



## INVESTING IN BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR: THE PROMISE AND OPPORTUNITY



**June 11, 2014 - 9:30 am – Noon**  
**NPR Headquarters – 1111 North Capitol St NE, Washington, DC 20002**

**Panel 1: Youth Leaders Have Overcome Barriers and Achieved Success**  
**Panelist Biographies**  
**(Biographies as written in their own words)**

This panel will be moderated by Amy Sullivan:

Amy Sullivan is a correspondent for *National Journal* and director of the Next Economy and Next America projects. She was previously a senior editor at TIME Magazine, where she directed coverage of the 2008 presidential primaries and wrote about politics, religion, and culture. Her first book, *The Party Faithful: How and Why Democrats Are Closing the God Gap*, was published by Scribner in 2008.

### **Brandon Deloatch**

Bro. Brandon Deloatch has been in the Sankofa Passages Program, since the spring of his 9<sup>th</sup> grade year and now he is a graduating senior. This program is an in school “Rite Of Passage” program that deals with the holistic development of 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade young men of color (African American & Latino). Specifically, the Sankofa Passages Program works with young men in the Philadelphia Public School District who are considered “at-risk”.

While, Bro. Brandon was attending Edison High School and growing in the Sankofa Passages Program, he struggled with life outside of school. During the summer after his sophomore year, he made a bad choice and was arrested. The Sankofa Passages Program was positioned as an alternative program to the juvenile justice system and Bro. Brandon carried out his probation with the Sankofa Program; he was able to stay with his mother and continue to attend Edison High School.

That year he went from a failing student to a passing student with A’s & B’s. Another highlight of this year for Brandon was that with permission from the courts, Bro. Brandon was able to present at the

Coalition Of Schools Educating Boys Of Color's annual national conference at North Carolina Central University.

Bro. Brandon has learned how to completely separate himself from chaos, which is the norm in his environment. He says some of his keys to success are to know his history and to change the bad company he normally kept around. Ultimately he learned how to model righteous behavior in his school, family & community.

Currently, Bro. Brandon is a graduating senior at Edison High School. He is a member of multiple organizations in school. He is a leader in the Sankofa Passages Program. He has transformed his music & rap, so that it reflects all the dynamics of the black & brown community and still tells the story about some of the harsh realities that we face. He is a budding poet in the Philly Youth Poetry Movement (PYPM) in Philadelphia and he has been training in an African Martial Arts system called Sekou Chinyelu for the last two years. In regards to college, he will be attending the Community College of Philadelphia with the intent of transferring to Howard University upon receiving his Associates Degree. At Howard University he plans on majoring in African American History/Africana Studies and Music.

## **Troy Dobbins**

As a child, Troy was the product of love and inspiration. He let those two characteristics carry him from that stage all the way up to the person that he is today.

He was born on a naval base in San Bernardino, California on July 2, 1993. His parents came to Illinois shortly after his birth. Unfortunately, they did not stay together and this led to another chapter in his life. Troy became a child of a single parent home. Well, actually, that is not entirely true because his mom and grandma were very present in his life. Because of the change in his family, he was uprooted and moved to another neighborhood, which was the South side of Chicago in a neighborhood that was filled with poverty, gangs, drugs, and yet there were families there that struggled to survive and that hoped for a positive and conducive way out. Troy came from one of these families.

His mother was nurturing yet strict. This propelled him through school, peer pressure, and all other things that might entice a young man. Troy graduated from Edward Coles Elementary in 2007, where he was salutatorian. He went on to Carver Military Academy where he graduated in the top ten percent, reached the ranking of Lt. Colonel, finished as a Gates finalist, and received many other accolades throughout his high school career. In 2011, he embarked on a journey at Chicago State University where he majors in finance today.

Although Troy has achieved a lot coming from the background that he did, he often wondered what would have happened if there were more resources and opportunities in his community. Furthermore, he wondered what happens to those who come from an even more volatile situation than he did and the help is not there, but the dreams are. Troy once read something that stuck with him. It was a quote from Albert Einstein. It reads, "your imagination is your preview of life's coming attractions." With this in mind, his bio includes visionary, entrepreneur, anthropologist, and in the not so distant future executive director of Olympic scholars.

## Wilmer Quiñones

Wilmer Quiñones, age 20, attends the University of Massachusetts Boston and is employed part-time at Sociedad Latina as a Civic Engagement Assistant. He is studying Criminal Justice and plans to pursue a career in the field.

