

# COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO GUN VIOLENCE IN OUR CITIES

---

## HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM,  
AND HOMELAND SECURITY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

---

SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

---

**Serial No. 116–54**

---

Printed for the use of the Committee on the Judiciary



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://judiciary.house.gov>

---

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

39–718

WASHINGTON : 2020

## COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

JERROLD NADLER, New York, *Chairman*

|                                       |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ZOE LOFGREN, California               | DOUG COLLINS, Georgia,          |
| SHEILA JACKSON LEE, Texas             | <i>Ranking Member</i>           |
| STEVE COHEN, Tennessee                | F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.,    |
| HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON, JR., Georgia | Wisconsin                       |
| THEODORE E. DEUTCH, Florida           | STEVE CHABOT, Ohio              |
| KAREN BASS, California                | LOUIE GOHMERT, Texas            |
| CEDRIC L. RICHMOND, Louisiana         | JIM JORDAN, Ohio                |
| HAKEEM S. JEFFRIES, New York          | KEN BUCK, Colorado              |
| DAVID N. CICILLINE, Rhode Island      | JOHN RATCLIFFE, Texas           |
| ERIC SWALWELL, California             | MARTHA ROBY, Alabama            |
| TED LIEU, California                  | MATT GAETZ, Florida             |
| JAMIE RASKIN, Maryland                | MIKE JOHNSON, Louisiana         |
| PRAMILA JAYAPAL, Washington           | ANDY BIGGS, Arizona             |
| VAL BUTLER DEMINGS, Florida           | TOM McCCLINTOCK, California     |
| J. LUIS CORREA, California            | DEBBIE LESKO, Arizona           |
| MARY GAY SCANLON, Pennsylvania,       | GUY RESCHENTHALER, Pennsylvania |
| <i>Vice-Chair</i>                     | BEN CLINE, Virginia             |
| SYLVIA R. GARCIA, Texas               | KELLY ARMSTRONG, North Dakota   |
| JOE NEGUSE, Colorado                  | W. GREGORY STEUBE, Florida      |
| LUCY McBATH, Georgia                  |                                 |
| GREG STANTON, Arizona                 |                                 |
| MADELEINE DEAN, Pennsylvania          |                                 |
| DEBBIE MUCARSEL-POWELL, Florida       |                                 |
| VERONICA ESCOBAR, Texas               |                                 |

PERRY APELBAUM, *Majority Staff Director & Chief of Staff*  
BRENDAN BELAIR, *Minority Staff Director*

---

## SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY

KAREN BASS, California, *Chair*  
VAL DEMINGS, Florida, *Vice-Chair*

|                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| SHEILA JACKSON LEE, Texas        | JOHN RATCLIFFE, Texas,          |
| LUCY McBATH, Georgia             | <i>Ranking Member</i>           |
| TED DEUTCH, Florida              | F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.,    |
| CEDRIC RICHMOND, Louisiana       | Wisconsin                       |
| HAKEEM JEFFRIES, New York        | STEVE CHABOT, Ohio              |
| DAVID N. CICILLINE, Rhode Island | LOUIE GOHMERT, Texas            |
| TED LIEU, California             | TOM McCCLINTOCK, California     |
| MADELEINE DEAN, Pennsylvania     | DEBBIE LESKO, Arizona           |
| DEBBIE MUCARSEL-POWELL, Florida  | GUY RESCHENTHALER, Pennsylvania |
| STEVEN COHEN, Tennessee          | BEN CLINE, Virginia             |
|                                  | W. GREGORY STEUBE, Florida      |

JOE GRAUPENSPERGER, *Chief Counsel*  
JASON CERVENAK, *Minority Counsel*

# CONTENTS

SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

## OPENING STATEMENTS

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| The Honorable Karen Bass, a Representative in Congress from the State of California, and Chair of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security         |      |
| Oral Testimony .....  | 1    |
| The Honorable John Ratcliffe, a Representative in Congress from the State of Texas, and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security |      |
| Oral Testimony .....  | 4    |
| The Honorable Jerrold Nadler, a Representative in Congress from the State of New York, and Chairman, of the House, Committee on the Judiciary                         |      |
| Oral Testimony .....  | 5    |
| Prepared Statement .....  |      |

## WITNESSES

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Honorable William Lacy Clay, U.S. House of Representatives, Member of Congress, Missouri 1st District |    |
| Oral Testimony .....  | 6  |
| Prepared Statement .....  | 9  |
| The Honorable Robin Kelly, U.S. House of Representatives, Member of Congress, Illinois 2nd District       |    |
| Oral Testimony .....  | 12 |
| Prepared Statement .....  | 17 |
| Eddie Bocanegra, Senior Director, Heartland Alliance  |    |
| Oral Testimony .....  | 23 |
| Prepared Statement .....  | 26 |
| Reggie Moore, Director, City of Milwaukee Health Department, Office of Violence Prevention                |    |
| Oral Testimony .....  | 30 |
| Prepared Statement .....  | 33 |
| Maj Toure, Founder, Black Guns Matter   |    |
| Oral Testimony .....  | 56 |
| Prepared Statement .....  | 59 |
| Amber Goodwin, Executive Director, Community Justice Action Fund  |    |
| Oral Testimony .....  | 62 |
| Prepared Statement .....  | 64 |

## STATEMENTS, LETTERS, MATERIALS, ARTICLES SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Statement of Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, City of Chicago submitted by Representative Robin Kelly, a Member Congress of the State of Illinois, prepared for the record .....    | 12 |
| Materials submitted by Representative Steve Cohen from the State of Tennessee, a Member of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security for the record ..... | 88 |

# IV

## APPENDIX

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| Cycles of Violence, A Journal Sentinel Special Report, If violence spreads like a disease, it can be interrupted. How a new team in Milwaukee is trying to stop one shooting leading to another ..... | 99   |
| Los Angeles Times Op-Ed: How do we reduce gun violence? By treating it like a disease written by Michelle A. Williams and Mary T. Bassett .....   | 109  |
| ProPublica, How the Gun Control Debate Ignores Black Lives by Lois Beckett .....  | 113  |
| USA Today—El Paso, Dayton, Chicago: Media doesn't treat all gun violence the same .....   | 130  |
| The New York Times, Confronting a Plague of Violence, a Documentary by Steve James .....  | 134  |
| The New York Times, When Cities Try to Limit Guns, State Laws Bar the Way .....   | 138  |
| The Trace, How We Fix This Gun Reform is on the Agenda. But Victims of Color Aren't .....   | 141  |



## COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO GUN VIOLENCE IN OUR CITIES

---

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
*Washington, DC*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 12:09 p.m., in Room 2237, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Karen Bass [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Bass, Nadler, Jackson Lee, Demings, McBath, Deutch, Jeffries, Lieu, Dean, Mucarsel-Powell, Cohen, Ratcliffe, Gohmert, McClintock, Cline, and Steube.

Staff Present: Joe Graupensperger, Chief Counsel; Monalisa Dugue, Deputy Chief Counsel; Veronica Eligan, Professional Staff Member; Tamara Kassabian, Counsel (Detail); Jason Cervenak, Minority Chief Counsel; and Andrea Woodard, Minority Professional Staff.

Ms. BASS. The subcommittee will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare recesses of the subcommittee at any time.

We welcome everyone to this afternoon's hearing on Community Responses to Gun Violence in Our Cities.

I will now recognize myself for an opening statement.

I am pleased that the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security is holding this very important hearing on an issue that is too often overlooked in our national conversation about gun violence—the systemic, tragic, and daily experience of gun violence in our communities.

Yesterday, the Judiciary Committee conducted an important hearing on the deadly use of assault weapons in this country. Some have asserted in that hearing, and as an NRA talking point against strengthening gun laws, that the continued gun violence in our cities like Chicago that have strong gun laws indicates that these laws are ineffective.

That is not correct. We know that lax gun laws in other jurisdictions allow those intent on evading gun laws to obtain guns and traffic them to cities that have enacted strong gun laws. So, today, we will focus on the epidemic of gun violence in many of our cities, the root causes of this violence and the trauma that results, and

the various responses being developed by individuals in these communities and the resources needed to support these efforts.

Our cities disproportionately suffer the impact of gun violence, with the impact particularly felt by communities of color. Too many lives are taken, too many people are injured, and too many families of victims suffer. It is imperative that we apply a comprehensive approach to addressing gun violence in this country, which should include an appropriate focus on these communities that experience concentrated levels of shootings.

Unfortunately, communities have developed solutions, but financial assistance to successful strategies is often not available or slow and inefficient when it is. This lack of financial and other assistance is especially evident in African-American and Latino communities.

Communities often have effective ways to address community-based gun violence. They need the resources. In order to have an effective, comprehensive approach, we must change the way we discuss and address these issues and change the attitudes and behaviors of perpetrators, educators, researchers, advocates, and including us, lawmakers.

So, today, we start this conversation. Too often communities with habitual occurrences of gun violence receive attention for the acts of the violence, but little to no attention as to why a high concentration of violence permeates these communities. Instead, we too often do not take the time to look behind the violence and find and support appropriate responses, and we do not take the time to listen to the people in those communities who are working where they live and work to develop solutions that are rooted in their everyday experiences.

Consequently, these communities are often not factored into the larger conversation around responses to gun violence. We need to examine what are the root causes of violence? What are examples of successful community-based responses to gun violence?

Understanding the root causes really doesn't take rocket science, and I want to take a few minutes to describe this. If you look at communities where you have concentrated violence, you also have a number of other factors. You have the communities that suffer from the cycle of incarceration and people being released from incarceration who are then locked out of a legal economy. And then people will survive by any means necessary.

If you don't allow people to work because they are formerly incarcerated, our communities do not have job opportunities, then don't be surprised when those same communities are impacted by drug trafficking. Don't be surprised when those communities have a high concentration of gang violence.

A lot of this information is knowable, but attention is not given to it. So those communities then are viewed as communities that have a lot of problems and they are incapable of solving them, or these communities only care about gun violence when it involves a police officer and an individual and that these communities don't care about violence that happens inside the community.

Having lived and worked in these communities most of my life, I know that this is not true. One thing that was always extremely frustrating to us was we would work day in and day out to prevent

violence, have levels of success, but it never received any attention. What received attention was when the violence took place.

So I want to give you one example of a community in Los Angeles where we set out to prevent homicides from taking place in one summer. It was an area where there were 300 apartment buildings. It wasn't public housing, but it kind of functioned that way, called Baldwin Village, in my congressional district. And we invested concentrated resources in this housing development.

We hired young people during the summer. And so when we think of cutting funding to programs like Summer Jobs, we don't connect it to violence prevention, and we should. We hired people who were former gang members, and we essentially assigned them the task of mediating conflicts. They were on the ground. They worked with the people in the neighborhoods.

When there was a conflict that was developing, because they were OGs, or original gangsters—they were out of the gang life, but they still had credibility—instead of sending in police forces, we sent in people from the community, and they were able to mitigate that violence. And we went—in an area that was known for homicides, we went an entire summer without homicides.

The other thing about shootings when they take place is they tend to be concentrated on certain days of the week and certain hours. And so during those hours and during those days was when we had the concentrated resources and made sure that young people had activities. One of the things that distinguishes areas where there is concentrated violence where they are areas that are low income is that they don't have the resources to involve youth in positive activities or employment opportunities for young people.

And so I look forward to today where we can hear about examples of root causes, but also solutions. So I want to recognize that many of my colleagues have taken a strong interest in these issues and are making proposals to address gun violence in our communities.

Representative Dwight Evans, who represents portions of Philadelphia, has one such proposal, and I would like to read a brief statement from him.

"Gun violence is a public health issue. Just this year alone, we have seen more than 10,000 deaths and more than 40,000 gun-related incidences. We have run out of excuses to not act on this. These are people's lives we are talking about, and while we move forward with long-overdue discussions on gun control legislation, we cannot forget the victims of gun violence, who already deal with the daily consequences of inaction.

"The Resources for Victims of Gun Violence Act, which I introduced with Senator Bob Casey, would establish an interagency advisory council to connect these victims with critical information, programs, and benefits they need. I urge all Members to join us in supporting this common sense legislation."

With this in mind, and as we discuss this important set of issues related to gun violence in our cities, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about other remarkable programs that are successfully addressing gun violence in communities throughout this country and which urgently require Congress' support.

It is now my pleasure to recognize the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Ratcliffe, for his opening statement.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses who are here today.

This is one of several hearings the majority has held on the issue of gun violence. Usually after we examine a topic two or three or four times, we should be able to find common ground and build a consensus on what we can do to address the issue. Unfortunately, that is a far cry from what we have seen this Congress.

A lot of my colleagues have said that gun violence is a public health crisis and suggested that their gun control proposals are the only way to save lives. We have got to be honest with ourselves. We have got to be honest with the American people about what the data shows.

According to the 2019 report from Every Town for Gun Safety, gun homicides and assaults are concentrated in cities. Thirty-one percent of gun murders occurred in the 50 cities with the highest murder rates, though only 6 percent of Americans live in those cities.

Gun homicides and assaults are concentrated in specific neighborhoods in specific cities. In St. Louis, for example, where Congressman Clay is from, 28 of the city's 88 neighborhoods had either 0 or 1 murder in the last 5 years. But 41 percent of St. Louis' murders and 35 percent of gun assaults occurred in just 9 of those 88 neighborhoods. And unfortunately, we have seen that disparity grow in lots of American cities.

I empathize with my colleagues that represent cities with high rates of gun violence, but gun control solutions that have been offered by this Congress, by a lot of my colleagues often would do little to address crime rates in those cities. Some of my colleagues have looked at the concentration of gun deaths in cities and concluded that the solution is to pass restrictive, vague laws and impose significant burdens on law-abiding gun owners all across the country.

Law-abiding Americans in Northeast Texas that I represent and law-abiding Americans who live in communities across the country don't commit gun crimes in Chicago or in St. Louis or New Orleans or Baltimore, or any other major American city. An attempt by this Congress to restrict Second Amendment rights of law-abiding Americans in an effort to pay lip service to the idea of public safety or public health is, frankly, an affront to common sense. I think it misses the mark on solutions that would actually reduce gun violence across our country.

So why not address the issue of mental health? Why not explore ways that school resource officers keep their schools and students across the country safe? Why not look at programs we already have in place that work to improve those programs, make them better? Programs like Project Safe Neighborhoods, which was a program that existed when I was the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Texas.

Why not explore community solutions to problems that are facing our cities? Some have suggested that we should not criminalize communities impacted by everyday gun violence. What would we

say to a parent in one of our cities if their child was gunned and murdered? Is the prosecution of the murderer of that child just another contributor to mass incarceration? The answer is unequivocally no.

This is an issue of criminal justice. This is about justice for the victims of these crimes, whether they are a child gunned down while playing outside or a single mother murdered by a domestic abuser. This is about keeping our communities safe, community-driven solutions that are tailored to meet the needs of a given community that should be heard and should be examined.

Until we reckon with these basic truths and discuss solutions that will actually hold accountable the perpetrators of gun violence instead of restricting the rights of law-abiding gun owners, we will continue to be mired in gridlock.

I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

And let me just respond, if you don't mind? I believe we have a lot more in common than we do differences, and let me assure you that I do not believe in any way, shape, or form that there is one solution. I think we need a comprehensive solution, and many of the things that you discuss I believe are part of that comprehensive solution.

With that, I am pleased to recognize the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Nadler, for his opening statement.

Chairman NADLER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the chair of the subcommittee, Karen Bass, for holding this critical hearing about community-driven strategies to reduce gun violence in our cities across the Nation. This discussion is a critical component of this committee's comprehensive approach to addressing our national epidemic of gun violence.

As we have seen, no American is immune from gun violence. The spike of mass shooting incidents, high suicide rates, domestic violence incidents, and daily homicides that we have seen in recent years has touched all of our communities. But gun violence has particularly victimized high-poverty communities of color across the country, with tragic results.

Every day in America, 100 people are shot and killed, and 210 more survive gun injuries. Half of all gun homicides took place in just 127 cities, however, which represented nearly a quarter of the population of the United States. Now these homicides are most prevalent in racially segregated neighborhoods with high rates of poverty. These communities lose grandparents, mothers, fathers, teens, or young children to gun violence at an alarming rate. This is simply unacceptable.

Today's hearing is intended to generate a national conversation about gun violence and its destructive impact on our communities. We must analyze gun violence in America the same way we would analyze a disease, as it is, in fact, a public health issue, as well as one of public safety.

Today, we will hear about the scope and gravity of this issue, the root causes of gun violence in specific communities, and local prevention and intervention programs that implement evidence-based

violence reduction strategies that engage all community stakeholders.

We must acknowledge and examine the loopholes in the law that allow tens of thousands of guns to enter the illegal market. The vast majority of these guns are trafficked from States with weak gun laws to States with stronger gun laws.

Also, mayors of cities across the Nation are pleading for changes to State firearm preemption laws that block cities like Chicago, Dayton, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis from adopting reasonable gun legislation to protect their residents.

In addition, the antiquated gun tracing system, severe budget cuts, and laws placing unnecessary restrictions on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives have undermined its ability to enforce Federal gun laws and regulate the gun industry effectively.

Strengthening our gun laws is just a start. Gun violence in our communities is a multifaceted issue that requires a holistic approach. Federal, State, and local government efforts must reflect the need to address this problem comprehensively, investing in evidence-based anti-gun violence programs and ensuring that these programs are tailored to the needs of the communities most affected by the crisis.

I look forward to hearing the perspectives of our colleagues, Representatives Lacy Clay and Robin Kelly, who represent the St. Louis and Chicago areas, respectively, both of which are directly impacted by chronic gun violence. I also look forward to hearing from our other expert witnesses about the scope of the problem and what solutions have been shown to work. Their testimony today will help inform our efforts to take a comprehensive approach to addressing the national emergency of gun violence.

I thank the chair of the subcommittee for holding this important hearing, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. BASS. We will now hear from our first panel, the Honorable William Lacy Clay, who represents the First District of Missouri, and Honorable Robin Kelly, who represents the Second District of Illinois. And we thank you for joining us today.

Mr. Clay.

**STATEMENTS OF HON. WILLIAM LACY CLAY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MISSOURI; AND HON. ROBIN KELLY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS**

**STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM LACY CLAY**

Mr. CLAY. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass, Chairman Nadler, and Ranking Member Ratcliffe, who I want to recognize as his sister being a friend and constituent of mine in St. Louis.

I appreciate the subcommittee's efforts to organize and hold a hearing on this important topic. This Nation and the community that I represent in St. Louis are facing a public health emergency, and I am not just speaking about the tragic frequency of mass shootings in schools and other public spaces.

Members of this committee and the 116th Congress have had numerous opportunities to make it known how they prioritize firearm

safety. Regardless of what any of my colleagues have said publicly about the issue, this body has a responsibility and an opportunity to work together and move the debate forward. The nearly 40,000 people killed by firearms in the United States in 2017 no longer have that chance to move this debate forward.

The people living and working in my district, where nearly 600 shootings have occurred so far this year, do not have the choice to remain silent while these issues impact their daily lives. I do not have that choice.

Since May, at least 22 children under 16 years of age have been killed by guns in the St. Louis region, some due to random shootings, others due to accidents and unsecured handguns. It is due to statistics like that that black families are 62 percent more likely to lose a son to a bullet than to a car accident.

Now my community is already on track to top last year's rate of gun-related injuries and deaths, and I know we are not alone. Our city councils and other local leaders used to be able to confront these issues directly. Mayors and law enforcement would work with other community leaders and residents to discuss ways to make our streets safer.

Unfortunately, in the 1980s, the gun lobby started approaching Governors, State legislators, and even some of my colleagues in Congress to make sure that these dedicated local leaders and first responders would not be able to do what they need to do to address firearm safety. This is unacceptable. That is why I, along with my esteemed colleague and friend Congresswoman Robin Kelley, introduced legislation to restore the ability of these local leaders to pass common sense laws and regulations. And our new legislation is directed to help curb the slow motion mass shootings that occur in St. Louis, Chicago, and other urban communities every week.

H.R. 3435, the Local Public Health and Safety Protection Act, would allow the Department of Justice to provide grants to States that reverse their ill-advised firearm preemption laws and allow local government to take reasonable measures to address gun violence on their streets. And under the bill, States should not prohibit or restrict a local government from requiring background checks for firearm purchases, restricting the ability to carry a firearm in public places, restricting the quantity and type of ammunition that an individual is allowed to purchase, or requiring gun owners to safely store their firearms, especially in households with children, and prohibiting the sale and transfer of certain types of especially deadly firearms and accessories, including semiautomatic assault weapons and large-capacity ammunition magazines, among other provisions.

The epidemic of gun violence in places like St. Louis and Chicago is different than the situation in smaller cities and towns across Missouri and across this country. Not every community faces the same challenges. That is why this bill works.

Communities who do not experience high rates of gun violence would likely not see the need to implement higher standards at local levels, but the impact on other communities would be meaningful. This act is all about hope, the hope that we can finally give local governments the freedom to protect innocent citizens and first

responders while making our neighborhoods safer, regardless of what the State legislature thinks.

And Madam Chair, I would stop there and say thank you again for allowing me this opportunity.

[The statement of Mr. Clay follows:]



**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

**House Committee on the Judiciary**  
**Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security**  
**Hearing on Community Responses to Gun Violence in Our Cities**

**Prepared Testimony of Congressman Wm. Lacy Clay**  
**September 26, 2019**

Thank you to Chairwoman Bass and Ranking Member Ratcliffe for allowing me to testify. I appreciate the Subcommittee's efforts to organize and hold a hearing on this important topic.

This nation and the community that I represent in St. Louis are facing a public health emergency. And I am not just speaking about the tragic frequency of mass shootings in schools and other public spaces.

Members of this Committee and the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress have had numerous opportunities to make it known how they prioritize firearm safety. Regardless of what any of my colleagues have said publicly about the issue, this body has a responsibility and an opportunity to work together and move the debate forward.

The nearly 40,000<sup>1</sup> people killed by firearms in the United States in 2017 no longer have that chance. The people living and working in my district where nearly 600<sup>2</sup> shootings have occurred so far this year do not have the choice to remain silent while these issues impact their daily lives. I do not have that choice.

Since May, at least 22 children under 16 years of age have been killed by guns in the St. Louis region<sup>3</sup>-- some due to random shootings, others due to accidents and unsecured handguns. It is due to statistics like this that black families are 62 percent more likely to lose a son to a bullet than to a car

---

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Health Statistics, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/injury.htm>. 23 Sep 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Gun Violence Archives, <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/congress/mo/>. 23 Sep 2019

<sup>3</sup> ABC News, "Gun deaths of St. Louis children rise to 22 as 3-year-old shoots self in head", <https://abcnews.go.com/US/gun-deaths-st-louis-children-rises-22-year/story?id=65592890> 22 Sep 2019.

accident.<sup>4</sup> My community is already on track to top last year's rate of gun related injuries and deaths and I know we are not alone.

Our city councils and other local leaders used to be able to confront these issues directly. Mayors and law enforcement would work with other community leaders and residents to discuss ways to make our streets safer. Unfortunately, beginning in the 1980s the gun lobby started approaching governors, state legislators, and even some of my colleagues in Congress to make sure that these dedicated local leaders and first responders would not be able to do what they need to do to address firearm safety.

This is unacceptable.

That is why I, along with my esteemed colleague and friend, Congresswoman Robin Kelly, introduced legislation to restore the ability of these local leaders to pass common sense laws and regulations. Our new legislation is directed to help curb the slow-motion mass shootings that occur in St. Louis, in Chicago, and other urban communities, every week.

H.R. 3435, the Local Public Health and Safety Protection Act would allow the Department of Justice to provide grants to States that reverse their ill-advised firearm pre-emption laws and allow local governments to take reasonable measures to address gun violence on their streets.

Under the bill, States should not prohibit or restrict a local government from:

- Requiring background checks for firearms purchases;
- Restricting the ability to carry a firearm in public places;
- Restricting the quantity and type of ammunition that an individual is allowed to purchase;
- Requiring gun owners to safely store their firearms, especially in households with children;
- And prohibiting the sale and transfer of certain types of especially deadly firearms and accessories, including: Semi-automatic assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines, among other provisions.

---

<sup>4</sup> Giffords, "Urban Gun Violence," <https://giffords.org/issue/urban-gun-violence/> 23 Sep 2019.

The epidemic of gun violence in places like St. Louis and Chicago is different from the situations in smaller cities and towns across Missouri and across the country. Not every community faces the same challenges—that is why this bill works. Communities who do not experience high rates of gun violence would likely not see the need to implement higher standards at the local level. However, the impact on other communities would be meaningful.

The Local Public Health and Safety Protection Act is all about hope—the hope that we can finally give local governments the freedom to protect innocent citizens and first responders while make our neighborhoods safer...regardless of what the state legislature thinks.

As of today, H.R.3435 is supported by the major national advocacy organizations, including: Giffords, Everytown for Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, March for Our Lives, Brady, Newtown Action Alliance, Survivors Empowered, States United to Prevent Gun Violence, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and Amnesty International USA.

In addition, it has received vocal support from other leaders in the St. Louis area, including emergency personnel, Mayor Lyda Krewson, the St. Louis Board of Alderman, and countless other individuals focused on ending gun violence in our community.

We all know that there is not one fix that will end all gun violence—especially without attention to other factors, including: poverty, education, and whole health. But that is not an excuse for our inaction. Congress has the power to save American live and we must do it—now. Passing H.R. 3435 would be a powerful, innovative first step that I urge you to support.

Ms. BASS. Absolutely. Representative Kelly.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ROBIN KELLY**

Ms. KELLY. Madam Chair, before I begin my testimony, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to enter into the hearing record a statement from Mayor Lori Lightfoot of Chicago.

Ms. BASS. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

**MS. KELLY FOR THE RECORD**

---

Statement of Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, City of Chicago  
before the  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on the Judiciary  
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security  
Community Responses to Gun Violence in our Cities  
September 26, 2019

I'd like to thank the Subcommittee for holding this important hearing on the community responses to gun violence, and for accepting this testimony for the record. Chicago has experienced chronic and entrenched gun violence for many decades. Though we have seen decreases in violence over the past few years, it is not enough. It is unacceptable that there are so many Chicagoans who have been impacted by gun violence and who do not feel safe in their neighborhoods. It will take a comprehensive "all-hands-on-deck" approach to solving this critical issue.

We need to make it more difficult for people to obtain illegal weapons. Sixty percent of illegal firearms recovered in Chicago come from outside of Illinois. This means that Chicago and Illinois cannot effect the needed change on its own. We must strongly advocate for common-sense gun control legislation at the federal level. We support universal background checks and closing loopholes, a ban on assault weapons, and policies that keep guns out of the hands of people who are dangerous to themselves and others as well as promoting gun safety. I thank this Committee and the House of Representatives for its action on common-sense legislation and I urge further action by the Senate.

Additionally, it is our highest priority to build broader community-based safety infrastructure. Our strategy is composed of four key areas. We focus on supporting the **people** at highest risk of violence, promoting safety in the **places** that have the highest concentration of violence, establishing **community-police trust** through accountable policing, and creating strategic **alignment and coordination** across city and community stakeholders around a shared set of violence prevention and intervention outcomes. Through this approach, we will create safer neighborhoods where people receive the services that they need—a crucial step in preventing the spread of gun violence.

Curbing gun violence in Chicago, and across the nation, is a huge task, one that we take very seriously. We believe that through collaborative efforts, we can begin making progress. Gun control legislation, individual interventions, place-based support, and effective policing will all play a key role. Together, we can make our cities, our states, and our entire country much safer places to live.

