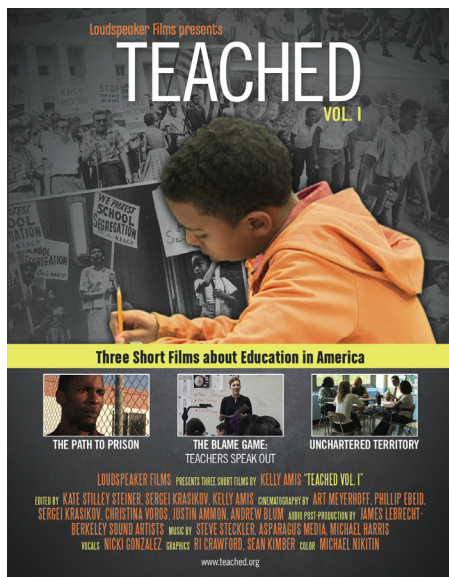
BAEO celebrated its First Annual Ed Reform Champions Under 40 Awards by recognizing 19 parents, students, educators, clergy, elected officials, and philanthropists who have significantly changed the life trajectories of children in their communities.

BAEO Founder and incoming Board Chair Howard Fuller made a special presentation to Kevin P. Chavous in recognition of his long-standing commitment to BAEO's mission and his leadership as Board Chair for the past two years.





# Documentary Film Screenings



## TEACHED

A special showing of the documentary “TEACHED” opened with these statements . . .

*The United States has the largest prison population in the world:  
2.3 million people.*

*The vast majority of American prisoners are functionally illiterate.  
But it doesn't mean that they didn't go to school.*

Jerone Shell of South Central Los Angeles describes his path being passed year after year with failing grades, joining a gang, and finally learning how to read while he spent 10 years in prison. The film's producer Kelly Amis and Howard Fuller facilitated the discussion of three short films featuring BAEO's Kevin P. Chavous, Howard Fuller and Donald L. Hense.

*“I and others became quite emotional seeing the connections between Jerone's poor reading ability and incarceration. We became emotional again this time with joy as Jerone told about his life since leaving prison.”*

*“Gangs should not be ‘rescuing’ our young men as they fall through the cracks in our schools.”*

*“We often do not hear of our youth coming through the prison system and making it.”*

## AMERICAN PROMISE

Participants also previewed “American Promise” due to be released nationally in 2013 on POV. Twelve years in the making, a Brooklyn-based father and mother, also filmmakers, document the struggles they and their son faced while he attended a prestigious K-12 school.

*“American Promise showcases the unique challenges families face in navigating the complex world of education. Parents want quality choices for their children that sometimes require providing a private education in a public world.” - Shree Medlock*



*“Going to Dalton was not the quick fix by itself for Seun and Idris.”*

*“I want to use this film to open conversations about what we must do to improve the academic achievement of our boys and young men.”*

*“Like the film says, what are we willing to sacrifice for educating our youth?”*

*“Very real film! You could feel how Idris and Seun, their parents and teachers struggled with race and class issues.”*



# Program Leaders

**Naryan Leazer**  
*Title II: Global Competiveness  
 Through College  
 Readiness and Success  
 Strand Co-Leader*



**Alisha Thomas Morgan**  
*Bailey-Sullivan Leadership Institute  
 Strand Leader*



**Isaac Ewell**  
*High-Quality, Black-Led  
 Charter School  
 Strand Leader*



**Jacqueline McGriff Cooper**  
*Chief of Staff*



**Robert Pavlik**  
*Title II: Global Competiveness  
 Through College  
 Readiness and Success  
 Strand Co-Leader*



**Peter Groff**  
*Policy Strand Leader*



**Tracie Craft**  
*Mobilization and Advocacy  
 Strand Leader*

*"Deborah M. McGriff charged us to keep the program strands fresh, relevant and research-based."*

*"We strived to move the conversations on behalf of Black children back and forth . . . between hopes and realities, between young leaders and senior leaders, and among parents, educators, elected officials and clergy."*

*"We are thrilled that more than 85% of the concurrent sessions were rated 'Very Good' or 'Excellent'."*



# Concurrent Sessions Inform, Inspire and Empower

*"High quality early childhood education is a great economic investment. Parents deserve to have the latest information on what they can do to promote healthy brain development in their children. They must be supported in their efforts to provide the best quality care and learning opportunities for their children."* Carra Harris

