

# The Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund

## WHY NOT A MY BROTHER’S AND SISTER’S KEEPER INITIATIVE?

*By Timothy Casey\**

This past February President Obama announced a new initiative called “My Brother’s Keeper” (MBK) to reduce the disparities between young white men and young men of color.<sup>1</sup> The Administration has so far refused entreaties from both men and women of color to include young women of color in the existing MBK program.<sup>2</sup>

There is a compelling case for the inclusion of young women of color in MBK. Young Black and Hispanic women trail young White<sup>3</sup> women in both educational attainment and economic wellbeing. Though young men of color now trail young women of color in educational attainment, they still surpass them in economic wellbeing.

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>
Not a HS Graduate	5%	10%	20%
Associate or BA Degree (or more)	53%	31%	27%
Worked full-time all year (FT AY)	45%	37%	35%
Never worked during year	22%	29%	34%
Poor	17%	31%	29%
Median Earnings FT AY Workers	\$33,000	\$26,000	\$25,000

As Table 1<sup>4</sup> shows, young white women are about twice as likely as young Black and Hispanic women to have a college degree, and much less likely to be a high school dropout. Similarly, young white women have higher employment and earnings rates and lower poverty rates than young Black and Hispanic women.



<b>Table 2. Educational Attainment &amp; Economic Well-Being of Young Men and Women of Color Age 23-29 (2012)</b>				
	<b>Black Men</b>	<b>Black Women</b>	<b>Hispanic Men</b>	<b>Hispanic Women</b>
Not a HS Graduate	12%	10%	27%	20%
Associate or BA Degree (or more)	24%	31%	19%	27%
Worked full-time all year (FT AY)	44%	37%	55%	35%
Never worked during year	27%	29%	17%	34%
Poor	23%	31%	19%	29%
Median Earnings FT AY Workers	\$30,000	\$26,000	\$27,000	\$25,000

As Table 2 shows, young Black women now surpass young Black men, and young Hispanic women now surpass young Hispanic men, in educational attainment, with a higher percentage having a college degree, and a lower percentage of high school dropout. Nevertheless, young Black men have higher employment and earning rates and lower poverty rates than young Black women, and young Hispanic men have higher employment and earning rates and lower poverty rates than young Hispanic women.

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Legal Momentum promotes gender equity, personal and economic security for women and girls, an adequate safety net, and an end to poverty through targeted litigation, public policy advocacy, research, and education. To subscribe to Legal Momentum’s Women & Poverty listserve, send an email to [tcasey@legalmomentum.org](mailto:tcasey@legalmomentum.org) with “subscribe” in the subject line.

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<sup>1</sup> *Presidential Memorandum -- Creating and Expanding Ladders of Opportunity for Boys and Young Men of Color* (February 27, 2014), available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/27/presidential-memorandum-creating-and-expanding-ladders-opportunity-boys->.

<sup>2</sup> *Letter Of 200 Concerned Black Men Calling For The Inclusion Of Women And Girls In “My Brothers Keeper,”* (May 28, 2014), available at <http://aapf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Mens-Open-Letter-to-Pres.-Obama-PDF4.pdf>; *Why We Can’t Wait: Women Of Color Urge Inclusion In “My Brother’s Keeper,”* (June 17, 2014), available at <http://aapf.org/2014/06/woc-letter-mbk/>.

<sup>3</sup> In this report, “White” means non-Hispanic White.

<sup>4</sup> All the figures in both Tables 1 and 2 were derived by Legal Momentum from U.S. Census Bureau Data using the CPS Table Creator at <http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html>.