

**Testimony of the Office of the Mayor
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Economic Development
Intro. 1012: Establishing a Commission to Address the Root Causes of Violence
December 6th, 2013**

On behalf of the Administration, thank you for this opportunity to comment on the City Council's proposed bill in relation to an interagency commission to address the root causes of violence.

As you know, Intro. No. 1012 – also known as the Community Violence Prevention Act – would require that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene establish a commission to address the root causes of violence in police precincts with high rates of crime. The commission would identify the ten police precincts with the highest total number of complaints for certain crimes during the preceding two calendar years, and further require development of a specific three-year plan to combat crime in each identified precinct through social service and job development programming.

Although the Administration agrees with the importance of understanding the root causes of violence within high crime police precincts, it cannot support Intro. No. 1012 in its current form. The Administration believes that interagency efforts underway are already targeting “root causes” effectively, and “high crime” police precincts as defined by the bill should not be added criteria. Additionally, while the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene collects and analyzes data to identify public health risk, the bill's designation of the Department as an oversight authority for a range of City services outside its jurisdiction or expertise is untenable. Furthermore, the definitions used by the bill to determine “high crime” police precincts differ substantively from those of the New York City Police Department (NYPD). Targeting services according to the terms of this bill may have the unintended consequence of skewing data and reallocating resources from communities with higher incidence of violent crime.

The stated intent of the legislation is addressed by several initiatives underway across the affected agencies, with programs targeting “root causes” of violence encompassing poverty, public health, education and community services. Premature death due to violent crime is all too common among our city's young men, and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) uses social, economic, health and demographic data to identify at-risk populations and allocate program resources. Relevant data is used to target funding geographically by borough or community district, and identify priority neighborhoods or populations such as new immigrants or youth who are not working or in school. In its procurement processes, DYCD incorporates data on unemployment rates, public school enrollments, educational attainment, labor force participation, English language proficiency, health and nutrition statistics and other metrics to identify risk factors. Specific program development areas using this data include Youth Workforce Development, Neighborhood Development Areas and Out-of-School Time.

Located in the Office of the Mayor, the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) has enhanced interagency focus on poverty, and demonstrated the importance of coordinating efforts to better address community needs. For example, a system of Neighborhood Opportunity Networks (NEONs) through the Department of Probation brings education and employment services for probationers to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has also redesigned its resident economic empowerment initiatives by creating a system of “zone coordinators”, where programs are coordinated at the community level to better connect NYCHA residents to needed services.

Together with CEO and in partnership with the City Council, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is overseeing an innovative approach to violent crime prevention called Cure Violence. This program treats violent crime like a public health crisis, working to change behavioral patterns and conditions that enable its growth in communities. Credible messengers called Violence Interrupters are recruited from within the community to work with high-risk youth, mediating conflict through nonviolent alternatives and connecting residents with needed services. Data provided by the NYPD identifies gun violence hot-spots and informs designation of service areas, which currently include several of the City’s most at-risk communities. The Department also facilitates interview training for program staff, with the goal of securing longer-term behavior change among participants and strengthening access to mental health services.

The Department of Education (DOE) has also developed a strong partnership with the NYPD in recent years through the School Safety Division, forming a comprehensive approach to violence prevention that has reduced crime in public schools by 49 percent. The DOE’s Office of Safety and Youth Development (OSYD) collects, analyzes and disseminates data to help schools identify trends and allocate resources to address student needs and reduce serious incidents. OSYD also conducts comprehensive assessments of schools identified as “high-need”, “Impact” and/or “Persistently Dangerous” to identify areas for improvement. Since 2004, the Impact School Initiative has provided intensive support to schools with high levels of crime and disorder. Supports provided to Impact and other high need schools include: intervention teams and programs; additional safety agents; and peer mediation and conflict resolution.

The DOE also partners with community-based organizations to provide academic, co-curricular, sports and arts programs both during school hours and immediately after school. These partnerships have also extended to the City Council, which has provided funding to 10 schools across five high-crime police precincts across the City as defined by the NYPD. DOE’s 21st Century after-school grants and Beacon programs also provide services during evening hours, when students are statistically most susceptible to delinquent behavior. Specifically targeting violence prevention, the DOE’s Gang Prevention and Intervention Unit provides support to students in danger of becoming gang-involved, or have a history of gang involvement. Moreover, it supports students’ families and educates communities in the early warning signs of gang involvement.

Major felony crime data as defined by the NYPD is posted weekly on the Department website, and there are some key differences between the categories currently defined as major felony crime and the terms proscribed by the bill. For example, in defining “Assault” the bill fails to include crimes such as: Gang Assault in the First and Second degrees; Strangulation in the First and Second degrees; and four additional felony assault crimes currently included by the Police Department in its “Felony Assault” category. The bill also does not adequately distinguish between “Grand Larceny” and “Grand Larceny of a Motor Vehicle”, since the bill’s definition of “Grand Larceny” embraces all such crimes, including motor vehicle theft. Instead, the definition of “Grand Larceny of a Motor Vehicle” would more properly reference a specific provision of the Penal Law, which should be explicitly excluded from the bill’s definition of “Grand Larceny.”

Apart from the technical definitions of crimes included in the bill, a contrast exists between the legislation’s stated intent – to address the “root causes” of violence – and the inclusion of property crimes when calculating the relevant crime rates. Although violence may be associated with the commission of Burglary, Grand Larceny or Grand Larceny Motor Vehicle, those crimes do not necessarily involve the violence inherent in the commission of Assault, Murder, Rape and Robbery. Including such property crimes in calculating the crime rates to determine which ten precincts receive special treatment may unintentionally skew crime data, and target resources away from those communities actually suffering greater violence.

In sum, the Administration agrees that the goals of this legislation are of critical importance, but cannot support the Community Violence Prevention Act in its current form. “High crime” police precincts as defined by the bill should not be included as a leading indicator in delivery of social services, nor should the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene oversee a commission encompassing such a broad range of City services outside its jurisdiction and expertise. Moreover, the bill’s definition of “high crime” precincts might have the unintended consequence of skewing data and reallocating needed resources, frustrating efforts already underway within and across the affected agencies and neighborhoods throughout the City.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment on Intro. No. 1012.

**TESTIMONY OF
THE FORTUNE SOCIETY
David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy (DRCPP)**

Committee on Economic Development

Honorable Karen Koslowitz, Chair

**Members: Mathieu Eugene, Julissa Ferreras, Letitia James, Diana Reyna, Albert Vann
Brad Lander, Stephen Levin, Donovan Richards, Mark Weprin, Rubin Wills,**

December 6, 2013

Presented by

Marlon Peterson
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Good morning. My name is Marlon Peterson and I am the Director of Community Relations at The Fortune Society. Thank you, Chair and members of the City Council Committee on Economic Development, for the opportunity to testify today.

For over forty-five years, The Fortune Society has been a powerful criminal justice advocate and re-entry service provider. We are a longstanding member of the coalition of service providers from across the City and State offering alternatives to incarceration (ATI), reentry, and related programs (including pre-trial services, defender-based advocacy, client specific planning, community service sentencing, drug treatment diversion programs, legal and employment assistance). These programs divert appropriate individuals who have been arrested or convicted to community supervision and sanctions and connect people who are transitioning from prison or jail into our communities to needed services. These efforts protect the public and save the city and state revenue by reducing jail and prison costs, preventing recidivism and stabilizing these individuals and their families. At the Fortune Society, for instance, every dollar invested in ATI programs yields three dollars in jail and prison displacement savings to the City and State, while providing individuals an environment that fosters change, allows clients to stabilize themselves, develop legitimate income streams, build a track record of "clean time" without drug use, and access needed services.

Most recently, The Fortune Society, through its David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy, created the initiative, iLIVE. Inspired by a quote by writer and activist, Darnell Moore, "*LIVING is the most radical act that I can commit myself to,*" iLive aims to reach individuals from neighborhoods throughout the city who have been affected by gun violence and help them get professional licensed mental health treatment. As part of this effort, we are developing

a campaign to address the stigma that impedes many people from receiving needed care and support. iLive will also host a variety of groups and events throughout the City and at Fortune in collaboration with community based partners such as Harlem SNUG, Man Up!, Inc., Life Camp, SOS South Bronx, Legal Aid Society, and others working to end gun violence.

When I read the term “root causes” of violence in Prop 1012, I immediately thought about nature and the fact that there are trees taller than football fields and that these trees are nourished from its root **below** the surface of the ground. Elaborating on that example, to substantively address the problem of violence it is imperative that we investigate and address the underlying causes...the smaller problems and systemic deficits that result in the huge illustration of violent acts New Yorkers experience everyday. School violence, subway violence, street violence, institutional violence, and other forms of violence are all evident displays of poverty, over-incarceration, insensitive policing, community alienation, archaic social services procedures, unfair immigration policies, under-funded and under-cared for schools, inadequate housing policies, and the lack of culturally competent measures to acknowledge and de-stigmatize behavioral health. The violence we see...that cripple our feelings of safety are a sequelae of these and other social ills. We must move beyond the common thought that our young people are the sole problem, but, that, the institutions they must interact with also shoulder the burden of being labeled the problem.

Understandably, recent media attention to young people wantonly punching passerbys evokes vitriolic feelings in most people. “These kids need to rot in jail!” That, I am sure is a reaction of many. Yet, how much thought is being given to what circumstances are leading young people to partake in such very random acts of violence? According to US Attorney Eric Holder, “We

cannot simply prosecute or incarcerate our way to becoming a safer nation.” He goes on to say, “A vicious cycle of poverty, criminality and incarceration traps too many Americans and weakens too many communities; however, many aspects of our criminal justice system may actually exacerbate this problem rather than alleviate it.” For example, in FY12 there were 84,754 new admissions to Rikers Island. In fact, there are about 12,800 people on Rikers Island right now, and only 10% are participating in any form of skills-building activities. Of the total population, 34% have a mental health diagnosis, and those are only the known mental health diagnoses. This is an increase of 5% from 2010. According to a Yale study by Andrew Papachristos & Christopher Wildeman, “Geographic exposure to neighborhood violence is associated with a range of negative outcomes such as PTSD, depression, and decreased cognitive functioning” (Network Exposure and Homicide Victimization in an African American Community, 2013). These issues are usually left unaddressed. This week alone, a young girl in Harlem was kidnapped by her uncle who reportedly had mental health issues. We do not feel enough is being done to support our young people who are simply surviving in communities as marginalized persons with an array of trauma, i.e., incarcerated and deported family members, mistreatment in schools, stop and frisked more times than they been said “hello” to by an officer, underfunded extra-curricula activities, less opportunity to enjoy their communities because of ill-thought bi-products of gentrification, and so on.

While the City Council should be commended in its creation and implementation of the Anti-Gun Violence Task Force, it is time to move one step further by passing Prop. 1012. Yes, long gone are the days when we had over 2,000 murders in NYC when we could dismiss the crime problem as a bi-product of the lucrative underground drug economy. Paradoxically, today, we are on pace to reach historical lows in homicides, yet we see a 2.4% increase in felony assaults,

according to the 11/18/2013-11/24/2013 Citywide CompStat report. These assaults have long lasting traumatic effects on the victims, witnesses. While some may see this as the calm before the storm, I wish to frame this as the opportunity to do some substantive work around core causes of gun violence and other forms of community violence, and steps towards real solutions without the constant feel of panic, which only allows us to provide band-aids.

Now is the time to start addressing the systems that foster, and in some cases exacerbate community violence. Undocumented immigrants, for example. In sections of the city like Flatbush, where crime violent crime is increasing, policies like Secured Communities (S-Comm) which gives the NYPD Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) powers, that can place arrested, but, not yet convicted folks into deportation hearings, increases alienation and fear of law enforcement within our immigrant community. A son of naturalized citizens from Trinidad, my father was undocumented for almost 20 years, and would avoid interacting with the police at all costs; not because he was committing crimes, but because he feared any interaction with police could somehow begin a process of him being taken away from his wife and three children. Immigrant distrust to of local law enforcement encourages forms of *street justice* that result in intra-community violence. While not excusing the violence committed, we must begin the hard work of shifting our overwhelmingly punitive approach to addressing community violence.