Ms. KELLY. Chairman Nadler, Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Ratcliffe, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for holding this important hearing on urban gun violence. I wish that I was here to talk about a more positive topic, but sadly, I am here to talk about an epidemic sweeping through the United States.

Gun violence is an epidemic that kills nearly 100 Americans each and every day and forever changes the lives of 250 others. Not every year, not every month or week, but each and every single day. And this epidemic, like so many others, has a disproportionate impact on the African-American community.

I am proud to represent the great City of Chicago, and like all cities, we have our share of challenges, and gun violence is one. We are a city awash in illegal guns that are transported over our borders from Indiana, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and Missouri, all of which are States with weak or non-existing gun safety laws. A patchwork system is unworkable. We need a national solution to this national problem.

To date, Chicago has lost 341 people to gun violence. That is 341 sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers whose lives were cut short due to congressional inaction. There have been over 1,500 shot.

In my district, I hear from young people, some of whom are numb to the pain. Others feel the sense of urgency. More than half of all guns used to commit crimes in Chicago come from outside of Illinois. We can't be an oasis of common sense surrounded by States beholden to the gun lobby.

We need strong Federal laws against straw purchases and gun trafficking because these common sense ideas are proven to save lives. We also need the background check bill passed to the Senate brought to the floor and signed by the President.

Many gun violence deaths could be preventable. We could save more than 30,000 American lives every single year. A recent study shows that States with stronger gun safety laws have 35 percent lower rates of gun deaths for children and teenagers. These laws, like universal background checks, are supported by more than 90 percent of Americans and save lives, specifically the lives of our Nation's young people.

These bills before you today are also important next steps toward combatting gun violence, as is the bill I recently introduced, H.R. 4116, the Prevent Gun Trafficking Act, which would make straw purchases a Federal crime. Straw purchases, I am saying, because a number of trafficked guns are straw purchased. Straw purchases are not just a problem in Chicago, but every urban community is challenged with crimes using guns that are purchased illegally.

We have reached a point in our country where many Americans have been affected by gun violence, either directly or through a close neighbor, friend, coworker, or family member. Gun violence happens everywhere, in every community and, sadly, in too many families. I just lost a 12-year-old today. She was shot sitting in her home planning her birthday party, and a bullet came through the window, and she died on her birthday.

At this very moment, we are at a pivotal crossroads. We are seeing a reform movement sweep across America in big cities and small towns. In actuality, we are seeing many movements converging together, demanding profound change, much like the

1960s, made up of concerned citizens standing up and speaking out for their fellow Americans.

Hundreds of thousands of people are taking to the streets every few months. Just yesterday, young people from Chicago and other young people from across the United States came to D.C. to demand action, all of them marching shoulder to shoulder for common sense gun laws. Our young people in Chicago have been speaking out for years. Now they are joined by the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and thousands of other young people who are galvanizing the Nation.

Young people are rising up, speaking out, and demanding action, and I couldn't be prouder of them. These young people are energizing our movement, even though many of us have been soldiers in the movement for many years. These young people are the reinforcements that we always needed.

Our numbers keep growing. Every day, more and more people are realizing their safety and security is eroding. More and more people are joining the fight for common sense gun reform.

In closing, I do want to say this is not about taking guns away from people who have them legally, and they are not trying to hurt me, you, or anybody else. Also I know it will take more than laws. It will take improved police-community relations and also will take investing in our neighborhoods and scaling up effective programs that I know exist in the Chicagoland area.

I wrote a report in 2014 called the Kelly Report on Guns, and it discusses root causes and solutions and that this is a public health crisis. And lastly, we like to blame mental health, but more people with mental health are hurt by guns than hurt other people.

I yield back.

[The statement of Ms. Kelly follows:]



**Testimony – CONGRESSWOMAN ROBIN KELLY**

Staff: Charles – Remarks: Charles

Date & Time: Thursday (9/26) at 12pm

Location: Rayburn 2237

Role: YOU are testifying in front of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security.

Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Ratcliffe and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for holding this important hearing on urban gun violence.

I wish that I was here to talk about a more positive topic but, sadly, I'm here to talk about an epidemic sweeping through the United States.

Gun Violence is an epidemic that kills nearly 100 Americans each and every day and forever changes the lives of 250 others, not every year, not every month or week but each and every single day. And this epidemic, like so many others, has a disproportionate impact on the African American community.

I'm proud to represent the great City of Chicago and like all cities, we have our share of challenges.

Gun violence is one. But in Chicago, we don't ignore problems – we face them, head on, and look for real solutions.

Chicago is a city of pride and humility, that has been unfortunately overshadowed by the lack of community investments and resources for those most in need.

We are also a city awash in illegal guns that are transported over our borders from Indiana, Wisconsin, Kentucky and Missouri. All of which are states with weak or nonexistent gun safety laws.

A patchwork system is unworkable; we need a national solution to this national problem.

To date, Chicago has lost 341 people to gun violence. That is 341 sons, daughter, mothers and fathers whose lives were cut short due to Congressional inaction.

In my district, I hear from young people, some of whom are numb to the pain. Others feel a sense of urgency.

More than half of all guns used to commit crimes in Chicago come from outside Illinois. We can't be an oasis of commonsense surrounded by states beholden to the gun lobby.

We are a nation, not a patchwork. We need strong, **federal** laws against straw purchases and gun trafficking because these commonsense ideas are proven to save lives.

Every gun violence death is a preventable death. Every one.

We could save more than 30,000 American lives every single year – if our Republican colleagues, especially in the Senate, could find the courage to stand up to the NRA.

We know the facts.

A recent study shows that states with stronger gun safety laws have 35 percent lower rates of gun deaths for children and teenagers.

These laws, like universal background checks, are supported by more than 90 percent of Americans and **save lives**, specifically the lives of our nation's young people.

These bills before you today are also important next steps toward combatting gun violence. As is the bill I recently introduced, H.R. 4116, the Prevent Gun Trafficking Act which would make straw purchases a federal crime. Straw purchases are not just a problem in Chicago, every urban community is challenged with guns used in crimes that are purchased illegally.

We've reached a point in our country where most Americans have been affected by gun violence, either directly or through a close neighbor, friend, co-worker or family member. Gun violence happens everywhere, in every community and sadly to nearly all families.

At this very moment – we're at a pivotal crossroads. We're seeing a Reform Movement sweep across America – in big cities and small towns.

In actuality, we're seeing many movements converging together, demanding profound change — much like the 1960s.

They're made up of concerned citizens standing up and speaking out for their fellow Americans.

Hundreds of thousands of people are taking to the streets every few months.

Just yesterday, young people from Chicago and thousands of young people from across the U.S. came to D.C. to demand action. All of them — marching shoulder-to-shoulder for common sense gun laws.

Our young people in Chicago have been speaking out for years.

Now they are joined by the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and thousands of other young people who are galvanizing the nation.

Young people are rising up, speaking out and demanding action. I couldn't be prouder of them!

These young people are energizing our movement.

The movement was already there — all of us here have been soldiers in that movement for many years.

These young people are the reinforcements that we've always needed!

Our numbers keep growing. Every day, more and more people are realizing their safety and security is eroding.

More and more people are joining the fight for common sense gun reform.

I'm certain that together, our passion to save lives will win the day.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much for your time and your testimony, and I will look forward to that report that you mentioned. You wrote it 5 years ago?

Ms. KELLY. Yes, and we are updating it.

Ms. BASS. Okay. I would like to now bring forward our panel. Could our panel come forward? Mr. Bocanegra, Amber Goodwin, Reggie Moore, Maj Toure.

[Pause.]

Ms. BASS. Now if you would please rise, I will begin by swearing you in. If you would please rise? Raise your right hand.

Do you swear or affirm under penalty of perjury that the testimony you are about to give is true and correct, to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief, so help you God?

[Response.]

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Let the record show the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Thank you, and appreciate your coming forward today.

Please note that your written statements will be entered into the record in their entirety. Accordingly, I ask that you summarize your testimony in 5 minutes.

To help you stay within that time, there is a timing light on your table. When the light switches from green to yellow, you will have 1 minute to conclude your testimony. When the light turns red, it signals that your 5 minutes have expired.

I want to first introduce Amber Goodwin. Ms. Goodwin is the founding director of the Community Justice Action Fund and the Community Justice Reform Coalition. CJAF is the Nation's leading gun violence prevention organization, working on policy, education, leadership development, and building resources centered on communities of color. Under Amber's leadership, CJAF is filling a critical role in advocating for solutions and leadership roles for marginalized communities of color.

Eddie Bocanegra, Mr. Bocanegra is the senior director of READI. Do you say "read-eye"?

Mr. BOCANEGRA. READI Chicago.

Ms. BASS. Oh, "ready," okay. READI Chicago. In this role, he oversees the management and implementation of the evidence-based and trauma-informed program to reduce violence and promote safety and opportunity. Mr. Bocanegra brings years of experience in community-based organizations and programs created to address trauma and build resiliency among those most impacted by violence.

Reggie Moore currently serves as the injury and violence prevention director of the City of Milwaukee, and I believe Representative Gwen Moore is here or was here. You are one of her constituents. The director of the City of Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention, a division of the Milwaukee Health Department.

Mr. Moore leads the city's efforts to assess, prevent, and decrease incidence of structural and community violence. He facilitated the development of Milwaukee's first comprehensive violence prevention plan, known as the "Blueprint for Peace," which is a community-centered plan that takes a public health approach to addressing the root causes of violence and trauma.

Mr. Moore leads the National Youth Activism Program for the Truth Initiative in Washington, D.C., where he designed and implemented programs to increase public health advocacy among youth throughout the country.

Mr. Toure is the founder of Black Guns Matter. He believes that Americans in inner cities must be allowed to exercise their Second Amendment right and challenge the status quo for smaller amounts of people to carry, but not most others. I don't know. I think that didn't sound right.

We welcome all of our distinguished witnesses and thank them for participating in today's hearing.

Mr. Bocanegra.

**TESTIMONY OF EDUARDO BOCANEGRA, SENIOR DIRECTOR, HEARTLAND ALLIANCE; REGGIE MOORE, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION, ON BEHALF OF CITY OF MILWAUKEE HEALTH DEPARTMENT; MAJ TOURE, FOUNDER, BLACK GUNS MATTER; AND AMBER GOODWIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY JUSTICE ACTION FUND AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE REFORM COALITION**

**TESTIMONY OF EDUARDO BOCANEGRA**

Mr. BOCANEGRA. Good morning, Chairman Bass and Ranking Member Ratcliffe and members of the committee.

Oh, sorry. Is it on?

So, again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the gun violence facing communities across our Nation and to share the actions of Heartland Alliance and other organizations, advocates, and survivors of violence in Chicago, while working around the clock to make our communities safer.

Communities across our country are struggling with violence, cities like Baltimore, Detroit, St. Louis, Chicago. Much of this violence is concentrated in a handful of impoverished neighborhoods. This year alone, Chicago has had over 2,000 shootings and over 300 homicides as a result of gun violence. Just this past weekend, 21 people were wounded, and 5 were killed.

Behind every shooting, there is a family left to grapple with the aftermath. Mothers, like Mrs. Jennings, whose son was shot 19 times, and Rodney Bell, who was shot in the face multiple times. I had the honor of knowing these young men, and I personally witnessed their efforts to change the circumstances they were born into. These killings and resulting trauma are preventable.

Neighborhoods with high levels of violence routinely face other compounding survival issues, like limited or no access to employment, safe housing, health and mental services, and more. This results in a heartbreaking cycle of poverty, violence, and trauma. And we know that exposure to violence and trauma can make people react in unpredictable ways that may not be appropriate to the situation.

Much of gun violence in Chicago, for example, is the result of a split-second decision by traumatized individuals who have grown up surrounded by violence. I know this from personal experience.

I witnessed violence and domestic abuse at home when I was 6 years old. By the time I was 13, I witnessed my first homicide. I

was 17 when a close friend of mine died in front of me, and by the time I was 18, I was sentenced to 29 years in prison for murder.

In prison, I saw that most people look exactly like me. The men who rotated through what seemed like revolving prison doors shared the same goals as me, never to return. Somehow many of us fell short. Nearly everyone who returned to prison lacked the same things, a plan for how to survive outside of prison; a network of people who would stick by them, and when they faced setbacks, they would be there; access to support systems to help them cope with feelings of hopelessness, loss, and frustrations.

Since my release from prison 11 years ago, I have earned a Bachelor's from Northeastern Illinois University and a Master's degree from the University of Chicago. I have created innovative approaches to leveraging marginalized groups as part of the solution, such as U.S. veterans, parents who lost children to violence, and people with justice involvement.

My perspective on this deeply—my perspective on this is deeply informed by my personal experience and education. I am proud to be a part of a movement in Chicago that aims to dramatically reduce cycle of poverty and violence in our city. The surge in gun violence in Chicago 2 years ago spurred action in unprecedented ways.

A coalition of more than 40 Chicago funders and foundations under the umbrella of Partnerships for Safety and Peaceful Communities courageously aligned their funding to support proven and promising programs and approaches to reducing gun violence, rebuilding communities and developing leaders who can sustain safety and opportunity.

There is a number of promising initiatives that can serve as models, including the Metropolitan Peace Academy, lead by Communities Partnering for Peace, which was established to professionalize street outreach work; Chicago CRED; Chicago Public Schools Safe Passage, which was designed to provide safe routes for students while traveling to and from school; and READI Chicago, the program that I run.

With our six partners, we relentlessly engage men who are most highly impacted by gun violence and connect them with paid employment, cognitive behavioral therapy, and supportive services. READI Chicago is being evaluated by the University of Chicago's Urban Labs so that we can learn all that we can about what is taking—what it takes to meaningfully identify and engage men who are at the highest risk of gun involvement and keep them alive.

There are no Federal programs designed to support bold, comprehensive responses to prevent violence like ours. Importantly, very few programs are led by people like me with life experience like mine. We urgently need attention and sustained investment in people who are the most at risk before more lives are lost.

And I wanted to close by sharing a story of one of our—of those that we lost. When I first met Davon, he was unhappy with his life and community. He joined our program and started to see change. He was beginning to plan for a future. Tragically, Davon was shot and killed just about 2 months ago on an afternoon, 5:45, as he was heading back home from work.

And I can't help but to think about the young man who ran up to Davon and shot him. What if he had been given the tools to help



him pause and think? What if he had been surrounded by people who cared enough about him, to address his pains or grievances and change his thoughts? Perhaps Davon would still be alive.

After spending much of my time in prison contemplating how my future would have meaning, my goal is clear. To use my experience as a former gang member and inmate, as well as my formal education to save lives and to help others with backgrounds like mine find and achieve their own dreams for a safer and better future.

We can do this, and I appreciate your support.

[The statement of Mr. Bocanegra follows:]

**HEARTLAND  
ALLIANCE**  
ENDING POVERTY

208 South LaSalle Street  
Suite 1300  
Chicago, IL 60604

P 312.660.1300  
F 312.660.1500  
[heartlandalliance.org](http://heartlandalliance.org)

---

Congressional Testimony

## Community Responses to Gun Violence in our Cities: Chicago Responds

Submitted by Eddie Bocanegra, Senior Director, Heartland Alliance

Testimony submitted on September 24, 2019, to the House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security as a statement for the record for the hearing on September 26, 2019, on Community Responses to Gun Violence in our Cities.



208 South LaSalle Street  
Suite 1300  
Chicago, IL 60604

P 312.660.1300  
F 312.660.1500  
heartlandalliance.org

Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Ratcliffe, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the gun violence facing communities across our nation and to share the actions of Heartland Alliance<sup>1</sup> and other organizations, advocates, and survivors of violence in Chicago who are working around the clock to make our communities safer.

Communities across our country are struggling with violence—cities like Baltimore, Detroit, St. Louis, and Chicago<sup>2</sup>. Much of this violence is concentrated in a handful of impoverished neighborhoods. This year alone, Chicago has had over 2,000 shootings and is nearing 300 homicides as a result of gun violence.<sup>3</sup> Just this past weekend, 21 people were wounded and 5 people were killed.

Behind every shooting there is a family left to grapple with the aftermath. Mothers like Ms. Jennigs whose son was shot 19 times, or Rodney Bell who was shot in the face multiple times. I had the honor of knowing these young men, and I personally witnessed their efforts to change the circumstances they were born into. These killings and resulting trauma are *preventable*.

Neighborhoods with high levels of violence routinely face other compounding survival issues—like limited or no access to employment, safe housing, health and mental health services, and more. This results in a heartbreaking cycle of poverty, violence, and trauma.

And we know that exposure to violence and trauma can make people react in unpredictable ways that may not be appropriate to the situation. Much of the gun violence in Chicago, for example, is the result of split-second decisions, by traumatized individuals who have grown up surrounded by violence.

I know this from personal experience: I witnessed violence and domestic abuse at home when I was 6 years old. By the time I was 13, I witnessed my first homicide. I was 17 when my friend died in front of me. By the time I was 18, I was sentenced to 29 years in prison for murder.

In prison, I saw that most people looked exactly like me. The men who rotated through what seemed like a revolving prison door shared the same goal as me—to never return. Somehow, many of us fell short. Nearly everyone who returned to prison lacked the same things—a plan for how to survive outside of prison; a network of people who would stick by them when they faced setbacks; and access to a support system to help them cope with feelings of hopelessness, loss, and frustration.

Since my release from prison nearly 11 years ago, I have earned a Bachelor's from Northeastern Illinois University and a Master's degree from the University of Chicago. I've created innovative

<sup>1</sup> Heartland Alliance works in communities in the U.S. and globally to serve those who are homeless, living in poverty, or seeking safety. We believe society is better for everyone when all of us can participate, prosper, and reach our full potential. [www.heartlandalliance.org](http://www.heartlandalliance.org)

<sup>2</sup> Over the last three years, gun violence in Chicago has outpaced other cities of our size. According to federal data that's available; there were over 14,000 gun homicides, primarily in urban communities.

<sup>3</sup> Homicides due to gun violence in Chicago as of 9/18/19: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-chicago-homicides-data-tracker.htmlstory.html>



208 South LaSalle Street  
Suite 1300  
Chicago, IL 60604

P 312.660.1300  
F 312.660.1500  
heartlandalliance.org

approaches to leveraging marginalized groups as part of the solutions, such as U.S. veterans, parents who lost children to violence and people with justice involvement. My perspective on this is deeply informed by my personal experiences and education.

I am proud to be part of a movement in Chicago that aims to dramatically reduce the cycle of poverty and violence in our city.

The surge in gun violence in Chicago two years ago spurred action in unprecedented ways. A coalition of more than 40 Chicago funders and foundations—under the umbrella of the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities—courageously aligned their funding to support proven and promising programs and approaches to reducing gun violence, rebuilding communities, and developing leaders who can sustain safety and opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

There are a number of promising initiatives that can serve as models, including:

- The Metropolitan Peace Academy, led by Communities Partnering for Peace, which was established to professionalize street outreach work.<sup>5</sup>
- Chicago CRED<sup>6</sup>.
- Chicago Public Schools Safe Passage which is designed to provide safe routes for students while traveling to and from school.<sup>7</sup>
- And READI Chicago, the program I run. With our six partners, we relentlessly engage men who are most highly impacted by gun violence, and connect them with paid employment, cognitive behavioral therapy, and support services.<sup>8</sup> READI Chicago is being evaluated by the University of Chicago Urban Labs so that we can learn all that we can about what it takes to meaningfully identify and engage men who are at highest risk of gun violence—and keep them alive.

There are no federal programs designed to support bold, comprehensive responses to prevent violence like ours. Importantly, very few programs are led by people like me with life experiences like mine. We urgently need attention to and sustained investment in people who are the most at-risk before more lives are lost. I want to close by sharing a story of one of those lost lives.

When I first met Davon, he was unhappy with his life and community. He joined our program, and I started to see a change. He was beginning to plan for his future. Tragically, Davon was shot and killed walking home—from READI Chicago at 5:45pm on a sunny Tuesday afternoon earlier this summer. He was walking home just one block away from his normal route. It is an unimaginable loss. And I can't help but think about the young man who ran up to Davon and shot him. What if HE had been given the tools to help him pause and think? What if he had been surrounded by people who cared enough to help him address his pain or grievances and change his thoughts? Perhaps Davon would still be alive.

<sup>4</sup> <https://safeandpeaceful.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.metrofamily.org/cp4p/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.chicagocred.org>

<sup>7</sup> <https://cps.edu/Pages/safepassage.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> For more information on READI Chicago please visit: <https://www.heartlandalliance.org/readi/>. Importantly, in its first two years of implementation, READI Chicago has demonstrated the ability to identify, engage, and serve those who are most at risk of becoming involved in gun violence. We are serving over 1000 of these men: 87% are 18-32 years old, 93% are African-American, and 78% have lost a family member to gun violence. And they tell us it is working. "The program has changed my life. It works on my thinking. If I can get up to do negative, I can get up to do positive."



208 South LaSalle Street  
Suite 1300  
Chicago, IL 60604

P 312.660.1300  
F 312.660.1500  
[heartlandalliance.org](http://heartlandalliance.org)

After spending much of my time in prison contemplating how my future would have meaning, my goal is clear—to use my experiences as a former gang member and inmate, as well as my formal education, to save lives, and to help others with backgrounds like mine find and achieve their own dreams for a safer and better future.

We CAN do this, and you can help make this possible.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear today. I would be happy to respond to questions.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Moore. It is hard to look at those pictures, you know?

### TESTIMONY OF REGGIE MOORE

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Ratcliffe, and other members of the subcommittee, for providing the opportunity for me to speak before you today.

Again, my name is Reggie Moore. I am the director of the City of Milwaukee's Office of Violence Prevention, and I want to start by thanking my esteemed congresswoman, Gwen Moore from Wisconsin's Fourth District, for her invitation to address this critically important issue. I am sure she shares our excitement for being the host for the 2020 Democratic National Convention in our city.

And I would also like to acknowledge Congressman Sensenbrenner for his many years of service, who also serves on this committee.

I am grateful for this opportunity to share the vision, approach, and progress Milwaukee has made toward addressing violence as a public health issue not only because this topic is deeply personal for me, but because we are long overdue for lifting up community-based solutions proven to prevent and reduce violence in communities across this country.

We have an opportunity right now to invest in policies and programs that could literally save lives or continue to ignore the slow mass murder happening on the streets of our cities every day across this country. Our mayor and former congressman Tom Barrett has been a champion for gun violence prevention for more than a decade. As one of the first mayors involved with Mayors Against Illegal Guns and Cities United Against Gun Violence, he remains committed to this issue. However, cities cannot bear this burden alone.

Today, I will speak briefly to you about the approach we took to frame violence as a public health issue, the perils of punishment over prevention, our success with engaging residents and prioritizing local solutions, and the need for national and State-level support for these efforts.

The pictures sitting before you are of young people—and only a few of, unfortunately, too many—who have been killed in crossfire shootings in the City of Milwaukee. This issue does not just affect one community or one zip code but has impacted lives across our entire city.

This young lady here is Sandra Parks. She was a brilliant 13-year-old girl who was killed on November 19th by a bullet fired from an assault rifle outside of her house as she sat in the safety of her own bedroom. Her life was taken just 2 years after she wrote an award-winning essay about gun violence.

They all should be here today, whether taking a tour of the national Capitol with other children that we encountered on our way here or actually sitting at this table as advocates. And unfortunately, none of them will have the opportunity to sit in the seats that you are sitting, with the power and ability to make a change in this country on this issue.

I want to briefly read a passage that she wrote in her essay that I think underscores the impact that many children in our country

feel in cities and in neighborhoods as it relates to gun violence. “Sometimes I sit back, and I have to escape from what I see and hear every day. I put on my headphones and let the music take me away. I move to the beat, and I try to think about life and what everything means. When I do, I come to the same conclusion. We are in a state of chaos.

“In the city in which I live, I hear and see examples of chaos almost every day. Little children are victims of senseless gun violence. We must not allow the lies of violence, racism, and prejudice to be our truth. The truth begins with us. Instead of passing each other like ships in the night, we must fight until our truths stretch to the ends of this world.”

Launched in 2008, the Office of Violence Prevention sits within the Milwaukee Health Department. Our mission is to prevent and reduce violence through partnerships that strengthen young people, families, and neighborhoods. Under the leadership of Mayor Barrett, Milwaukee launched the office in 2008, placing the office in the Health Department, underscoring our commitment early to treating this as a public health issue.

Unfortunately, in cities across the country, violence has often been simplistically regarded as bad people doing bad things in bad places, punishable by death, divestment, or confinement. This has led to a manmade disaster for young people, families, and neighborhoods. Instead of addressing the root causes of violence, we decided to punish it. In many cities, poverty, trauma, unemployment became an issue for the criminal justice system to manage, especially in African-American communities.

We cannot talk about violence in Milwaukee without talking about mass incarceration. As of the 2010 Census, Wisconsin had the highest incarceration rate of black males nationwide, locking up 12.8 percent of black male residents, compared to the country’s 6.7 percent average at that time. Out of 56 majority black communities in Wisconsin, 31 are jails or prisons.

Concentrated punishment is an expensive habit that has had a significant impact on local and State taxes more than housing, transportation, higher education, youth development, or public health. In 1970, Milwaukee was a thriving industrial city with a relatively low poverty rate. But decades of industrial decline and population loss have taken their toll.

By 2019, the city spends over \$300 million, 40 percent of the city’s budget, on law enforcement alone. This cost exceeds the total amount of revenue collected through property tax levied for the entire city.

Milwaukee clearly cares about public safety, but this is fiscally and morally unsustainable for our community. The punishment of disadvantage hides the deep and cumulative impact of policy decisions so that the real work of solving these problems never happens. High neighborhood unemployment rates are never addressed, the foster care system is never repaired, and underfunded schools close en masse.

In Milwaukee, in 2017, we engaged the community in developing a comprehensive violence prevention plan called the Blueprint for Peace. In the written document, you have copies of that, and this is a comprehensive approach that calls for all hands on deck to ad-

addressing this issue so that we can stop the pipeline from pain instead of investing in incarceration and death on the backend.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Moore follows:]





Written Testimony from the City of Milwaukee  
Provided by Reggie Moore,  
Director, City of Milwaukee Health Department  
Office of Violence Prevention

Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security  
of the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary

Hearing Date  
*September 26, 2019*

A public health approach to addressing chronic  
gun violence in US cities

Thank you Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Ratcliffe, and members of the Subcommittee for providing the opportunity for me to speak before you today. I want to thank our esteemed Congresswoman Gwen Moore from Wisconsin's 4<sup>th</sup> District for the invitation to address this critically important issue. My name is Reggie Moore and I am the Director of the City of Milwaukee's Office of Violence Prevention. Our city is proud to be the host city for the 2020 Democratic National Convention. The City of Milwaukee is honored to be before you today and I also want to acknowledge Congressman Sensenbrenner for his many years of service representing the state of Wisconsin and his presence on the committee today.

On behalf of the entire city of Milwaukee, I am grateful for this opportunity to share the vision, approach, and progress Milwaukee has made toward addressing violence as a public health issue. Not only because the topic of community-based solutions to gun violence has not received the national attention or concern that it deserves but also because we are at a crossroads as a country. A crossroads where we have a chance to invest in policies and programs that could literally save lives or continue to ignore the slow mass murder happening on the streets of our cities every night in America.

