

# QUESTION BRIDGE: BLACK MALES

January 11 - March 12, 2016

This is a critical period in history for the African American community. In recent years, many have been able to transcend racial, cultural and economic boundaries while others have found themselves increasingly confined to the margins of society. African American men are particularly challenged by this paradox. A black man is the President of the United States, yet black men are still severely overrepresented in incarceration and high school dropout rates, and suffer disproportionately from various preventable health risks and as victims of homicide.

The representation and depiction of black males in popular culture has long been governed by prevailing stereotyped attitudes about race and sexuality. Far too little is known about the range of internal values and dynamics of this group. Scientists, social scientists, theorists, historians, politicians and activists have investigated the plight of the African American male on various levels and from diverse perspectives, yet not enough has been done to represent a multi-faceted and self-determined representation of this demographic. Ultimately Black males' greatest challenges are with themselves. The question is, "why?"

**Question Bridge: Black Males** opens a window onto the complex and often unspoken dialogue among African American men, creating an intimate and essentially genuine experience for viewers and subjects and providing new opportunities for understanding and healing. This project brings the full spectrum of what it means to be "black" and "male" in America to the forefront. "Blackness" ceases to be a simple, monochromatic concept.

- Chris Johnson, Hank Willis Thomas, Bayeté Ross Smith and Kamal Sinclair

**Question Bridge: Black Males** was created by Chris Johnson, Hank Willis Thomas, Bayeté Ross Smith and Kamal Sinclair. The Executive Producers are Delroy Lindo, Deborah Willis and Jesse Williams. The Post-Production Producer is Will Sylvester and the Supervising Story Producer is Rosa White.

**Question Bridge: Black Males** is a fiscally sponsored project of the Bay Area Video Coalition (a 501c3 not-for-profit organization) and supported in part by a grant from the Open Society Institute: Campaign for Black Male Achievement, The California Endowment, The Ford Foundation, The Tribeca Film Institute, the LEF Foundation, The Center for Cultural Innovation, Nathan Cummings Foundation and the California College of the Arts. The project was supported by the Sundance Institute's New Frontier Story Lab.



**Question Bridge: Black Males** is a project that explores critically challenging issues within the African American male community by instigating a trans-media conversation among black men across the geographic, economic, generational, educational and social strata of American society. **Question Bridge** provides a safe setting for necessary, honest expression and healing dialogue on themes that divide, unite and puzzle black males today in the United States.

**Question Bridge** originated in 1996, when artist Chris Johnson was looking for a way to use new media art to generate a meaningful conversation around class and generational divisions within San Diego's African American community. Mediated through the lens of a video camera, ten members of the black community were provided a format to openly express their deeply felt beliefs and values through candid question and answer exchanges. None of the questions or answers were prompted. Over the course of four years, Johnson, along with Hank Willis Thomas, Bayeté Ross Smith and Kamal Sinclair, have traveled the nation collecting questions and answers from over 150 Black men in eight cities (New York, Chicago, Oakland, San Francisco, Birmingham, Atlanta, New Orleans, and Philadelphia) that comprise a video catalog of 1,500 exchanges. By focusing on exchanges within this extended community, surprising insights and new possibilities for witnessing our common humanity emerge.

Chaffey  College

WIGNALL MUSEUM of  
CONTEMPORARY ART

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Admission is free. Park in the North Parking Lot. Permits can be purchased from machines located in the lot. Parking is \$4 for all day or \$1 for one hour.

Believe in life! Always human beings will live and progress to greater, broader, and fuller life.

-W.E.B. DuBois

There is something called black in America, and there is something called white in America, and I know them when I see them, but I will forever be unable to explain the meaning of them, because they are not real, even though they have a very real place in my daily way of seeing, a fundamental relationship to my ever-evolving understanding of history and a critical place in my relationship to humanity.

- Carl Hancock-Rux  
from his essay "Eminem: The White Negro"  
in *Everything But the Burden*, edited by Greg Tate

- W.E.B. DuBois

"The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self."

- W.E.B. DuBois

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, — an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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