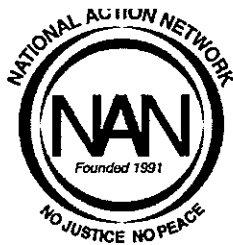
Lastly, I encourage that this commission consists of persons impacted by violence on both sides of the victim spectrum—the person harmed and the person that did the harm. Inviting impacted persons to this commission invokes authenticity to the cultural competence necessary to produce qualitative recommendations to the root causes of violence. Impacted includes both victims and

perpetrators (both victims) from a trauma-informed perspective. There is precedent for this in the Fortune Society, where approximately half our of staff at all levels of the agency and one-third of our board of directors were justice involved. These persons, including myself, have *excellent credentials* and their knowledge having lived through similar experiences “[serves] as a resource rather than a liability, according to Criminologist Herbert Sigurdson (1969) (Employing Your Mission—Building Cultural Competence in Reentry Service Agencies).

The points I have raised today are complex, maybe even overwhelming. Nevertheless, the focused concentration of a group of personally invested people is needed to begin this arduous task of addressing violence with new eyes. New York is known for its innovation in the business and financial sector. We should expect nothing less from our criminal and social justice contingent.

The Fortune Society would like to express its full support for Prop 1012. As we have done in the past, we would like to extend our expertise to the City Council in its examination and development of a plan to address the root causes of violence.

Thank you, once again, for this opportunity.



Statement for the Record

Submitted By:

National Action Network

Testimony on:

A Commission to Address the Root Causes of Violence

Before the Committee on Economic Development

New York City Council

December 6, 2013

Thank you Chairwoman Koslowitz and members of the Committee on Economic Development for allowing National Action Network to submit testimony into the record regarding the establishment of a Commission to address the Root Causes of Violence in New York City. National Action Network (NAN), a leading Civil Rights organization that fights for one standard of justice, decency and equal opportunities for all people regardless of race, religion, national origin and gender, acting as a megaphone for the voiceless supports this hearing addressing the root causes of violence in our communities and has been a staunch proponent of nonviolence since its founding.

Having been at the forefront of the battle to promote anti-violence and conflict resolution in communities across America, we feel that the exploration of a committee to address the violence is long overdue. The root causes of violence in communities across the country can be attributed to a variety of factors, all stemming from the circular effect of poverty. Poverty itself is a risk factor for violence. According to the American Psychological Association's Children, Youth, and Families & Socioeconomic Status, "all family members living in poverty are more likely to be victims of violence."¹ The report goes on to say that racial and ethnic minorities are at increased risks of being victimized. In study after study, researchers have found that violence is a side effect of poverty, especially high rates of poverty. The major

¹ Children, Youth and Families & Socioeconomic Status, American Psychological Association, p. 2

impacting factors of violence come from poverty leading to a lack of quality educational opportunities, unstable family structure, unemployment or underemployment, housing inequalities and interactions with the criminal justice system. When we begin to look at each of these factors separately, we find a direct correlation or the connecting link comes back to poverty.

In what can be called the wheel of violence, with violence being the center or core, there are many spokes that perpetuate the violence in our communities. The first spoke of the cycle of violence is lack of educational opportunity. Many believe that the lack of education achievement begins the vicious cycle.

In the landmark case of *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that separate is inherently unequal in public schools. The Supreme Court Justices found that “...*Segregation of children in the public schools solely on the basis of race denies to black children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, even though the physical facilities and other may be equal. Education in public schools is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.*” The law further states that “...*separating black children from others solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. The impact of segregation is greater when it has the sanction of law. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law tends to impede the educational and mental development of black children and deprives them of some of the benefits they would receive in an integrated school system.*”²

So if by the very nature of the *Brown* decision, we know that impoverished schools in majority African American and Hispanic communities are not equal and because their inherent inequalities breed feelings of inferiority, in order to address violence we must begin the conversation of what we can do to bring the education achievement gap to a close.

² *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483, 74 S. Ct. 686, 98 L. Ed. 873 (1954).

In 2012 the Children's Defense Fund released a report, Portrait of Inequality 2012: Black Children in America.³ This report states that lack of quality education contributes to the devastating "Cradle to Prison Pipeline". It goes on to state that African American students are on the high end of receiving suspensions, expulsions and corporal punishment. They have the highest achievement gap and are on the low end of school retention rates. These facts do not help in reducing violence in our schools. In fact in New York City, we have seen a spike in the number of violent incidences in our schools. From 2005 - 2012 the number of school violence reportedly hit an all-time high. These record breaking numbers show that the overall count of incidents, which include serious offenses like sexual assaults and fighting, as well as minor altercations and infractions have skyrocketed by more than 50% since 2005 to 68,313.⁴

Education is the very cornerstone to advancement in every economic category. Without a quality education one can find themselves on the short end of lifetime achievements. In fact the basic necessities of a productive life - a job and housing - are not likely to be obtained without at least a high school diploma or a GED. Thus, children who fail to receive a quality education often find themselves stuck in the vicious cycle of poverty that limits their potential and prevents them from achieving their full promise.

The second spoke in this wheel is unemployment. According to the most recent monthly unemployment statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor, the unemployment rate for African Americans is 13.1%, Hispanics is 9%, and Whites is 6.3%⁵. The effect of high unemployment continues to ravish our communities. African Americans are usually unemployed longer and are more often underemployed. Another challenge as it pertains to unemployment is the difficulty and at times inability of ex-felons to find gainful employment. Discussed later is the effect of criminal justice system interactions on low-income and minority communities.

Since July 2009, the federal minimum wage remains at \$7.25. At this current rate the minimum wage pays only \$15,000.00 per year, which is \$3,000.00 below the poverty level for a family of 3. Both the Senate and House have sponsored bills that would increase the federal

³ Portrait of Inequality 2012: Black Children in America – Children's Defense Fund

⁴ School Violence Shatters Record' New York Post, August 29, 2012

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, November 4, 2013 press release

minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10. These bills, if passed, would lift families above the poverty line to an annual income of \$21,000. This could generate \$32 billion in new economic activity by creating 140,000 new full-time jobs.

Additionally, many states and local entities recognize that \$7.25 is not enough to survive on or to raise a family. Many state and local entities are now taking initiatives to raise the minimum wage in their areas. Even here in New York City, there are ongoing efforts pushed to increase the minimum wage to \$15.00. With the increased pay come increased opportunities and a chance to provide more for their families. That money could also be circulated throughout the community as people use those extra dollars right in their neighborhoods. The tax revenue could support a variety of social supports within the community that would aid in alleviating some of the violence.

The third spoke in the wheel is family structure. When looking at lower income communities, poverty often affects family structure. A variety of structures including single parent homes, homes with multiple extended family members living in one domicile or foster homes are risk factors for psychological stressors which have the potential to lead to violence. According to the American Journal of Public Health's Public Health Matters, research has found that specifically for youth, growing up in a married-parent household reduces the likelihood of violence.⁶

The next spoke deals with housing and the conditions under which people are sometimes forced to live. Within Council's own introductory bulletin regarding today's hearing it says, "...some communities often face high levels of poverty, which research indicates may be linked to increased levels of crime." When people are forced to live in communities with inadequate resources and are exposed to violence, they are more likely to be violent. Further, the CDC includes diminished economic opportunities, high levels of transiency, low levels of community participation and socially disorganized neighborhoods as factors leading to community violence.⁷ Too many times, a person's zip code determines not only their mobility, but their interactions with a life that is filled with feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and

⁶ American Journal of Public Health- Public Health Matters - February 2005, Volume 95, No. 2

⁷ <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>

despair. These feelings manifest themselves in ways that are harmful to the individual and create a deteriorating effect within the community.

Another spoke deals with criminalization of African Americans. Policies that target African Americans, including Stop and Frisk here in New York, create the illusion of wrong doing even when there is none. African Americans and Latinos are often the victims of racial profiling. Whether they are walking home, as in the case of Trayvon Martin, driving a luxury car or shopping at high end store, blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be believed to be guilty simply because of how they look. New studies have shown that African Americans are four times as likely to be arrested for marijuana usage even though whites use the drug more. The statistics and disparities exist in other places within the criminal justice spectrum as well. The criminalization of certain racial and ethnic groups leads to low self-esteem, self-worth and expectations. These factors can lead to anger, high school dropout rates, bullying, high incarceration and in some cases, violence.

Together, the overarching issue of poverty and related spokes of educational inequalities, unemployment and underemployment, instability of the family structure, exposure to violence, where one lives and interactions with the criminal justice system create a cycle that breeds the opportunity for violence. Within the list of issues are subsets of other issues including hunger and mental illness that also contribute to the causes of violent behaviors. We encourage the Committee on Economic Development to move forward with establishing a commission to further explore the root causes of violence. By examining what lies at the core of these types of behaviors, we are sure that you will find that a lack of investment into the communities where violence is most prevalent is at the root of the problem. We must find ways to support people instead of further stripping a community of the structural supports that allow for economic mobility and opportunities. Too many times when the supports are taken away, people are left to fight or flight mode and flight is normally not an option. As an organization that espouses the beliefs of the non-violent tradition of Dr. King, we are constantly examining the ways that we can limit the amount of violence in communities and we hope to have the opportunity to partner with the Committee on Economic Development and the full City Council to alleviate violence in New York City.

December 6, 2013
Allen James, Program Manager,
Save Our Streets, Crown Heights
A project of the Center for Court Innovation

I am the Program manager of Save Our Streets Crown Heights (S.O.S.), a project of the Center for Court Innovation. S.O.S. operates out of the Crown Heights Community Mediation Center on Kingston Avenue in Crown Heights Brooklyn. The mediation Center has been a valued multi-service center in Crown Heights for more than a decade.

S.O.S. is a replication of the CURE Violence anti-gun violence model that was pioneered in Chicago in 1995 as CeaseFire.

Along with S.O.S. South Bronx and the Brownsville Anti Violence Project, S.O.S. Crown Heights is part of a significant commitment by the Center for Court Innovation to explore the potential of community based anti-violence initiatives in New York City.

The formal components of the CURE Violence model are *outreach, community mobilization, public education, faith based leader involvement* and recognition from law enforcement.

CURE Violence takes a public health approach to quelling gun violence. The approach responds to outbreaks of gun violence in much the same way that health workers respond to an outbreak of contagious disease by identifying the locus of the outbreak, isolating those who are infected and deploying health workers to stem further transmission.

In 4 years of operation, S.O.S. Crown Heights has contributed to a significant reduction in the number of shooting incidents in its defined target area. The program operates in a 40 square block grid inside the area of the 77th Police Precinct. The program target area contains two NYCHA housing developments and has a combined population of approximately 20,000 people.

- In 2010, the first operational year of S.O.S., the target area experienced 24 shootings five of which were fatal.
- In 2011 there were 8 shootings in the target area, five of which were fatal
- In 2012 there were 17 shootings and 3 fatalities.
- So far this year there have been 14 shootings in our area, 3 of which were fatal.

S.O.S Crown Heights has had success in establishing itself as a calming neighborhood presence. The 9 members of the program's outreach team are well known and trusted by merchants and ordinary residents as well as by young people and the high-risk of violence sub group that is our target population.

Using their street experience, powerful intuition and ongoing training, S.O.S. outreach workers and violence interrupters have been successful in detecting and mediating conflict before they escalate to gun violence and our outreach team is influential with middle school and high school

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Allen James, Program Manager,
Save Our Streets, Crown Heights
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students in and around our target area. In the past 4 years, the S.O.S. outreach team has mediated over 180 conflicts. 125 of those were judged to have potential to escalate to gun play.