*"Great mix on panel which gave multiple perspectives and added to the conversation."*



*"Radical change doesn't need a permission slip."*

*"Strive to talk to elders, not old people. Old people hold back knowledge. Elders are people up in age with infinite wisdom and are willing to pass their intelligence on to us young people."*

*"Let's help our students to manage their diets, exercise, language and thinking, images, and physical environments to prepare their bodies and minds for learning."* Robert Pavlik, Institute for the Transformation of Learning, Marquette University





# Concurrent Sessions Inform, Inspire & Empower

*"Know.....the components of conducting an effective reading program. Understand.....how to determine the need in your area. Do.....identify ways that you can help close the achievement gap in reading."* Monique Bell, Milwaukee Summer Reading Project

*"Develop a quality product before considering growth, and create measures to evaluate quality."*  
Machion Jackson, Davis Ellis Academy



*"Don't try to solve all of the world's problems in your business plan. Rather, distinguish yourself by being adept at addressing the one or two problems that you are most passionate about, and well-positioned to impact. Speak the language of funders: state your objectives, followed by performance metrics that will ensure accountability."* Sherman Whites, Walton Family Foundation

*"It was helpful to listen to young people doing amazing work."*



*"It is essential that we begin in Pre-K indoctrinating our children that success and a college education are synonymous."* Donald L. Hense, Friendship Public Charter School

*"Each presenter provided quality, intelligent and helpful information."*

*"As parents, we need to know where to find the education bills."*





# Concurrent Sessions Inform, Inspire and Empower



*"The value of STEM work is the building, the creation, the problem-solving. As much learning can be derived from the successes as it can from the failures."* Noah Tennant, Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter School

*"Why not let on-line instruction take care of memorization and drill and practice and let teachers perform the more rewarding aspects of teaching; helping students with analysis, synthesis, and evaluation?"* Edgar Russell, Quest Milwaukee

*"I can see how technology tablets improve individual and small group learning."*



*"We must get parents and teachers to meet one another as soon as school starts."*

*"I am going to change the way I interact with my son as well as my future students."*

*"For my journey as a parent, I now know how to get on board this choice movement and navigate through the garbage dump of stuff that happens daily in failing schools."*





# Education Policy and Parental Choice Strand



*"Policy makers face challenges and opportunities for legislation focused on strong local education components."*

*"Parents must be educated on all their options."*



*"Great step-by-step ideas, powerful stories and transferable ideas."*

*"We need to collaborate and support each other."*

*"Great to hear stories from other states and leaders who face similar challenges."*





# Meet the Authors



## Meet the Authors

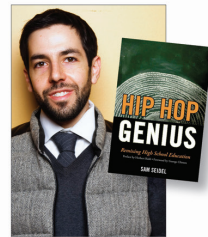
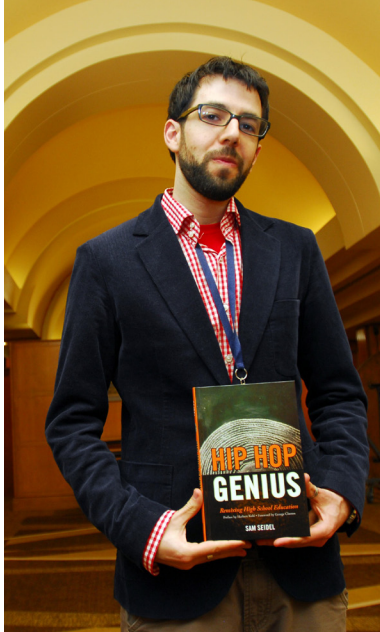
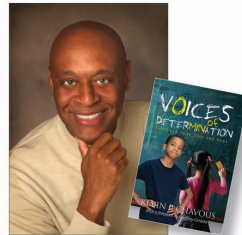
### Kevin P. Chavous

BAEO Board Chair

Thursday, March 1 – 8:30 pm-9:30 pm

*Voices of Determination* tells the stories of ten children who overcame extraordinarily difficult circumstances to get an education and end the cycle of generational poverty. It debunks the myth that children are victims of circumstance. In the moving work, Kevin P. Chavous argues that children can and will succeed if the educational system provides them with the opportunity to learn.