Today, I will briefly speak to you about the approach we took to define the problem of gun violence as a public health issue in Milwaukee, our success in centering the community in

---

Reggie Moore  
Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention  
414.286.8553 | [reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov](mailto:reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov)

determining local solutions to this problem, and the national context for which our efforts are occurring.

The pictures sitting before you are of children killed in cross-fire shootings in the city of Milwaukee. As you can see in the written statement, violence does not target one community or zip code in Milwaukee; it impacts all of our neighborhoods

- 10 Ten-year-old Sierra Guyton died July 13, 2014, almost two months after being shot in the head while playing on the playground less than a block from her home. She was caught in the crossfire between two gunmen who exchanged 16 shots with 50 children nearby.
- 5 Five-year-old Laylah Petersen was killed on November 6, 2014 while sitting on her grandfather's lap in his house when bullets fired outside the house struck her.
- Bill Thao, only 13 months old, was playing on the floor of a relative's home on Dec. 27, 2014, when three gunmen in the street fired 41 bullets at his home.
- 9 Nine-year-old Za'Layia Jenkins died May 11, 2016, 11 days after she was shot inside a relative's home.
- 15 year-old Melanie Johnson was struck inside her home after gunfire erupted outside the house on Dec. 12, 2016.
- 6 year-old Justin Evans Jr. was shot July 22, 2017, in his grandmother's yard as he prepared to go fishing with a relative. He was the youngest victim to die by gunfire that year.
- 13-year-old Sandra Parks was hit by a bullet fired from an assault rifle outside of her house that struck her in her own bedroom Nov. 19, 2018.
- 3-year-old Brooklyn Harris was shot and killed inside a car during a road rage incident July 13, 2019, near North 42nd Street and West Concordia Avenue.
- 20 year old Quanita Tay Jackson was known as a peace activist as was killed one day after organizing a successful basketball tournament for peace. She was caught in the crossfire of two cars shooting at each other on Sunday, August 25, 2019.

They should be here today. Either on a field trip along with the hundreds of other children visiting the Capitol today or some of them sitting at this very table speaking to you. Just two years after Sandra Parks wrote an award-winning essay about gun violence she was gunned down in her own home while sitting in her bedroom by an assault rifle fired by a man from across the street. As is all-to-common, Sandra was not the intended target but her life was tragically lost along with so many others killed as a result of often angry men firing guns indiscriminately over senseless conflicts and petty arguments. I would like to share a passage

from Sandra's essay that underscores the psychological toll that gun violence takes on children living in these environments:

### **Our Truth**

by Sandra Parks

*Sometimes, I sit back and I have to escape from what I see and hear every day. I put my headphones on and let the music take me away. I move to the beat and try to think about life and what everything means. When I do, I come to the same conclusion ... we are in a state of chaos. In the city in which I live, I hear and see examples of chaos almost everyday. Little children are victims of senseless gun violence. There is too much black on black crime. As an African-American, that makes me feel depressed. Many people have lost faith in America and its ability to be a living example of Dr. King's dream!*

*The truth is faith and hope in what people can do, has been lost in the poor choices we make. We shall overcome has been lost in the lie of who we have become! So now, the real truth is, we need to rewrite our story so that faith and hope for a better tomorrow, is not only within us, but we believe it and we put it into actions.*

*Our first truth is that we must start caring about each other. We need to be empathetic and try to walk in each other's shoes. We shall overcome when we eliminate the negative and nasty comments people make about each other. We shall overcome, when we love ourselves and the people around us. Then, we become our brother's keeper.*

*Our second truth is that we need to have purpose. We are the future generation, therefore we must have an education to make a positive difference in the world. We are the future leaders, but if we don't have an education, we will accomplish nothing. We will overcome, when we use our education to make the world a better place. We will become the next President, law enforcement officers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and law makers. We cannot continue to put the responsibility on other people. It is our responsibility as future leaders!*

*We must not allow the lies of violence, racism, and prejudice to be our truth. The truth begins with us. Instead of passing each other like ships in the night, we must fight until our truths stretch to the ends of the world.*

Launched in 2008, the Office of Violence Prevention is a division of the City of Milwaukee Health Department. We are the largest municipal health department in the state of Wisconsin, responsible for protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of over 595,000 residents in the City of Milwaukee. The mission of the Office of Violence Prevention is to prevent and reduce violence through partnerships that strengthen youth, families, and neighborhoods. Under the leadership of Mayor Tom Barrett, Milwaukee launched the Office of Violence Prevention in 2008. Placing the office in the city's Health Department underscores our early commitment to treating violence as a public health issue. Although violence is now clearly recognized as a public health problem just 40 years ago the words "violence" and "health" were rarely used in the same sentence.<sup>i</sup> This has not been an easy road. In 1979, a groundbreaking report from the U.S. Surgeon General on health promotion and disease prevention identified violence as one of 15 prevention priority areas for the nation. The report stated that "violence can be prevented and should not be ignored in the effort to improve the nation's health." It wasn't until last year that the American Public Health Association (APHA) adopted an official policy statement regarding violence as a public health issue.

Unfortunately, in cities across the country, violence has often been regarded as bad people, doing bad things, in bad places, punishable by death, divestment, or incarceration. This has led to a man-made disaster for youth, families, and neighborhoods across the country. Instead of addressing the root causes of violence we decided to punish it. In many cities poverty, trauma, and unemployment became an issue for the criminal justice system to manage especially in African American neighborhoods.<sup>ii</sup> We cannot talk about violence in Milwaukee without talking about mass-incarceration.<sup>iii</sup> As of the 2010 census, Wisconsin had the highest incarceration rate of black males nationwide, locking up 12.8 percent of black male residents compared to the country's 6.7 percent average at that time. By contrast, only 1.2 percent of white men in the state were incarcerated that same year. Diving in deeper, 4,042 of every 100,000 black Wisconsin residents in 2010 were incarcerated, according to the Prison Policy Initiative. Out of 56 majority-black communities in Wisconsin, 31 are either jails or prisons.<sup>iv</sup>

During the tough-on-crime era of the 1990s, Wisconsin was one of about 40 states that passed versions of so-called "truth-in-sentencing" bills, which sought to end or weaken parole processes so inmates would serve their full sentences. As in states nationwide, Wisconsin pushed through mandatory minimum sentences and three-strikes policies, which drove more people into prison for longer amounts of time. This produced life-long trauma for generations of children growing up with one or more parent in prison.

Wisconsin's truth-in-sentencing legislation, however, was uniquely harsh, in that it required both violent and nonviolent property-crime and drug offenders to serve 100 percent of their prison

---

Reggie Moore  
Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention  
414.286.8553 | [reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov](mailto:reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov)

time, eliminated the use of parole boards for people incarcerated after the year 2000, and provided no mechanism to keep judges' sentences within any standardized ranges.

These new laws had damaging effects on black communities, especially in the early 2000s when Milwaukee accelerated its War on Drugs. From 2001 to 2003, drug sale arrests jumped 66% percent in Milwaukee County, far exceeding the rate of overall arrests in the area and outpacing the rest of the state, where drug sale arrests actually dropped slightly, according to a 2006 Justice Strategies brief.

As drug-offense convictions soared in Milwaukee County, African-American men suffered 11 to 12 times as many drug-related prison admissions as white men over 2002 to 2005. From 1990 to 2011, 40 percent of black males incarcerated from Milwaukee County were drug offenders.<sup>v</sup>

Punishment became the prevailing policy approach to managing decades of concentrated disadvantage. Concentrated punishment is an expensive habit that has had a significant impact on local and state taxes more than housing, transportation, youth development, education, or public health. In 1970, Milwaukee was a thriving, industrial city with a relatively low poverty rate of 11%. But decades of industrial decline and population loss took their toll. By 2014, nearly one in three city residents lived below the poverty level. Areas where the poverty rate topped 20% proliferated. That is considered the threshold for "concentrated poverty." Once surpassed, experts say, other negative side effects — such as crime, violence, and the drop-out rate — rise as well. Today, in Wisconsin each day that a young person spends in a correctional facility costs \$390 per day or \$142,000 per year. According to a report by the Justice Policy Institute titled "The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities" ultimately creates poorer life outcomes and are more likely to result in youth continuing to commit crime as adults.<sup>vi</sup> In 2019 the City of Milwaukee spent over \$300 million dollars (47%) of its budget on law enforcement alone. This cost exceeds the total amount of revenue collected through property taxes for the entire city.

The punishment of disadvantage hides the deep and cumulative impact of policy decisions, so that the real work of solving these problems never happens. High neighborhood-unemployment rates are never addressed. The foster care system is never repaired. Underfunded schools are closed en masse.<sup>vii</sup> Affordable housing is uprooted while forced displacement of families through serial evictions in Milwaukee has become the subject of an award-winning book by Desmond Matthew titled "Evicted: Poverty and Profit in an American City." According to his research, one in every eight Milwaukee renters faces an eviction - either by legal or other means - every two years.<sup>viii</sup> In his book Desmond declares that "poor black men may be locked up, but poor

---

Reggie Moore  
Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention  
414.286.8553 | [reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov](mailto:reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov)

black women are locked out. Both phenomena work together to propagate economic disadvantage in the city.”

In the book the “War on Neighborhoods: Policing, Prison and Punishment in a Divided City” struggling parents are the first to be removed from their homes. Restless youth are the first to be kicked out of schools. The most traumatized are the most likely to be jailed and those most in need of work are the least eligible for employment. Policymakers have not just avoided addressing the problems of unemployment, struggling schools, addiction, and mental illness in American communities; they have actively punished people suffering from these conditions.”<sup>xix</sup>

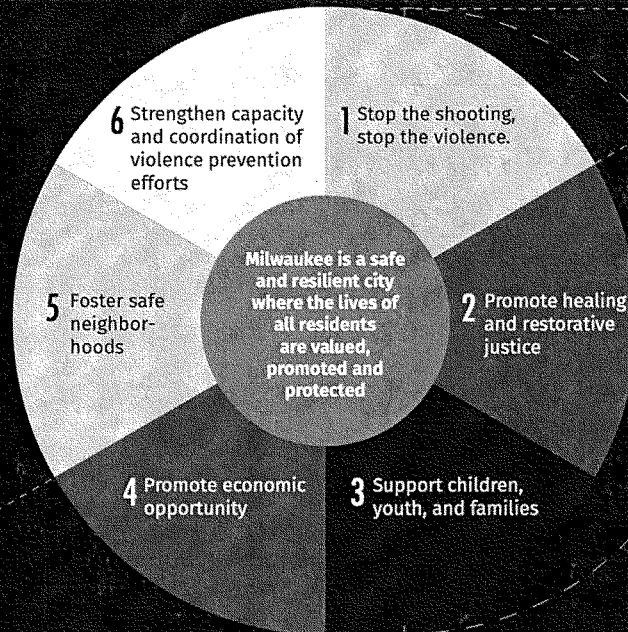
Excerpt From: Ryan Lugalía-Hollon & Daniel Cooper. “The War on Neighborhoods.” Apple Books. <https://books.apple.com/us/book/the-war-on-neighborhoods/id1262798053>

Excerpt From: Ryan Lugalía-Hollon & Daniel Cooper. “The War on Neighborhoods.” Apple Books. <https://books.apple.com/us/book/the-war-on-neighborhoods/id1262798053>

Milwaukee along with several other cities throughout the country saw a spike in homicides and non-fatal shootings in 2015. In one year alone, our homicides increased by 70% and our nonfatal shootings by 10%. In 2016, Mayor Tom Barrett with support from the city council decided to increase the city’s capacity to address this issue from a public health perspective. One of our main priorities was to engage the community in defining the strategies and priorities for addressing violence in Milwaukee. It was clear from the very beginning that the community wanted a plan that would not only address the symptomatic interpersonal violence we see on the nightly news but the historical, structural, and systemic violence that we also see playing out in cities across the country. We engaged thousands of residents including youth, formerly incarcerated, gun violence survivors, business, philanthropy, law enforcement, judges, healthcare workers, etc. in the development of Milwaukee’s first comprehensive violence prevention plan known as the Blueprint for Peace. The Blueprint contains six core goals and 30 strategies that were prioritized for implementation across the community focused on 10 priority neighborhoods. With support from the Prevention Institute, a national agency with decades of experience in public health policy, program development, and violence prevention, we produced a framework that prioritized evidence-informed interventions across the continuum of prevention, intervention, and healing. Every convening throughout the process included a cross section of residents including youth, policy makers, business leaders, educators, philanthropists, judges, law enforcement and parents who had lost children to gun violence. We also surveyed over 1,000 youth ages 13-18 to understand their perspectives of violence in Milwaukee and to determine their vision for peace in the city. There are two foundational approaches that run throughout the Blueprint for Peace. The first is the Adverse Community Experience and Resilience Framework that examines risk and protective factors for violence prevention in three areas: People, Place and

Equitable Opportunity. The “People” domain reflects attitudes and behaviors related to community cohesion, civic participation, and collective efficacy. Place, pertains to the built environment including safe and accessible play spaces, housing, and blight abatement. Equitable Opportunity speaks to economic investment, access to affordable housing, living wage employment, after school programs and entrepreneurship opportunities. Each Goal of the Blueprint has a set of relevant indicators for evaluating progress and is designed to be a five-year plan with annual assessments of progress, challenges and impact.

## GOALS OVERVIEW



To reduce multiple forms of violence and realize the vision that Milwaukee is a safe and resilient city where the lives of all residents are valued, promoted, and protected, this Blueprint identifies six intersecting and mutually reinforcing goals. These goals are designed to address violence by reducing community exposure to the identified risk factors and strengthening community access and engagement to the identified resilience/protective factors. Diagram C (above) illustrates the six goals and Table 1 (see p. 27) shows the alignment between goals and prioritized risk and resilience/protective factors.



**TABLE 1: RISK AND RESILIENCE FACTORS ADDRESSED BY EACH GOAL**

The following table summarizes the risk and resilience factors addressed by each goal:

| <b>Risk Factors</b>  | <b>Goal 1</b> | <b>Goal 2</b> | <b>Goal 3</b> | <b>Goal 4</b> | <b>Goal 5</b> | <b>Goal 6</b> |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Limited employment and economic opportunities                  |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Lack of access to resources                                    |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Segregation  |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Disconnectedness among residents and institutions              |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Limited community-government trust                             |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Lack of housing  |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Neighborhood disinvestment                                     |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Harmful norms creating a culture of fear and hopelessness      |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Adverse childhood experiences and other experiences of trauma  |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Harmful norms around masculinity and femininity                |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| High alcohol outlet density                                    |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Availability of illegal guns                                   |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| <b>Resilience Factors</b>                                      |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Strong neighborhood centers and neighborhood-based initiatives |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Community-building and healing capabilities of organizations   |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Local investment   |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Engagement in positive activities                              |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Collective efficacy  |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Strong schools and teachers                                    |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Access to resources  |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Family connection and relationships with other caring adults   |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Community connectedness  |               |               |               |               |               |               |
| Arts, culture, and faith                                       |               |               |               |               |               |               |

## GOAL #1: STOP THE SHOOTING, STOP THE VIOLENCE

### Recommended Strategies

#### 1. Use of timely, comprehensive data to prioritize prevention efforts

- a. Enhance local capacity to access, analyze, and utilize violence-related data from a variety of sources, including local emergency departments, emergency medical services, law enforcement, trauma centers, and the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner.
- b. Conduct regular reviews of incidents of violence in coordination with public health, hospital, law enforcement, and community partners.

#### 2. Reduce incidence of violence through proactive prevention efforts

- a. Utilize evidence-based outreach and violence interruption strategies to mediate conflicts, prevent retaliation and other potentially violent situations, and connect individuals to community supports<sup>9</sup>. These strategies include violence interruption and focused deterrence in neighborhoods and schools.
- b. Improve lethality assessment and safety planning measures to prevent domestic violence homicides and suicide.<sup>39,40</sup>
- c. Continue Milwaukee Police Department training in the areas of crisis intervention, fair and impartial policing, and procedural justice.
- d. Expand implicit bias and micro-aggression reduction and de-escalation training to include first responders, mental health providers, community health workers, and other partners.
- e. Offer localized and culturally responsive crisis intervention support and referral services to prevent suicide and suicidal behavior.<sup>41</sup>

#### 3. Respond to immediate individual and community needs post-incident

- a. Expand support services for survivors of violence through hospital-community partnerships and hospital-based violence intervention programs.<sup>42</sup>
- b. Expand post-incident trauma healing supports, including community events and critical incident debriefing for victims, witnesses, and first responders connecting them to appropriate community supports.

#### 4. Decrease illegal gun availability

- a. Conduct dialogue and education to promote evidence-informed policies related to gun ownership and possession.

#### 5. Promote violence prevention as a way of life

- a. Support and promote individual capacity for conflict prevention, de-escalation and proactive bystander practices in schools and neighborhoods.



## GOAL #2: PROMOTE HEALING AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

### Recommended Strategies

#### 1. Promote healing, behavioral health, and trauma reduction

- a. Provide trauma reduction and healing-informed care support to residents, professionals who address violence, and others experiencing primary and secondary trauma.<sup>65</sup>
- b. Expand capacity of problem-solving courts to provide therapeutic resources and services for youth and adults involved in the criminal justice system, juvenile justice system, and child welfare system.
- c. Increase coordination of mental health and trauma services across agencies to support children, youth and families who have been exposed to multiple forms of violence.<sup>66</sup>
- d. Prevent and treat substance abuse in priority neighborhoods.

#### 2. Strengthen treatment and healing services for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence

- a. Expand awareness and access to survivor-centered sexual and domestic violence services.<sup>67</sup>
- b. Advance policies that enhance safety of survivors before, during and after legal proceedings.
- c. Increase affordability and access to treatment services for perpetrators of domestic violence.

#### 3. Identify and support people at risk for self-harm and suicide

- a. Train community members to identify people at risk for suicide/self-harm and respond effectively by facilitating access to support services.<sup>68</sup>
- b. Support treatment to prevent suicide attempts such as discharge information sessions and active follow-up approaches to prevent suicide.<sup>69</sup>

#### 4. Improve cultural competence and support cultural identity of community members

- a. Build a pipeline of culturally-competent, non-traditional mental wellness and health care providers.
- b. Promote connections to faith and/or sense of cultural identity to advance individual and community healing and resilience.<sup>70</sup>
- c. Promote culturally rooted healing, resilience, and social development for chronic and repeat juvenile offenders.

#### 5. Strengthen and preserve healthy relationships

- a. Strengthen restorative justice in courts, child welfare institutions, schools, and community-based settings as a means to advance healing and repair relationships for survivors and perpetrators of violence and broader social networks.

### GOAL #3: SUPPORT CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

#### Recommended Strategies

##### 1. Promote healthy families and quality early learning to foster healthy child development

- a. Promote early childhood home visitation and positive parenting programs.<sup>77</sup>
- b. Strengthen preschool enrichment with family engagement.<sup>78</sup>
- c. Strengthen neighborhood centers as resources for families.
- d. Support father-child connectedness including opportunities for systems-involved fathers in priority neighborhoods.<sup>79</sup>

##### 2. Advocate for safe and inclusive school environments

- a. Bolster school-based violence and trauma prevention for staff, students, and families.
- b. Empower young people to become violence prevention advocates and speak out against behaviors that promote violence. This includes reinforcing positive behavior, and offering support in situations where violence has occurred or may occur.<sup>80</sup>
- c. Enhance opportunities for academic credit recovery and high school persistence and graduation.

##### 3. Ensure youth are connected to positive, caring and reliable adults

- a. Strengthen quality, access, and coordination of mentorship and after-school/summer programs.<sup>81</sup>

##### 4. Decrease domestic violence and sexual assault

- a. Support leadership and empowerment programming for women and girls in priority schools and neighborhoods.<sup>82</sup>
- b. Expand efforts to promote positive gender norms that support the formation of healthy relationships and healthy gender identity, including mobilizing men and boys as allies.<sup>83</sup>
- c. Adopt comprehensive school-based sexual violence and teen dating violence prevention policies and practices that also address the needs of LGBTQ youth.
- d. Adopt a comprehensive approach to sexual health education.

##### 5. Increase employment and workforce development opportunities for high-risk youth

- a. Increase coordination of youth job programs to link higher need youth to subsidized jobs and supportive services to strengthen employability and earn income concurrently.
- b. Develop re-engagement centers for young people ages 14-24 who have been disconnected from school and workforce to support skill development and reconnection to educational and employment opportunities.
- c. Work with employers to increase job opportunities, on-the-job training and retention strategies for youth, with consideration of youth from undocumented families.

## GOAL #4: ADVANCE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

### Recommended Strategies

#### 1. Improve organizational policies and practices to support safe and inclusive work environments

- a. Establish and incentivize proactive policies that reduce practices of discrimination and harassment based on race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, or national origin.<sup>31</sup>

#### 2. Connect adults to employment opportunities with a living wage and remove accessibility barriers

- a. Build on, tailor, and expand workforce and employment development efforts to link job seekers in greatest need to open positions.<sup>32</sup>
- b. Create incentives and improve employer readiness to hire and retain those facing accessibility barriers (e.g. people returning from incarceration) and remove barriers for jobs.<sup>33</sup>
- c. Adopt local policies to support living wages and local hiring.<sup>34</sup>
- d. Adopt local policies to support paid sick, paternity, and maternity leave.
- e. Increase opportunities for driver's license recovery and eliminate suspensions for non-driving violations, including truancy.

#### 3. Strengthen economic supports for women and families

- a. Support adequate workplace policies and access to and availability of affordable, quality child care.<sup>35</sup>

#### 4. Strengthen financial literacy skills

- a. Integrate financial education with employment services to improve economic opportunities for low-to-moderate income communities.

#### 5. Foster local entrepreneurship

- a. Create opportunities for local entrepreneurship and economic development, including co-op's.

### Relevant Indicators:

- Employment rate of priority neighborhoods (U.S. Census)
- Number of transitional jobs and programs serving residents in priority neighborhoods engaged in transitional jobs, entrepreneurship or other programs
- Poverty rate in priority neighborhoods
- Amount of Community Reinvestment Act resources dedicated to priority neighborhoods
- Number of new businesses started in priority neighborhoods
- Number of families in priority neighborhoods eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit

## GOAL #5: FOSTER SAFE AND STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

### Recommended Strategies

#### 1. Create safe and accessible community spaces

- a. Organize community events in neighborhoods most impacted by violence.<sup>98</sup>
- b. Create safe transportation routes.
- c. Strengthen current Community Schools and bring to scale best practices to expand the Community Schools Model to additional schools.
- d. Promote neighborhood revitalization and address physical blight and nuisance properties in prioritized neighborhoods.<sup>99</sup>
- e. Increase investments to parks and playground infrastructure, equipment and landscaping in priority neighborhoods to ensure playgrounds are safe and accessible for all.<sup>100</sup>
- f. Decrease the sale of harmful products through monitoring and restrictions, and reduce the number of establishments with liquor and tobacco licenses in priority neighborhoods.<sup>101</sup>

#### 2. Increase economic development and access to economic opportunity in priority neighborhoods

- a. Engage businesses in violence prevention efforts, including expanding partnerships with business improvement districts and other community-level efforts that increase economic growth and sustainability.<sup>102</sup>
- b. Connect transportation/transit to economic development so that people in the city can access jobs throughout the region.

#### 3. Improve government-community relationships

- a. Provide increased opportunities for government-community partnerships and trust-building.
- b. Increase knowledge, awareness, and power provided through civic engagement among residents in priority neighborhoods.
- c. Sustain and expand existing community oriented and problem solving policing efforts, with the goal of building and strengthening relationships, trust and legitimacy throughout the community.

#### 4. Build resident leadership and collective action

- a. Expand efforts to build neighborhood/resident organizing and advocacy capacity.
- b. Build capacity for residents to lead organizations to address the needs of their neighborhoods.

#### 5. Connect residents to resources to improve their quality of life

- a. Invest in and promote programs to increase safe and affordable housing in priority neighborhoods.
- b. Connect residents in priority neighborhoods to community resources to meet basic needs such as food, housing, medical and other services/resources.<sup>103</sup>

## GOAL #6: STRENGTHEN CAPACITY AND COORDINATION OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS 000000

### Recommended Strategies

#### 1. Build capacity for systems change and increased collaboration across organizations and sectors

- a. Establish and sustain a Milwaukee Violence Prevention Council with strong community representation to provide leadership, coordination, and oversight to the implementation of the Blueprint for Peace.<sup>104</sup>
- b. Expand and align community building processes and tools to build trust with community members and among organizational partners.
- c. Offer ongoing opportunities for training and capacity-building for organizational and individual partners to better understand best practices for preventing violence.<sup>107</sup>
- d. Build capacity and collaboration across priority neighborhoods in citywide implementation.
- e. Identify and collaborate on strategies for systemic change in order to advocate for policy and practice changes relevant to violence prevention.

#### 2. Apply trauma-informed, racial equity, and implicit bias reduction lenses across sectors

- a. Adopt a trauma-informed approach to violence prevention across sectors, institutions and partners that acknowledges trauma and encourages trauma-sensitive approaches to violence.
- b. Pursue and implement policies and practices that are trauma and healing-informed and reduce elements of bias across government departments and other sectors, including education and youth-serving organizations.

#### 3. Create a mechanism for sustainable violence prevention funding

- a. Align funding to support strategies within the Blueprint for preventing violence in prioritized neighborhoods with a particular emphasis on incentivizing collaboration.

#### 4. Develop and implement an effective communications strategy

- a. Ensure effective internal and external communication among.
- b. Develop and implement branded and culturally tailored communications campaigns to promote norms around community safety, including effectively engaging the media to reduce biased reporting, framing violence as preventable and highlighting solutions for Milwaukee.<sup>108</sup>

#### 5. Increase evaluation capacity and accountability

- a. Establish coordinated data sharing for tracking programs, participation, and impact across multiple sectors.
- b. Utilize a results-based framework for evaluating the impact of the Blueprint, including establishing a system to track key indicators and other evaluation needs.

One of several strategies led by the City of Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention includes the implementation of Goal 1 Strategy 2A that specifically calls for a street outreach and intervention program designed to prevent and interrupt the transmission of conflict and retaliatory-driven violence in Milwaukee.<sup>x</sup>

414LIFE is Milwaukee's violence interruption program developed to address homicides and non-fatal shootings among youth and young adults ages 15-35. This model uses a public health approach focused on stopping the transmission of violent behavior while also changing social norms related to violence. These interventions include outreach, community engagement, public education, post-shooting response and case management of individuals at highest risk for shooting or being shot. In a state with the second highest Black homicide victim rate in the country, we understand gun violence as both a public health and racial equity crisis. Since the launch of the program in November of 2018 there have been over 68 violence interruptions completed and over 80 gun-shot survivors referred to the program. These patients are identified throughout partnership with Froedtert Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin at highest for engaging in retaliatory violence, re-injury, or death. To date, 100% of patients that have been offered the program have accepted contact from a 414LIFE Hospital Responder. 100% of patients seen by 414LIFE Hospital Responder have not been re-injured or engaged in violent acts of retaliation. According to the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, the average cost of treating 1 gun-shot victim with 1 perpetrator is **\$1.1 million** with a **homicide costing \$1.6 million**. At a cost of \$500,000 the 414LIFE program has potentially saved city residents **over \$70 million in less than 1 year**.