We are also experiencing success in bringing neighborhood residents together to analyze and understand the causes and nature of the gun violence – and neighborhood violence of all kinds and to empower them to take ownership of the problem, organize, plan and act.

Outreach workers have had ongoing success in developing mentoring relationships with high-risk young men and helping them to consider and pursue behavior and lifestyle changes. Over the past 4 years the program has served 96 young people as program participants with some of them participating for as long as 18 months.

In the South Bronx, Save Our Streets South Bronx has been operating for just over one year and has already had a calming effect, logging weeks without any shootings and working closely with more than 40 persons who were assessed as high risk of involvement in violence.

The network of CURE Violence initiatives that are operating now in each of the boroughs of New York City are demonstrating their effectiveness in contributing to reductions in street violence. These initiatives should be supported, strengthened, expanded and built upon with policies and practices that strengthen and support families and communities.



**Testimony of gabriel sayegh
State Director, New York
Drug Policy Alliance**

Submitted to:

**City Council of New York Committee on Economic
Development**

Hearing on Initiative No. 1012-A

**Friday, November 6
New York, NY**

Thank you, members of the Committee on Economic Development, for inviting our testimony. On behalf of the Drug Policy Alliance, I am pleased to testify in support of the proposed Initiative No. 1012-A to establish a commission to address the root causes of violence.

By creating a commission to address “root causes,” this bill requires us to take a step back and consider the big picture. As I’m here to focus on drugs and drug policy, a little context is in order. For over 40 years, the official drug policy of both the U.S. and NYC has been the criminalization-based approach known as the war on drugs. This miserable war has failed to improve health and safety in our communities, but has proven wildly successful in criminalizing health issues, feeding mass incarceration, fostering overdose deaths and disease transmission, reducing access to healthcare and education, promoting and rewarding fiscal waste, violating civil rights and civil liberties, stigmatizing individuals and whole subpopulations, fragmenting families, fostering distrust between police and the communities they serve, feeding the school-to-prison pipeline, and institutionalizing appalling racial bias and racial disparities.

Our state’s distinctive contribution to the war on drugs was the draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws, and while those laws have recently been reformed, our drug policies unfortunately remain stuck in the same failed criminalization-based framework, seemingly undermining our capacity for an honest, science-based discourse about drugs, let alone our ability to enact sensible drug policies. For instance, our state legislature, specifically the Senate, has been unwilling or unable to enact a very small repair to our state’s 36 year-old marijuana decriminalization law that would stop the unlawful, wasteful, racially biased arrests of tens thousands of New Yorkers for possession of small amounts of marijuana. Even that small reform -- sponsored by the Governor, passed by the Assembly, widely supported by law enforcement -- finds itself stuck in the muck and mire of the drug war framework. This diminishes our ability to effectively address other drug-related problems, including drug-related violence.

In New York City, effectively addressing drugs and drug-related violence is unnecessarily complicated by the fact that numerous stakeholders and sectors play some role in addressing drugs and drug use, but these groups (including City agencies) are not operating with shared objectives, they are not using the same evaluation measures, and they don’t even share the same understanding of what the problems are. Law enforcement, education and health agencies, treatment providers, community organizations, people who use drugs, people in recovery, and more all play a role in these policies, but these groups lack a unified framework for approaching drug-related issues, and often work at unintentionally contradictory purposes. Nowhere is this more costly than at the City level. For instance, syringe exchange programs are among the most successful public health interventions in NYC history, dramatically reducing the spread of AIDS, while linking marginalized people to essential services and community. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene oversees these programs. Meanwhile, the NYPD arrests people for possession of syringes, sometimes directly outside of these program locations. This completely undermines the program purpose and function. The results? Fewer people using syringe exchange programs, increasing the risk of HIV infections. These two City agencies need not work at cross-purposes. We should have a coordinated plan to achieve better outcomes in both public health and public safety.

Fortunately, there’s something we can do about this, and we don’t have to start from scratch. I want to share with you the *Blueprint for a Public Health and Safety Approach to Drug Policy*. Published earlier this year by The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) and DPA, the *Blueprint* examines New York’s current drug policies and makes specific recommendations for both the state and the City as to how those policies could achieve better health and public safety outcomes through a more coordinated, public health-oriented approach. This approach is based upon the four pillars model of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement.

Believing that good public policies should be developed in collaboration with those directly affected by them, we spent over a year holding community consultations with 500 New Yorkers across the state, asking how drug use and drug policies affected people and their neighborhoods and what should be done to move the

City and state forward. We also met with experts, policymakers, and service providers and conducted an extensive review of the literature. The *Blueprint* is the result of these activities.

Addressing root causes is at the core of this report and approach. For instance, structural issues—like disparities in income, education, and opportunity—profoundly shape individual experiences of drug policies, as does the neighborhood in which a person lives. In New York, these structural issues are overlaid with issues of race and racism so that communities of color, while just as affected by problematic drug use as white communities, are far more profoundly and detrimentally affected by our current policy responses to such use. Simply put, even though drug use is spread roughly evenly throughout the population, our responses to drug use—how we police and the services and resources available to people in need—vary tremendously. Poorer communities and communities of color generally have fewer resources with which to prevent and address drug use. They face more intensive policing, surveillance, and penalties from multiple government agencies than do more affluent, white communities.

Most current approaches to drug use tend to intervene at the level of the individual, failing to take into account the larger environmental, community, family, and economic contexts that contribute to harmful drug use. The public health and safety approach we outline in this *Blueprint* includes strategies that address the individual within the context of communities. All sectors of society (not just criminal justice or treatment) need to be involved if we are to address the social factors—racial segregation, income inequality, poverty, unemployment, community norms, literacy issues, deteriorating housing, disinvestment—acknowledged as having an effect on drug use behavior, the health of people who use drugs, and the differential rates of illness among people who use drugs from different racial and ethnic groups. Overall, we call for strong leadership, particularly at the municipal level, to align our policies across agencies and sectors in order to improve the health and safety of our communities. This will no doubt serve and compliment any effort to tackle the root causes of violence.

Municipal strategies have been used across Canada and Europe to successfully shift drug policies at the local level and then expand those policies to the regional or national level through a bottom up process. These strategies emphasize the need for meaningful collaboration and engagement across multiple sectors in order to guide comprehensive reform.

Thankfully, NYC need not wait for Albany to act to begin making meaningful changes in how to deal with issues surrounding drug policy and public safety. Cities have significant control over a range of systems and funding streams that shape drug policy, such as policing, education, housing, social services, economic development, and local courts. In recent years, a number of innovative, collaborative approaches to public safety have been developed and implemented in cities throughout the nation. The Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program in Seattle, the Drug Market Intervention strategy (DMI) first implemented in Highpoint, NC and the Harlem Youth Violence Task Force in NYC are examples of programs that show promise in addressing community concerns regarding violence and drug-related issues through multisectoral approaches.

It is our hope that any Commission that tackles the challenging task of addressing the root causes of violence will, in due course, touch upon, if not fully address, the need for a coordinated drug policy in our City. We believe that NYC can lead the way in modeling reforms that will improve the health and safety of our communities.

We applaud the Committee for bringing proposed Initiative No. 1012-A forward and urge its swift passage. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Blueprint for a Public Health and Safety Approach to Drug Policy

Executive Summary

The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) and the Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) are pleased to present this *Blueprint for a Public Health and Safety Approach to Drug Policy*. DPA and NYAM are organizations with very different missions and histories but a shared understanding that New York's current policy approach to drugs is failing. We joined together to examine New York's current drug policies and to reimagine how those policies could realize better health *and* public safety outcomes, through a more coordinated, public health-oriented approach based on the four pillars model of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and public safety. Believing that good public policies should be developed in collaboration with those directly affected by them, we spent over a year holding community consultations across the state asking New York residents how drug use and drug policies affected them and their neighborhoods and what should be done to move the state forward. We also met with experts, policymakers, and service providers and conducted an extensive review of the literature. This *Blueprint* is the result of these research activities.

New York's Current Approach to Drug Policy

Some of the problems with our current drug policies stem from the fact that these policies have been largely bifurcated between two different and often contradictory approaches. One treats drug use as a crime that cannot be tolerated and should be punished; the other views addiction as a chronic relapsing health or behavioral condition requiring ongoing treatment and support. Neither of these views is all encompassing—it should be recognized that there are patterns of drug use that do not result in significant harm or health problems and therefore require no intervention. The public health approach presented here takes the view that our focus should be on the harm caused by drug use and the harm caused by our policy responses to it. We have focused specifically on illicit drugs, not because they are by themselves more harmful (in fact, tobacco causes more morbidity and mortality than any illicit drug), but because it has become increasingly clear that our current policies to manage illicit drugs are failing.

Drug policy in New York is further complicated by multiple actors that all play some role in preventing or responding to drug use. Without a unified framework and better coordination, they often work at cross-purposes. For instance, while New York has grown its network of innovative harm reduction, drug treatment, and alternative-to-incarceration programs, it has also been aggressive in policing and penalizing the same population that accesses these services for possession of drugs and syringes and for relapses. The result is a system that is not working well for anyone. Drug use and its associated harms continue, and our policy responses have resulted in the mass incarceration of New Yorkers, increased racial disparities, stigmatization of individuals and whole subpopulations, fragmented families, deep distrust between police and the communities they serve, and millions of dollars in costs during times of both economic prosperity and, more recently, fiscal crisis.

To get a copy of the full report, please contact
gabriel sayegh at gsayegh@drugpolicy.org or
Tracy Pugh at tpugh@nyam.org



New York's Current Approach to Drug Policy, cont.

In an era of limited resources, we simply can no longer afford to keep doing what we have been doing when our actions have shown to be largely ineffective and even detrimental:

- *Drug use affects New Yorkers.* The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) estimates that one in 13 New York State residents suffers from a substance abuse condition. An estimated 447,000 people in New York State need treatment but do not get it.¹ Statewide, over 1.8 million New Yorkers (1.77 million adults and 156,000 young people ages 12-17) have a substance abuse condition.² Many more are affected by the drug use of a family member, friend, or colleague.
- *Incarceration has proven ineffective at reducing drug use.* With one in every 100 U.S. adults now in prison and many more involved in the criminal justice system,³ incarceration is increasingly seen as an important public health issue and as a social determinant of health that exacerbates existing health disparities.^{4,5} In 2011, there were 104,897 adult drug arrests overall in New York City—21,149 were felony arrests and 83,748 were misdemeanors.⁶ That same year, the New York City Police Department made over 50,000 arrests for marijuana possession⁷ yet overall rates of drug use, including marijuana, have remained relatively stable.⁸
- *Our drug policies are driving unacceptable racial disparities in our criminal justice system.* Despite the relative consistency in the prevalence of drug use across races, the vast majority of those arrested and incarcerated for drug offenses are people of color. In New York City in 2011, more than 85 percent of those arrested for marijuana possession were Black and Latino, mostly young men,⁹ even though young white males use marijuana at comparable, if not higher, rates.¹⁰

Figure 1



- *Illicit drug use and our current policy responses to it are costly and require a revised approach.* The economic cost of illicit drug use to the U.S. is estimated to be more than \$193 billion annually.¹¹ The average annual cost of incarceration to New York tax payers is estimated at \$3.6 billion.¹² As incarceration has increased substantially over the last 40 years, illicit drug use has not seen a substantial reduction.