Wilmer was born in the Dominican Republic and moved between Boston and the DR throughout elementary school. After moving to Boston permanently, Wilmer attended McCormack Middle School and Curley Middle School. At Curley, he joined the soccer team and was selected to travel to the U.S. Virgin Island of St. Croix on a service trip. The project, which involved rebuilding a Boys & Girls Club, sparked his interest in community service and continues to influence his life today. Wilmer graduated with honors from Curley and continued onto Boston Leadership Academy for the start of his high school career. He transferred to and graduated from Greater Egleston High School in 2013.

Since 2010, Wilmer has been an active leader at Sociedad Latina, serving as a Youth Community Organizer, Student Facilitator for the English Language Learners (ELL) Youth Advisory, Program Assistant for the Saturday ELL Academy, Intern at Boston City Councilor Tito Jackson's office and Emcee for various community events. He was also a Student Member of the Boston Public School Committee's ELL Task Force, representing the interests and needs of the district's multicultural and multilingual students. As a Civic Engagement Assistant, Wilmer uses his experience as an Alumni Youth Leader to mentor and support current Youth Leaders in their campaigns around public school reform, community development and progressive taxation.

Wilmer has received various awards for his volunteer work, including the 2012 Community Service Award from the Mission Hill Youth Collaborative and the 2012 John Mudd Youth Advocates of the Year Award from the Massachusetts Advocates for Children. His previous community service activities include the Walk for Hunger, the Boston Fire Department's MLK Day of Service and the Boston Police Academy's Charitable Giving Days. Wilmer lives in Dorchester, Massachusetts and is bilingual in English and Spanish.

## Anjel Ortiz

My name is Anjel Ortiz, I'm 23 years old and I am currently living in the South Valley of Albuquerque. I work for La Plazita Institute (LPI) as the farm manager. LPI is a non-profit organization that helps people who are struggling, addicted, and coming out of jail. LPI has a community garden year round that helps feed hundreds of families. Before I moved out here I was dealing with a lot of stress in my life. Every day was a constant struggle for me to get thru the day. At age sixteen, I began to use drugs, and this started to destroy my family's life and mine. It wasn't until I moved to Albuquerque that I started to overcome the demons of my past.

When I was young I grew up in a small town in Northern New Mexico called Penasco. Since Penasco was such a small town we relied a lot on our land to survive. I was raised a lot around gardening and farming. I've looked up to two main influences in my life my father and my uncle. They taught me the importance about life and how we need to respect the land and each other to survive. They also provided me with the knowledge to be able to feed my family from just a seed. When I was four years old, my parents got a divorce and it sent my life on a spin I was confused, not knowing what to do. I was always back and forth

between my father and mother. Throughout school I encountered a lot of problems because I didn't always have the best things. So that brought trouble because I would stand up for myself. I was always taught to stand up for myself and to be strong. Never let anyone put you down or place you on a lower pedestal than them. When I got into high school my friends and I began having fun. Too much fun in my opinion. We began getting high on different drugs and drinking alcohol. Doing things that held me down. When I was in eleventh grade, I began using prescription pills then came heroin. When I tried heroin I was in love. It was an immediate addiction that began to control my life.

When I came to Albuquerque to visit my brother, he sat down with me and explained that here in the South Valley people do care. They do want everyone to be or get clean. He explained that LPI had helped him cure his own addiction and helped him overcome his fears. In the next few days we went around and checked out all the organizations that he had been involved in. When we went to check out LPI it was like all my dreams come true. They had an opening as there farm manager and that is something I have wanted to be able to do for a long time. So we asked the main boss if by any chance I could fill in as the farmer until they could find someone. At that moment we made the deal. Now, it has been a month into farming and all the LPI family has taken me under their wings. They care for me not only because I am the perfect example for their organization but because deep down they want to help me fulfill my goal of staying clean. LPI has and continues to help me stay clean and off the streets. They support me and give me faith that I can overcome anything in life.

My future goals are to go back to school and finish getting a degree in biology. I also want to be able to go back to Penasco and implement the things I am learning here and maybe be able to save people just like myself and create opportunities for them. In contrast, this can motivate people to do well in life, stay clean and stay motivated. It's like my mother would always say "Idle time is the devil's time". We must stay moving in order to accomplish the goals we set out for.