Our effort is based on the Cure Violence model out of Chicago, IL. This approach was developed by epidemiologist Gary Slutkin, M.D. Its model takes a public health approach to gun violence Prevention by stopping the spread of violence in communities by using the methods and strategies associated with disease control – detecting and interrupting conflicts, identifying and treating the highest risk individuals, and changing social norms. In 2000, Dr. Slutkin launched the model in the most violent community in Chicago. The U.S. Department of Justice in 2009 found that it reduced shootings from 16 percent to 34 at the time. Cure Violence produced a 67% reduction in shootings in its first year.

The target populations are individuals at highest risk of involvement in shootings and killings. The team works daily to engage with key individuals who meet a minimum of three of the following criteria:

1. Member of a street organization or group known to be actively involved in violence;

---

Reggie Moore  
Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention  
414.286.8553 | [reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov](mailto:reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov)



2. History of criminal activity including crimes against persons;
3. Leader of a street organization, group or social network involved in violence;
4. Pending or prior arrest(s) for weapons offenses or auto thefts;
5. Victim of a recent shooting;
6. Recently released from prison; and
7. Between the ages of 15 and 25.

Through ReCast Milwaukee, a five year, five-million initiative funded by the Federal Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. In 3 years we have invested over 2.5 million dollars in community-based programs incorporating culturally responsive mental health and healing programs in schools, neighborhoods, and youth-serving agencies. We have also implemented innovative approaches for training adults and youth in mental health first aid, conflict mediation, trauma recovery, and social emotional learning. These strategies address a range of priorities in Goals 2 and 3 of the Blueprint.

Another intervention relevant to Goal 3 is our Trauma Response Partnership. This program is a collaborative effort between the Office of Violence Prevention, law enforcement, fire fighters, EMT's, and hospitals to ensure that children exposed to a violent incident receive access to timely counseling and healing support by a trained professional specializing in addressing adverse childhood experiences. Since its launch in 2015 over 1,000 referrals of children ages 6-17 have been made to the program. Law enforcement remains the largest source of referrals for the program with domestic violence being the leading incident of trauma/violent exposure.

In August 2018 Milwaukee experienced 14 homicides in the first 15 days of the month. Victims included children, teens, and several domestic violence related homicides. Most were the result of conflict or arguments. We organized over 150 residents to develop a 21 day strategy to respond to the violence through outreach, public awareness campaigns, grief support, and youth engagement programming. We ended that month with 22 homicides. This summer we engaged in similar efforts and ended August 2019 with 10 homicides. That is a 120% decrease from year to year during one of the most violent months of the year for Milwaukee.

The strategies called for in the Blueprint for Peace require federal, state, and local investment to implement, evaluate, and scale.

According to Milwaukee Police Department, non-fatal shootings and homicides have declined since the launch of the Blueprint for Peace. This preliminary data is encouraging and we need federal support to ensure that these efforts can continue. Last year (2018) Milwaukee ended the year with less than 100 homicides for the first time since 2014. As of this week homicides are

down 14% and nonfatal shootings are down 20% but we understand all too clearly that one homicide is one too many. For the parents of the children that will never have the opportunity to visit this chamber or sit in the seat that you're sitting, their homicides were one too many. For the hundreds of individuals shot in Milwaukee and across the country every year, their injuries were one too many. Milwaukee is not alone. Cities throughout the country are impacted by the scourge of gun violence sustained by structural and systemic factors resulting from generations of policies and divestment that have led to killing fields watered by concentrated poverty, mass-incarceration, and a punishment industry that is moral and fiscally unsustainable. Over-reliance on punishment as a means to contain social ills is putting cities on the verge of bankruptcy. We have to do something different not only because it is the fiscally responsible thing to do, but because it is the right thing to do. There is a growing national movement focusing on prevention over punishment. Milwaukee is a proud member of several national alliances advocating for smart public safety policy and public health approaches to violence prevention. These alliances include Cities United, Health Alliance for Violence Intervention Programs, Community Justice Action Fund, LIVE FREE, the UNITY Network and the Movement Toward Violence as a Public Health Issue.

Violence of all forms costs hundreds of billions of dollars every year and it erodes the physical, psychological, social, and economic health and advancement of residents in communities nationwide.

Health-based violence prevention models utilize common public health strategies to reduce exposure to violence and focus on those at highest risk for involvement. Local investment in opportunities and new social norms is necessary to reduce risk and improve outcomes. We must work collectively to build a system for violence prevention with equitable and sustainable resources comparable to what has been invested in criminal justice over the past 100 years in this country. Leadership of health systems have a critical role to play in this movement and as the top 3 employers in the city of Milwaukee are uniquely positioned to align this issue with other health priority areas. Many of the factors that increase the likelihood of violence fall into the category of social determinants of health with the presence of violence being a social determinant itself. It is time to address violence as the health crisis that it is and activate our nation's healthcare and public health systems to work with communities and other sectors to end this epidemic.<sup>xi</sup> In closing, the City of Milwaukee asks for enhanced federal partnership which may include more appropriations for local violence prevention efforts, more federal grants for mental health services, and consideration of proposals such as Congresswoman Moore's bill to build community capacity for conflict de-escalation and violence prevention. The City of Milwaukee is eager to be an active partner to the House and Senate in finding shared solutions to reduce violence in America's cities.

---

Reggie Moore  
Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention  
414.286.8553 | [reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov](mailto:reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov)

<sup>i</sup> <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/history-violence-public-health-problem/2009-02>

iii “Devah Pager, *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).”

<sup>vi</sup> [http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/06-11\\_rep\\_dangersofdetention\\_jj.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/06-11_rep_dangersofdetention_jj.pdf)

viii <https://www.wuwm.com/post/evicted-book-paints-heartbreaking-picture-milwaukee-under-stress#stream/0>

ix “Bruce Western et al., “Stress and Hardship after Prison,” *American Journal of Sociology* 120, no. 5 (2015): 1512–47.”

---

<sup>x</sup> David-Ferdon C., Vivolo-Kantor A. M., Dahlberg L. L., Marshall K. J., Rainford N. & Hall J. E. (2016). A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>xi</sup> <http://violenceepidemic.com>

<sup>xii</sup> <http://violenceepidemic.com/framework>

**Hearing on Community Responses to Gun Violence in our Cities**  
 September 26, 2019, 12:00 p.m.  
 Testimony of Reggie Moore

**Sandra Parks**



<https://images.app.goo.gl/34YbCwcuMvio46Yh6>

13-year-old Sandra Parks was hit by a bullet fired from an assault rifle outside of her house that struck her in her own bedroom Nov. 19, 2018. Sandra wrote an award-winning essay about the constant shootings in her hometown of Milwaukee and elsewhere, and the emotional toll they have on young people like her.

**Quanita “Tay” Jackson**



<https://www.tmj4.com/news/local-news/long-live-tay-hundreds-gather-to-honor-tay-jackson-at-memorial-service>

20-year-old Quanita Tay Jackson was known as a peace activist as was killed one day after organizing a successful basketball tournament for peace. She was caught in the crossfire of two cars shooting at each other on Sunday, August 25, 2019.

**Laylah Petersen**



<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/crime/2016/09/29/laylah-peterson-homicide-case-goes-jury/91262674/>

5-year-old Laylah Petersen was killed on November 6, 2014 while sitting on her grandfather's lap in his house when bullets fired outside the house struck her.

**Za'Layia Jenkins**



<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/crime/2018/06/15/zalayia-jenkins-milwaukee-man-sentenced-girls-shooting-homicide/702401002/>

9-year-old Za'Layia Jenkins died May 11, 2016, 11 days after she was shot inside a relative's home.

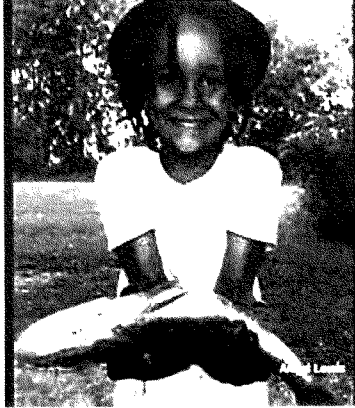
**Bill Thao**



<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/investigations/2019/02/15/da-investigating-if-police-got-wrong-man-baby-bill-thao-murder-milwaukee/2869528002/>

Bill Thao, only 13- months-old, was playing on the floor of a relative's home on Dec. 27, 2014, when three gunmen in the street fired 41 bullets at his home.

**Justin Evans, Jr.**



<https://images.app.goo.gl/w1hsSuciTavogwW77>

6-year-old Justin Evans, Jr. was shot July 22, 2017, in his grandmother's yard as he prepared to go fishing with a relative. He was the youngest victim to die by gunfire that year.

**Brooklyn Harris**



<https://images.app.goo.gl/SjhkySzLggtGvwWy9>

3-year-old Brooklyn Harris was shot and killed inside a car during a road rage incident July 13, 2019, near North 42nd Street and West Concordia Avenue.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much.

And before we go to the next witness, I just wanted to detour a little bit and let Representative Jackson Lee have a few words before she has to leave, and then we will come to you, Mr. Toure.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me accept the courtesies in the proficient and efficient manner to respect all members, but I had to acknowledge all the witnesses, first of all, and to hear you talk about the redemption, as opposed to incarceration and murder and death at the end. But I want to acknowledge my fellow Texan and fellow Houstonian Amber Goodwin and to let her know that if she sees me stepping out, I am managing bills on the floor. That is another place way away.

But I wanted to say not only does she have the wisdom to organize and be the founding member, the director of the Community Justice Action Fund and the Community Justice Reform Coalition dealing with gun violence, but we have worked together in organizing and empowering people. And if there is anyone that can be solution oriented on these questions, Madam Chair and to the ranking member, it is Amber, along with her fellow witnesses.

And Amber, I look forward to us being in tandem as we sort of lift this up in the many challenges that we have in our hometown, but in the Nation. Let me thank you for the work that you have done and my privilege to be here to welcome you.

Forgive me. I hope you will stay around, and I can catch up with you, if I am allowed to say that on the record.

Thank you very much. Madam Chair, let me yield back to you as I thank this fellow Texan.

Thank you.

Ms. GOODWIN. Thank you.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Toure.

#### TESTIMONY OF MAJ TOURE

Mr. TOURE. Good morning. Thanks, everybody, for having me. I appreciate everyone listening.

Can you all hear me? Good? Okay.

Good afternoon. My name is Maj Toure. I am the cofounder of Black Guns Matter. Our organization travels around the country to address firearms-related rights and responsibilities. Each one of our classes, which happen in libraries, churches, recreation centers, and even on street corners, where we discuss firearm safety, conflict resolution, and the law.

My travels have afforded me a unique opportunity to see firsthand the issue of violence in our urban centers, as well as the failures and successes of various approaches. Black Guns Matter started 4 years ago, and the data we have collected has been and will continue to be a very valuable tool in saving lives and protecting freedoms as stated in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Personally, I know that today's hearing is centered on quelling the violence in urban communities, but the phrasing is a bit off. We do not have a gun violence issue in our urban centers. But we do have a host of other issues that, coupled with the lack of de-escalation tools, lead to violence.

What we are experiencing is not an issue with guns, per se, but more lack of ability to navigate trauma. If we are going to address



violence in urban America, we need to address violence of all kinds. Singling out firearms is a tremendous misstep in solving the issue, and I hope my testimony today will assist in redirecting our focus.

One of the first ways that we have tackled this issue with Black Guns Matter is by identifying and labeling answers as “solutionary.” Giving urban Americans tangible skills has been very impactful because we define not only what our approach is, but also a parameter for staying the course of solution-based thinking. By naming what we are doing, we have given Americans all around the country an ideology to galvanize around solutions more so than further focusing on the problem.

Our focus is solutions to violence. Our approach is conflict resolution. Our goal is saving lives and mitigating trauma. Our results have been and are healing while defending freedoms. This is the solutionary way that has been effective.

In 2016, when we started Black Guns Matter, it was a result of a steady barrage of media images that depicted our communities as violent and savage. That year, one of my best friends was shot in the head because of negligence.

As news of his death circulated, I couldn’t—

Ms. BASS. Your microphone?

Mr. TOURE. As news—my microphone is turned off. Is it on?

Ms. BASS. Ms. Goodwin, maybe you could move your mike over? Let us see.

Mr. TOURE. How about this one?

Ms. BASS. Yes.

Mr. TOURE. Okay, cool. Try it again.

As news of his death circulated, I couldn’t help but think how easy it would have been to ensure he knew the basics of conflict resolution and safety. I recognized that in addition to doing a voter registration drive that year, we needed to do a license to carry drive by inviting people in my community to be safe and responsible gun owners.

That year, we hosted our first class in North Philadelphia, where I am from, expecting 35 people. Instead, 350 showed up to learn. Guns are a taboo topic in urban America. Therefore, safety training has purposely been withheld in our communities, and the homicide rates are a direct reflection of that ignorance.

That year we started Black Guns Matter, Philadelphia saw the lowest firearm-related deaths it had since 1979. After weekly ongoing classes, which continued to overflow from the space, we began getting calls in other cities. We need you to come to Baltimore, Chicago, Brooklyn, Milwaukee, Compton, to host some of these classes.

With the support of crowdfunding, we started a 13 cities tour, began visiting cities with the highest homicide rates to inform members of the community on conflict resolution, de-escalation, and training. This is a place where people from both sides of the aisle can agree that this simple act of free education is saving people in my community from prison, negligence, and death.

I want to take this time, this moment to provide a bit more in-depth information about what our classes include. Also I want to let you know that we have now trained over hundreds of thousands of people across the country and have been in almost all 50 States,

taking an approach that not only preserves freedoms but empowers the people.

The first component to every class is firearm safety. The power that comes with firearms ownership is also a tremendous responsibility. Safety training and education to prevent negligent death is something we control with proper knowledge around firearm safety.

I have a little bit of time left. So I am going to cut back on some of this testimony.

The LAW. Lawyers, prison, families, freedom. We have tremendous success in sharing local laws by inviting lawyers to teach beginners who may not know local carry, proper storage and handling laws, and things of such.

The last one, conflict resolution. According to the CDC, of the 12,979 firearm homicides in the United States in 2015, 81 percent occurred in urban areas. For example, 2014, in Philadelphia's safest police district, which is approximately 85 percent white, no one was reported to be killed by gun violence. The homicide rate for black Americans in all 50 States is on average 8 times higher.

Importantly, most urban areas, especially those that experience the most gun violence, are characterized by poverty, inequality, racial segregation, and a lack of education around firearm safety.

In closing, in the last 4 years, we have developed a curriculum. This is developed. We have developed a curriculum based on lived experience and case studies all around this Nation and some of the areas that suffer the most poverty, human rights restrictions, and negligence in the country. Our experiences with applying these solutions have been that most people, regardless of political affiliation, respect our people-powered initiative.

Communities can solve these problems on our own primarily because we have taken this holistic, solution-based approach more than the "guns are bad, and the problems will just go away if you restrict them" attempt.

To add more restrictions to good Americans solves nothing. Education and solidarity around intelligence has been the most productive means of striking balance between solutions and respect for rights. And I don't in any way think punishment solves problems more than proper education from a holistic and freedom-based perspective.

Thank you for your time. I know that we, as Americans, can solve this issue with logic and respect for our Bill of Rights.

[The statement of Mr. Toure follows:]

## Community Responses To Violence In Our Cities Maj Toure

## Black Guns Matter

Good afternoon. My name is Maj Toure and I am the co-founder of Black Guns Matter. Our organization travels around the country to address firearms related rights and responsibilities. Each one of our classes, which happen in libraries, churches, recreation centers, and even on street corners where we discuss firearm safety, conflict resolution, and the law. My travels have afforded me a unique opportunity to see first hand the issue of violence in our urban centers, as well as the failures and successes of various approaches. Black Guns Matters started four years ago and the data we have collected has been, and will continue to be, a very valuable tool in saving lives and protecting freedoms as stated in the Constitution and Bill Of Rights.

Firstly, I know that today's hearings are centered on quelling the violence in Urban communities, but the phrasing is a bit off. We do not have a "gun violence" issue in our urban centers, but we do have a host of other issues that coupled with the lack of de-escalation tools, leads to violence. What we are experiencing is not an issue with guns per se, but more of a lack of ability to navigate trauma. If we are going to address violence in Urban America, we need to address violence of all kinds. Singling out firearms is a tremendous misstep in SOLVING this issue and I hope my testimony today will assist in redirecting our focus.

One of the first ways that we have tackled this issue is by identifying and labeling answers as "Solutionary." Giving Urban Americans tangible skills has been very impactful, because we define not only what our approach is, but also a parameter for staying the course of solution-based thinking. By naming what we are DOING, we have given Americans all around the country an ideology to galvanize around solutions more so than further focusing on the problem. Our focus is solutions to violence, our approach is conflict resolution, our goal is saving lives and mitigating trauma, our results are healing while defending freedoms. This is the Solutionary way that has been effective.

In 2016, when we started Black Guns Matter, it was a result of a steady barrage of media images that depicted our communities as violent and savage. That year one of my best friends was shot in the head because of negligence. As news of his death circulated, I couldn't help but think how easy it would have been to ensure he knew the basics of conflict resolution and safety. I recognized that in addition to doing a voter registration drive that year, we needed to do a license to carry drive by inviting people in my community to be safe and responsible owners. That year we hosted our first class in North Philadelphia, expecting 35 people, instead 350 showed up to learn. Guns are a taboo topic in Urban American therefore safety training has purposefully been withheld in our communities and the homicide rates are a direct reflection of that ignorance. The year we started Black Guns Matter, Philadelphia saw the lowest firearm related deaths in Philadelphia since 1976.

After weekly ongoing classes which continued to overflow from the space, we began getting calls from my homies in other cities. They said, “We need you to come here to Baltimore, to Chicago, to Brooklyn, to Compton and host some classes.” With the support of crowdfunding, we started a 13 cities tour and began visiting cities with the highest homicide rates to inform members of our community on the conflict resolution, de-escalation, and training. This is a place where people from both sides of the aisle can agree that this simple act of free education is saving people in my community from prison, negligence, and death.

I want to take this moment to provide a bit more in depth information about what our classes include. Also I want to let you know that we have now trained over hundreds of thousands of people across the country and have been to almost all 50 states taking an approach that not only preserves freedoms but also empowers the people.

The first component to every class is firearm safety.

a. Firearm safety —With the power that comes with firearms ownership, there is also a tremendous responsibility. Safety training and education to prevent negligent death is something we can control with proper knowledge around firearm safety. One of my neighbors, who I will call Jamal, was lost to homicide a few years ago. However this loss actually sparked his mother and younger brother in wanting to know how to properly & legally utilize, store, and transport firearms to not be a victim at all. Showing young people what to do if they come across a firearm in a park or at a friends home can be crucial to saving that child’s life. The impact of preventing ONE death is unimaginably powerful to a family that would have lost a loved one to that ignorance.

b. The law—lawyers, prison, families, freedom. We have had tremendous success in sharing local laws by inviting lawyers to teach beginners who may not know local carry, proper storage and handling laws. One of our students, Brandon, who had never faced criminal charges of any kind before, was charged with possession of a firearm simply because he did not know that he had to spend twenty dollars in Philadelphia to apply for his license to carry. This was a young man who lived in North Philadelphia, purchased a firearm lawfully from a licensed dealer, was pulled over and let the officer know he had a firearm in his glove compartment. Not being aware of proper transportation or concealed carry laws, he was charged and subsequently lost his bank teller position as well as his ability to apply for student loans or public housing. Not because he was the “bad guy” but simply because he didn’t know. Our events and classes around the nation have shed light on this information, removing hundreds of Americans from potential charges and jail time that unnecessarily would tax our already overburdened courts. This is progress.

c. Conflict resolution— Also according to the CDC, of the 12,979 firearm homicides in the United States in 2015, 81% occurred in urban areas (CDC, 2017). For example, in 2014, in Philadelphia’s safest police district, which is approximately 85% White, no one was reported killed by gun violence. The homicide rate for Black Americans in all 50 states is, on average, eight times higher. Importantly, most urban areas, especially those that experience the most gun violence, are characterized by poverty, inequality, and racial segregation. This speaks to a very

important piece of our curriculum, conflict resolution. These are a bit more tricky to gauge, but the impact of the lack of this skill set is clearly shown. In spaces where young people are shown what conflict actually is and isn't, and being presented with tools to handle each situation accordingly, this is a powerful tool. Where else are they teaching conflict resolution in our hoods? Addressing cultural differences and similarities as well as how to understand moments of tension have significantly helped. Case in point, in 2018, when we taught these fundamental principles at YesPhilly, an alternative high school in North Philadelphia, there was a potential for a shooting between two students who had pre-existing issues between each other. Both students had access to firearms and volatile tempers. One of the school students was going to shoot another student after class. I went out to these students, walked them through our conflict resolution tactic of saying 'You Right' and we were able to save two lives. One person who may have been shot and killed and another who would have went to prison for murder. This is yet another intangible that has serious impact on our community while respecting the human right to self defense.

#### 4. Closing.

In the last four years, we have developed a curriculum based on lived experience and case studies all around this nation in some of the areas that suffer the most poverty, human rights restrictions and negligence in the country. Our experiences with applying these solutions has been that most people, regardless of political affiliation, respect our people-powered initiative. Communities can solve these problems on our own. Primarily because we have taken this holistic solution-based approach more than the "guns are bad" and the problems will just go away if you restrict them attempt. To add more restrictions to good Americans solves NOTHING. Education and solidarity around intelligence has been the most productive means of striking balance between solutions and respect for rights and I don't think in any way punishment solves problems more than proper education from a holistic and freedom based perspective.

Thank you for your time, I know that we as Americans can solve this issue with logic and respect for our Bill Of Rights.

Ms. BASS. Ms. Goodwin.

**TESTIMONY OF AMBER GOODWIN**

Ms. GOODWIN. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass and Ranking Member Ratcliffe—also a fellow Texan—and members of the subcommittee, for inviting me and having the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Amber Goodwin, and I am the founder and director of the Community Justice Action Fund.

Gun violence impacts every American community. Although black, Latinx, and indigenous communities bear the heaviest burden of violence, we often receive the least amount of attention from policymakers.

Today, I speak not only as someone who has the privilege to be asked to testify before you, but also as a black woman with the responsibility to speak for the millions of people of color who have been impacted by gun violence and whose voices are absent from or sometimes silenced within the gun violence prevention movement.

I started working on gun violence almost 5 years ago, working for one of my heroes, Congresswoman Gabby Giffords. It is also where I met another one of my heroes, Congresswoman Lucy McBath. I love saying that.

In 2015, in the aftermath of the shooting in Charleston, I listened and learned from leaders like Pastor Michael McBride and Erica Ford, who have been working on violence prevention for decades. When I looked around at other gun violence prevention organizations in the halls of Congress, I didn't see anyone who looked like me who was invited to the table to discuss issues of gun policy.

I started an organization specifically to give voice to the communities most impacted by gun violence and center them in the debate on guns, but I can promise you I am not here to have a debate today. It is my hope that policymakers and advocates use their voices, information, and legislation today as a launching pad to pursue a comprehensive and holistic policy agenda that is responsive to, driven by, and done by communities directly impacted by gun violence.

I believe and I know another world is possible. One where we are not just talking about which individual has access to guns, but one where people don't want to pick up guns in the first place.

All of the community intervention strategies you will hear about today are thanks to our loved ones who have been on all sides of a gun and work of leaders around the country who put themselves in harm's way every single day. These people are our loved ones, and they are my heroes.

While there is progress, there is no one framework or approach that aims to unify the systems or sectors needed to end violence in America. In States across the country—California, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, and most recently, in New Jersey—State lawmakers are creating change, and they are doing it through policy. What I am asking today is for the Federal Government to do the same.

We must also support initiatives to combat gender-based violence because far too often, it is women who look like me whose voices

go unheard. Black, Latinx, and indigenous women are dying at alarming rates, and we need to be empowered not to just say their names, but also demand change so their names are not just another hashtag.

I could spend hours running down the list of our loved ones of color, including those most marginalized in our country, such as our trans brothers and sisters of color and those who are part of the disability community. Yet our issues are still not given the urgency, the resources, or political weight to even come close to making a difference.

I have the following requests of this body today. Number one, funding. That you allocate adequate funding for public health-focused community interventions on gun violence and that you create a gun violence task force led by Members of Congress and leaders in the community.

Number two, support. That you increase funding for gender-based violence prevention initiatives to ensure that programs are able to meet the needs of survivors and create streamlines of funding for researchers of color to continue to innovate on the proven strategies that you will hear about today.

Number three, inclusion. That you commit to the full inclusion of individuals with lived experience on all sides of the gun crisis in all future decision-making in this body.

Communities like mine are still working to address the generational trauma that comes from one incident of gun violence. Shirley Chisholm said if there is not a seat at the table, bring a folding chair. We are still bringing folding chairs to meetings and tables in Washington.

I am appreciative of being given a seat at the table here today, but as someone who has not been personally impacted by gun violence, I understand the importance of giving the megaphone to those voices that have gone unheard in the debate for so long. I actually believe it is time we flip the table over and disrupt how we really think about the possibilities of ending gun violence in America.

I also believe that if we are serious about building safe and just communities, we can't just focus on the safety of some communities while turning our backs on the ones that are most affected. We need to focus on the safety of people who live in the neighborhoods that some politicians will only visit during the daytime.

I am entering into the record copies of research, reports, and policies led by people of color organizations on the front lines of this work to help support the asks that we have today.

Chairwoman and members of the subcommittee, thank you again for taking the time to let me testify and look forward to your questions.

[The statement of Ms. Goodwin follows:]



Testimony of Amber Goodwin  
Executive Director, Community Justice Action Fund

Before the House of Representatives Judiciary Sub Committee on Crime,  
Terrorism, and Homeland Security

September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019



Thank you Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Ratcliffe, and members of the subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Amber Goodwin, and I am the Founder and Director of the Community Justice Action Fund, a project of Tides Advocacy.

Gun violence impacts every American community. Although Black, Latinx and Indigenous communities bear the heaviest burden of this violence, we often receive the least attention from policymakers. Today, I speak not only as someone who has the privilege to be asked to testify before you, but also as a Black woman with the responsibility to speak for the millions of people of color who have been impacted by gun violence, and whose voices are absent from, or silenced within this movement.

I started working on gun violence almost five years ago as a staffer for one of my heroes, Congresswoman Gabby Giffords. In 2015, in the aftermath of the shooting in Charleston, I listened and learned from leaders like Pastor Mike McBride and Erica Ford, who have been working on violence intervention for decades. What I saw was a community torn apart because of systemic racism and access to firearms. When I looked around at other gun violence prevention organizations in the halls of Congress, I didn't see anyone who looked like me invited to the table to discuss and lead on issues on gun policy. I started an organization specifically to give voice to the communities most impacted by gun violence and center them in the debate on guns. But, I can assure you there is no debate here.

