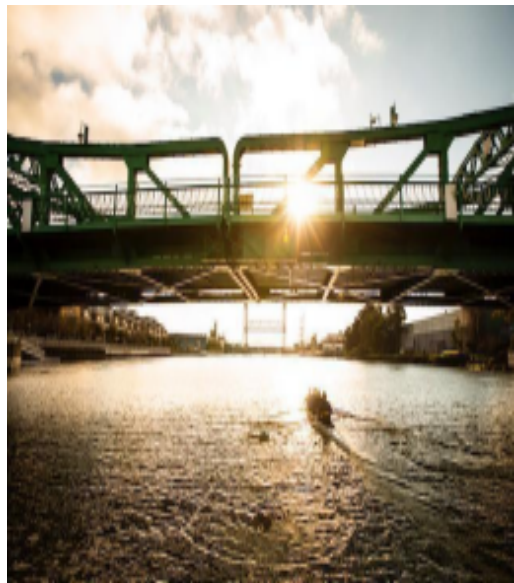


## **ARSHAY COOPER and the A MOST BEAUTIFUL THING INCLUSION FUND ANNOUNCE INITIAL PROGRAMS**

The *A Most Beautiful Thing* Inclusion Fund, a new non-profit fund, has been formed in the wake of the highly acclaimed film, *A MOST BEAUTIFUL THING* (featuring the story of Arshay Cooper, which is narrated by Common, executive produced by NBA Stars Grant Hill and Dwyane Wade along with Grammy winning producer 9<sup>th</sup> Wonder, and directed by Olympian Mary Mazzio.) Arshay Cooper, himself an award-winning author, is leading the work of the *A Most Beautiful Thing* Inclusion Fund (“AMBTIF”) which boasts a stellar advisory board consisting of rowing Olympians Anita DeFrantz; Aquil Abdullah; David Banks; Alex Osborne; Pat Etem; Mary Mazzio; Dan Walsh (a representative of HUDSON and Concept2); Elle Logan; and Bill Hudson, David Covin, and John Bottum, all passionate supporters of youth rowing. The AMBTIF is housed as its own fund, under the umbrella of the George Pocock Rowing Foundation.



The *AMBTIF* program aims to break barriers within the sport of rowing by increasing access for diverse and under-resourced youth to rowing programs across the country, on a continuing and sustainable basis, including increasing the number of people of color on the board, staff and roster of these programs. The program’s vision is for all boathouses in this country to reflect the diversity of its city, at every level of competition, from recreational rowing to the Olympics.

The *AMBTIF* will, in its inaugural year, be partnering with 9 communities. The fund will supply 5 of those core programs with dedicated grants to support (a) coaches of color, (b) transportation/swimming lessons/academic tutoring; and (c) athletes to compete in an out-of-city regatta. The Fund will also provide ongoing DEI training to all of its partners as well as send Arshay (and key guest athletes) to each partner city to help each partner program with athlete and middle school recruitment. Arshay and the Fund will also aim to establish local partnerships in the community, to develop relationships with elected officials, and to guide and support strategic development plans.

We are also excited to announce that HUDSON and Concept2 have become key partners to *AMBTIF*. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of HUDSON and Concept2, AMBTIF will be awarding HUDSON rowing shells and Concept2 oars and Concept2 ergometers to the 5 core partners. “We are proud to be partners with an initiative that will positively impact the sport of rowing. We believe in Arshay’s mission which will realize more diverse athletes being represented in our sport,” said Dan Walsh, the liaison for Concept2 and HUDSON. HUDSON has designed a gorgeous double/pair in AMBTIF colors, reflecting the colors of Chicago.

The five core programs receiving grants and equipment in Year 1 are:

- Chicago Training Center (Chicago, IL)
- St Benedict's Preparatory School - Rowing Team (Newark, NJ)
- Baltimore Community Rowing (Baltimore, MD)
- San Miguel Academy - Rowing Team (Newburgh, NY)
- Delta Sculling Center (Stockton, CA)

Also, AMBTIF will be partnering in Year 1 with four additional programs, and their local communities including:

- Oakland Strokes Rowing Club (Oakland, CA)
- George Pocock Rowing Foundation (Seattle, WA)
- Canal Dock Boathouse (New Haven, CT)
- Princeton National Rowing Association (Trenton, NJ)



For each of these community programs, AMBTIF will help to establish a partnership between a local public middle school and a nearby college or university, such as Yale, Princeton, UC Berkeley and University of Washington. “Talent is everywhere, access and opportunities are not. The moment I wrapped my hands around those oars, my life was never the same,” said Arshay Cooper. Arshay hopes he can share that feeling with thousands of young people. Arshay and *A Most Beautiful Thing* have been featured on “The Today Show,” “NBC Nightly News,” “Matter of Fact with Soledad O’Brien,” BET, NPR, Fox, *Sports Illustrated*, *Men’s Health*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *BBC World Service*, *Miami Herald*, *People*, *Black Enterprise*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Deadspin*, and the Steph Curry Book Club. (*A Most Beautiful Thing* is now streaming on Peacock and Amazon Prime.)

Arshay has brought on Denise Aquino, founder of Rowing in Color, to assist him in this effort. To support the *A Most Beautiful Thing* Inclusion Fund or learn more about the need for inclusion in rowing, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/AMBTIF2021> or contact Arshay Cooper at [arshay@pocockfoundation.org](mailto:arshay@pocockfoundation.org) or Denise Aquino [denise@pocockfoundation.org](mailto:denise@pocockfoundation.org).