

Celebrating Fatherhood in Los Angeles with Lou Gossett, Jr.

Posted by Deborah List on March 20, 2012

In support of President Obama's Fatherhood & Mentoring Initiative, Oscar Winner Lou Gossett, Jr. and Deputy Assistant to the President Michael Strautmanis led a Responsible Fatherhood Roundtable discussion and recognition ceremony. At the event, both spent time recognizing individuals who are working to promote responsible fatherhood in Los Angeles. These individuals were surrounded by young people involved in sports games and leadership activities from Challengers Boys and Girls Club who hosted the discussion.



In photo (from left): Kenneth Braswell (Director, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse); actor Lou Gossett Jr., Eugene Schneeberg and Deborah List (Center for Faith-based & Neighborhood Partnerships, U.S. Department of Justice), and Michael Strautmanis, (Deputy Assistant to the President and Counselor to the Senior Advisor for Strategic Engagement, The White House) attend the Fatherhood Roundtable Event in Los Angeles.

Through the roundtable discussion, all of us present had the chance to learn about, lift up, and connect faith and community-based organizations in Los Angeles that are helping fathers to be actively engaged with their kids. I was inspired by the individual stories of the ten men and women connected with these organizations who were recognized. Their dedication and positive presence in their families and communities is truly remarkable.

- **Roderick Elzy** helps dads discover the tools they need to become better fathers through the Fatherhood Initiative at Great Beginnings for Black Babies.
- **Kenneth Hilton** balances his work schedule as a Mortgage Banker at Wells Fargo with his first priority of spending time with his wife and his four children.
- **Sung Soon Lee** dedicates himself to the care of his 15-year-old son, who was born with Cerebral Palsy.

- **Michael Cummings** meets regularly with other fathers at a housing development in South Central LA to help them connect with their kids, as he is doing with his own daughter Emonni.
- **Mary Weaver** serves as the Executive Director of Friends Outside in Los Angeles County, which provides services to families and children and their incarcerated and formerly incarcerated family members.
- **Thomas Enriquez** receives valuable support from the Children's Institute's Project Fatherhood and from his family so that he can attend school related events with his kids, as a single father of four.
- **Samuel Spicer, Jr.** helps dads get involved with their children's education through the Fatherhood Program at CDI Head Start, serving the San Gabriel Valley, CA.
- **Jason Franklin** mentors youth returning from juvenile camps and prison back into society and has benefited from his own mentors, who have helped him be a better father to his two young daughters.
- **Jim Miller** spends more time with his family now that he has left the corporate world and started Elevate Sports LA, where he encourages families to grow together through the mutual enjoyment of physical activity.
- **Edward Sykes** gives credit to his wife, mother, and grandmother for helping him understand the values that have made him a good father to his teenage son, despite growing up without his own biological father.

Through the actions of each of these individuals, and the support of their mentors and families, it was clear that a major effort is taking place in our local communities to make sure every child has a responsible adult role model in their life.

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