Every year, close to 40,000 people die by gun violence, but Black, Latinx and Indigenous people make up a disproportionate share of gun deaths due to homicide, interpersonal violence, and domestic violence. [1] According to a report we co-authored with the Live Free Campaign and Giffords in 2017, day-to-day interpersonal gun violence constitutes a disproportionate number of those shootings are concentrated in our cities—often in communities of color. Black men make up 6% of the US population, yet account for more than half of all gun homicide victims each year. Latinx men are also disproportionately impacted by gun violence. Of America's 13,000 gun-related homicide victims in 2015, over 8,500 were men of color. Additionally, this report suggests gun violence costs the United States at least \$229 billion every year—with a single gun homicide costing nearly half a million dollars in medical, criminal justice, and other expenses. [2] According to the Centers for Disease Control, Black and Latinx young men are disproportionately impacted by this tragic violence: almost 75% of America's 14,415 gun homicide victims in 2016 were either Black or Latinx, and nearly 85% were male. [3] The Violence Policy Center released a 2019 report that says Black women are murdered at a rate more than twice as high as white women. These rates are similar for Indigenous women. [4]

For the last several years members of the public health community have stated with confidence that gun violence is a health crisis in the United States. [1][2][3] This crisis has also been recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and they

define violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” [5]

Violence impacts millions of people living in the United States and touches every part of the healthcare system. Communities and neighborhoods are still working to address the generational trauma that comes out of one incident of violence. The national cost associated with violence amounts to hundreds of billions of dollars, annually. [3]

We know that universal background checks are one method for reducing gun violence, but we’d be remiss and irresponsible if we stopped there. It is my hope that policymakers and advocates use the voices, information, and legislation as a launching pad to pursue a comprehensive and holistic policy agenda that is responsive to, and driven by, communities directly impacted by violence. I believe and know that another world is possible, one where we are not just talking about which individuals have access to guns, but one where people don’t want to pick up guns in the first place. Many of the community intervention strategies you will hear about today are thanks to the work of our loved ones who have been on all sides of the gun and the work of leaders like Devone Boggan, Anthony Smith, Kayla Hicks, Javier Lopez, Dr. Shani Buggs, Chico Tillman, Alex Sanchez, Blinky Rodriguez, Michael DeLaRocha, David Muhammed, Jabari Holder, and Ben McBride. I mention all sides of the gun because I want to be clear that hurt people can hurt people, and we will work with and continue to be led by people who previously may have been involved in crime. Every positive data point you see here today is because of the people on the frontlines who risk their lives everyday for our communities and who have the lived experience of knowing this crisis. These are our loved ones and my heroes.

Gun violence impacts a wide range of social and economic areas, including education, racial inequity, economic development, and justice reform. [2] Violence, in all of its forms, touches countless Americans, with particularly devastating and disproportionate effects on communities of color, women, and the LGBTQ community. Now more than ever, municipalities across the country are investing in public safety and police violence prevention programs that aim to decrease incidents of gun violence. While there is progress, there is no one framework or approach that aims to unify the systems or sectors needed to end violence.

In states across the country, including California, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, and most recently in New Jersey, state lawmakers are creating change through policy. What I am asking today is for the federal government to do the same.

In Massachusetts, the Commonwealth invests directly in local, data-driven gun violence reduction strategies primarily through two competitive grant programs: the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) and the Shannon Community Safety

Initiative (CSI). SSYI focuses its attention on young men ages 17-25, while the focus of Shannon CSI is preventing violence among youth ages 12-17. [6][7]

Earlier this summer, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law the California Violence Intervention and Prevention (CalVIP) grant program, which provides competitive matching grants for cities and community-based organizations to implement effective programs designed to interrupt entrenched cycles of shootings and retaliation. The legislature is also supporting AB 1603, which authorizes the CalVIP grant program by statute and strengthens the program by removing low caps on grant awards, requiring prioritization of grants from communities with the highest rate and number of shootings and homicides, and requiring prioritization of programs targeted at individuals at highest risk of being victims or perpetrators of violence. [8]

In 2019, the New Jersey legislature passed the Create and Fund the New Jersey Violence Intervention Program (NJVIP). This legislation will help with homicide reduction and interpersonal violence, and is modeled after effective state grant programs in Massachusetts and New York. The state will provide competitive multi-year grants to cities and non-profit organizations implementing effective, evidence-based violence intervention initiatives. In addition, the legislature created the Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program Initiative to interrupt these cycles of violence by working with gunshot patients in and after their admission to the hospital, and requires the state's victim counseling service centers to create new partnerships with hospital trauma centers to connect gunshot patients with violence prevention programs. [9]

In 2018, the Maryland legislature established the Maryland Violence Intervention and Prevention Program Fund (MDVIP) to invest and fund evidence-based public health approaches to gun violence prevention. MDVIP provides financial support to local governments & community-based organizations that use public health principles and demonstrate measurable positive outcomes in preventing gun violence, especially in regions that are disproportionately affected by violence. It also established a Council, anchored by the Director of the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Protection, to oversee the distribution of the funding and to review the efficacy of gun violence prevention programs. [10]

In addition to these state-based strategies, we must also support initiatives to combat gender-based violence - because far too often it is women who look like me whose stories go unheard. In a 2015 survey by the National Domestic Violence Hotline about survivor experiences with law enforcement, over half of the participants said calling the police would make their situation worse; one in four said they would never call the police again; and two-thirds said that they were afraid of not being believed and not getting the help they need as a result. One in four reported that they were arrested or threatened with arrest during a partner abuse incident. [11] Black, Latinx and Indigenous women are dying at alarming rates, and we need to be empowered to not only say their names, but also demand change, so their names aren't just another

hashtag. I could spend hours running down lists of our loved ones of color, including those most marginalized in this country such as our trans brothers and sisters of color, yet issues impacting communities of color and especially women of color aren't given the urgency, resources, or political weight to even come close to making a difference. The Reauthorization of VAWA H.R. 1585 would address the gaps in the law concerning firearms and domestic violence, and this is also homicide prevention.

I have the following requests of this body today:

1) Funding. That you allocate adequate funding for public health focused community interventions on gun violence; In order for gun violence, in all forms, to decrease or even disappear a public health framework needs to be adapted to reflect a unified, integrated violence prevention effort that encourages and supports extensive cross-sector collaboration with a focus on health. This new public health agenda would allow for more agencies to be involved and be held accountable for preventing gun violence and its health and behavioral health effects. In this model, health departments, hospitals, schools, universities, and non-profits would (1) share data on all forms of violence, (2) identify protocols for screenings and referrals, (3) develop and enhance programs and policies to prevent and reduce violence, and (4) use data to continuously increase the efficiency and effectiveness of these efforts. Additionally, that you create a gun violence task force led by members of congress and communities leaders that specifically look at amplifying gun violence as a public health issue in Black, Latinx and Indigenous communities

2) Supporting Women & Girls. Increase funding in the Violence Against Women Act, pass an enhanced reauthorization of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act to ensure that programs are able to meet the needs of survivors, and create streamlines of funding for researchers of color to continue to innovate using proven strategies. We need large and long term investments in scholarship and research that is informed not only by evidence but also by the community.

3) Inclusion. That you commit to the full inclusion of individuals with lived experience on all sides of the gun crisis in all future decision-making by this body.

Shirley Chisolm said, "If there's not a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." We are still pulling up folding chairs to most tables in Washington. I am appreciative of being given a seat at the table here today, but as someone who has not personally been impacted by violence, I understand the importance of passing on the megaphone to those voices that have gone unheard in this debate for so long. I believe it's time we flip the table over and disrupt how we think about the possibilities of ending gun violence in America. I believe if we are serious about building safe and just communities, we can't just focus on the safety of some communities while turning our backs on those most affected. We need to focus on the safety of people who live in the neighborhoods that some politicians will only visit during the daytime.

I am entering into the record copies of research, reports, and policies led by people of color organizations on the front lines of this work to help support the asks we have today.

Chairwoman, Ranking Member, and members of the subcommittee, thank you again for inviting me to testify here on this critical topic, and I look forward to your questions.

---

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) Nonfatal Injury Reports.

[2] Giffords Law Center, Investing in Intervention: The Critical Role of State-Level Support in Breaking the Cycle of Urban Gun Violence (2016), <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Investing-in-Intervention-02.14.18.pdf>.

[3] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016, July 29). Cost of Injuries and Violence in the United States. [http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/overview/cost\\_of\\_injury.html](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/overview/cost_of_injury.html)

[4] Violence Policy Center, When Men Murder Women. (2019) <http://vpc.org/studies/wmmw2019.pdf>

[5] . Violence Prevention Alliance (2016). Definition and Typology of Violence. World Health Organization. <http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/>

[6] "Section 40000005 – Safe and Successful Youth Initiative – Budget Summary FY 2019," Mass.gov, August 10, 2018, [http://budget.digital.mass.gov/bb/gaa/fy2019/app\\_19/act\\_19/h40000005.htm](http://budget.digital.mass.gov/bb/gaa/fy2019/app_19/act_19/h40000005.htm). "Safe and

[7] Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI)," Commonwealth Corporation, accessed September 23rd, 2019, <http://commcorp.org/programs/safe-and-successful-youth-initiative>. "Section 81000111 – Gang Prevention Grant Program- Budget Summary FY 2019," Mass.gov, August 10, 2018, Graziano, M., & Pulcini, J. (2013). Gun violence and the role of health care: A confusing state of affairs. *The American Journal of Nursing*, 113(9), 23-25. doi:10.1097/01.NA.J.0000434174.40289.af

[8] California State Statute. [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201920200AB1603](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB1603)

[9] New Jersey State Statute. *AN ACT concerning violence intervention in hospitals and 2 supplementing Title 26 of the Revised Statutes*. [https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills/A5000/4806\\_11.PDF](https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills/A5000/4806_11.PDF)

[10] Maryland State Statute. *House Bill 432 of Maryland's 2018 Legislative Session established the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program fund*. <https://goccp.maryland.gov/grants/programs/vipp/>

[11] National Domestic Violence Hotline <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/statistics/>

[12] [http://budget.digital.mass.gov/bb/gaa/fy2019/app\\_19/act\\_19/h81000111.htm](http://budget.digital.mass.gov/bb/gaa/fy2019/app_19/act_19/h81000111.htm)  
Carnell C. Dawn M.E. Paul D.S. Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs Work. *The Journal of Trauma Injury, Infection, and Critical Care*. Sept 2016

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

We will now begin questions. Every member of the committee will have 5 minutes. I will begin.

I just wanted to say that oftentimes when we have this discussion about community-based violence that there is the mistaken belief that people who are pushing for reforms, whether we are talking about gun control reforms or different solutions, that we do not care about the victims. But I think it just needs to be registered that the people that do the work like you, Mr. Bocanegra, or you, Mr. Moore, you work with the victims, too.

The perpetrators, the victims are the same people in the same community. And so when you are calling for solutions that involve criminal justice reform, it is not without the concern over the people who are the victims. But as long as we have certain zip codes in this country where the violence is concentrated, where the arrests and the cycling in and out of the criminal justice system is concentrated, where people don't have opportunities once they get out because we have locked them out of the legal economy, then we shouldn't expect the problem to be resolved.

So I absolutely believe in a comprehensive solution not just focusing on gun control, that we need to address mental health, we need to address education, economic opportunities. But we have chosen so far, as a nation, to not seriously invest in those areas. And so what I would like to ask you, beginning with you, Mr. Bocanegra, what would you like to see from Congress?

So you run a nonprofit organization. I don't know how you are funded. I don't know if you receive any Federal funding. But what type of assistance do you need? What type of legislation do you believe we need to do to expand and replicate your work?

I would like to ask Bocanegra as well as Mr. Moore.

Mr. BOCANEGRA. Sure. Thank you, ma'am.

So, first and foremost, I want to say thank you for the opportunity just to be able to speak and to be able to raise the issues in our community in Chicago and communities alike.

Currently, READI Chicago is about a \$20 million program that serves about 500-plus men who are at the highest risk of gun involvement. So we use science—police data, hospital data—to identify those who are at the highest risk of gun involvement, whether they are victims or perpetrators.

And in fact, there is so much research out there, to your point, that often perpetrators of violence were also victims of violence. However, at what point do we decide that they stop being a victim?

So it is my job, with the support of a coalition of organizations, to really find these individuals in the community and to provide employment opportunities in which these individuals are employees of Heartland Alliance.

Ms. BASS. What do you need from us? What do you need us to do?

Mr. BOCANEGRA. So what we need from you and from the committee is the hope that more resources are allocated to this level of work, for people who are on the extreme margins of being excluded from the community. And just last to say that in addition to that, right now all of our funding is—for the most part is coming from the private sector. We need Federal dollars behind us.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. BOCANEGRA. Especially as we are learning more about this population as well.

Ms. BASS. Okay. Let me move on to Mr. Moore.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Milwaukee is one of several cities that received a ReCAST grant. ReCAST stands for—

Ms. BASS. What type? ReCAST?

Mr. MOORE. ReCAST, Building Resilience in Communities After Stress and Trauma. It is housed in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. It is a 5-year grant, and we are entering the fourth year. And so I would ask if you would prioritize that those funds continue because they prioritize communities that have had high rates of gun violence as well as trauma.

The other opportunity, Congresswoman Moore has a bill around conflict mediation that I think could support many of the things that have been presented today, but prioritizes building that capacity in local communities as far as formerly incarcerated and folks that are doing violence interruptions.

Ms. BASS. Ms. Goodwin.

Ms. GOODWIN. I think one of the most important or, I guess, two very important pieces. One is on research. Most of the prison strategies that either you heard about today or you have on the record were innovated and actually started in the '90s. So that is Operation Ceasefire. That is Cure Violence.

But what we haven't been able to do from a research component is, one, be able to really innovate on those strategies. There is someone who is based out of California named DeVone Boggan, who has been really incredible in innovating and started the office—

Ms. BASS. I am sorry to interrupt you, but before I run out of time.

Ms. GOODWIN. Oh, yes.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Toure, you mentioned the curriculum. Is your program funded?

Mr. TOURE. We have raised about—I am back. I think they got me back online.

We raised about \$235,000 from crowdsourcing. We have been able to maintain this 50-State tour. We have a goal of \$1 million that was raised incrementally. So we spend that and go to these different cities as we do that. But as far as our—

Ms. BASS. Okay. So let me ask you all, and you can just raise your hand with this. Do you have programs that Members of Congress could go and visit so that we could learn more about what you do? Raise your hand if that is the case.

[Show of hands.]

Ms. BASS. I would just like to say before I yield to the ranking member, last year, Representative Chabot, I invited him to Los Angeles to come to visit some programs that are doing similar work, and I think it was very eye-opening. And I would like to say that maybe one of the things we could explore after this hearing is to go around and look at some innovative programs that are taking place around the country. If you would be open, I would be more than happy to organize that.

I yield to my colleague.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. I yield my time to the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Cline.

Mr. CLINE. Okay. I thank the ranking member. I thank the chair for putting this hearing together.

This is an excellent panel that has real results in all different localities around the country to address violence in our communities. It is something that we can all agree on that needs to be addressed. It is something that we should all—the best solutions are going to come from our individual districts, from our individual cities, from our individual experiences.

And in my district, we have something called Project Safe Neighborhoods. The Roanoke Division's PSN program recently completed a successful operation, making several arrests and the seizure of illegal firearms, narcotics with a street value of \$500,000, and \$80,000 in currency. And we—and law enforcement gathered intelligence as part of an ongoing criminal investigation, and those arrested were charged with various State and Federal crimes.

But more interesting to me was just the detail with which these successful programs were outlined. Mr. Moore, for example, your goals overview, the six goals—number one, stop the shooting. Stop the violence. Number two, promote healing and restorative justice. Number three, support children, youth, and families. That one, I think, in particular is critical.

Promote economic opportunity. Five, foster safe neighborhoods. Six, strengthen capacity and coordination of violence prevention efforts. It is an excellent listing of all the different programs.

Ms. Goodwin, you talked about all the different State programs that are addressing violence in communities—California, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey. Many times you have issues where there is not a lot of interstate activity. So it is best left to States. But there are times when you do have interstate activity that can involve the Federal Government.

But for these organizations, you know, READI Chicago, great example that you are pursuing here, and your focus on the idea that much of the gun violence in Chicago being the result of split-second decisions by traumatized individuals who have grown up surrounded by violence. Recognizing that many times the perpetrators of the violence were victims themselves.

And Mr. Toure, your three-pronged solutions for safety education, legal education, conflict resolution education, those are all going to the heart of the reasons why violence has become so endemic not just in our cities, but across our society. I represent a district that is—some of it is more populated cities. Some of it is very rural. But the violence persists across demographics, across different situations.

And so, working together, I think we can find these solutions and decide. Are some of them able to be replicated at the Federal level with funding, or are some of them—do some of them need to stay at the State level and just receive support from Federal, whether it is through funding or otherwise? But rather than us legislate, simply support the efforts that you are pursuing.

So I have got 1 minute left. Mr. Toure, since I ended with you, if you can talk about in particular, as an attorney, I was taught,



I tried to teach my clients that ignorance of the law is not a defense. So you can't just go into court and say I didn't know that it was illegal. Judge, jury is not going to buy that.

Can you talk about your education program there and how that is having an effect?

Mr. TOURE. Yes, so each—because we have been to all of the cities that everyone here lives in. I moved to Chicago for a month to do conflict resolution for a month. South Side, whatever side. Point being is, each locality is different.

So the people in that particular locality—for example, in Philadelphia, you know, I have had guys 25 years old have a job at the bank, purchase a firearm lawfully, not knowing that you have to spend \$20 to get a license to carry. Get pulled over, doesn't know the proper storage laws for that municipality. Now you have the felony charge. Now your life is pretty much over.

So now that may be different from Philadelphia than it is for New Jersey, you know? So having lawyers specifically that are already connected to the community to come to these classes, as well as the firearms instructors, as well as the mental health specialists at our actual free events.

Now they are not free. I mean, you know, this isn't a socialist thing. They are in a space where we want to remove the financial barrier to entry for beginners that want to come learn. So having layers there is a critical component of it.

I am not an attorney. I cannot defend you, nor can I give you legal advice. But that lawyer that is at that class can. And so this is something that is standard at every single one of our classes all across the country for the last 4 years.

Mr. CLINE. Great solution.

Ms. BASS. Representative Demings.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Madam Chairwoman, for convening us together for this very, very important topic.

Thank you so much to all of our witnesses as well for being here with us.

What a subject. As a former law enforcement officer, this is a topic that I have dealt with more than I care to admit, and I thank you so much, as I look at the work that each of you are doing in this area.

With that being said, Mr. Moore, in your community-based, on-the-ground work that you have been doing, could you just describe for us how important—as we talk about reducing violence, gun violence in our communities, could you describe for us just how important the relationship is between the police and the community? Having that strong relationships of trust and mutual respect.

Mr. MOORE. Thank you.

It is critical on a number of levels. As it relates particularly to gender-based violence, when you think about particularly undocumented families who are afraid to call the police in those situations. When you have people who want to come forward with information, but they are not protected by law enforcement in terms of being able to show up in court, all of those things contribute to the ability to solve crimes and to address at least the backend of violence.

And trust is critical, and it goes both ways. And so, when you have, you know, high incidence where trust breaks down in communities, where people either don't believe their law enforcement would be responsive or that if they are, particularly in a mental health crisis, that that person could be injured or killed as a result of calling for help, those are all factors that we hear about in our community that have to be addressed.

And so the relationship is something that we look at as a public health issue, and so we work across all systems in our city to try to address that.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Thank you so much.

And Mr. Bocanegra—I hope I didn't mess that up too much—there is a lot of talk about State rights and, you know, is this a State issue? Is this a local government issue? Certainly, there are major roles to play in those jurisdictions.

But why is it so critical do you believe, and look at the program that you have as well, it is pretty comprehensive—why is it so important for the Federal Government—if we are going to make great strides in this area in reducing violence in some of the most vulnerable communities, why is it so important for the Federal Government to have a major role in that process? And what do you see?

And if you have already said this, I am so sorry to have you repeat yourself. But if you could have any wish at all today as it pertains to a role for the Federal Government, what would that be?

Mr. BOCANEGRA. Well, the question was asked earlier, but now I have a little time to actually process the question. So I appreciate that.

I think, you know, currently, we are leveraging—most cities are leveraging VOCA funds, which are under your jurisdiction. And many cities are able to leverage that, support families and individuals who have lost someone to violence and for individuals who are impacted by trauma as one case. I would encourage the folks in this room to continue to invest and to push for VOCA resources in the future as well.

The second thing that I would ask this committee as well is that in addition to that, I think it is imperative for us to think about—and I am not a gun expert, and I am not here to debate that. As someone who has three other siblings who serve in the Armed Forces, I respect people's Second Amendment. But I will tell you this, that a lot of the people that I work with are being killed as a result of guns.

And the reason why they carry guns is because of safety issues. Safety issues because of like their current situation, circumstances that they were living. So as much as I want to convince people to put their guns down or to maybe go through the legal process of purchasing a gun, the truth is that by the time our kids are—you know, our men, by the time they're 15 or 16, they already have one or two gun offenses.

On average, our program—participants in our program have 18 arrests filed and felony convictions. There is no way they can purchase a gun legally. So I think about how do we create more safer communities as well, and I think that by doing so, we increase the economy in our cities, in our government. There are more people that look like me in places like this as well.

And lastly, I would say, you know, I know there is a big push around criminal justice reform. As somebody who's been incarcerated, right, I could tell you that people who are formerly incarcerated could add a lot of value to our society and our community.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Representative Steube.

Mr. STEUBE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I don't think there is a coincidence, to me anyways, that most of these big cities have very, very restrictive gun laws, yet they have the highest crime rates. And we can—I will first talk about Chicago, and then I would love to hear Mr. Toure.

Mr. TOURE. Right.

Mr. STEUBE. Toure.

Mr. TOURE. Yes.

Mr. STEUBE. Did I get it right that time?

Mr. TOURE. You got it.

Mr. STEUBE. Okay. And I will ask for you to kind of respond and what your thoughts are on this. But just looking at Chicago, and you have very restrictive gun laws there. Washington, D.C., has very restrictive gun laws, but they have a very high homicide rate and gun violence rate. I don't think there is a coincidence there.

But the other side of that argument would be, oh, people are getting their firearms from Indiana and Wisconsin. So these are factual numbers. So some facts on that.

You have in 2015, gun murders per 100,000 residents in Wisconsin and Indiana were 2.9 and 3.2, while gun ownership rates were 34.7 and 33.8. This contrasts with Illinois, which had 3.4 gun murders per 100,000 and 26.2 ownership rates. Chicago's gun homicide rate same year was 25.1 per 100,000 residents.

So you have neighboring States where the gun laws are much restrictive and in my—I would say more freedom for law-abiding citizens, but they have more guns and less crime.

Mr. TOURE. Right. Right.

Mr. STEUBE. So could you talk about that a little bit?

Mr. TOURE. Well, that is because some of the approaches aren't really about saving lives. You can't legislate evil. And I think what is happening is because a lot of communities have suffered from trauma, and that trauma is legit. I wouldn't be on this panel with this collective of people, understand we are in the community, right? So we are affected by that.

But the problem is when you make legislative decisions for moral behaviors that don't solve the actual issue, that is wrong. That is wrong. John Lott—it is a book, "More Guns, Less Crime." That is factual data.

We cannot argue—I have friends, family members, loved ones that have been affected by this, but you know, the data is clear. Adding more rules does not save lives. Education does.

Those areas that you are talking about that have equal or even more firearms, they also have a general culture of understanding of what your rights are as stated in the Second Amendment, but also what the responsibilities that come along with that. So that is a cultural and educational shift, as opposed to in those places like Philadelphia, Chicago, Compton, Detroit, the places that we go to regularly. Because there is not more education, openness about

firearms responsibilities and rights, everything becomes taboo. That taboo means we are not going to discuss it.

Perfect example for this, and it is somewhat similar, but it is a bit different. In the '90s, we had tremendous problems with teen pregnancy. Tremendous problems. We didn't like hide more, you know, talk less about sex. What we did was we talked more about sex and prevention, and teen pregnancy rates dropped. That is education.

So in these places, when you just try to over legislate, which is a violation of our human rights and self-defense, that is clear, and then you ask for Federal Government to help to encroach on States rights, that is another clear-cut contradiction, that does not help. The solution is informing young people, just because a lot of these young men for the most part are ill-informed. They are not educated. It is taboo, and they still live in the same rough neighborhood like I live in, you know?

So the answer here is more solution-based thinking in regards to educating. And I know it sounds weird when you say it. I know a lot of people say, well, you may be pro gun or you may be pro freedom. I think we all are. I don't think anybody is saying or genuinely saying we want to take something away from you, but you can legislate things away with an unintended consequence, you know?

So the answer here, again based on the data, not my feelings, the basic answer here is educating people about their rights. When we have classes where guys are 19, 20 years old, and we educate them on, hey, these are your rights. If you stay on the straight and narrow, you can lawfully purchase firearms to participate in the shooting sports, you know, all of these particulars that go along with that, that young man is much more likely to stay on the right and narrow so when he is 21, he can lawfully have a license to carry. He can protect his home, his freedoms.

And we are educating those people. The answer here is education, not more punitive damages for things that, again, like you said, the numbers are very clear.

Mr. STEUBE. And I have only got 30 seconds left. So I will give it to you with one quick question.

So how do you respond to people who accuse you of putting more firearms in their cities?

Mr. TOURE. Well, they are wrong, and that is the opportunity for us to educate. If someone thinks that, they are not familiar with all of the work that we do around healing and trauma.

I am not having a conversation about firearms with anyone until I am having a conversation about safe and responsible ownership and mitigating trauma. If you come to our class because you are mad, it is not time for you to learn about firearms. And we invite those people to come into our actual classes.

Mr. STEUBE. Thank you for your time.

Ms. BASS. Representative McBath.

Mrs. MCBATH. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass.

And thank you so much to our witnesses today, and I somewhat actually had the opportunity to work with a great deal in the field over the several years that I have been working on gun violence prevention. But I kind of want to take a moment today to just kind

of talk about a meeting that I had with some of my colleagues—Congresswoman Kelly, Congressman Clay, Congressman John Lewis, Congressman David Cicilline, and myself. We actually had a chance to go over to Senator Mitch McConnell's office yesterday.

And we had the opportunity to go over and to speak with some of his very own constituents, gun violence survivors from his district, gun violence survivors, volunteers, activists from all over the State. We actually had a chance to go in, and they had a chance to tell their experiences of losing loved ones to murder, suicide, and also the shooting in Parkland, the shooting in Las Vegas.

And they spoke about their injuries, the injuries that they bear that only not are physical injuries, but psychological injuries as well. One woman spoke of losing both of her children to gun violence in separate incidents more than a decade apart.

And another woman spoke of two of her relatives a generation apart, that she lost both of them to gun violence. And we did talk about our failure to take action, which is leaving many, many generations in pain.

And so many of these survivors, they are actually standing up now, and they are sharing their stories. And most, I have to say, unfortunately, are communities of color. Their communities, communities of color, are bearing a particularly heavy burden for the Senate's failure to address gun violence, for the Senate's failure to take up the legislation that we have already passed in the House to guarantee universal background checks, to fund gun violence prevention research, and to close the Charleston loophole.

So I want everyone to understand that no one in this room is immune to gun violence. I know firsthand. I lost my son Jordon in the national loud music killing. No family, no place of worship, no school, no community is immune. And we owe it to every single American in this country to take action to keep them safe.

And I applaud those of you that are sitting on the panel today, thank you for the work that you are doing in your communities to make a difference. You are taking action as we all wait for the Senate to finally take some serious action on saving lives.

Ms. Goodwin, I would like to ask you a question. You know, there is a significant fiscal cost related to gun violence, which includes medical expenses, criminal justice costs, and lost income, most of which are borne by our taxpayers. How could we better invest so that we are getting a better yield for our taxpaying dollars?

Ms. GOODWIN. That is a great question, and just on talking about the costs, it costs upwards of \$229 billion a year, just that is the impact of gun violence. What is not built into that cost, which is very important, is the cost of even shootings and violence that we don't know about that isn't reported or we don't have the research on, or people that actually may not even go to the hospitals.