New York is poised for change. There is much momentum to move our drug policies toward a public health-based approach. At the local level, communities around the state are actively calling for a new approach. They are challenging criminal justice-dominated strategies for dealing with drug use—such as stop, question, and frisks leading to arrests for low-level marijuana possession—and mass incarceration. At the policy level, New York in 2009 became one of the first and biggest states in the country to move away from the harsh mandatory sentencing laws that characterized drug policy in the U.S. throughout much of the past four decades. The significant reform to the Rockefeller Drug Laws was advanced by a historic conference held at NYAM in January 2009. The conference, called *New Directions New York: A Public Health Safety Approach to Drug Policy*, helped to delineate a public health and safety approach as a clear alternative to an existing policy. The conference made clear that a wide array of community, government, health, and other stakeholders agree that at the center of all our drug policies whether addressing legal or illicit drugs—should be the question, “What impact will our policies have on the public’s health and safety?” This *Blueprint* seeks to outline an approach that responds to this question using the best evidence available coupled with the input of hundreds of New Yorkers.

Figure 2



Overview of Findings

This *Blueprint* details a number of specific findings related to the four pillars model: prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and public safety. Two clear, overarching themes emerged from our work. First, structural issues—like disparities in income, education, and opportunity—profoundly shape individual experiences of drug policies, as does the neighborhood in which a person lives. In New York, these structural issues are overlaid with issues of race and racism so that communities of color, while just as affected by problematic drug use as white communities, are far more profoundly and detrimentally affected by our current policy responses to such use. Simply put, even though drug use is spread roughly evenly throughout the population, our responses to drug use—how we police and the services and resources available to people in need—vary tremendously. Poorer communities and communities of color generally have fewer resources with which to prevent and address drug use. They face more intensive policing, surveillance, and penalties from multiple government agencies than more affluent white communities.

Most current approaches to drug use tend to intervene at the level of the individual, failing to take into account the larger environmental, community, family, and economic contexts that contribute to harmful drug use.¹³⁻¹⁴ The public health and safety approach we outline in this *Blueprint* includes strategies that address the individual within the context of communities. All sectors of society (not just criminal justice or treatment) need to be involved if we are to address the social factors—racial segregation, income inequality, poverty, unemployment, community norms, literacy issues, deteriorating housing, disinvestment—acknowledged as having an effect on drug use behavior, the health of people who use drugs, and the differential rates of illness among people who use drugs from different racial and ethnic groups.¹⁵⁻²⁰

Similarly, all sectors need to address the harm that has resulted from some of the current drug policies, particularly arrests and incarceration and their concentration in certain neighborhoods and among people of color.²¹⁻²² Enforcement practices like marijuana arrests and illegal “stop, question, and frisks” are among the most glaring examples of policies that must be reevaluated for effectiveness and their contribution to poor life outcomes. These practices, about which community members spoke most passionately, primarily target people of color and result in the stigmatization of entire communities and groups of people.

Taking these structural issues seriously means that we must both critically examine the impact of policies and practices that create racial disparities and broaden our drug policy framework, expanding from an individual enforcement-based approach to efforts such as community development, education, and the better integration of health, mental health, drug treatment, and social service systems.

The second overarching theme is that, when problematic drug use does occur, our response should be to offer help instead of sanctions. Many of our current policies and practices reflect a “zero tolerance” view that either criminalizes or demonizes people who use drugs in ways that do little to help them or their families or to ensure that our communities are safer. In fact, responding to drug use primarily as a crime leads to a cascade of negative outcomes (e.g., breaking up families, creating barriers to employment, disqualification from student loans, denial of access to public housing, loss of children) and prevents more constructive responses. Zero tolerance policies fail to recognize that drug use is endemic (it has happened throughout history and across all populations) or that addiction is a chronic relapsing condition. When people do become addicted, they need treatment, not punishment. In place of zero tolerance, we need systems and supports that help those with drug use problems minimize problematic use of drugs and decrease the harm associated with that use. Our communities will be healthier and safer if those who have drug use problems have access to medical care, harm reduction services, housing, and social services. Those who have quit using drugs also need ongoing support. We would never penalize someone with diabetes—a chronic condition, like addiction, that requires both medical treatment and a change in behavior. We should not penalize those who use drugs if they are not harming others. Our drug policies should not be driven by moral judgments but by the goal of improving the health and safety of individuals, families, and communities.

Overview of Recommendations

The *Blueprint* offers a series of detailed recommendations. Overall, we call for strong leadership at the state and local level to align our policies across agencies and sectors with the goal of improving the health and safety of our communities. To this end, we recommend that the Governor of New York convene a multiagency task force. It should include all of the state agencies that serve people who use drugs; state agencies involved in enforcing current drug laws; communities most affected by drug use; a variety of human service providers; community members, including people in recovery, people who currently use drugs, and formerly incarcerated people; and experts. We recommend that the task force be chaired by a senior member of the Governor's office and that it focus its attention on assessing and evaluating all state agency drug policies and programs to work toward their alignment. To be effective, the task force must include meaningful representation from and collaboration with New York City officials. We also recommend that New York City should, because of the size of its population, the complexity of its own agencies and programs, and its unique drug policy environment, convene its own multiagency, cross-sectoral mechanism to examine city-level policies. We recommend that these entities define their charges broadly, recognizing that the state and the city's health reform efforts, economic and community development, infrastructure investments, and educational programs, as well as more traditional health and social services, all have a role to play in preventing harmful drug use, helping individuals and families involved with drugs, and strengthening our communities.

While some policy changes will require a multiagency structure to resolve competing demands and leverage existing resources, other policies will not. Therefore, we have also made a series of recommendations for specific state and city agencies to eliminate those policies and practices that penalize people who use drugs and deepen racial disparities; to work with communities to modify current or develop new policies that will help individuals, families, and communities prevent drug use; reduce the harm for those who cannot or will not stop using drugs; and offer those leaving the criminal justice system and those in recovery the ongoing services and support they need to reintegrate into their families and communities. New York can lead the nation in re-envisioning and implementing an approach to drug policy that is humane, fair, and effective. We hope that this *Blueprint* can guide a comprehensive effort to transform our drug policies from the existing, confusing mix of contradictory approaches into an integrated approach that improves the health and safety of all New Yorkers.

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The New York Times

The Next Step in Drug Treatment

The country needs get beyond the 'drug war' approach to addiction

April 26, 2013

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The mandatory-sentencing craze that drove up the prison population tenfold, pushing state corrections costs to bankrupting levels, was rooted in New York's infamous Rockefeller drug laws. These laws, which mandated lengthy sentences for nonviolent, first-time offenders, were approved 40 years ago next month. They did little to curtail drug use in New York or in other states that mimicked them, while they filled prisons to bursting with nonviolent addicts who would have been more effectively and more cheaply dealt with through treatment programs.

The country is beginning to realize that it cannot enforce or imprison its way out of the addiction problem. But to create broadly accessible and effective treatment strategies for the millions of people who need them, it must abandon the "drug war" approach to addiction that has dominated the national discourse in favor of a policy that treats addiction as a public health issue.

The Affordable Care Act sets the stage for such a transformation by barring insurers from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, including substance dependency. The administration's new National Drug Control Strategy — described in a lengthy document promoted by the White House this week — calls for, among other things, community-based drug-prevention approaches that fully integrate treatment with the health care system. President Obama's budget, meanwhile, calls for a \$1.4 billion increase in treatment funding.

To its great credit, New York was one of the first states to back away from the policies it helped to create. In 2009, it revised the Rockefeller laws, with the aim of sending more low-level, nonviolent offenders to treatment instead of to prison. That step leaves it in a good position to take advantage of the Affordable Care Act and create a system for treating drug problems that is free of the poor coordination and interagency conflicts. A timely new report issued by the New York Academy of Medicine and the Drug Policy Alliance, an advocacy group, provides a detailed blueprint for how the state could remake its drug treatment delivery system and remove public policy obstacles to timely and accessible treatment.

It notes, for example, that agencies often work at cross-purposes, in some cases penalizing, instead of helping, addicts. Addicts who avoid H.I.V.-AIDS exposure by getting clean needles at publicly funded centers are then arrested for having "drug paraphernalia." Those with drug felonies on their records can be denied access to affordable public housing. Those who seek medical treatment for illnesses, and especially for pain, are often suspected of exaggerating their ailments to get drugs.

The report calls on the governor to convene a multiagency task force of the various state agencies and departments that encounter drug users, including social service agencies and the education and court systems. The ever more pressing purpose would be to improve the delivery of quality services to people who are too often banished to the margins of the health care system.

TESTIMONY

The Council of the City of New York

Committee on Economic Development
Karen Koslowitz, Chairperson

Re: Proposed Int. No. 1012-A-In relation to establishing a
commission to address the root causes of violence.

December 6, 2013
New York, New York

Submitted by
The Legal Aid Society
199 Water Street
New York, NY 10038

Good morning. I am Thomas Giovanni, supervising attorney of the Legal Aid Society's Anti-gun Violence Initiative, a specialized unit in our Civil Practice dedicated to providing legal services to community members served by the Council-funded CureViolence organizations. I submit this testimony on behalf of the Legal Aid Society, and thank Chairperson Koslowitz and the Committee on Economic Development for inviting our thoughts on establishing a commission to study the root causes of violence.

The Legal Aid Society is the nation's oldest and largest provider of legal services to low-income families and individuals. As you know, from offices in all five boroughs, the Society annually provides legal assistance to low-income families and individuals in more than 300,000 legal matters involving civil, criminal, and juvenile rights problems. The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program. The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States. And it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession.

Our Juvenile Rights Practice provides comprehensive representation as attorneys for children who appear before the New York City Family Court in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children's rights and welfare. Last year, our Juvenile Rights staff represented more than 34,000 children, including approximately 4,000 who were charged in Family Court with juvenile delinquency. Annually, our Criminal Practice now handles

nearly 230,000 trial, appellate, and post-conviction cases for clients accused of criminal conduct.

The Legal Aid Society's Anti-Gun Violence Initiative (AGVI) is the legal support component of the broad coalition of service providers, researchers and city council members working under the City Council's Anti-Gun Violence Task Force. Four Staff Attorneys and the Supervising attorney seek to fulfill the AGVI's mission to support five designated Community Partner organizations who are working in their communities using the CureViolence model. We believe—as is supported by the best research and the on-the-ground experiences of the Community Partners—some of whom are testifying here today—that the most effective means of combating violence in our communities is a **multi-spectrum, long-term investment in communities**. Therefore, the AGVI's mission is to provide comprehensive (or wrap-around) legal services, including legal education and direct legal representation, in the areas identified by Community Partners as areas of need.

AGVI attorneys provide direct services for our Community Partners and their constituents, as well as acting conduits for those groups to benefit from more direct access to the full range of services offered by the Legal Aid Society. Subject areas include, but are not limited to, housing; public benefits; immigration; employment; collateral consequences of criminal convictions; family law; health law; criminal defense—including juvenile delinquency—school suspensions; and safety transfers, both in public housing and schools. As you will hear from the testimony of the true “experts,” those providing direct services to community members, successfully supporting communities in these and other areas of need is intimately related to reducing the frequency and intensity of violence in our communities.

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. The Society's law reform representation for clients benefits some two million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a Statewide and national impact.

Our perspective comes from our daily contacts with clients and their families, and also from our frequent interactions with the courts, social service providers, City agencies including the New York Police Department, Department of Education, and Department of Probation as well as the Administration for Children's Services.

Legal Aid applauds the Council's inquiry into the root causes of crime and the most effective methods to address them. A critical piece of representing children and adults who are charged with crimes is to identify the collateral issues that need to be addressed to stabilize our clients' lives. All of our clients are low-income and many have at least one significant social issue beyond poverty that destabilizes their lives. The Legal Aid Society has demonstrated repeated success in connecting clients to programming which, in turn, sets our clients on productive paths in life.

This success includes reduction in recidivism rates, re-engagement with school and work and building stronger families. We strongly believe that if access to services were enhanced in our lowest income communities, many fewer people would enter the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, many services are only available *after* an arrest. Ideally, Legal Aid would like to see increased services available to a broader range of people in the most underserved communities.