A leading national advocate for school choice, Chavous helped to shepherd the charter school movement into the District. Under his education committee chairmanship, charter schools grew from zero to more than 40 schools and 17,000 students in six years. That number represented 20 percent of the overall public school population in the District of Columbia, the highest percentage of charter schools in the country. He is also active in a variety of local charitable activities.



### Sam Seidel

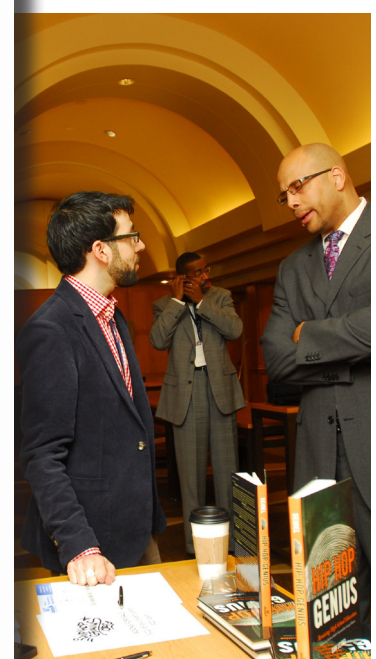
Author and Consultant

Friday, March 2 – 3:30 pm-4:30 pm

*Hip Hop Genius*: Remixing High School Education

Many educators already know that hip-hop can be a powerful tool for engaging students. But can hip-hop save our schools? In *Hip-Hop Genius*, Sam Seidel introduces an iteration of hip-hop education that goes far beyond the usual approach of studying rap music as classroom content and looks instead at deeply honoring the knowledge of urban students. Seidel lays out a vision for how hip-hop's genius—the resourceful creativity and swagger that took it from a local phenomenon to a global force—can lead to a fundamental retooling of the way we think of teaching, school design, and leadership.

Sam Seidel is an education writer and consultant. He has taught in a variety of settings from first grade to juvenile prison to community college. He now works with national networks of innovative schools. To learn about his recent book, check out [www.HipHopGenius.org](http://www.HipHopGenius.org).



### Alisha Thomas Morgan

Director, BAEO's Bailey-Sullivan Leadership Institute

Friday, March 2 – 11:30 am-12:00 pm  
and 1:30 pm-2:00 pm

In *No Apologies: Powerful Lessons in Life, Love & Politics*, Alisha Thomas Morgan presents refreshingly new, practical and honest insights for women leaders, young professionals and the African-American community as a whole. This riveting, no holds barred book offers life lessons through the transparent lens of one of the country's most promising political stars.

Morgan made headlines in 2005 when she challenged the Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives in a heated debate over voting rights – an unprecedented rebuke of the status quo that turned the political landscape on its head. As some legislators shunned her, others demanded a public apology and some called for her expulsion, Morgan stood firm on her convictions, making no apologies for standing up for what was right.



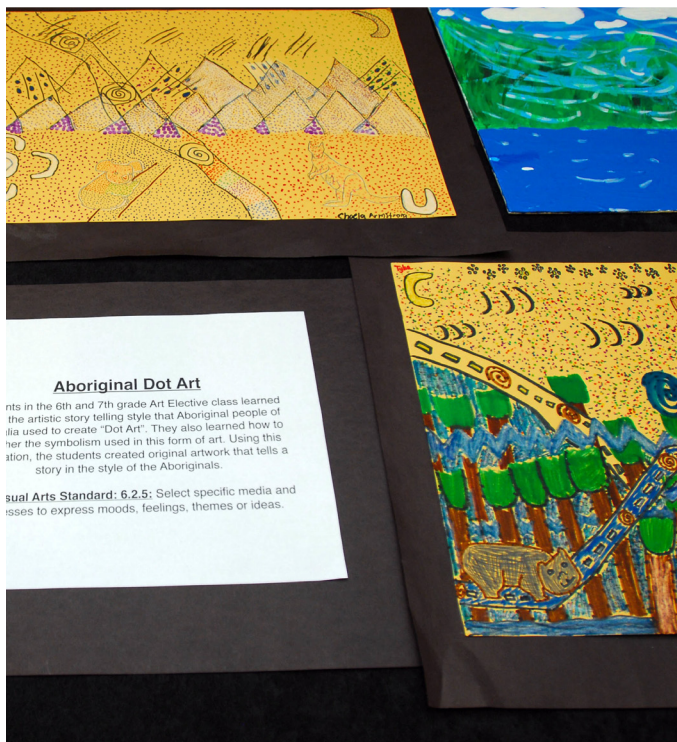
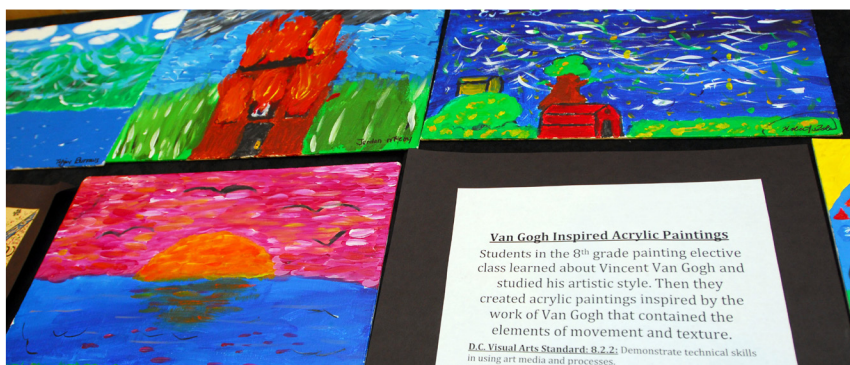