The hospital cost itself is \$2.8 billion. And so, you know, one night in the hospital—and I know that there are survivors here in the audience, too, that I want to recognize—it is about \$95,000 per night to stay in the hospital if you have been shot or injured.

And so I think the cost savings for what a lot of us are talking about actually pays for itself, and we can look at what some of the States have actually been able to do. And I do think that there is a role either cross-jurisdictionally, we have seen some cities, we

have seen some States, we have also seen some counties actually take initiative to reduce gun violence specifically in communities of color. And most of it has to do with funding, but it does have to do with healing, and it does have to do with looking at the entire life cycle of gun violence.

So I will just say a couple of States very quickly. In New York State, of the last available data that we do have, the State spends around—the actual State government, about \$20 million. But the cost of gun violence is around \$5.6 billion. So we know that if you actually invest, in Massachusetts, they save about \$7 for every \$1 spent in the State of Massachusetts, which is the State that has passed legislation.

Legislators came together and said how can we solve violence that is happening in our inner cities and in our communities? And so what we do know is that there is a cost for gun violence, and we can look and kind of talk and have those conversations for how much each shooting costs. And there is incredible research that is being done around the country from people like Pastor Michael McBride, DeVone Boggan, and David Muhammad out of Oakland on what is the exact cost per shooting.

In some cities, it is over \$500,000. In some cities, it is \$1 million. And so there is an inherent cost that taxpayers are having every time someone is shot and survives. The disability community has been impacted every single day and sometimes do not have access to things like VOCA funds. So there is a huge cost of gun violence, but there is also an even less cost of actually doing something and taking action specifically on these programs that we are talking about today.

Mrs. MCBATH. Thank you so much.

Ms. BASS. Number-one reason why young men are in wheelchairs is gunshot wounds.

Representative Gohmert.

Mr. GOHMERT. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank all of you for being here.

Just seems from observing that all of you, all four of you seem to have a heightened sense of right and wrong, a heightened sense of wanting to help others, and to make this world a better place. I greatly appreciate that. Appreciate you being here.

Mr. Toure, you have talked about the classes that your organization provides, and it sounds like those were immensely helpful. I am wondering, are there any classes on parenting?

Mr. TOURE. Yes. So, one, we have groups—we usually have—I will give you a perfect example. We have had generations, 74-year-old grandmom, mom, granddaughter come to our classes the first time, to help with parenting and create scenarios there, as well as those are first time people have ever held a firearm, knew about what it was, so forth and so on.

I think the bigger portion of that, again, because I know we are having a conversation about gun violence, or violence in general, but we are also having a conversation about culture shifting back in the direction of a nuclear family scenario.

Mr. GOHMERT. Yes.

Mr. TOURE. These are the conversations that we have—

Mr. GOHMERT. So we talk about nuclear families?

Mr. TOURE. Absolutely. So we——

Mr. GOHMERT. Because we talked about improving the poverty situation.

Mr. TOURE. Right.

Mr. GOHMERT. And the surveys seem to indicate very clearly you got a better shot at not living in poverty, regardless of race, if you have a nuclear family.

Mr. TOURE. A structure. Right. So I have a friend who does this event called Aiming for the Truth, and he famously says how, you know, you show someone in parenting how, okay, I am a parent. This is my wife. This is my—you know, or my husband, and these are our children. That is the equity for your family, right? You build that equity up.

Firearms and the Second Amendment, safe and responsible ownership is how you defend that equity, okay? So these are things that we deal with at our classes.

Again, every one of the panelists today have made this clear in the sense of—and I don't want to sound so "broken recordish," but this is a holistic approach. The only area that we may have some sort of disagreement is the lack of legislating or asking more people as more so than education.

So the parental component of that is definitely in our classes at every single one.

Mr. GOHMERT. It sounds like what you have been teaching is immensely helpful, but I think about John Adams when he became second President. He made the statement talking about our Constitution. This Constitution is intended for a moral and a religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.

So it constantly occurs to me if we are not going to get back to teaching right and wrong——

Mr. TOURE. Correct.

Mr. GOHMERT [continuing]. And the best place for that seems to be in the home, then we are going to end up not only getting rid of the Second Amendment, we can't have freedom of assembly because there will be problems. Freedom of speech, we got to cut that out. It only works if people are taught about right and wrong.

Mr. TOURE. Our classes deal with morality and understanding what those high levels of morals are. Again, as I said earlier, you cannot legislate morality. It has to be educated. It has to be cultural.

We have to have a paradigm shift in these regards that makes a young person, like the brother said, not even want to pick up a gun to be violent in the first place. Or a knife. Or a bat.

Mr. GOHMERT. Well, right. Like in Rwanda, they didn't have guns hardly, but they had enough machetes to kill 800,000 people.

Mr. TOURE. Right, right.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mainly with machetes. It is the evil that is in the heart that needs to be stopped.

Mr. TOURE. Right.

Mr. GOHMERT. But I saw it over and over as a felony judge, the thousands of cases that came through my court. So often, there was no father or a mother was working three jobs, and she wasn't around as much because she was trying to do what she could.

And it—regardless what you think or just like anybody about the Bible, I found it intriguing, I believe. But intriguing, the last verse of the Old Testament before it is silent for 400 years is talking about the end. “When He comes, He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children and the hearts of the children back to the fathers.”

And it just seems like when those are out of synch and fathers don’t care, we are in trouble.

Mr. TOURE. Correct.

Mr. GOHMERT. And I appreciate all that you are doing to try to make this a better place and hope we can work together toward that.

Thank you very much.

Mr. TOURE. Thank you.

Ms. BASS. Representative Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks, Madam Chairman. Thanks for holding this hearing.

I represent Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. Parkland, one of the safest communities in the country until 17 people were gunned down and 17 others were injured. And the kids, the survivors who started March for Our Lives, knew enough to address what Representative Clay referred to earlier as the “slow motion mass shootings” that are taking place in communities all across our country.

And they knew enough to try to build a movement by going to L.A. and Chicago and Milwaukee and meeting their peers and engaging around the issues that we are talking about here today. They did a great job causing the conversation to continue about school shooting, but we have dropped the ball when it comes to the conversation that we need to be having today, which is why I am so grateful to the chair.

Look, we have got to pass Representative Kelly’s bill on straw purchasers and gun trafficking and deal with illegal guns. And we have to pass Representative Moore’s bill on community-based approaches.

But I want to, Mr. Moore, just go back to those photos you held up because it says something really important about why we are here. That picture of Sandra Parks, who you said was 13 when she was struck in her own bedroom in 2018, and that other picture you have of Quanita Tay Jackson, who was 20, who was a peace activist who was caught in a crossfire of two cars shooting at each other.

And that other photo you have of 5-year-old Laylah Petersen, who was killed while sitting on her grandfather’s lap. And these other photos that you have submitted, the 9-year-old Za’Layia Jenkins, who died while inside a relative’s home, and Bill Thao, 13 months, was playing on the floor of a relative’s home. And 6-year-old Justin Evans Jr. in his grandmother’s yard. And 3-year-old Brooklyn Harris shot and killed inside a car.

Let us be honest. There is just no question that if these horrific attacks were happening every single day, people dying, little kids dying on the floor of their home or sitting on their grandpa’s lap or getting ready to go fishing, if they happened in other communities, we would be talking about them all the time.



And—and the reason this is so—this hearing is so important and the fact that you are here highlighting the work you do is so important is because we have got to deal with gun safety, and that is a big piece of this. But your focus, Mr. Bocanegra and Mr. Moore, and the work that you do, Ms. Goodwin, too, on not just the gun issue, but the need for community-based solutions, recognizing that we have got a gun violence problem.

And we also have an enormous problem with poverty and trauma and economic opportunity, lack of economic opportunity and mass incarceration. And that needs to be on the table every day, too.

And Mr. Moore, your proposal or the plan that you submitted for the record, I think we all need to focus on. You walked through all kinds of really important things that we ought to do, and you talked about their risk factors, lack of housing and segregation and harmful norms creating a culture of fear and hopelessness, and limited employment opportunities. That has got to be—that has got to drive this debate, too.

And so I guess my question for you is when half the dais comes to Milwaukee next summer, and we have an opportunity to highlight the really important community-based work that you are doing, what do you want to take us to see? What is it that we want to make sure the world pays attention to so that when we return from that, we will be further informed and empowered to do the kinds of important work that we are talking about here?

Mr. MOORE. I am going to need more than 30 seconds to answer that. But definitely, the Blueprint represents the hopes, dreams, aspirations, and ideas of the entire community. We interview thousands of young people who are part of the process. Law enforcement, hospital leaders, they are grassroots folks who are doing things every day.

We hear the stories about the pain and what is not working. There is a lot that is happening in our city. Tay, for example, organized a basketball tournament in the park that she was killed in the next day on a day of a love. And that was organized by community members who wanted to elevate love in the city.

And again, although she wasn't targeted, rapid gunfire in our city often fired by semiautomatic weapons are taking the lives of children in our city every day. But we are also fighting back and taking a public health approach to solving this issue.

Mr. DEUTCH. Madam Chairman, I am really, really grateful for today and for our witnesses being here today. And I hope that we can do many more hearings like this to keep this issue front and center as a major part of what we do.

Ms. BASS. Absolutely. And when we are finished, I am going to ask the chair if—the chair and the ranking member, if they will allow us to visit some of your communities so that we can go in a bipartisan fashion and see what communities are actually doing to solve the problem.

Representative McClintock.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

We have been at this now for 50 years, debating these issues, and over the years, we do have experience with a lot of policies that have worked and a lot of policies that haven't worked. And it seems to me we ought to be approaching the issue in that manner.

And I pointed out that in those 50 years, we have adopted many, many gun control laws that we didn't have back in those days, in the '60s and before. And you would think that if the gun control laws were a solution to the problem, the problem would at least be getting better by now, not getting worse. But it is clearly getting much worse.

You know, I pointed out that in those 50 years we discovered that gun control laws are very effective at disarming law-abiding citizens. They, by definition, obey those laws. The problem is they have been very ineffective at disarming criminals and madmen and terrorists.

In response to that argument yesterday, Ms. Jayapal said, well, of course, criminals don't obey laws, but that is not an argument for not having any laws. And it struck me what she and others seem not to be able to grasp is that gun control laws are unique. When law-abiding citizens obey gun control laws, they render themselves defenseless against the very criminals who don't obey these laws, and we end up creating a society where law-abiding citizens are defenseless and criminals are as well-armed as ever.

That is a very unstable, very dangerous, and very violent society. And I don't think it is a coincidence that so many of these incidents occur in so-called "gun-free zones," where criminals and terrorists and madmen all know law-abiding people can't fight back.

Mr. Toure, you mentioned one of the things that has changed is obviously we have seen a big change in the culture over these past 50 years. But it seems to me another thing that changed is when somebody went out of their way to warn us that they were out of their minds and ready to do violence to others, we took them at their word.

Mr. TOURE. Right.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. We committed them in mental institutions where we could treat them, care for them, and keeping them from harming themselves or others. We have emptied out those mental hospitals over the past 50 years, and one of the most common situations that we see in so many of these massacres is the person was out of his mind.

Mr. TOURE. Right.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. They went out of their way to tell us they were out of their mind. We knew it, and we just didn't do anything about it. We used to, but we don't anymore.

Mr. TOURE. Correct.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. We are in the business of making public policy. What would you recommend to us, what changes in laws do we need to make in order to bring this crisis under control?

Mr. TOURE. Well, for one, we have a lot of those laws already on the books. First, I want to say—well, he is gone now. But to the family members, he brought up Parkland, and that young man, first and foremost, to all of the families and victims of that, you know, our energy, support, love is consistently with them, among others. Not just Parkland, Chicago, Detroit, North Philly where I am from as well.

In that scenario, you had someone who was—had the police called on him over 30 times, you know? Thirty-eight, if I am—you know, don't quote me too hard. But you have someone that clearly

had an issue. And in that space where we are trying to make sure that we look like we are actually safer than we actually are, you know, the coward of that particular county, they had a standing practice of ignoring some of those things, and unfortunately, it cost 17 lives.

So my answer to that is I think we have the laws already in place. I think that people are not following those or executing them properly for their own whatever their individual or collective reasons are.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Well, then please tell me, at least in California—each State may be different. But tell me they are powerless to act until a person they know is dangerously mentally ill actually goes out and commits a crime. Then they can arrest him. Then they can get them away from society.

Mr. TOURE. Now there is the—

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. But it used to be that they could get them committed, get them treated, and keep the rest of society safe from them and keep themselves safe from themselves.

Mr. TOURE. I think we are still talking about something more community-based. You know, there are also issues of a few weeks ago, maybe a few months ago at this point, where the grandmother saw that the grandson was about to do something silly with a firearm. A grandmom, a nanny, right? A nana got involved and stopped that young man from doing things.

This is going back to the conversation about morality. This is going back to the conversation of community development. This is the same type of holistic approach that we are talking about today.

But where we are wrong is when we are ignoring those things for legislative or fiduciary reasons. I think that we all know that these are issues, and I think sometimes the things that I have done. You are going through a divorce. You have a lot of guns. Hey, man, let me clean your firearms for you. You got a bunch of them. Let me clean them for you for a while. Cooling period.

That does not have to include more legislation. That is community involvement.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Representative Dean.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I am so glad you convened this important hearing.

And I am struck by the conversation that just took place because really what it, I think, advises all of us is we should pass immediately red flag laws. Absolutely, we should have the ability to interfere, to intervene to save lives. To say you are in grave danger. You are having a crisis. You are not somebody who was 302'd sometime in your past. You are in the midst of a crisis. Let us help you.

We know that the Charleston shooter, what happened there was his friend knew he was in grave crisis, took his gun away when he had gone into a terrible binge drinking episode. But fearing for his own liability, the friend gave the gun back.

So you have made an eloquent argument for red flag laws.

Mr. TOURE. No.

Ms. DEAN. I also want to point out—

Mr. TOURE. Not at all. [Laughter.]

Mr. TOURE. Not at all. I respect—

Ms. DEAN. So I also want—

Ms. BASS. Excuse me. Excuse me. The representative is speaking.

Ms. DEAN. The other fallacy, the myth that we just heard over and over again, and Madam Chair, I hope maybe we can dig into this some more, which is bad guys are never going to follow the law, so you can't—guns is different. It is a different topic.

I come from Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania State Police have the Pennsylvania Instant Check System. It is layered over top of the National Instant Check System. It is actually stronger because it doesn't have a 3-day default to sell the gun. It has a waiting period, and you cannot default sell the gun until you get clearance.

What that—what the data shows, not the myths, but what the data shows is that in a single year, 12,000 prohibited purchasers attempted background checks to buy guns, and they were declined because they were prohibited purchasers. So sometimes bad guys, prohibited purchasers will try to follow these laws, and the laws work. Background checks work. We need to make it universal.

I think I would like to pivot from that to just talk about the issue of suicide. I was thinking the numbers are so staggering. Forty thousand people a year die of gun violence in this country. More than half of those, 20,000—some are gun violence suicides.

Another 134,000 people are literally wounded caught in the crossfire. Think about that. Recently, at a hearing, I was asked does that 134,000 identify people who are actually traumatized, never touched by the bullet, but traumatized. And of course, it doesn't.

So I think let me start there. Mr. Bocanegra, could you talk to that issue of suicide? We know that suicide rates are up. Suicide rates, tragically, in all areas, whether it is veterans, our youth, black males, people who are poor and struggling with debt, suicide is up.

Can you talk to the issue of suicide, gun violence suicide, and also the trauma?

Mr. BOCANEGRA. So I am not an expert in that area, so I might defer to one of my colleagues here. But I would say this from experience. I have had the pleasure of working with veterans, United States combat veterans. And I could tell you that, unfortunately, we have lost some veterans along the way because of suicide. And not just PTSD, but moral injury specifically.

The second thing that I would say is that my wife, Kathryn Bocanegra, for about 10 years has worked with families who lost their children to violence. And while we don't work with families who lost their kids to cancer or any of that, specifically the trauma that comes with someone who lost someone to violence, including suicide, needs a different kind of level of support as well for the surviving family members.

And lastly, when I started my opening remarks, you know, I wish I had more time to have spoken on this. But when I was 17 years old, about to turn 18, I was going to sign up with the Marines. And I was going to sign up for the Marines because I, by that time, witnessed too many of my friends shot and killed, all of them gang members, including myself being one.

And I told myself, if I die, I want, at the very least, my parents to be proud of the fact of who I was as a person. So I was going to join the Marines knowing that I was going to get killed. And so I didn't know this until grad school, but every time that I went to a rival gang without a weapon, and I antagonized the other gang members to shoot me, those are suicidal ideologies behind that. And many young black and brown people actually experience that, but we don't talk about that as well.

And so when I think about the program that we are managing in Chicago and other programs alike, I think about how relevant trauma is. And unless it is—if we don't cure that, if we don't give it the proper attention that it needs, we will have an increase in those suicides in the different ways that typically we don't speak on.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you. And I—

Ms. GOODWIN. I can speak really quickly on that, the suicide rate.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you.

Ms. GOODWIN. So, and this comes out of the Journal—I know we don't have too much time—Journal of Community Health earlier this year. Suicide rates are the second-leading cause of death of black children between the ages of 13 and 19. And this is taking the rate from 2001 to 2017. It is a 60 percent increase.

So I am going to say that again, 60 percent increase from 2001 to 2017 of black boys between the ages of 13 and 19. It is 182 percent increase for black girls between the age of 13 and 19. The number one for black boys' way of dying by suicide is with a firearm.

So there is an increase that is not steadily increasing. It is happening very fast in our communities.

Ms. DEAN. I can't say the words thank you, but I thank you all.

Ms. BASS. Ms. Mucarsel-Powell.

Ms. MUCARSEL-POWELL. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass, for holding such an important conversation. We know that gun violence is an epidemic. It is a public health epidemic that is affecting our communities all over the country.

I actually represent a portion of Miami-Dade County. And in South Miami-Dade, we have some of the highest rates of gun violence in the entire county for kids under the age of 18. So I think that gun violence is now affecting all people. It is affecting people that are trying to go about their everyday lives when they go shopping at the mall, when they are worshipping in churches, when they go to movie theaters, nightclubs. But I think we need to accept the fact that it disproportionately affects communities of color, and we have seen the facts.

And I want to echo what my colleague mentioned earlier, Congressman Deutch, that we need to address the systemic issues of the cycle of poverty, lack of economic opportunity, and also we need to take action here in Congress to pass common sense gun reform.

I mean, you are talking about a high rate of suicide among teens. And in my district, in my community, we have two huge gun shows where teenagers can go to the parking lot and get guns from other private citizens that are purchasing these arms. So there are a lot of things that how we can address reducing gun violence in our

communities, but I do want to highlight some of the programs that I have seen that have helped.

We have—I have gotten to know my constituent who I now call my friend. Her name is Romania Dukes, and she lost her son to gun violence in my community. Michael Dukes was only 18. He was hanging out with his friend when he was killed. He was hit by a stray bullet fired during an argument that had nothing to do with him.

And this tragic and senseless instance of gun violence led Romania to take her pain and take action to help others. And she started this organization called Mothers Fighting for Justice. Romania's organization works to educate young teens about the dangers of gun violence. It has initiatives to build relationships between the police and the communities so that they can build trust. It highlights local leaders that help reduce crime and violence among the younger generation. And I think that these type of initiatives are so important to helping our communities.

I also want to mention South Dade Major Charles, who has been dealing just in the past 2 weeks with several shootings in our community. And he brought out to my attention something very interesting that I don't think we talk enough about, and it is how do you monitor young teens to—through social media that are communicating through social media, getting arms from each other, organizing crime. And it is just something that I want to bring up since we are talking about this.

But my first question is to Mr. Goodwin. Mr. Goodwin, you have talked about these community initiatives as being so important—or Ms. Goodwin, sorry. What do you think we can do here in Congress to facilitate these programs and raise more awareness?

Ms. GOODWIN. I think one of the biggest, the ask that I would have is that you look at the data and the evidence. And you know, it was said earlier today by the chairwoman, there is evidence in research from every almost Ivy League in this country that looks at the programs that you will hear about today or you heard about today that says that they are effective, and it says that they can dramatically reduce gun violence, mostly homicides, in places upwards of 60 to 70 percent.

So this isn't us kind of throwing things around. This is the data and the research that says that it works. What we don't have and what we have had to do is we have had to over rely on philanthropy or good-meaning people who want to give money to the organizations that you may hear about today. And so we do need resources from the Government, and we do need statutory legislation that actually makes sure that this legislation won't go away, regardless of who is in office.

A lot of places, and I am sure Reggie can speak to this as well, a lot of the work that has happened has, you know, has lasted through different mayors or through different people on city council. And so we need a codified law that actually looks like this at a department. Like he works within and works with the Department of Health, and so we believe that we need to have codified into law a department to specifically work on violence prevention in communities of color that actually works with people on the ground in the front lines of this.

And then we need Federal dollars that can go into those 120 cities that we mentioned earlier this year that have the high rates of homicide.

Ms. MUCARSEL-POWELL. Thank you. And Mr. Moore, do you want to comment on that?

Mr. MOORE. Yes. I want to talk about a very specific intervention called 414Life that we have launched in partnership with our Level 1 trauma center, Froedtert Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin, where we have hired folks from the community to interrupt the cycle of retaliatory violence.

Most of the shootings in our city are related to arguments and conflict. And so having folks with the street credibility to be able to detect and intervene and stop the transmission of violence is a public health approach that is showing results. Right now, we are 15 percent down in homicides and 20 percent down in nonfatal shootings as of today.

Ms. MUCARSEL-POWELL. Thank you so much. I yield back, Madam Chairman.

Ms. BASS. Representative Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Chairman Bass, and thank you for calling this hearing, which is so important.

My State of Tennessee, and particularly my City of Memphis, which is most germane to me, heavily impacted by poverty and by violent crime. A recent study by the Violence Policy Center cites that Tennessee has one of the highest rates of homicide of black victims in the Nation and that African Americans are disproportionately reported as victims of homicide.

In Tennessee, there were 323 black homicide victims in 2016, and 87 percent of them died after being shot. Nationwide in 2016, although African Americans only represent 13 percent of the population, homicide of black residents made up 51 percent of all respondents to the reports.

This is an epidemic that has long-term implications. A local publication in Memphis, the Daily Memphian, which is online but is kind of in lieu of a daily newspaper, or in addition thereto, I guess, recently published a three-part series of the impact that constant stress and trauma has on the brains of young people.

Research showed that prolonged stress and trauma can impair the normal development of a child's brain and erode a child's immune system. Children who experience chronic stress, trauma in their first childhood experiences become more prone to violence, aggression, depression, substance addiction, suicide, illness and disease, not to mention academic failure. There is a definite need for more Federal resources to help combat this issue.

And at this time, I would like to introduce that Daily Memphian report to the record and the Violence Policy Center report, as well as—

Ms. BASS. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

**MR. COHEN FOR THE RECORD**

---



9/25/2019

The Gun Violence Epidemic Impacts Black Americans the Most | HuffPost

**Contributor**

Executive Director, Violence Policy Center

## The Gun Violence Epidemic Impacts Black Americans the Most

03/24/2016 11:26 am ET Updated Dec 06, 2017

Earlier this month, men armed with an AK-47-style assault rifle and a 40-caliber handgun ambushed a backyard cookout in a community near Pittsburgh. The shooters killed five people as well as a woman's unborn child. A mother lost three adult children and two nieces in the attack. An agent with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said: "It was like a military (operation), like when I was in the Marines. That's totally what it looked like."

This was one of 15 lethal mass shootings that have already occurred in America this year, based on the federal definition of a mass shooting as one with three or more victims killed. These horrific killings are now occurring on a weekly basis in our nation.

REAL LIFE. REAL  
NEWS. REAL VOICES.

Help us tell more of the stories that  
matter from voices that too often remain  
unheard.

Subscribe Now

Here's another fact that's important to mention in the context of America's gun violence epidemic: The victims of this mass shooting were black. And it's also a fact that in America, black men and women are far more likely to be victims of lethal gun violence.

The Violence Policy Center, the organization I head, recently released the 10th edition of our annual study, *Black Homicide Victimization in the United States*. The study found that blacks represent 13 percent of the U.S. population yet account for 50 percent of all homicide victims.

9/25/2019

The Gun Violence Epidemic Impacts Black Americans the Most | HuffPost

And while mass shootings are particularly horrific, it is the daily toll of gun violence that proves most deadly.

Our study found that in 2013, the most recent year for which comprehensive national data is available, there were 6,217 black homicide victims in the United States. That year, the black homicide victimization rate in the United States was 16.91 per 100,000. That is four times the overall national homicide victimization rate of 4.27 per 100,000, and more than six times the national homicide victimization rate for whites at 2.54 per 100,000. (Broken out by gender, the homicide victimization rate for black male victims was 30.59 per 100,000. The homicide victimization rate for female black victims was 4.36 per 100,000.)

Nearly 85 percent of black homicide victims are killed with guns.

It's time to stop gun violence in America.

Violence Policy Center

As German Lopez notes in [an article on our findings on Vox](#):

*To put this in perspective, other developed countries like Canada, Germany, the UK, and Japan had homicide rates around or below one per 100,000 in 2013. The white homicide rate in the US tops even those countries' figures, but the black homicide rate is tremendously higher.*

*In fact, the black homicide rate is more in line with the reported rates for developing countries like Mexico (19 per 100,000), Panama (17 per 100,000), and Uganda (11 per 100,000).*

It's equally important to note that the overwhelming majority of these homicides are committed with firearms. In 2013, for homicides in which the weapon used could be identified, 84 percent of black victims were shot and killed with guns. Of these, 73 percent were killed with handguns.

When faced with the impact of guns on communities of color, all too often, there is a false assertion by some that homicides with African American victims are uniformly "gang-related" or connected to other criminal activity. However, our study found that when the circumstances could be identified, 68 percent of the homicides with black victims were not related to the commission of any other felony. Of these, 51 percent involved arguments between the victim and the offender. The study also found that when the victim to offender

9/25/2019

The Gun Violence Epidemic Impacts Black Americans the Most | HuffPost

relationship could be identified, 72 percent of black victims were killed not by strangers, but by someone they knew.

In addition to looking at the national statistics, our study identified the 10 states with the highest black homicide victimization rates. In 2013, Indiana had the highest black homicide victimization rate in the nation, followed by Missouri.

Below is a chart showing the 10 states with the highest black homicide victimization rates in 2013. Pennsylvania, the state where the horrific mass shooting cited above took place, ranked sixth.

| Ranking | State        | Number of Homicides | Homicide Rate per 100,000 |
|---------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1       | Indiana      | 213                 | 34.15                     |
| 2       | Missouri     | 216                 | 30.42                     |
| 3       | Michigan     | 428                 | 30.34                     |
| 4       | Nebraska     | 25                  | 27.65                     |
| 5       | Oklahoma     | 81                  | 27.36                     |
| 6       | Pennsylvania | 384                 | 26.11                     |
| 7       | Wisconsin    | 93                  | 24.74                     |
| 8       | Louisiana    | 350                 | 23.33                     |
| 9       | California   | 549                 | 21.79                     |
| 10      | New Jersey   | 268                 | 20.49                     |

Every year, there are more than six thousand black homicide victims across the nation. That means six thousand people whose lives are cut short, who leave behind grieving families and devastated communities. Meanwhile, it remains absurdly easy to access the weapons used in the vast majority of these shooting: guns.

It is both alarming and unacceptable that black men and women, boys and girls, in America face a disproportionate chance of being murdered. We hope our research will not only help educate the public and policymakers, but aid those national, state, and community leaders who are already working to end this grave injustice.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you.