Characteristics of Court-Involved Children, Teens and Adults

An alarmingly high percentage of individuals who enter the court system, either on juvenile delinquency or criminal matters, have a history of trauma. This history feeds patterns of substance abuse, mental illness and other self-harming behaviors. A recent study published by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, reported the results of the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, a national study that is large and comprehensive in its assessment of victimization and delinquency. Its findings of most relevance to today's inquiry are as follows:

- Boys with histories of both delinquency and as victims had considerably more victimization than the boys who were primarily victims, disclosing 6.3 and 4.5 different kinds of victimization in the past year, respectively. These boys had particularly greater percentages of sexual victimization (40% for delinquent boys vs. 13% for primarily victim boys), and witnessing family violence (26% for delinquent-victim boys vs. 12% for primarily victim boys).
- Girls with histories of both delinquency and as victims also were more victimized than the primarily victim girls, disclosing 6.4 and 4.2 different victimizations in the past year, respectively. The girls in the delinquent-victim category had victimization rates which were particularly higher for sexual victimization, for which the rate among delinquent-victim girls (58%) was more than twice that among the primarily victim girls (27%).
- Among both boys and girls, delinquent-victims tended to experience more life adversities and mental health symptoms than other groups. They also received less social support. The girls experienced higher rates of inconsistent/harsh parenting.
- Importantly, there were few significant differences among the primarily delinquent, primarily victim and delinquent-victim groups on features such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, family structure, disability status, school performance or physical features.¹

These national figures are consistent with our local findings. A very high percentage of our adolescent clients who are prosecuted in the adult court system have been exposed to violence in their homes and/or communities,

¹ Cuevas, C.A., Finkelhor, D., Shattuck, A., Turner, H., Hamby, S., October 2013. Children's Exposure to Violence and the Intersection Between Delinquency and Victimization. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Juvenile Justice Bulletin.

approximately 50% have special education needs, about 35% have current involvement or past histories with foster care and at least 40% have diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health issues. Many of our clients' parents share these histories in addition to unstable housing, histories of substance abuse, and intergenerational violence and trauma. The Administration for Children's Services recently began to examine the prevalence of cross-over youth—those who have had child welfare involvement and are held in juvenile detention facilities. In fiscal year 2010, 48.2% of the detention admissions had current or past histories of child welfare involvement.

The adult criminal justice population shares many of the same characteristics and life histories as our adolescent clients. Unfortunately, we often see that issues may have been identified, but a connection to services was not made through system failure or a lack of available providers. A recent report issued by the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), noted that 95% of women and 89% of men entering jail diversion programs have experienced physical or sexual abuse. A study of women inmates of a maximum security prison found that they experienced physical and sexual abuse throughout their youth and adulthood. Additionally, individuals can be retraumatized by services, supervision, and management policies that do not account for trauma. The report recommends that individuals must be screened for trauma and the systems providing services must be trauma informed.²

² "Co-Occurring Disorders in Criminal Justice Settings", SAMHSA, available at www.samhsa.gov/co-occurring/topics/criminal-justice/trauma.aspx.

Focus on high poverty, under-resourced neighborhoods

The vast majority of individuals processed through the juvenile and adult courts come from five neighborhoods of New York City: Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, East New York and the South Bronx.³ South Jamaica also has high representation in this category. These neighborhoods also share significant problems of poverty, inadequate services to meet high need, low performing schools, higher than average prevalence of health and mental health issues and substandard housing stock. While service availability has improved throughout these neighborhoods in the last few years, much more must be done to address the persistent need.

Research suggests that family ties, social networks and social support deters criminal behavior. Cultivating social networks, providing opportunities to help others and supporting families can develop stability in neighborhoods racked by low employments and fractured family structures.⁴ These services along with placement of social service, mental health, employment and educational services should be concentrated in the areas and neighborhoods with the most need. The neighborhoods listed above as well as those like the Rockaways, which historically have been drastically under-resourced should receive enhanced examination.

The Legal Aid Society also encourages an examination of the redirection of some percentage funds dedicated to traditional law enforcement to preventive services. In recent years, New York City has seen significant reduction in the number of people incarcerated, while crime rates have remained low. The cost

³ http://gothamist.com/2013/05/01/these_interactive_charts_show_you_w.php

⁴ See, "The Potential of Community Corrections to Improve Safety and Reduce Incarceration", the Vera Institute of Justice, Center on Sentencing and Corrections, July 2013.

savings from the reduced use of incarceration should be dedicated to services supportive of safer, healthier, more productive communities.⁵

Proposed Int. No 1012-A

The Legal Aid Society strongly supports the proposed bill to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to establishing a commission to address the root causes of violence. We offer the following comments on the language of the bill:

- We suggest amending the definitional section of the bill (§ 17-198(b)) to reflect that all references to criminal offenses are those that are defined in the New York Penal Law. This provides a more inclusive definitional reference.
- We suggest amending the commission membership list (§ 17-198(d)) to include the Department of Health and Mental Health, Department of Probation, an agency or organization with a proven track record of providing family support services, an agency or organization with a proven track record of providing trauma informed mental health services, and at least one organization that services the formerly incarcerated.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about this important issue.

Contacts: Thomas Giovanni, Supervising Attorney, Anti-gun Violence Initiative
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⁵ Austin, J., Jacobson, M., How New York City Reduced Mass Incarceration: A Model for Change?, January 2013. available at <http://www.vera.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/how-nyc-reduced-mass-incarceration.pdf>.

Root Causes of Violence

Violence is no stranger to the American experience as evidenced by the presence of gangs in our cities, especially New York, since the 5 Pointers in the 1700's. To understand this phenomenon it's imperative to examine the driving forces in our culture and society that contribute to violent behavior.

Our kids are trying to find their way in an ethos that is materialistic, status driven, impersonal, alienating, cosmetic, drug laced and indifferent to the plight of those who do not have a seat at the table of the American Dream. The themes of our greatest dramas and novels are universally about alienation and loneliness.

Our kids in the face of such skewered values generally explode or implode. Compound that by their immediate experiences in neighborhoods where drug dealers are role models for obtaining money and gangs, not police, guarantee them protection. Never ending cycles of poverty, lack of positive role models, a music industry and a media that glorifies violence in song and on screen and you have an ongoing recipe for disaster. For many these experiences are cyclical and extend into future generations.

America does not invest in programs for youth. Where is the money for positive peer groups for kids to join? Why are we more willing to expend \$200,000 to send a kid to prison rather than investing the equivalent to keep kids out? Many of our kids still feel the lash of racism as well. For whatever the merits of Stop and Frisk or the reduction in crime its proponents attest to, young people of color feel they are purposely profiled because of their skin color or culture. They do not feel safer. They feel more threatened.

In our school systems kids attend class to pass tests. Learning is an immediate casualty in such an environment. Our kids come to school with a host of needs and those needs will never be met in a traditional classroom setting. This also contributes to a sense of neglect, failure and ultimately violence.

In short we have raised a generation of very unhappy kids who have lost their ability to dream. That's on us and the economic, social and educational systems we've immersed them into.

The Council for Unity has been addressing these root causes for 40 years. Born out of gang and racial violence in 1975, The Council created a counterculture to gangs where the child's need for support and structure is addressed through the 4 pillars of the program: Family, Unity, Self-Esteem and Empowerment. In our meteoric rise from 6 original gang leaders to a curriculum based on these 4 precepts, the Council's model is used in elementary, middle and senior high schools in all 5 boroughs on NYC with an out of city network that extends from Buffalo to Riverhead, Long Island. Equally powerful paradigms have been developed for adults in communities (Our Adult and Family Partnership Model), for Police Departments (Our Public Safety/Community Policing Model) and our Correctional Facility Model where we transform a prison into a community asset to prevent crime by having our prison chapters in Sing-Sing and Suffolk County Correction participate in a Loved Straight Program to dissuade kids from participating in gangs and criminal activity. It is this 4 point school based, community based, law enforcement and prison based synergy that has enabled the Council to reverse these never ending cycles of violence. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has attested to our outcomes and members of the FBI and Secret Service sit on our board. They realize we cannot arrest our way out of our problems and that Council for Unity is a legitimate antidote for the culturally driven forces that contribute to the violent behavior of so many of our kids.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert J. De Sena
Founder & President
Council for Unity, Inc.



Blessings of Faith & Happiness

- We thank Christine Quinn and her staff for the wonderful work on the Gun Violence Task Force and for the creation of the New York City Crisis Management System.
- We thank each of you on this committee for the vision to see the need for a Community Violence Prevention Act
- All citizens are entitled to a Quality LIFE, a Defined Liberty & The Blessings of Happiness and that's all we want!
- One Planet! One LIFE Support System! We are the Oxygen Mask for the hundreds of thousand of Voiceless People in urban communities
- In 2012 we had 340 Days in South Jamaica Target Area with no shootings! And at the same time year prior there was 7 people shot.

Similarly, We all suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder diagnosed or not. This unaddressed leads to the Disease Of Violence ex. David said "ALL MY FRIENDS I PLAYED WITH IN THE SAND BOX ARE NO LONGER HERE", I DON'T SLEEP AT NIGHT AFRAID I AM GOING TO BE KILLED" "I HELD MY BROTHER'S HEAD ON MY LAP, AS HE SAID "I'M GOING TO BE ALRIGHT!" HE WASN'T HE DIED FROM THE GUN SHOT!"

Whether it is the PTSD from HOMELESSNESS, SYSTEMIC POVERTY, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CULTURAL OBLIVIOUSNESS, POLICE MISCONDUCT, AND OR DELAPETATED NEIRBORHOODS OUR PEOPLE ARE HURTING AND WE NEED HELP. HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE!

Testimony for the Community Violence Prevention Act
Tamika D. Mallory, Community Organizer and Anti-Violence Activist
December 6, 2013

There is no such thing as contained violence; every crime, every act of brutality has a chain reaction of cause and effect that jeopardizes a wide range of individuals, economically and socially. Even with a decrease in gun violence, this council has reported that in recent years violent crime rates have remained high in communities across New York City—violence is a **PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS** that puts the future of our city at risk. This, we know from recent experience with the Bryant Park shooting, which happened outside the bounds of underserved communities where people assume violence occurs most. And the new “knock out” game, on the rise among young adults, makes any unlucky passerby a victim of violence. However in many cases, targeted victims have been older people, and in some cases, older white people.

The Children’s Defense Fund reported that the number one cause of death for young people of color nationally is homicide by firearm, and the New York City Department of Health reported that gun violence is the leading cause of death for our young people. Beyond that, many of our youth do their rounds in the prison system every year for violent and petty crimes. A generation of young men and women lost to violence by death or incarceration is a tragedy that is limiting opportunity and preventing our city from moving forward. Children and families devoid of resources and opportunities are much more likely to experience and perpetuate violence—we cannot afford to waste their potential and turn a blind eye to the issues they face. Our city government, our organizers—we need to work together to discover the root causes of violence and ensure that this very *public* crisis is stemmed at the root. This public crisis *is* preventable, but not unless we care for all children in New York City equally.

The Community Violence Prevention Act is the embodiment of what community organizers have been advocating for so long, like Erika Ford of Life Camp, A.T. Mitchell of Man Up, Lance and Todd Feurtado from King of Kings, Iesha Sekou of Street Corner Resources, and New Yorkers Against Gun Violence, and the list goes on, and on. We need to be fighting the root causes of violence to not only reduce crime, but to give our underserved communities opportunities to succeed. We need to make sure that we occupy our children with opportunity, give them the resources to pick up a hobby before they pick up a weapon or throw a punch. We need to fight economic insecurity, create jobs for struggling families and young adults. We need to treat mental illness and build a city that takes care of its most vulnerable to stop violence before it starts. With the CVPA we have the opportunity to use all of our city’s resources and brainpower to unify and expand the existing efforts of community organizers working in communities everyday to prevent violence, provide support, and create opportunity.