# Student Art Exhibition



## Art Show Features Friendship Students

*"Creativity, which is the expression of our originality, helps us stay mindful that what we bring to the world is completely original and cannot be compared." Brene Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection*





# Closing Ceremony

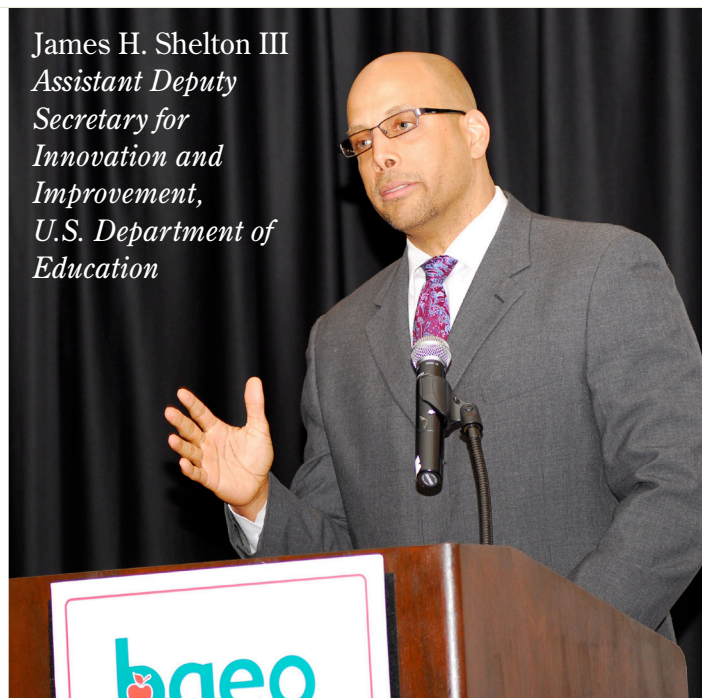


*"Yes I am angry and you ought to be angry too. Angry at the injustice that is being done to our children. Stop talking about how you are tired. You can't get tired on our children. They are depending on you."*

Howard Fuller  
BAEO Founder and Board Chair



Deborah M. McGriff  
awards the BAEO  
Bucks Grand Prize to an  
emerging BAEO leader  
from Philadelphia for  
sharing creative ideas.



James H. Shelton III  
Assistant Deputy  
Secretary for  
Innovation and  
Improvement,  
U.S. Department of  
Education

*"We're getting on the  
same page."*

*"Empowered my will to take actions for my  
beliefs. Go Philly! Go BAEO!"*

*"Enlightening – opened my  
thought process. Thank you!"*

*As a pastor, I am finding my role in BAEO's mission.*

*"We have a ton of work to do."*

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*History has shown that social movements, which positively impact Black people, have been most effective when the mantle of leadership is borne by credible, Black-led organizations that have the capacity to work closely with allies of all races and political parties to achieve common objectives. In many places across the country, the future of education reform will depend upon the ability of BAEO to increase the level and intensity of support for educational reform in the Black community.*

Black Alliance for Educational Options



SAVE  
THE DATE



# SYMPOSIUM **2013**



Black Alliance for Educational Options

## MARCH 14-16, 2013

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