I introduced H.R. 3738, the Safer Streets Act, which would create a new grant program to help reduce violent crime in our communities. Specifically, the act would provide grants to units of local government that have crime rates twice the national rate. Fifty percent of the grant funding would be reserved for units of local governments with crime rates 4 times the national average, 20 percent would go to units of local government with crime rates 3 times the national average, and 10 percent to those crime rates twice the national rate.

I think it makes sense to put the money where the problem is. The remaining funding would be reserved for emergency grants to help address spikes in violent crime.

It is unfortunate, I read yesterday that one of the bills that I voted for in this committee and was kind of proud to do because I had to overcome my resistance to voting for something that the proponents of were not my favorites, but you try to do what is right. And that was the FIRST STEP Act.

And then I read that the Leader said that he didn't want to use it in his campaigns. It was a loser and that he regretted somewhat him being behind it because he hadn't got the credit he deserved, and the people who liked it, like Van Jones, liked him for a day and then didn't like him afterwards.

We need to be doing things that address these problems and not worry about somebody kissing your shoes or kissing your posterior or patting you on the head. That is a problem we have got in this country.

Mr. Moore, let me ask you. If States and localities were given more Federal funding, how would you recommend it be spent to truly help solve the problem?

Mr. MOORE. Thank you. And I want to also underscore that Wisconsin has the second-highest black homicide victimization rate, which I think is highlighted in one of the reports you presented from the Violence Policy Center. So this is a racial justice issue as well.

Particularly as it relates to funding public health approaches to violence prevention, one of the things that could be supported is 414Life, as an example. You know, we need all the support that we can get on that, both from the local level, the State level, but also if there are Federal resources that could support training and engaging folks in conflict mediation and de-escalation, which it seems like there is agreement for that among this panel. That is something that could substantially help.

I also want to underscore on the prevention side because I see that more on the intervention. On the prevention side, there is also funding after school. When you look at cuts to the 21st century community learning centers, funding those types of programs are also important. Youth employment is also an area of focus that should be strengthened as well.

Mr. COHEN. Let me ask you this, Mr. Moore, and I may be presumptive here because of where you are from. But are you going to be for the Brewers or the Nats? [Laughter.]

Mr. MOORE. The Brewers all day.

Mr. COHEN. Well, I hope you have an awful October the 1st.  
[Laughter.]

Mr. COHEN. I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. BASS. We will close out with Mr. Jeffries.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Thank you, Madam Chair, for convening this hearing.

I want to thank all the witnesses for your presence here today.

Let me just start with Ms. Goodwin. I think you said in your testimony that black, Latinx, and indigenous people, of course, make up a disproportionate amount of gun deaths due to homicide, interpersonal violence, and domestic violence. Is that right?

Ms. GOODWIN. Yes.

Mr. JEFFRIES. And I think you also testified that black men make up 6 percent of the U.S. population, yet account for more than half of all gun-related homicide victims in America. Is that right?

Ms. GOODWIN. Yes.

Mr. JEFFRIES. And you know, from an explanatory standpoint, every gun-related death is a tragedy in America. The mass shootings tend to get a disproportionate share of attention, but the day-to-day violence is just as consequential, as hurtful, as devastating to individuals, to families, and communities. And so if you could just lay out for me briefly how you think we can take steps to address that day-to-day gun violence disproportionately impacting, as you pointed out, black and Latino individuals?

Ms. GOODWIN. Yes, absolutely. So I think having a comprehensive approach—and I know that kind of sounds like a buzzword. But all of the programs, almost everything that was addressed today, whether it is suicide, trauma, most of the programs that most of us work on actually address and hit on every single thing that you heard about.

In Oakland, in Boston, in Chicago, in places across the country, across the South, they are actually building in comprehensive approaches that have healing counselors that come to whenever there is a rapid response. Erica Ford in New York City, she has a bus that actually goes around to different communities after there has been mass tragedy happening in communities of color.

And so I think that comprehensive approach, but I also want to make sure that I add into that comprehensive approach really making sure that when we look at the homicide rate in this country of a little over or almost 8,000 homicides of black folks in this country, a large number of that is not women, but women are being killed and getting killed by firearms, especially black women.

And so I think that is also part of what we need to build into a lot of the comprehensive approaches that we see in cities and counties and States.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Thank you.

Mr. Moore, it is my understanding that there are roughly—or the United States has roughly 4 percent of the world's population, but about 40 percent of the world's guns, and so that translates into over 300 million guns circulating throughout America with law enforcement not really having a handle on who has those guns, who may get access to those guns in an unlawful fashion or in a fashion that may result in someone doing harm to the American people.

And while we want to balance, of course, the interest inherent in the Second Amendment and the right to bear arms, the Supreme Court, in a decision written by Justice Scalia, indicated that reasonable regulations are constitutional and within the purview of the Congress to move forward in the best interests of the safety and security of the American people. So I would be interested in your thoughts, being in a State like Wisconsin that I believe has not been very proactive in terms of its gun violence prevention policies, operating within that context in Milwaukee, what have some of the challenges been?

Mr. MOORE. I think—and I stated in my remarks earlier that there has been an overreliance on punishment as opposed to prevention. And again, we work with families where we understand that accountability is the first step to healing, brings them to justice and people being, you know, found as far as perpetrators.

Unfortunately, there has not been an equitable investment on the prevention side. And so at the State level, for example, we are trying to push for a comprehensive policy plus resources as it relates to gun violence prevention from the State to support municipalities, particularly Madison and Milwaukee, who have the largest populations, in dealing with this issue.

The other piece is looking at gun tracing. And so understanding to time the crime in terms of where guns are coming from and understanding that there are dealerships, gun dealerships, 5 percent of them account for 90 percent of the crime guns that are found. And so really addressing that issue of the flow of firearms, both legal and illegal, into our community.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Well, thank you very much.

And Major Toure, did I get that correct, your title?

Mr. TOURE. Yes. Toure.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Toure, you—I think you sell T-shirts on your website. Is that correct?

Mr. TOURE. Yes.

Mr. JEFFRIES. And one of them is “Make the ‘Hood Great Again.” Is that right?

Mr. TOURE. Absolutely.

Mr. JEFFRIES. And what is your recommendation as it relates to how that actually would be brought about?

Mr. TOURE. You do that by having a respectful balance between mitigating and preventing against trauma like this, as well as preserving freedoms. I think that we make the mistake when we lean, just like Mr. Moore said, when we lean so heavily on legislation and adding more punitive measures, more so than preventing, you know?

So I think that is one of the primary ways, when we strike that balance between mitigating the trauma, educating people, while preserving freedoms. And I think that is definitely how we make the ‘hood great again.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Thank you. Madam Chair, I think I am out of time. I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Representative Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Ms. Chairman and Ranking Member, thank you for your courtesies, one from the great State of California and one from the great State of Texas.

I rushed back here because I think you all are part of the most important hearing that we may be holding on the Hill today. There are many things going on. But what we are trying to do here is saving lives.

Let me first start with this detrimental concept from the schoolhouse to jailhouse—forgive me for the answers you may have already given. I see that as a pathway to the loss of life of young people.

Some years back, before it became duck for an active shooter, school systems in States began to think the way you deal with children is you assess them for truancy, you assess them for gum chewing, and I say assess them, penalize them criminally for gum chewing, for making an outburst, for stomping out of a classroom, and you begin to define who they are.

Would you just go down the row and answer that question of what that begins to do in a child's life, when they start out in school like that even as young as 5? Mr. Bocanegra. Forgive me, Eduardo.

Mr. BOCANEGRA. I need a second or two to think about that. That was a really heavy question.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. All right. Mr. Moore.

Mr. MOORE. I think when we look at the trauma that has been produced and we further traumatize young people, you may have heard about some of the issues we have had in Wisconsin with Lincoln Hills, where we took young people who had been harmed and put them in a place that caused more harm for longer periods of time, and we expected them to return back to the community feeling stronger and safer.

Unfortunately, that is not what prison incarceration produces. And we have to have a serious conversation about how we are treating young people not just when they do something wrong, but way long before that, and understand the fact that there is research out there that states that confining young people does not produce better outcomes for them long term.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you. Mr. Toure.

Mr. TOURE. Famous quote. You know, it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men and/or women.

It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men or broken women. You know, I am paraphrasing that part. I think from the school perspective, I think, again, the answer is very clear. It is less punitive. An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure.

And I think that in something as extreme that is clearly an issue that we have in our Nation today, something as extreme as firearms, we have to take that same approach and educating and changing the thought process around this seemingly taboo subject to prevent more death and more trauma. So, for me, it is education more so than just only, you know, punitive measures.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. So I am going to ask a question, Amber, in the mix so that I get my question in. My goal and vision has been, working with this great committee, to overhaul the juvenile justice system with omnibus legislation that deals with complete alternatives for juveniles when they have to be in the system at all.

So incorporate in your answer the idea that where you place a child, if you have to place them, really reflects on what will happen to them. We introduced the anti-bullying juvenile block grant money as an anti-bullying, prevention of bullying. Not enough money, I believe. But the point is, is that it was in the Department of Justice to give organizations money to try to deal with this.

So what is the need, adding to the question I have, for the overhaul of what they call the juvenile justice system—detention, indefinite stays—as relates to your work and as relates to changing the lives of children? Is it on?

Ms. GOODWIN. We see the levels of recidivism when young people especially are going through the criminal justice or the juvenile justice system.

But I just also want to put a fine point on it. You said that there are several hearings that are happening today. There is a hearing today in a different just about school safety, right? That is actually talking about gun violence.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. And I was there.

Ms. GOODWIN. Yes, and we have these conversations that are just focused on what is happening in schools. But our babies have to leave schools, right? And the ones who look like us have to deal with trauma when they walk home, what they witness and what they see. And we have evidence that shows that children are harmed in numerous ways just whenever they witness violence, when they witness gun violence.

They don't even have to be a part of it, but they are harmed in different ways. A couple of ways that I know, and this is coming from the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, exposure to gun violence specifically with children, post traumatic stress disorder, antisocial behavior, depression, stunted cognitive and emotional development, risky alcohol and substance abuse, and then high-risk behaviors whenever it actually comes to firearms.

And so we see these cycles of violence, but I think one thing that will be very helpful is not to silo away these conversations, whether it is in this body or outside of this body, because we know that there are ways that, you know, stop a bullet, but we need to make sure that we are figuring out why people are picking up guns in the first place and not just be thinking about the legality of guns as well.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank the witnesses. I thank the chairwoman for her—

Ms. BASS. Absolutely. And I hope that this is the beginning of a discussion. I think that we all, from all of the witnesses today, understand that it really is not rocket science to figure out how to address these problems. There is tons of research. We know what to do to address the root causes.

And we also know of programs that have successfully addressed the problem, and I think we have examples of those programs that are with us today. It is my hope, and I will ask the chairman, if we can—the chairman and the ranking member if we can follow this up, if we can visit some of the programs so that we can really look at how we support a comprehensive solution.



And I think we saw today that today was not the point to just look at one aspect of a solution, but to look at communities in their totality and understand that communities have the capacity to address the problems. They just need the resources.

And with that, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:16 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

**APPENDIX**

---

journal sentinel



ANGELA PETERSON / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Reggie Moore, from left, director of the Office of Violence Prevention, Chris Conley, 414LIFE outreach and resource coordinator, and Dontay Martin, also with 414LIFE, give a group hug to Berrice Parks while attending a neighborhood cookout in Garden Homes neighborhood.

CYCLES OF VIOLENCE | A JOURNAL SENTINEL SPECIAL REPORT

## **If violence spreads like a disease, it can be interrupted. How a new team in Milwaukee is trying to stop one shooting leading to another.**

Sept. 25, 2019 | By [Ashley Luthert](#) and Sydney Cryz on of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

On a still November evening, an angry man shot an AK-47 pistol at a house in Milwaukee.

He could not be sure who was inside, but that didn't matter to him.

He fired anyway.

How Milwaukee is tackling violence:

1/12

## journal sentinel

Sandra Parks who was home with her mother and younger brother.

As the community mourned the loss of yet another young person, a new city-backed group quietly went to work. It was the group's first major test.

The 11-person team known as 414LIFE has been trained to interrupt violence, keep the peace and provide support to people hurt by gunfire and their families.

The team donned their black and orange shirts and stood with neighbors and advocates outside Sandra's home for a vigil the day after the shooting.

They introduced themselves to Sandra's family. They spoke to neighbors and asked what they thought was needed to stay safe and if the shooting was related to a feud or dispute.

A few days later, Tonia Liddell, a 414LIFE member, sat next to Sandra's mother at New Pitts Mortuary as they talked to a funeral planner.

She answered questions when Bernice Parks, overcome with grief and shock, could not.

In the months following, Liddell and 414LIFE stayed with Parks while others faded away.

Liddell answered her panicked middle-of-the-night phone calls.

Chris Conley, the outreach coordinator, picked up Batman decorations for a last-minute birthday party when Parks' son turned 10.

The entire team helped Parks pack up her house and move — twice.

And when the man who killed her daughter was sentenced to 50 years in prison, Liddell was at her side.

"She was consistent," Parks said. "Everybody else wasn't looking out for us like she was."

Milwaukee police and their partners are solving crime to prevent it

### Health Department

If violence spreads like a disease, it can be interrupted. How a new team in Milwaukee is trying to stop one shooting leading to another.

### A California case study

Oakland cut its shootings in half and saw a 46% drop in homicides. What Milwaukee can learn from the Bay Area city.

Read the full cycles of violence series →



ANGELA PETERSON / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Bernice Parks, left, is comforted by Tonia Liddell, a hospital responder for 414LIFE, after Parks gave her victim statement at the Aug. 23 sentencing of Isaac D. Barnes at the Milwaukee County Courthouse. Barnes was sentenced to 50 years in prison in the death of Parks' 13-year-old daughter, Sandra.

---

**journal sentinel**

---

**Treating violence like a disease**

A long-running dispute spills over into gunfire.

A petty argument at a club leads to a snap decision to pull a gun.

A young man gets shot and then starts to carry a gun, fearing another confrontation or seeking revenge.

For years, arguments and fights have been the leading factor in shootings and gun homicides in Milwaukee. The violence spreads like a disease.

Now public health leaders are trying to get in front of those disputes, ending them before they turn deadly and preventing retaliation, through an effort called 414LIFE.

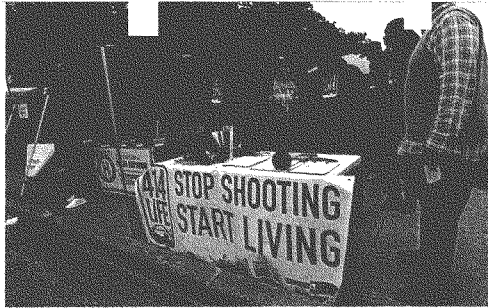
Based in the city's Office of Violence Prevention, 414LIFE uses the "Cure Violence" model and takes a public health approach to gun violence. The strategy has been used in 25 cities, including Chicago, New York and Baltimore, and was the subject of an acclaimed documentary recently screened in Milwaukee followed by a panel discussion about 414LIFE.

"Violence functions like the flu," said Terri deRoos-Cassini, a trauma psychologist at Froedtert Hospital and associate professor at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

"From the public health standpoint, you want to inoculate somebody to prevent the spread."

She said 414LIFE is similar to white blood cells, fighting an infection and stopping it from jumping to others.

## journal sentinel



ANGELA PETERSON / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

414LIFE member Steve Hopkins, from left, Uniting Garden Homes Inc. board member Deslynn Smith, 414LIFE member Hamid Al-Jabbar and 414LIFE member Montreal Robinson talk to festivalgoers at the 48th Annual Juneteenth celebration in June on North King Drive. 414LIFE is an 11-person team trained to interrupt violence in Milwaukee. [View more photos.](#)

The effort is a collaboration among the city's Office of Violence Prevention, Froedtert Hospital, the Medical College of Wisconsin, Ascension Wisconsin and the nonprofit Uniting Garden Homes Inc.

Froedtert Hospital and Ascension St. Joseph hospital treat the vast majority of the gunshot patients in Milwaukee.

The \$500,000 program was funded for its first year by the city and private donors, including Bader Philanthropies, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Live Free and Google. Nearly all of the funding pays salary and benefits for the team, which includes five outreach workers, four violence interrupters, one hospital responder and a program director.

Although the team takes referrals from anywhere in the city, its outreach efforts have focused on two neighborhoods, Old North Milwaukee and Garden Homes, that have had high rates of homicides, shootings and assaults for the past several years.

Thomas Abt, a Harvard researcher who recently released a book on preventing urban violence, said the Cure Violence model has "mixed but promising" results and it's important for cities to have consequences for shooters and resources to get people to stop shooting.

"You have to have both tough and soft approaches," Abt said.

Researchers, led by deRoos-Cassini, say it's too soon to determine if the Milwaukee program is working — the hospital component began in May — but they are tracking who is referred to the team, who chooses to speak with interrupters and longer-term patient outcomes.

**journal sentinel**

Already, medical staff have noticed more gunshot patients returning for follow-up care such as physical therapy and counseling sessions. The number of shootings and homicides in the city has steadily declined, continuing a trend that started in 2016.

As of Sept. 1, 414LIFE has intervened in 65 disputes and worked with 83 shooting victims since its November launch, giving it a deeply personal look into the city's hurt and trauma.

"One person lost somebody, somebody else went to jail. One person witnessed this, they won't ever forget this in their life," said Steve Hopkins, one of the interrupters.

"We're the disease stoppers."

### Credible, trusted in the street and in the classroom

Ray Mendoza's phone rang.

He answered and heard a man say he wanted to shoot someone who owed him money.

*Do me a favor, Mendoza said. Promise me you won't do anything right now.*

Mendoza went to the other man's house, the one with a debt who didn't have all the money. Mendoza asked him how much he could afford and then Mendoza took the cash to the man who had first called him.

Mendoza looked in the man's eyes and told him not to ask for more. The situation was over. Everyone would be safe.

"That was it," Mendoza said. "Just that simple."

The Cure Violence model only works with interrupters who are trusted and credible in the neighborhoods where they intervene. Often, the interrupters have come from the same neighborhoods where, they say, they used to be part of the problem. 414LIFE does not work with the police, in part to maintain that street-level credibility.

One of the interrupters, Hamid Al-Jabbar, grew up off Capitol Drive and as a teen, he and his friends started robbing drug houses. Al-Jabbar ended up serving 27 years behind bars and came out a changed man.

So when Donald Ballard, 48, reached out for help finding a job, Al-Jabbar understood the situation. Ballard has three felony convictions, a barrier for finding employment. Al-Jabbar took him to job fairs and interviews until Ballard

## journal sentinel

"As a felon, and doing what he's doing now, he's creating a blueprint for a guy like me," Ballard said of Al-Jabbar. "I try to follow that blueprint."

The interrupters' credibility extends to young people, too. This spring, staff at NOVA Middle and High School reached out because students had formed cliques and were fighting and disrupting class.

414LIFE mentored and counseled students, provided violence prevention workshops and had regular check-ins with several key students inside and outside of school.

When the interrupters started their work, fewer than 20 students were expected to graduate. By the end of the school year, attendance had risen about 14% and 41 students graduated, school records show.

Students formed close relationships with 414LIFE members, said NOVA Co-Director Patricia Bridges.

"Those young men — all of them were black young men — they needed people that looked like them, that went through some things, to see that they could be successful," Bridges said.



ANGELA PETERSON / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Members from 414LIFE hold a cookout in the Garden Homes area. Alpha and Omega Ministry church helped plan the August event.

## Violence prevention in the hospital

Tonia Liddell has a very specific role on the 414LIFE team: hospital responder.

Every time a person with a gunshot wound comes into Froedtert Hospital or Ascension St. Joseph, she is paged.



## journal sentinel

bedside.

"When we're able to get in right then, when it's happening, where they're hurting and they're open, that's when you come in with that love and that support and that wisdom," she said.

If the person is unconscious or subject to a "police hold" — meaning officers still need to question the person about what happened — she heads to the waiting area to talk to friends and family.

While she speaks with those at the hospital, the rest of the 414LIFE team floods the area where the shooting happened. In both places, the first few questions are the same: How can we help? What do you need?

Studies have found gunshot survivors are 20% to 40% more likely to be shot again than those in the same age range who had never been shot and that 20% of people killed in shootings had been treated for a gun injury in the five years before their death.

Once patients leave the hospital, Liddell is there to connect them with whatever they need: Housing. Addiction services. Counseling. Transportation. Child care. Disability benefits.

Liddell knows what it's like to wait anxiously in a hospital, not knowing if a loved one is going to live, and she knows the dedication it takes to serve others.

Growing up, she often visited her maternal grandmother, Johnnye Keyes Gibbs, in South Bend, Indiana. One of her earliest memories is handing out food at the Salvation Army where her grandmother worked for nearly 40 years.

"That was my real foundation that I grew up on, like a missionary vocation," Liddell said.

In 2005, her godson, Preston Blackmer, was shot and killed while he sat in a car with his girlfriend. He was 16. His death pushed Liddell deeper into the work of preventing violence, a path that led her to 414LIFE.

"I feel like this was destined for me," she said.

**'Treat people like people'**



ANGELA PETERSON / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Tonia Liddell is the hospital responder for the 414LIFE team.

### journal sentinel

at Froedtert Hospital, one of about 20 medical centers in the U.S. participating in this kind of violence prevention effort.

They represented all parts of the hospital system — high-level executives, emergency room doctors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, Medical College researchers and more — and were joined by city officials, including the deputy health commissioner and director of the Office of Violence Prevention.

Others, including Liddell, joined on a conference call, their voices piped in through a speaker on the ceiling.

DeRoos-Cassini, the trauma psychologist and the hospital's coordinator for 414LIFE, asked a researcher to start the weekly meeting with the most recent statistics.

The program had 47 referrals since it began May 6. The median age of patients was 41 and all but three had been shot (the others were stabbings). On average, Froedtert's trauma team treats about 450 patients for gun-related injuries each year.



ANGELA PETERSON / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL  
Terri deRoos-Cassini of Froedtert Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin is the trauma psychologist for the 414LIFE team.

"We're seeing patients coming in with a penetrating injury are getting older," Cassini noted.

The data update continued. One patient lived outside of Milwaukee, but the injury happened inside the city. About 53% of the patients were shot at the location where first-responders picked them up.

Steve Hargarten, director of the Medical College's Comprehensive Injury Center, recommended adding the police district where the injury occurred as another variable. Others nodded in agreement.

Liddell understands the importance of the hospital collecting data for its own evaluation. Still, she and the 414LIFE team have pushed hospital staff to remember gunshot patients are, first and foremost, victims.

Many patients in the past have said they felt criminalized at the hospital and their families, who understandably are upset, had trouble communicating with hospital staff, Liddell said. The partnership with 414LIFE has helped bridge the divide and the hospital has made changes as a result, she added.

---

**journal sentinel**


---

barriers. Policies have to change. Systems have to change."

## Ongoing support and love

Burgers and hot dogs sizzled on a grill outside a barbershop in Milwaukee's Garden Homes neighborhood.

Bernice Parks weaved through the cluster of people, a smile on her face and an envelope in her hand.

She knew she carried good news, but she didn't open it.

She wanted to share the moment with Liddell, the woman who had stuck by her side in the months after her 13-year-daughter, Sandra, was killed in a shooting.

Earlier in the day, she called Liddell, who told her to bring the envelope to a cookout the interrupters had planned to calm a block where a shooting had happened recently.

### Save the date: O'Brien Conference in Public Service Journalism

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Wed. Nov. 6  
No Studios, 1037 W. McKinley Way, #10

O'Brien Fellow Ashley Luthern will lead a discussion on her series, "Cycles of Violence," and feature stories of those affected by violence and those working toward a solution. This free event is open to the public.

Parks waved to Martha Freeman, a longtime Garden Homes resident and retired sheriff's deputy who called out to passersby by name. Beloved and respected, Freeman has served as an informal violence interrupter for decades.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

"Jason, you met my friends — the ones giving out the food?" Freeman said to a man who paused near the grill.

"You've got to introduce yourself to them. You might need their help one of these days," she said. "Did you see what's on their shirt, it says 'violence interrupter.' So if somebody gets violent with you, you know who to call."

As the man grabbed a burger and started chatting, Parks found Liddell.

Together, they ripped open the envelope. Inside, a government letter informed Parks she was approved for housing assistance in West Allis.

"Yes!" Liddell said, clasping her hands and lifting her head up, her eyes closed in thanks.

## journal sentinel



ANGELA PETERSON / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Bernice Parks, left, looks at a letter notifying her that she had been approved for an apartment in West Allis while Reggie Moore, center, director of the Office of Violence Prevention, and Tonia Liddell, hospital responder for 414LIFE, give thanks about the news.

Parks had wanted to move to a safer neighborhood for years, first applying for housing assistance in 2003. After her daughter died, she asked Liddell for help. Liddell and 414LIFE pressed city and county officials and now, finally, came the good news.

The other interrupters heard the excitement and embraced her in a group hug.

When they returned to serving food and meeting neighbors, Liddell stood back with Parks who began to cry, her excitement and relief mixing with sorrow and guilt.

She didn't have to say anything.

Liddell understood.

Contact Ashley Luthern at [ashley.luthern@jrn.com](mailto:ashley.luthern@jrn.com). Follow her on Twitter at [@aluthern](https://twitter.com/aluthern).

## How to help

414LIFE is creating a volunteer network. Those interested in volunteering can contact program director Derrick Rogers at [derrick.rogers@414Life.com](mailto:derrick.rogers@414Life.com).

414LIFE is seeking outside funding for next year. Those interested in helping can contact Reggie Moore, the director of the Office of Violence Prevention, at [reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov](mailto:reggie.moore@milwaukee.gov), or the Greater Milwaukee Foundation where the office has a fund. More information is online at [milwaukee.gov/414Life](http://milwaukee.gov/414Life).

9/25/2019

Op-Ed: How do we reduce gun violence? By treating it like a disease

-----  
-----  
-----

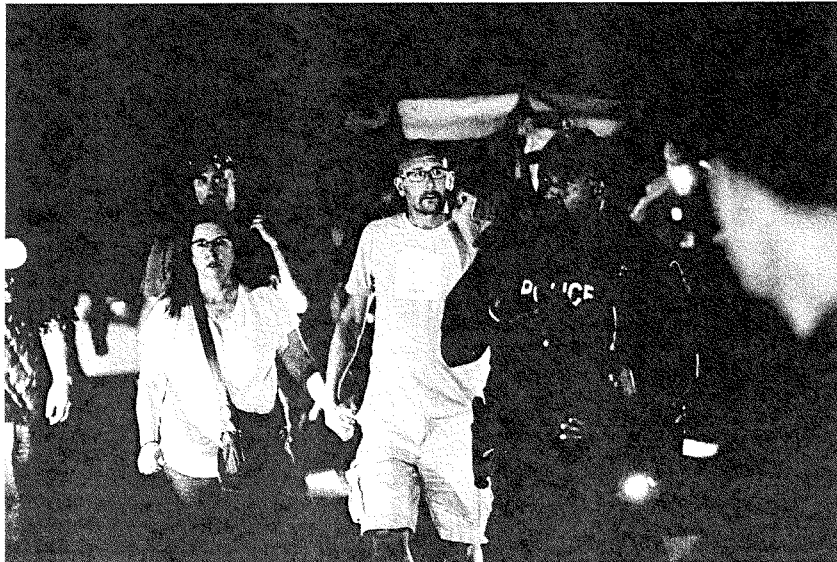
Los Angeles Times

Log In Q

ADVERTISEMENT

OPINION

## Op-Ed: How do we reduce gun violence? By treating it like a disease



Police officers escort people from the Gilroy Garlic Festival after a mass shooting on Sunday. (Noah Berger / Associated Press)

By MICHELLE A. WILLIAMS AND MARY T. BASSETT

JULY 29, 2019  
10:49 AM



This summer, U.S. cities have experienced unconscionable spikes in gun violence.