I’ve spent my life as an anti-violence advocate, and I have seen and felt the effects of violence first hand, like helping the mother of 4-year old Lloyd Morgan, Jr.—shot to death by a stray bullet in a Bronx playground in 2012—to order a specialized casket, because the smallest one available at the funeral home was too big for him. There is no denying that violence is not a disease in and of itself, but a symptom of a much greater crisis—a crisis of inequality that we have been battling for generations, which we have the opportunity to reduce, and which we must reduce now more than ever. We must place the same value on every child, and I—along with my colleagues in anti-violence work—reject the idea that because there may not be as many shootings as in the past, that somehow one of our children’s lives is not valuable, especially when the shooting could have been prevented by courageous and aggressive intervention from us as leaders. The answers, the intelligence on this issue is right in front of you today. Engage us, use us, and please, help us.

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

VINCENT F. DEMARCO
SHERIFF

November 9, 2009

Robert DeSena, President/Founder
Council for Unity
45 East 20th Street – 3rd Floor
New York, New York 10003

To Whom It May Concern:

As Sheriff of Suffolk County I contacted the Council for Unity in 2007 to address gang conflict in the Suffolk county Correction Facility. To say I was skeptical of the outcomes purported by this agency would have been an understatement.

Two years later, I am a believer, what I have witnessed is as follows:

- A decrease in violence with the facility, enhanced safety has been the result.
- Communications between inmates and correction officers have improved.
- Inmates have learned to respect diversity. They learn to respect other cultures, ethnic groups, religious preferences and rival gang members.
- Members replace violence with mediation to solve problems.
- Members find positive uses for free time. They now read, tutor each other, write in their journals and do homework.
- Members are motivated to participate in programs that help to empower them and raise their self esteem. They participate in anger management, vocational programs, educational programs, substance abuse meetings and religious services.
- Group on group violence in the facility has been greatly reduced.
- Mentoring between older inmates and minors increased significantly since the inception of the program.
- At the onset of the Council for Unity Program only 2 participants were enrolled in GED programs. Now, the inmates themselves require that all CFU members must enroll and receive their GEDs.
- The first female facility Council for Unity Chapter has been inaugurated at the SCCF, a historic milestone for the program.
- Several members have found gainful employment after discharge as a result of the program.

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

VINCENT F. DEMARCO
SHERIFF

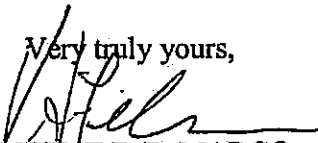
Page Two

- After discharge, members have been giving back to the community by participating in various town projects.

The Council for Unity's success within the Suffolk County Correctional Facility if adopted by other correctional facilities could have a profound impact on the state and possibly the national penal system.

Please feel free to use this letter in any manner you see fit to promote the benefits of the Council for Unity Programs.

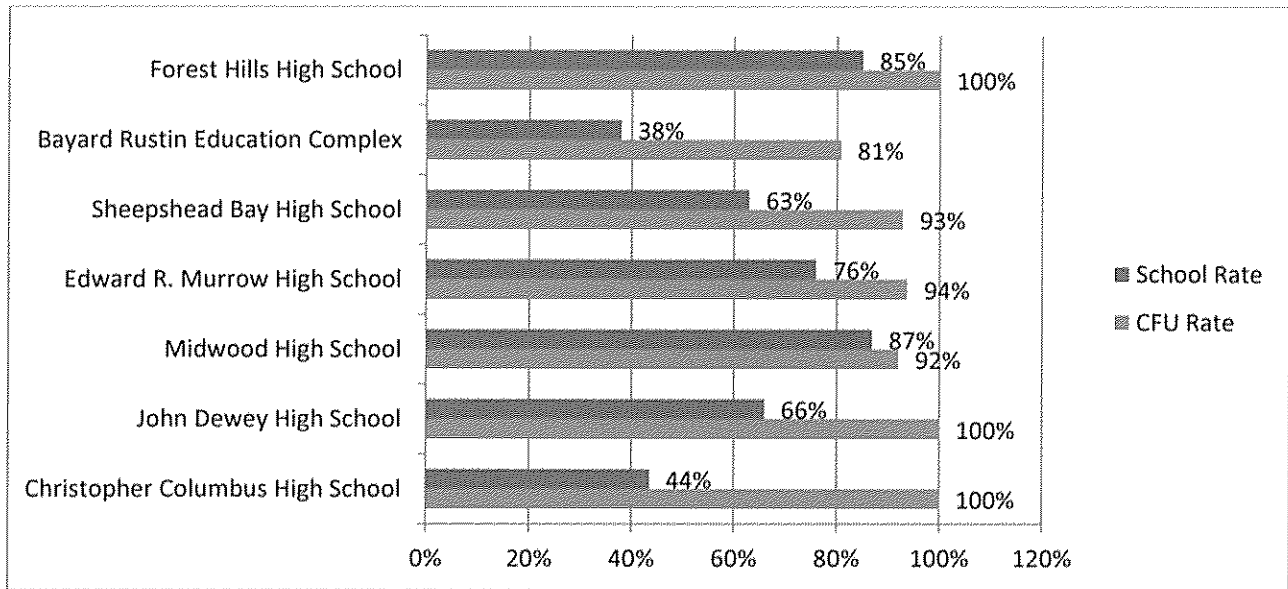
Very truly yours,



VINCENT F. DeMARCO
Sheriff of Suffolk County

VFD/kcm

The following chart illustrates the graduation rate for CFU High Schools that have seniors. The chart lists CFU's graduation rate as well as the graduation rate listed for the schools on the New York City Department of Education Website. The NYC graduation rate data is from 2010- 2011 the 2011- 2012 graduation rate data is not available yet.



As is clear from this chart, CFU has higher graduation data even for schools with a high graduation rate. The lowest rate for CFU is still above 80%. The total average graduation rate for CFU is 94%

THE *East Hampton • Southampton • Riverhead • Southold • Shelter Island*
INDEPENDENT

September 05, 2007

New Beginnings For Gang Members

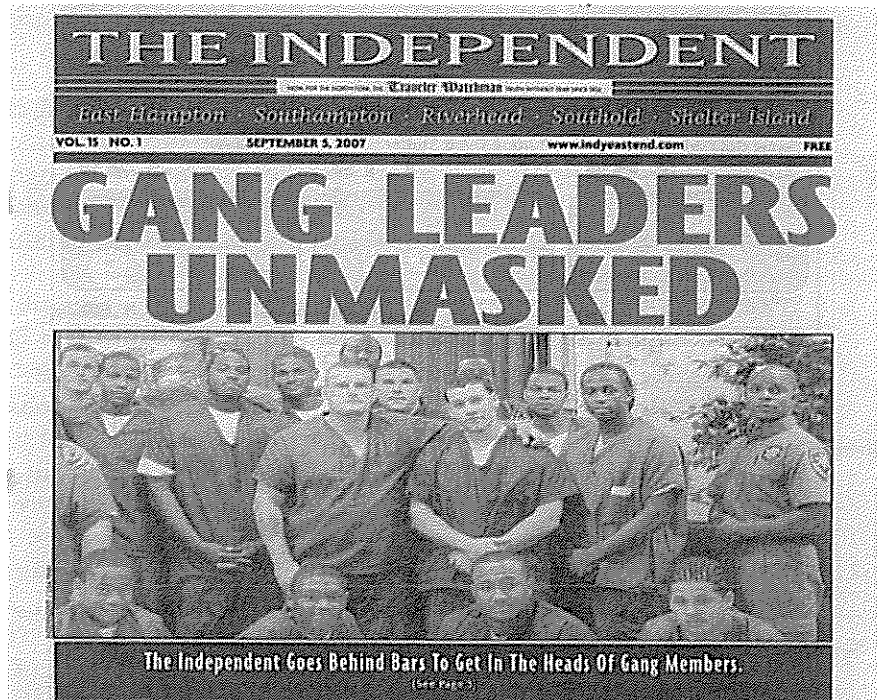
By Lisa Finn

They've spent their lives bustin' guns, robbing banks, and beating their enemies bloody. They have been charged with an array of horrific crimes ranging from murder to career drug dealing. By their own accounts, they have grown up on poverty-stricken streets, been schooled in shattering lives, inflicting beatings and bringing despair upon the families of those they've brutally killed.

On the streets, each of the young men, members of some of the deadliest gangs in the country, would admittedly have faced one another with hatred and violence. Bloods against Crips. Latin Kings against White Supremacists. But at the Suffolk County Correctional Facility in Riverhead, there is a program that has knocked down the walls, a program that is striving for new solutions to the gang problems that have rocked society in recent years. The program is called Council for Unity, and SCCF is being touted as a model, the first county facility to feature the program.

Council for Unity, founded by Bob DeSena in 1975, is a national non-profit organization with a history of successfully promoting inter-group relations and reducing violence in schools and communities. The idea is that by implementing school-based and after-school programs in leadership development, mentoring, career, college guidance and gang prevention, the Council fulfills a mission of empowering individuals and groups with the skills necessary to promote unity, safety and achievement.

Riverhead has been proactive in tackling gang issues, implementing Council for Unity in schools, the police department, the community, and most recently, in the correctional facility, where the program is in its first year. Last week, officials from Nassau County who are considering instituting the program in their own municipalities visited the facility to view a weekly meeting of the Council for Unity. And, based on the outpouring of emotion and heartfelt testimonials they witnessed, it is evident that, in the words of Sheriff Vincent F. DeMarco, "The program is working."



Before entering the jail, a visitor might harbor the belief that inside, one will find dark, dreary cells and an air of abject hopelessness. But last Thursday, as this reporter was buzzed through the gates and into the facility's chapel where Council for Unity meetings are held, the room was filled with artwork and poetry created by CFU members. And, as they entered the chapel in identical green uniforms, the prisoners greeted one another not with hostility or rage, but with handshakes and hugs, calling one another "Brother."

Brian Joseph, 17, is considered the "baby" of the group. He proudly displays a piece of artwork he created. "It took jail time to help me find God," he said. Gregory Roosa, who spent the entire night before the meeting drawing a depiction meant to represent the group's mantra, "Slaying the Dragon," created a piece of artwork so noteworthy that it may be used in the future with CFU materials.

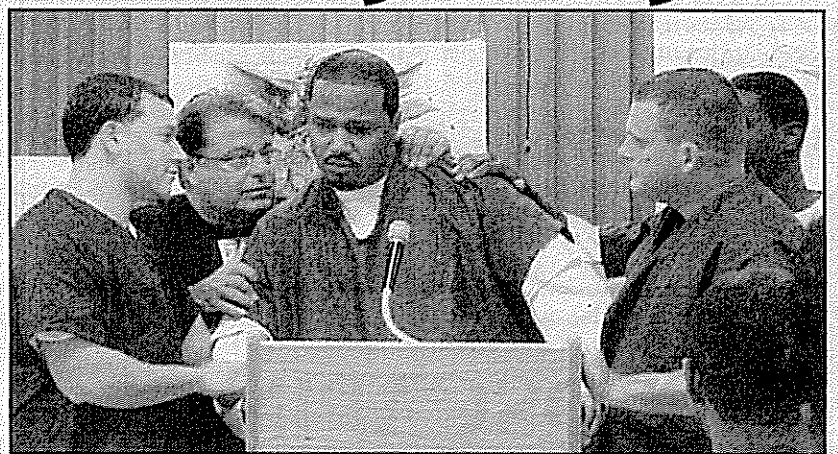
Despite the goodwill in the room, the prisoners make it clear that they've come from disparate places and lived on dangerous streets. LeQuarn "Lucky" Wade began the meeting by describing his life as a gang member. "A few years ago you could have caught me in your neighborhood selling drugs, or causing mischief. I watched businesses disappear, men and women lose their children, and I was a part of that because I sold them the drugs."

