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These young men just might be a black Bill Gates in the making

City Startup Labs wants to change the face of America's next generation of business owners

At a recent [Renewal Series](#) event in Charlotte, North Carolina, panelist Henry Rock [challenged](#) city leaders to listen to the underrepresented voices of its residents, the folks who live in the neighborhoods where economic mobility has languished.

Rock is passionate about cultivating new voices in his community. He is the executive director and founder of [City Startup Labs](#), a nonprofit that trains, mentors, and coaches young black men to become entrepreneurs. A businessman himself with more than two decades of experience in media and marketing, as well as in leading his own ventures, Rock writes about reimagining these young men as the next generation of entrepreneurs. — **The Renewal Project Editor Margaret Myers**





Why should it matter?

Why should it matter that young black men are counted as one of us, fellow citizens like you and me?

What does it mean that they can be counted on to contribute, innovate, and play a role in making a difference?

It matters while they bear the fruits of a journey stressed to nearly the breaking point and beyond. Young men with a world looking at them askance.

It matters deeply that we know of the challenges and handicaps faced by folks who experienced a tailwind that swiftly brought them here and against a headwind ever since they arrived.

It matters that these young men aspire to start and run companies of their own, because we all become the beneficiaries of their empowerment and innovation, as it serves us, our communities, our country.

It matters that we have a willingness to acknowledge courage, discovery, and accomplishment from those of us who dare put it on the line.

It matters that these young men aspire to start and run companies of their own, because we all become the beneficiaries of their empowerment and innovation, as it serves us, our communities, our country.

It matters that they know this; that we're pulling for them when, as one young man told me, "...nobody pays us any attention, unless it's to entertain them." They need to know we care.

[City Startup Labs](#) has these aspiring entrepreneurs embrace what is so and learn to grind out a business from their limitless imaginations. We must put these imaginations to use, by bringing

forth new discoveries and ventures, as they do stereotype-defying feats to the delight and benefit of us all.

We don't expect our work to bridge the gap that Raj Chetty [exposed here](#) in Charlotte and elsewhere, but it is and will continue to be an important and fundamental piece to the puzzle. Twenty-first century black male millennials as entrepreneurs or even intrapreneurs, carrying on a tradition of those who went before, making it now possible for us to glimpse and applaud their efforts, their contributions, their voices.

And this is why it matters.

HENRY ROCK

Executive director and founder of City Startup Labs

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<http://www.therenewalproject.com/these-young-men-just-might-be-a-black-bill-gates-in-the-making/>



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