

Giving Every Young Person a Path to Reach Their Potential

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Summary: My Brother's Keeper brings communities together to ensure that all youth — including boys and young men of color — can overcome barriers to success and improve their lives.

★★ KEEPING UP *with* THE CABINET ★★

Ed. note: This is cross-posted on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's blog. [See the original post here.](#)

Our nation's most basic duty is to ensure that every child has the chance to fulfill his or her potential. This isn't the responsibility of one individual or one neighborhood: it's up to all of us to pave these paths of opportunity so that young people — regardless of where they grow up — can get ahead in life and achieve their dreams.

That's why [My Brother's Keeper](#) (MBK) is such an important initiative. Launched by President Obama last year, MBK brings communities together to ensure that all youth — including boys and young men of color — can overcome barriers to success and improve their lives. I got to see this work up close during a recent trip to Oakland, California. I joined Mayor Libby Schaaf, City Council President Lynette McElhaney, and other stakeholders for a conversation about efforts that are making a difference in the lives of local youth.

One of the participants was a teenager named Edwin Manzano. The son of a hard-working single parent, Edwin found encouragement and support at the East Oakland Youth Development Center (EOYDC).

Thanks in part to the academic and mentoring services offered by the EOYDC, Edwin will become the first member of his family to attend college when he begins his studies this fall at San Francisco State University.

Edwin is grateful for the opportunities that EOYDC afforded him. “Everyone needs a support system,” he says. That’s true whether you are a teenager or HUD Secretary. I was lucky when I was growing up on the West Side of San Antonio. Although it was a modest community in terms of resources, it was rich with folks who took an interest in my future. I had family members, teachers — and even policymakers — who paved a path that allowed me and other young people like me to succeed.

Unfortunately, not every child is as fortunate. That’s why My Brother’s Keeper is so close to my heart. The future of every young person in America should be determined by their heart, their mind and their work ethic. It should never be determined by their zip code.



In Oakland, I talked with 17 young people who have big hopes and aspirations for the future. It’s in our nation’s interest to help them achieve their goals. And we’re committed to doing our part at HUD.

For example, we’ve introduced a Jobs-Plus pilot program that will provide public housing residents in eight cities with intensive

employment training, rent incentives and community building focused on work and economic self-sufficiency.

We're also working on a broadband initiative to ensure that students living in HUD-assisted households will benefit from the life-changing opportunities available through high-speed internet. This project will provide the access to online resources that young people need to succeed in the 21st century global economy.

On the housing front, we expect the recent expansion of our Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) initiative to aid HUD-assisted properties in raising billions of dollars in private sector investment — funding that will be used to secure our nation's affordable housing future. And recently, our Federal Housing Administration lowered its Mortgage Insurance Premiums to make homeownership more affordable for responsible families, helping them put down roots and build wealth for the future.

But I know HUD alone won't solve the issues facing America's youth. These challenges require our Department to maintain longstanding, effective partnerships with other federal agencies and key stakeholders. Most importantly, President Obama understands that My Brother's Keeper will only succeed if local leaders take his call to action into their own hands.

Folks in Oakland are stepping up to answer this call. During the Community Conversation, I spoke with leaders from Oakland's nonprofits, philanthropic institutions, and faith-based organizations that are putting our young people on the path to success. Groups like the East Oakland Youth Development Center, the East Bay Foundation, and the Allen Temple Baptist Church are using promising and proven approaches to make a real difference in their communities.

This kind of work is happening all across the nation and will benefit generations of Americans. We've got to keep it going by continuing to support our young people. When they succeed, our nation grows stronger, and our future becomes brighter. And by giving everyone an opportunity to reach their goals, we can ensure that the 21st century is another American century.

Secretary Julián Castro

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