Then came DeSena, and an introduction to CFU. "I can't see myself doing that anymore," he said. "I believed that it was money, cars or women that would make me a man. What made me a man is what I'm doing today, what I'm fighting for." Sometimes, Wade can't believe the transformation himself. "You actually had to see me before, and then, see me here now. This is me, for real." At first, Wade admitted he had doubts about the program. "I didn't think it would work. No way could I see Bloods, Crips and Latin Kings all sitting in one room and talking, and then becoming something positive. But here we are, and it's so amazing."

Together, he said, the new family the gang members have forged "stands for something great. What we have done here is inspirational and touches my soul." Wade, who has been incarcerated for 14 months, said despite the jail time, "This is the most free I've ever been."

Roosa read a poem about his life in the streets. Today, he said, "Anger and hatred is no longer the food that feeds me." Another inmate known as "Mr. T" was picked up in the recent bust on the Shinnecock Reservation. As he stood up to speak, he began to cry, and his CFU "brothers" surrounded him, offering support and words of encouragement. "Nobody gave me a chance," he said, adding that if programs such as CFU had been in place when he was growing up, things may have been different. "Kids need an opportunity."

Run by corrections officer Alex Bryant and Sergeant Noreen Fisher, CFU classes focus on serious discussions about racism, watching films that deal with gangs, writing in journals, and about learning the concepts upon which CFU is built. Fisher said when the prisoners first came to CFU, they thought it was a GED class, and, unhappy to be there, slouched in, pants hanging low, and slumped in their seats. But when given a choice all returned to the program.



Independent / Lisa Finn
Members from some of the most menacing and deadly gangs in the United States today, including the Bloods, Crips and Latin Kings, have found a new "family" through the Council for Unity program.

Jason Diadema, 22, had a mother who was a "crackhead and a prostitute. I'd see her on the streets with a pipe, hustling – selling her body for crack." Growing up, he said, "I thought I was all alone. I never had a mother and a father." Disenfranchised, he ran away from a group home and sought family ties with his gang, The Bloods, for over nine years. At one point, he went to live with grandparents on Long Island, where Diadema said the abuse continued. "I felt as though I had no place on this earth." When he first attended a CFU meeting, he had doubts. "I thought, 'I'm not going to sit with Crips and MS13.'" Today, however, Diadema considers rival gang members family and said Fisher "is a mom to me, the mother I never had." Diadema has two children. In the past, he didn't want them to know him, didn't want them to look at him "the way I looked at my mother." After CFU, said Diadema, "Now, I can't wait to go home."

All CFU members credit DeSena, as well as Butch Langhorne, assistant to DeMarco, and DeMarco, who were instrumental in bringing the program to Riverhead. They've bonded with Bryant, who's also the jail barber, and Fisher. And because DeMarco is on board, said Bryant, the program flourishes. If the mindset at the top does not change, old attitudes prevail, where "the perception is that inmates are garbage, and are treated as if they deserve nothing." Bryant acknowledges the high recidivism rate. According to United States Bureau of Justice statistics, 67.5 percent of prisoners released in 1994 were rearrested within three years, an increase over the 62.5 percent found for those released in 1983. But, he said, "If you can change one," that's a positive step.

And to work toward reducing recidivism rates, the goal is to implement CFU programs not only in jails, where the population is transient, but in prisons and in the community, so those who are released have a support network. Slaying the dragon, said Fisher, "seems to be working well. They are very optimistic, not as hopeless." Fisher adds that not all gang members are "mean-spirited." Gangs, she said, offer a "sense of family, of belonging. At first, they take care of you, and then payday comes and it means killing someone or burning down a house." Gang members, she said, wonder how getting "fancy sneakers ends up with them in jail. They wonder, "Where did it all go wrong?"

But, despite apprehension when she began running the program, today, Fisher is confident that she has "absolutely nothing to fear. Our group is a new family, where there is trust, love, encouragement and support." Fisher is adamant about working to effect change in the jail: "If you're really a correctional facility, you have to start thinking of ways to correct." Fighting in the jail has "calmed down," due to CFU.

DeSena, a champion for his program, greets all the inmates with hugs and support. "Gang violence," he said, "is stopping here." DeMarco agreed: "This is a bright light in a jail. The program is working, proving that some good can come out of the jail, perhaps for the first time in history."

DAILY @ NEWS

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

BIG TOWN  BIG HEART

CELEBRATING NEW YORKERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BY JOSH MAX

YOU MIGHT EXPECT a man who arranges sitdowns between the toughest of tough street gangs to look like a combination of "The Godfather's" Luca Brasi and Conan the Barbarian. But Bob DeSena, founder and president of the Council for Unity, resembles more a glad-handing mayor with an easy manner and a man-of-the-people demeanor.

Tonight, the 64-year-old Muttontown, L.I., resident is helming his organization's 31st annual induction dinner in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where prospects who have made it through the required year-long probation become official Council for Unity members. More than 1,000 teens and kids, some as young as 6, are bopping to the hip-hop sounds blaring from huge speakers. Plenty of food at the room-long buffet tables awaits them after they work up their appetites.

There's much to celebrate: Since its founding in 1975, the council has grown to 48 chapters in more than 40 schools with more than 5,000 students enrolled. The nonprofit's network comprises 60 schools and community centers in New York City and Long Island as well as the Boys & Girls Clubs of America in Texas and California.

DeSena, who was born and bred in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, says, "I don't believe there is [such a bad thing as] a 'bad kid.'

"Most of society regards kids in gangs as innately evil, sinister and unreachable and they want to just incarcerate them. But in my 30 years of doing this, when I go to a school with gang involvement and we present the Council for Unity, they come over every time. Every time. It tells me these kids are reachable, and if you give them an option that has meaning to them, they'll take it."

Coming from a good home doesn't have anything to do with whether or not a kid joins a gang, either, DeSena says. "A guy in my program did 15 years in prison, now he's out two years. He had two parents, came from an upscale home — and he still got caught up in the life."

DeSena, a former gang member himself who got out of that life early, started his professional career teaching English literature at John Dewey High School in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. "My back-

ground was in mythology," he says. "That helped me tremendously, because once you know that cultures are defined by their mythologies, you know how a culture works."

In the early 1970s, the high school was racked by violence between blacks and Italians, DeSena says. "It got very bad and something had to be done to stop it," he says. "I was recruited to try and help. I got six gang leaders to commit to an entire year of halting the violence to see if we could come up with an alternative."

"These were enemies and racists, but they ended up embracing unity. They saw that when they got together, there was nobody left to fight and no one to make fun of, either." In the wake of that triumph, DeSena founded the Council for Unity in 1975.



Bob DeSena (l) with ex-Bloods member Tyrell Tucker at Council for Unity dinner.

KRISTY LEIBOWITZ

if, you're dead. But the basic emotion I feel when I deal with gangs is compassion and empathy. I'm looking to give them a choice, a second chance. So I'm not thinking of fear, I'm thinking of assistance."

In addition to its work in schools, the council also reaches out to communities and correctional facilities.

"I met Bob during a riot at Erasmus Hall High School [in Flatbush, Brooklyn], in 1993," says Rick Brown, 31. "I was a major gang-banger. But Bob was [gutsy], man. He didn't say, 'Don't,' 'Stop' or 'You shouldn't.' He said, 'If I can get you a legit job, will you quit this life?'"

"One of my friends had been shot, and a few others were in jail, too, so I thought it was time to try another way."

Damon Rozier, 38, met DeSena at Dewey. "I was one of the bad kids [at the school]. I was selling crack and weed, and I had every one of my teachers intimidated — I had them marking me present when I was absent, that's how afraid they were of me. But Bob wasn't afraid; he wouldn't take any stuff off me. He helped me turn my life around, and today I consider him my father."

The Council for Unity also has a college chapter at the University of Vermont, and the program is constantly expanding. Scores of former Bloods, Crips and other gang members whom DeSena and his staff recruited into the program have gone on to personal and professional successes.

"Some are in the NYPD and FDNY, and we're really proud of them," DeSena says. "Others are, believe it or not, in the Secret Service, and others are successful businessmen."

DeSena has one son, Nikolas, 30. "He's on [the council's] board of directors. He grew up with people from every conceivable background. When he was a little kid, I used to bring him to the schools, and I always ran events at the house, so he got a great free education."

Tonight, DeSena shakes hand after hand and accepts hug after hug. He and colleagues gather for a photo; someone shouts out,

"Y'all look like 'America's Most Wanted!'"

DeSena laughs, then points to a refrigerator-sized man in a suit. "See that one? He ran a drug posse. That guy next to him was the most-suspended in his school. The fellow by the door used to lead a gang."

"It's this huge family of thousands. What America is on paper, we've achieved in reality — Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Protestants, all of 'em, getting along. There are over 97 ethnic and cultural backgrounds represented in the program."

DeSena has statistics to back up his enthusiasm: 94% of council participants graduate from high school, 96% of those attend college, and 70% of participating principals reported a decrease in violent crime in their schools.

After 31 years, does he ever feel burnout looming? "Are you kiddin'?" he shouts. "I feel like a 20-year-old! It's a really exciting time. I see miracles every day. Real miracles."

Do you know a New Yorker who's making a difference? E-mail Big Town Editor Dawn Eden: bigtown@nydailynews.com.

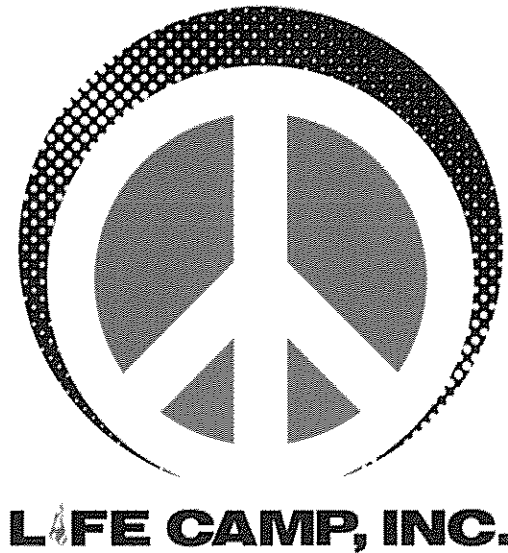
THE GANG'S ALL HERE

With Bob DeSena's aid, violent teens are making peace and finding hope

DeSena's smile is quick and his demeanor friendly, but his success in defusing gangs through three decades doesn't mean he doesn't consider his own safety on the job. "I've gone into mediation with some very hard-core characters," he says. "I do have a healthy fear. Without

MISSION

Founded in April 2002, the mission of LIFE Camp, Inc. is to develop teens and young adults into peer leaders, as we provide positive alternatives to violence and other forms of anti-social behavior. LIFE Camp also builds partnerships between community stakeholders within the public and private sectors, to respond with a collaborative, therapeutic approach to the issue of violence that impacts inner New York City communities.



A LOOK BACK... EXAMPLES OF PAST LIFE CAMP EVENTS

NY PEACE WEEK PARENTS' FORGIVENESS DINNER

Occasions Banquet Hall, Jamaica Queens, NY
75 Guests

January 15 - 22 marked the 3rd annual NY Peace Week organized by LIFE Camp, Inc., in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's legacy of non-violence. LIFE Camp's 3rd annual Peace Week Forgiveness Dinner, sponsored by RUSHCARD, was hosted by a collective of mothers from LIFE Camp who--despite losing their children to gun violence -- work to help other mothers heal from the pain of loss. Guest speakers included Russell Simmons, Cheryl "Salt" James Wray and Victoria Ruvolo, who survived and forgave an attack by a teen that doctors believed would leave her permanently impaired, among others. Parents dined and connected with other parents who shared the loss of a child to violence, followed by an evening of dessert and dancing; they left smiling and laughing, having shifted their pain into joy for the moment.

