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**From the Chairman**

**BLACK PHILANTHROPISTS**

So often we tend to look at the negative, the “deficit model” we speak so much about where we focus more on the glass being half-empty rather than half-full. I have to plead guilty myself; sometimes I also get into that mindset. Unfortunately, in so doing, I can miss out on what we’re doing right.

A couple of months ago, I saw an article announcing a partnership between Dr. Bernard Harris and Exxon-Mobil to increase awareness about the need for more math and science graduates. They will provide scholarships named in honor of Dr. Harris, targeting African American and Hispanic students pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

For those who may not remember, Dr. Harris has a doctorate degree in

medicine, a master’s degree in bio-medical science and as a former astronaut, was the first African American to walk in space. The recognition of his achievements is truly laudatory, but it’s just part of the story.

In 1998, Dr. Harris formed the Harris Foundation whose overall mission is to “invest in community-based initiatives to support education, health and wealth.” Here is a brother putting his time and money where his mouth is. I’ve had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Harris, and I know firsthand his commitment to young people. He is a good man, and a good Kappa.

But, he is not alone. Traditionally, among Black people, an individual who achieves, who raises the bar and is recognized for those accomplishments, has been viewed as an excep-

tion – one of a kind – *special*. As we know, that’s not the case. While we have many talented and unique folks worthy of note, there are a lot of good people out there similarly committed as Dr. Harris to employing their resources to help African Americans raise the bar of success.

In doing a bit of research, I was very impressed, not by the names of people you expect to see – celebrities and such, but of the efforts of “regular” people – those who are not in the headlines but who make such a sacrifice for what they believe.

This is in no way meant to demean the contributions of our celebrity philanthropists and I am heartened to know how many consider it a requirement of their success to give back, but rather to celebrate the contributions of all – and

especially those for whom such philanthropy is a sacrifice.

At **AASF**, we have the honor of being supported by Black philanthropists from all walks of life who back their belief in our mission with their generous financial donations. They agree that our organizations and institutions can be self-sustaining and are confident that when a need in the community is identified, we have the responsibility, competencies, and resources to make change happen.

Thanks to all of you devoted philanthropists who are  
*Making the Mission Possible!*

**Charles Webster, MBA** is Coordinator, Public Relations & Governmental Affairs for Broward County Public Schools and brings extensive experience in business and entrepreneurship to **AASF**.