*Photo, top, r-l: Cheryl "Salt" James from Salt N Pepa attends dinner then performs; Mothers post hand-crafted memorabilia in honor of children they've lost to violence
Bottom, r: Erica Ford, LIFE Camp Mom Jennifer Freeman, Russell Simmons, Mrs. Freeman's surviving son*

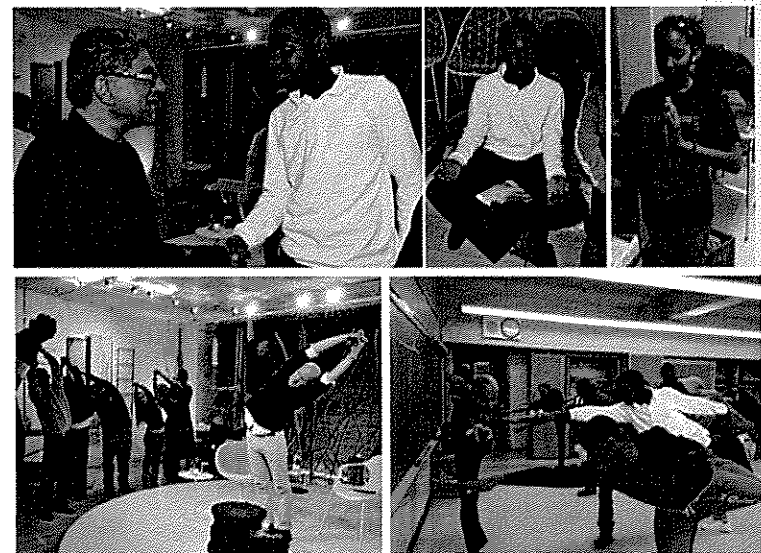


YOGA & MEDITATION HOSTED BY DEEPAK CHOPRA & EDDIE STERN

Ongoing, beginning December 19, 2012

Leading up to and following NY Peace Week, Deepak Chopra & Eddie Stern (Ashtanga Yoga) have traveled to South Jamaica, Queens NY to teach leadership through meditation and awareness to students, parents and community members who have been impacted by violence, bullying, inner conflict, or the general stress of urban living

*Photo, top, r-l: Deepak Chopra greets LIFE Camp participant after guided meditation session
Bottom l-r: Eddie Stern leads yoga session for LIFE Camp youth; Mas Vidal teaches yoga to LIFE Camp youth in a Brooklyn classroom*



Cost Analysis

Violent Deaths in the United States*

*(Based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2005 data)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/violentdeaths, accessed 4/25/12) estimated the total combined medical and work loss costs of violent deaths by sex (male, female) and intent (all violent deaths, suicide, “legal intervention” and homicide) in the United States for 2005. Working from a total of approximately 51,000 deaths caused by violence annually in the USA, they arrived at a per capita cost of death reflecting medical costs, lost productivity, and premature death. The purpose of the CDC study was to assist in “understanding the resources that could be saved if cost-effective violence prevention efforts were applied.” (ibid, p.1)

With total deaths of 10,491 females and 40,682 males costing a total of \$47 billion in work loss costs and \$215 million in medical treatment, CDC set the per capita cost of violent deaths for Americans at \$160. Extrapolating that figure to local Greater NYC, it is possible to estimate the cost, in 2005 dollars, to residents of New York City and other areas using population (census) statistics. Selected cost figures are 1,447,734,302.97

| Census Area | Population | Cost (2005\$’s) (base=\$160) | Cost (2005 indexed) (\$177.09) | Notes |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| New York State | 19,465,197 (2011) | \$3,114,431,520 | \$3,447,091,737 | |
| New York City | 8,175,133 (2010) | \$1,308,021,280 | \$1,447,734,303 | |
| Queens County | 2,230,722 (2010) | \$356,915,520 | \$395,038,559 | |
| 6 th Congressional District | 718,000 (2011)** | \$114,880,000 | \$127,150,620 | |

** rough estimate from 6th Congressional District Office

It should be noted that the numbers are evenly spread over the entire US population as a per capital allotment. While economic impact *per geographic area* may vary (variable work loss costs in areas of high unemployment for example), other indirect costs may balance the overall estimation of geographic impact. As CDC notes:

“Other costs to society that extend beyond the immediate physical consequences are not included in these estimates. Those costs include, but are not limited to disability mental/emotional anguish of surviving family member or co-workers [or fellow students], property damage, lowered property values, community fear, law enforcement, judicial, and litigation cost.” (ibid, p. 2)

Costs (medical, work loss, and other costs) related to non-fatal violence, which can be substantial are not included in the above table of estimates. If included, the costs would increase significantly.

The Third Metric

Redefining Success
Beyond Money & Power

December 6, 2013

HUFF
POST CHICAGO

Gun Violence Cost: Chicago Killings Cost \$2.5 Billion A Year -- \$2,500 Per Household -- According To Analysis

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Following [Chicago's staggering 2012 total of more than 500 homicides](#), the human toll of gun violence in the Windy City is well-known.

Now, [a new Bloomberg analysis released Wednesday has put a price tag](#) on the cost of killings:

\$2.5 billion a year.

The multi-billion-dollar figure breaks down to an average of \$2,500 per Chicago household, per year, [University of Chicago Crime Lab](#) director Jens Ludwig tells Bloomberg.

Some of the costs were intangible, such as impacts to quality of life like keeping children from playing outdoors in a violent neighborhood; others have firm figures attached. A sampling of Bloomberg's analysis includes:

- **\$900 — 1,200:** Cost of a typical ambulance ride to the ER
- **\$800:** "Incremental costs" for an autopsy by the medical examiner
- **\$52,000:** Average cost for acute trauma care of of gunshot victims, 70 percent of whom are uninsured
- **\$35,000:** Average cost of care at [the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago](#) where 1/20th of the patients are gunshot victims

[\(See stunning infographics on the cost of gun violence in Chicago.\)](#)

Not only does violence destroy local business, but Ludwig tells American Public Media's Marketplace that [every homicide in Chicago reduces the city's population by 70 people](#).

Residents left Chicago in droves during the past decade, [in particular decimating predominately black neighborhoods on the city's South Side](#). Recent Census numbers indicate that [while Chicago's population is on the upswing, it's growing at a slower rate than any other major U.S. city](#).

"One thing that happens when violence is driving people and business out of the city is that it obviously reduces the tax base, which denigrates the ability of the city government to address the violence problem, which generates more violence, which drives out more tax base," Ludwig says.

Another obvious way gun-related crimes sap the city's resources is through police overhead. Joseph Salemme, commander of detectives for the South Side, told Bloomberg "every murder incurs overtime," with extreme cases consuming 1,000 to 1,500 hours of "premium pay."

In the first three months of the year alone, [the department had already blown through two-thirds of the overtime police budget](#).

A 2012 study from the Center for American Progress estimated that [overall violence, not just that of guns, puts a \\$5.3 Billion annual dent in the collective wallet of Chicago](#). The study postulates reducing homicides by 25 percent would boost Chicago's home values by \$5.5 billion.

Watch PBS Newshour's "Gun Violence Is Public Health Crisis in Chicago"

URGENCY IN THE EMERGENCY
 APPLYING THE FEMA MODEL
 AS A
 FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING VIOLENCE
 Richard L. Glover, MSW/MPH/CSWM

Violence Remains an Emergency in Certain Communities Across America

- Among the leading causes of death of minority youth in the United States
- Claims lives in numbers comparable to and, at times, exceeding the toll from natural disasters
- Costs of related deaths and incarcerations are comparable to losses due to natural disasters

FEMA Model

- Designed specifically as an approach to manage emergencies
- National Model for EM
- Based on All-Hazards Approach
- Gun Violence and other forms of inter and intrapersonal violence are clearly *hazards* in certain communities
- FEMA, SEMO, NYC OEM are not focused on community violence as an emergency; nor, do we think they should be
- Organizations that have been working in violence prevention should continue to lead efforts in that area

FEMA Model (2) FRAMEWORK

The framework below offers three critical advantages

- Allows those doing VIP work to use a more strategic approach in their efforts
- Provides a unifying framework for diverse efforts within a given areas
- Provides policy makers with a context in which to set priorities in comprehensive approaches to address violence

- Prevention/Mitigation
- Protection
- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery

- All are critical aspects of *comprehensive violence management*
- The goal is to manage violence by building resilient communities through collaborative efforts

EVALUATION

- Organizations using participatory evaluation and empowerment evaluation can better position themselves to assess the relative success of their efforts
- Should be built in aspect of all future efforts
- The Expanded Systems Model is well-suited for the frameworks and current efforts

TRAINING

- The work being done by VIP Specialists is critical, skilled, professional work
- This project recognizes that those skills cannot be assumed, but must be identified, verified, nurtured, and continually developed
- The VIP Virtual Trainer/Simulator is a tool developed by STEM Solutions that is being tailored to the work of the organizations involved in VIP
- This Trainer/Simulator will evolve to reflect the complexity of the work being done in the field
- The tool will be made available for use as a training tool to organizations across the country.

Implementation

- Capacity building will demand continuous quality training for all individuals working in this field
- *The simulation software being developed in conjunction with this project will be integrated across all phases of the Framework.*
- Technical assistance will be made available in any and all aspects of program design, implementation and evaluation
- Assistance will also be give in applying a "technology of collaboration."

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I represent: Life Camp / Man Up

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Address: 1171 LINCOLN PL BROOKLYN NY

I represent: CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION

Address: 250 8th AVE NYC

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I represent: MAN UP INC.

Address: SAB

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Name: gabriel sayegh - gsayegh@ (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: drugpolicy.org

I represent: DRUG POLICY ALLIANCE

Address: 131 W. 33RD, 15TH FL, NY NY 11216

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Name: Tesha sekou (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 22

I represent: Street Corner Resources

Address: "I AM PEACE" Movement

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Name: VIVECA White

Address: _____

I represent: Harlem Mothers SAVE

Address: _____

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Name: Janaye Ingram

Address: _____

I represent: National Action Network

Address: 561 7th Ave 14th Fl NY NY 10018

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Name: ALLAN FEYNBLUM

Address: 1342 E 187th St

I represent: NYC JAILS ACTION COALITION

Address: _____

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Name: Diana [unclear]

Address: 343 5th Ave

I represent: ENACT FOR

Address: C30 5th Ave

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Name: Richard L Glover

Address: 71 Downing Street, Brooklyn, NY 11238

I represent: myself

Address: _____

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Name: Michael Hines

Address: 50 Broadway - N.Y. N.Y 10004

I represent: Council for Unity

Address: SAME

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Name: Marlon Peterson

Address: ~~20726 Northern Blvd.~~ 95 Pulaski St.

I represent: The Fortune Society

Address: 29-76 Northern Blvd LIC 1101

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Name: ADITYA KUMARAKRISHNAN

Address: 47-57 157 ST FLUSHING, NY 11355

I represent: STEM SOLUTIONS

Address: 47-37 157 ST FLUSHING, NY

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Name: ERICA FORD

Address: 111-12 Sutphin Blvd

I represent: LIFE CAMP INC

Address: _____

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Name: THOMAS GIOVANNI

Address: 230 F 106th ST

I represent: LEGAL AID SOCIETY NY

Address: 230 E 106th ST

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Name: Leah Gunn Barrett

Address: 44 87 Lafayette St

I represent: New Yorkers Against Gun Violence

Address: as above

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Name: LANCE FEURTADO

Address: 137-11 161 STREET JAN. N.Y. 11434

I represent: KING OF KINGS FOUNDATION

Address: STATE AS ABOVE