9/25/2019

Op-Ed: How do we reduce gun violence? By treating it like a disease

Just this past weekend 12 people were shot, one fatally, in Brooklyn, and a mass shooting in Gilroy, Calif., left three dead. In early June, Chicago witnessed 52 shootings during a single weekend, including 10 fatalities. In Washington, D.C., 19 people were shot in five days, including 11-year-old Karon Brown, killed in a car on the way to football practice. Nine people were shot during one eight-hour period in Baltimore this month. Even in Boston, which sees lower levels of gun violence than most major U.S. cities, at least 19 people have been shot since July 3, and the city's non-fatal gun injuries have risen by nearly 20% since 2018.

After the recent spate of Boston shootings, Mayor Marty Walsh touted the state's strong gun laws even as he lamented the city's levels of violence: "You still have a weekend like this. And it makes you think, God, what more can you do? But there has to be more."

There is.

To truly address gun violence, we need to view it through a public health lens — one that reframes the issue as a preventable disease that can be cured with the help of all community members.

This disease-control approach to gun violence is an effective one. Cure Violence, for example, a Chicago-based NGO, uses a public health perspective to help cities around the world reduce their gun violence levels. Under its model, outbreaks of violent behavior are responded to with three common epidemic-control methods: interrupting transmission, containing the risk and changing community norms. Cities that have applied these methods have seen as much as 73% drops in shootings and killings.

9/25/2019

Op-Ed: How do we reduce gun violence? By treating it like a disease



CALIFORNIA

### Full coverage of Gilroy Garlic Festival shooting

July 29, 2019

So what would this approach look like writ large?

First, American cities will need to invest more resources in evidence-based conflict diffusion. In the 1990s, Boston launched [Operation Ceasefire](#), a “focused deterrence” model developed by David Kennedy at the [Harvard Kennedy School](#) that advocated for direct communications between police, gang members, clergy and other community members and led to a 63% reduction in youth homicides. This intervention model has since been adopted in American cities like Oakland [to great effect](#). In his new book, “[Bleeding Out](#),” researcher and Harvard Kennedy fellow Thomas Abt concludes that “focused deterrence had the strongest and most consistent anti-violence effects.”

Yet such prevention efforts in American cities are poorly and sporadically funded. A dearth of federal research dollars for violence prevention has slowed progress in implementing prevention programs, in part owing to a lack of big data. Still, we are slowly starting to see [more cities and states invest major dollars in gun violence prevention programs](#).

Funding needs to remain consistent, however. In cities that have continued and expanded their investments in focused deterrence, the gains have lasted. In Oakland, for example, the [number of gun deaths has been halved since 2012](#). But in Philadelphia, where the Focused Deterrence approach was piloted [to positive effect](#), funding has stayed flat, the program has not been able to expand and gun violence is once again on the rise. Proven intervention programs need not only to be implemented but maintained and expanded — something that can ultimately save taxpayers money on expensive medical care and incarceration.

There's a role for individual residents, too. Those concerned about gun violence — which should be all of us — can support local organizations that work with their city's highest-risk residents. In Boston, for example, [InnerCity Weightlifting](#) partners with some of the city's most at-risk boys and men, providing them with social and economic capital through career tracks in personal training. [My Brother's Keeper Alliance](#), an initiative founded by President Obama, provides mentorship to high-risk boys of color. [Operation LIPSTICK](#) works with women in local high-crime areas to help them avoid the trap of [straw purchasing](#). And the [National Network of Hospital-Based Violence-](#)

9/25/2019

Op-Ed: How do we reduce gun violence? By treating it like a disease

Intervention Programs supports prevention work in hospitals and trauma centers. Prioritizing donations to any of these initiatives would help those most disproportionately affected by gun violence.

Finally, we should all work to change our community norms around gun violence. Most shooting victims in our cities live in poverty and are people of color; these gun violence inequities make it easier for other city residents to minimize their own threat and for media outlets to deprioritize coverage.

Psychological distance from these shootings does not lessen our responsibility to act. All concerned residents can and should prioritize the safety of their neighbors by fighting against misrepresentations of gun violence victims and perpetrators — including in the media — and learning more about the social injustices and traumas at the root of our cycles of violence. One resource is the Healing Hurt People initiative, developed in part by former Boston City Hospital physician John Rich, which is harnessing digital storytelling to let survivors tell their stories in their own words.

As public health educators and researchers, we firmly believe there is no disease we cannot cure, gun violence included. But no epidemic can be eradicated without the efforts of a village. One's own sense of safety should never lead to complacency when it comes to shootings in our American cities. Before we read about the next spate of gun violence, let each of us commit to new ways to combat this unacceptable contagion.

*Michelle A. Williams is dean of Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Mary T. Bassett is director of the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University and former commissioner of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.*

OPINION OP-ED

---

NEWSLETTER

Get our weekly Opinion newsletter



## How the Gun Control Debate Ignores Black Lives

By failing to talk about the majority of gun murder victims — black men — politicians and advocates are missing the chance to save lives.

*by Lois Beckett, ProPublica*

November 24, 2015

ON A DRIZZLY AFTERNOON in January 2013, almost a month after the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, that left 20 first-graders dead, more than a dozen religious leaders assembled in Washington, D.C.

They had been invited by the Obama administration to talk about what the country should do to address gun violence. Vice President Joe Biden had been meeting with victims and advocates all day, and he arrived so late that some in the room wondered whether he would come at all. When he finally walked in, the clergy started sharing their advice, full of pain, some of it personal. “The incidents of Newtown are very tragic,” Michael McBride, a 37-year-old pastor from Berkeley, California, recalled telling Biden. “But any meaningful conversation about addressing gun violence has to include urban gun violence.”

McBride supported universal background checks. He supported an assault weapons ban. But he also wanted something else: a national push to save the lives of black men. In 2012, 90 people were killed in shootings like the ones in Newtown and Aurora, Colorado. That same year, nearly 6,000 black men were murdered with guns.

Many people viewed inner-city shootings as an intractable problem. But for two years, McBride had been spreading awareness about Ceasefire, a nearly two-decades-old strategy that had upended how police departments dealt with gang violence. Under Ceasefire, police teamed up with community leaders to identify the young men most at risk of shooting someone or being shot, talked to them directly about the risks they faced, offered them support, and promised a tough crackdown on the groups that continued shooting. In Boston, the city that developed Ceasefire, the average monthly number of youth homicides dropped by 63 percent in the two years after it was launched. The U.S. Department of Justice’s “what works” website for crime policy had a green check mark next to Ceasefire, labeling it “effective” — the highest rating and one few programs received.

McBride wanted President Obama to make Ceasefire and similar programs part of his post-Newtown push to reduce gun violence. He had brought a short memo to give to White House staffers, outlining a plan to devote \$500 million over five years to scaling such programs

9/25/2019

How the Gun Control Debate Ignores Black Lives — ProPublica

nationwide. His pitch to Biden that day was even simpler: Don't ignore that black children are dying too.

In response, the vice president agreed urban violence was very important, McBride said. But it was clear that "there was not a lot of appetite for that conversation by folks in the meeting," McBride recalled.



*Michael McBride, a pastor who has been pushing the president and other politicians to increase support for programs like Ceasefire. (Deanne Fitzmaurice for ProPublica)*

Later, other ministers who worked with McBride would get an even blunter assessment from a White House staffer: There was no political will in the country to address inner-city violence.

When McBride spoke to administration staffers again about dramatically increasing money for programs like Ceasefire, he said, "People were kind of looking at me like, 'Are you crazy?' No, I'm not crazy. This is your own recommendation. You should do it!"

Mass shootings, unsurprisingly, drive the national debate on gun violence. But as horrific as these massacres are, by most counts they represent less than 1 percent of all gun homicides.

America's high rate of gun murders isn't caused by events like Sandy Hook or the shootings this fall at a community college in Oregon. It's fueled by a relentless drumbeat of deaths of black men.

Gun control advocates and politicians frequently cite the statistic that more than 30 Americans are murdered with guns every day. What's rarely mentioned is that roughly 15 of the 30 are black men.

Avoiding that fact has consequences. Twenty years of government-funded research has shown there are several promising strategies to prevent murders of black men, including Ceasefire. They don't require passing new gun laws, or an epic fight with the National Rifle Association. What they need — and often struggle to get — is political support and a bit of money.

A week after McBride and the other faith leaders met with Biden, Obama announced his national gun violence agenda. He called for universal background checks, which experts say could prevent some shootings. Other key elements of his plan — a ban on assault weapons and funding to put police officers in schools — were unlikely to save a significant number of lives.



*President Obama signs executive actions on gun violence soon after the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School. His gun platform included no money for the targeted urban violence strategies his own Justice Department described as effective. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty)*

At the press conference where Obama announced the plan, a diverse group of four children sat on the podium with him: two girls and two boys who had written letters begging the president to do something about gun violence. “Hinna, a third-grader — you can go ahead and wave, Hinna—that’s you — Hinna wrote, I feel terrible for the parents who lost their children. I love my country, and I want everybody to be happy and safe,” the president said.

Obama went over the litany of school shootings — Columbine, Virginia Tech, Newtown — and made a brief nod to the deaths of “kids on street corners in Chicago.” But his plan included no money for the urban violence strategies his Justice Department described as effective. His platform didn’t refer to them at all.

McBride, who was in the audience, said he was not surprised. He supported the president’s other proposals, and, when it came to urban violence, he had “realistic expectations.” In his

fight to save the lives of black men, McBride has kept running up against the same assumption: that “urban violence is a problem with black folk. It’s not a problem for this country to solve.”

Gun violence in America is largely a story of race and geography. Almost two-thirds of America’s more than 30,000 annual gun deaths are suicides, most of them committed by white men. In 2009, the gun homicide rate for white Americans was 2 per 100,000 — about seven times as high as the rate for residents of Denmark, but a fraction of the rate for black Americans. In 2009, black Americans faced a gun homicide rate of nearly 15 per 100,000. That’s higher than the gun homicide rate in Mexico.

To liberals, gun violence among African-Americans is rooted in economic disadvantage and inequality, as well as America’s gun culture and lax gun laws. Conservatives, meanwhile, often focus on black “culture.” “The problem is not our gun laws,” a member of the Wall Street Journal editorial board [wrote last year](#) about Chicago’s murder rate. “Nor is it our drug laws, or racist cops, prosecutors and judges. The problem is black criminality, which is a function of black pathology, which ultimately stems from the breakdown of the black family.”

Lost in the debate is that even in high-crime cities, the risk of gun violence is mostly concentrated among a small number of men. In Oakland, for instance, crime experts working with the police department a few years ago found that about 1,000 active members of a few dozen street groups drove most homicides. That’s .3 percent of Oakland’s population. And even within this subgroup, risk fluctuated according to feuds and other beefs. In practical terms, the experts found that over a given stretch of several months only about 50 to 100 men are at the highest risk of shooting someone or getting shot.

## Black Americans Are Murdered by Guns at a Far Higher Rate Than All Other Races

Firearm homicide rates by race, 1993–2010 (Rate per 100,000 people)

White  
Black  
American Indian/Alaska Native  
Asian/Pacific Islander

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), 1993–2010. Via the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#).

Most of these men have criminal records. But it's not drug deals or turf wars that drives most of the shootings.

Instead, the violence often starts with what seems to outsiders like trivial stuff — “a fight over a girlfriend, a couple of words, a dispute over a dice game,” said Vaughn Crandall, a senior strategist at the California Partnership for Safe Communities, which did the homicide analysis for Oakland.

Somebody gets shot. These are men who do not trust the police to keep them safe, so “they take matters into their own hands,” he said. It's long-running feuds, Crandall said, that drive most murders in Oakland.

Men involved in these conflicts may want a safer life, but it's hard for them to put their guns down. “The challenge is that there is no graceful way to bow out of the game,” said Reygan Harmon, the director of Oakland Police Department's violence reduction program.

These insights led a group of Boston police, black ministers and academics to try a new approach in 1996. Since group dynamics were driving the violence, they decided to hold the groups accountable. The plan was simple: Identify the small groups of young men most likely to shoot or be shot. Call them in to meet face-to-face with police brass, former gang members, clergy and social workers. Explain to the invitees that they were at high risk of dying. Promise an immediate crackdown on every member of the next group that put a body on the ground — and immediate assistance for everyone who wanted help turning their lives around. Then follow up on those promises.

The results of Operation Ceasefire were dramatic. Soon after Boston held its first meeting — known as a call-in — on May 15, 1996, homicides of young men plummeted along with reports of shots fired.

The Rev. Jeff Brown, one of the ministers who worked on the project, remembers people were outside more, barbecuing in the park. At Halloween, kids were able to trick-or-treat on the streets again.

The team behind the effort quickly started getting calls from other cities — even other countries — about how to replicate what became known as the Boston Miracle. With the support of the Justice Department under Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, many cities tried the strategy and some got dramatic results. Stockton saw a 42 percent reduction in monthly gun homicides over several years. Indianapolis experienced a 34 percent drop in monthly homicides. Lowell, Massachusetts, saw gun assaults fall by 44 percent.

A 2012 review of the existing research evidence found that seven of eight cities that had rigorously implemented Ceasefire and similar strategies had seen reductions in violence.

Other cities have tried Ceasefire, or half-tried it, and then abandoned it. The strategy requires resources, political buy-in, and ongoing trust between unlikely partners. The effort in Boston had “black and Latin and Cape Verdean clergy working with white Irish Catholic cops in a city that had a history of race relations leading up to that point that was abysmal,” Brown said. “It was really a shift in behavior, in the way we did business.”

These partnerships can be fragile. Boston’s own Ceasefire effort fell apart in 2000, researchers said. There was infighting and the police official who led it got another assignment. In subsequent years, homicides of young men crept up again.

An endless number of variables can affect crime, making it hard to know how much a particular effort works. Daniel Webster, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, noted that the current research only evaluates the short-term effects of the program, so it’s still unclear how well it works over the long term.

Still, Webster said, if you’re interested in reducing shootings among young black men, the Boston Ceasefire model is one of the strategies that has shown “the most consistent positive response.”

Jim Bueerman — head of the Police Foundation, which focuses on crime research — said that while the evidence is only “highly suggestive,” Ceasefire is still worth doing.

“It’s going to be a long time before you get the perfect evidence,” said Bueerman, a former police chief of Redlands, California. “When you come across a strategy like Ceasefire that appears to be working, you owe it to people to try it in your local community.”

9/25/2019

How the Gun Control Debate Ignores Black Lives — ProPublica



*Ceasefire requires trust between often unlikely partners. The Rev. Jeff Brown, third from right, leads a prayer with fellow clergy and law enforcement officials, including police Commissioner William Evans, second from left, before participating in a weekly peace walk. (Gretchen Ertl for ProPublica)*

Part of what seems to make Ceasefire effective is that it treats the men it targets as both dangerous and also in need of help. Such initiatives, however, fit into no political camp and thus have few powerful champions.

“It has no natural constituency,” said Thomas Abt, a Harvard Kennedy School researcher who has worked on crime policy at the Justice Department. “To vastly oversimplify, progressives want more prevention and conservatives want more enforcement. Focused deterrence” — what academics call Ceasefire and similar approaches — “challenges the orthodoxy on both sides. It makes everybody uncomfortable.”

Ceasefire has often been greeted with skepticism in the neighborhoods it’s supposed to help, where residents have reason to distrust the police. To buy into Ceasefire, McBride had to weigh the data against his own experience. In 1999, as a college student studying theology, McBride was stopped as he drove home by two white San Jose police officers. He said they

forced him to get out of his car, groped him, and made him lie on the ground while threatening him.

It didn't matter that he was a youth pastor, that he was involved in local politics, that he had just helped to get San Jose's new mayor elected. That night, he was just another black man lying on the ground. (The police chief at the time told ProPublica that while the officers and McBride gave conflicting accounts, he decided to launch a study of racial profiling during traffic stops, one of the nation's first.)

When McBride moved to Berkeley in 2005, fresh out of divinity school at Duke University, he thought he would focus his social justice work on education — mentoring young people struggling to graduate from high school.

Then a few of the young people he was mentoring were murdered. One was Larry Spencer, a charismatic 19 year old — funny, popular, “someone that everyone just really loved,” McBride said. Spencer was shot to death outside a liquor store in nearby Oakland. It was the city's 39th gun homicide in a year that left 110 dead.

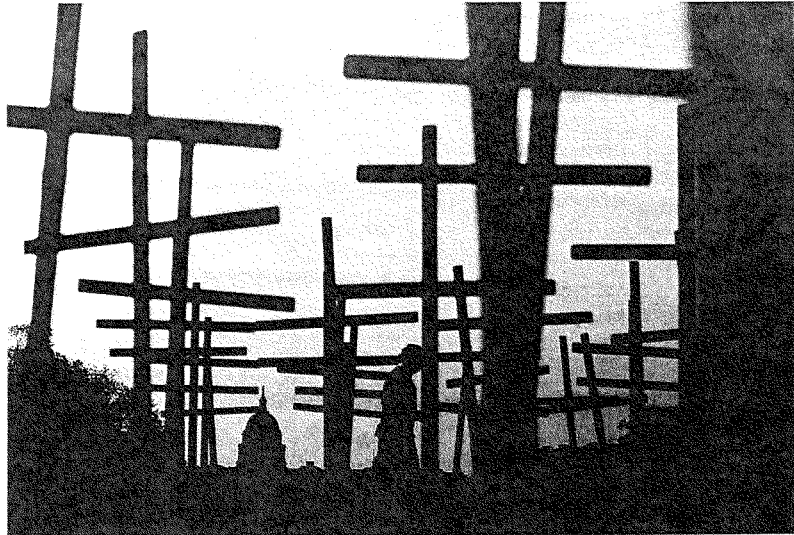
Hundreds of mourners attended Spencer's funeral, McBride said. McBride asked the congregation how many had attended a funeral before. Everyone raised their hands. How many had been to two funerals? Three? Four? He continued to count upward. “I got as high as 10,” he recalled. “Half of the young people started to cry and still had their hands in the air.”

Oakland had tried Ceasefire on and off for years but struggled to make it work. “There wasn't a true commitment to the strategy,” said Lt. LeRonne Armstrong, who managed the city's program in the mid-2000s while working in the criminal investigations unit. “We did not have the political support.”



9/26/2019

How the Gun Control Debate Ignores Black Lives — ProPublica



*After Sandy Hook, advocates placed thousands of grave markers on the National Mall to remember all those affected by gun violence. (Mark Wilson/Getty)*

McBride and others pushed city leaders and pastors to embrace the strategy.

Many of them were skeptical, but McBride thought working with the police was crucial. “We realized that in order for us to do any of this work, we were going to have to be in some relation with the police department. We pay taxes. We’re paying for the police department, whether we like it or not,” he said.

In 2012, Oakland recommitted itself to Ceasefire. It hired a full-time manager for the program, using both city dollars and part of a 2013 Justice Department grant. The city also dedicated funds to work with a team of experts who had helped other cities implement Ceasefire. The experts helped Oakland do a detailed data analysis homing in on the men who needed to be called in. There were only 20 guys at the first relaunched call-in — “but they were 20 of the right guys,” said Armstrong.

Murders dropped from 126 in 2012 to 90 in 2013, according to police department data. Last year, Oakland had 80 murders.

McBride traveled across the country as part of a national campaign to reduce urban violence using Ceasefire. Every city had its own challenges. Money was one of them. Ceasefire was not particularly expensive, but hiring outreach workers and providing social services to the men involved required a little support, as did hiring outside consultants. Outside funding also made it easier for city leaders to move ahead with a different approach to gun violence.

The Obama administration has several grant programs aimed at helping urban neighborhoods reduce violence, but the demand for grants far outstrips funding. For one 2012 grant, the Justice Department received over 140 applications and had money for just 15.

“It is a brutal process to apply for these grants. Most of them don’t get funded, and I think that’s a bit of a tragedy,” said Bueerman, the head of the Police Foundation. “You have agencies that are highly willing to do the work. You don’t have to sell them on the efficacy of the strategy. You just have to empower it through a relatively small amount of money to help them get the program started.”

The Obama administration has consistently asked for more money than Congress has authorized. In 2012, the White House requested \$74 million for five grants for Ceasefire and similar programs. It got \$30 million.

Advocates of Ceasefire have tried to press Congress for more money. Some legislators “really like these programs,” one former Hill staffer said, but not enough to take on an uphill battle for additional funding. “I think the one sort of antidote to that was if you had massive political pressure from some organization or group that felt really strongly about something and could get people riled up about it,” the staffer said. “Honestly speaking, if we are talking about urban violence, there is less of that.”

The national groups that spend the most money and do the most advocacy related to gun violence have concentrated almost exclusively on passing stricter gun control laws. Dan Gross, the president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, said he’s “very supportive,” of strategies like Ceasefire, but “it’s not our lane.”

A spokeswoman for Michael Bloomberg’s Everytown for Gun Safety said much the same. “We’re focused on what we know, which is how to improve the laws,” said Erika Soto Lamb.

Declines in violent crime over the last two decades have made it harder to galvanize support for gun violence prevention. The number of Americans murdered by guns peaked in 1993, then dropped sharply until 2000 for reasons that are still not fully understood. Since then, the number of Americans killed in gun homicides has remained remarkably consistent, about 11,000 to 12,000 a year.

Another constant: About half of those killed this way are black men, though they make up just 6 percent of the U.S. population. In 2001, when George W. Bush took office, 5,279 black men were murdered with firearms, according to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2012, it was 5,947.

These deaths are concentrated in poor, segregated neighborhoods that have little political clout.

“I think that people in those communities are perceived as not sufficiently important because they don’t vote, they don’t have economic power,” said Timothy Heaphy, a former U.S. attorney who has spent much of his career focused on urban violence. “I think there’s some racism involved. I don’t think we care about African-American lives as much as we care about white lives.”

The few congressional efforts to advance gun legislation in recent years have been prompted by mass shootings, violence that is seemingly random and thus where everyone can feel at risk.

“Congress has only moved in response to galvanizing tragedy, and galvanizing tragedy tends to not involve urban, run-of-the-mill murder,” said Matt Bennett, a gun policy expert at Third Way, a centrist think-tank. “The narrative about the need for gun violence prevention generally is driven by these black swan events, and those often involve white people,” he added. “It is horrific and tragic, but that’s the fact.”

When Adam Lanza shot his way into the Sandy Hook Elementary School with a military-style rifle and handguns in December 2012, it wasn’t clear if any laws would have stopped him. Lanza had taken the guns from his mother, who had purchased them legally.

The package of proposed legislation and policy initiatives recommended by the Obama administration in the aftermath of Sandy Hook centered on closing loopholes in background checks and renewing the federal ban on assault weapons that expired in 2004. The president also called for increased spending on mental health, crackdowns on the trafficking networks that sell illegal guns, and more than \$150



*Pastor Michael McBride leads a vigil outside of the White House on Dec. 14, 2012, to call on the president to take*

9/25/2019

How the Gun Control Debate Ignores Black Lives — ProPublica

million for a new program to put more cops and psychologists in schools. *action after the mass shooting that day at Sandy Hook Elementary School. (Alex Wong/Getty)*

Obama and gun control advocates made universal background checks the focus of their push. It wasn't a policy that was relevant to Newtown, but they saw it as the most likely way to reduce everyday gun violence and save lives. Most researchers agree that a better background check system could help curtail both urban gun violence and mass shootings, though there's no hard data to indicate how much.

There was less evidence proving that the other elements of the president's plan would reduce gun violence. Though the public quickly focused on one weapon Lanza used, a Bushmaster XM15-E2S, experts knew the assault weapons ban hadn't saved many lives. The effects of a renewed ban "are likely be small at best, and perhaps too small for reliable measurement," a report funded by the Justice Department concluded.

A former senior White House official agreed. While a ban on high capacity magazines could help some, the official told ProPublica, the assault weapons ban "does nothing." Though Obama endorsed it as part of the post-Newtown package, "we did the bare minimum," the official said. "We would have pushed a lot harder if we had believed in it."

Some gun control advocates who worked with the administration on gun legislation said they saw the endorsement of the assault weapons ban as a bargaining chip. "It's all a dance, it's a kabuki thing, and right from the beginning the White House understood that they weren't going to get a ban done," said Bennett, the gun policy expert. "They had to talk about it. It would have been insane not to. Every news report after Sandy Hook had this horrible looking AR-15, and noted that it had been a banned weapon that now wasn't."

Adding police at schools has popular appeal, but classroom homicides are exceedingly rare.

"Any given school can expect to experience a student homicide about once every 6,000 years," said Dewey Cornell, a University of Virginia professor who studies school safety.

"Children are in far more danger outside of schools than in schools. If we had to take officers out of the community to put them in schools, then actually children will be less safe rather than more safe."

Two former administration staffers who worked on the gun violence platform said the \$150 million proposal for cops and counselors in schools — which "may have been a bit outsized," one said — was driven by Vice President Biden's history of championing federal grants for hiring cops.

It also seemed like “something that people might be willing to, you know, give us money for,” a former senior White House official said.

The staffers said they could not remember why funding to support strategies like Ceasefire was not included in the plan. “Look, if it was some deliberate conversation not to do it, I would remember,” the former senior official said.

Though Justice Department grants for community violence prevention weren’t part of the post-Sandy Hook platform, a staffer said “we were watching the fiscal year 2014 budget process and making sure we were continuing to push for those resources at DOJ.” Bruce Reed, Biden’s chief of staff at the time, said budget concerns likely kept funding for innovative local efforts out of the package.

“We didn’t want to turn this into an appropriations bill, because that would be ... ” he said, shrugging. “That would cost us whatever Republicans we had hoped for.”

“The appropriations climate was, if possible, more divisive than the gun debate,” Reed added later. “We were always between shutdowns.”

Webster, the Johns Hopkins gun violence researcher, said that it would have been “more justifiable” to devote federal dollars to supporting Ceasefire and similar programs than it was to put the money toward school security. “I don’t know of any evidence that putting police in schools makes them safe, and I do know of evidence that having police in schools leads to more kids being arrested,” he said.

Two weeks after Obama unveiled his plan, McBride and dozens of other clergy members, many of them from cities struggling with high rates of gun violence, met again with staffers from Vice President Biden’s task force.

The mood at the January 29 meeting was tense. Many of the attendees, including McBride, felt the president’s agenda had left out black Americans.

“The policy people working for Biden worked with the reality of Congress,” said Teny Gross, one of the original Boston Miracle outreach workers who now leads the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago. “What they were proposing to us was very limited and was not going to help the inner city.”

Gross said he “blew a gasket.” The clergy members in the room were pleading for help. “We bury hundreds of kids every year in the inner city,” Gross recalled them telling the administration representative. “Some of the solutions need to apply to us.”

A staffer said that the political will of the country was not focused on urban violence, several ministers who attended the meeting recalled.

“What was said to us by the White House was, there’s really no support nationally to address the issue of urban violence,” said the Rev. Charles Harrison, a pastor from Indianapolis. “The support was to address the issue of gun violence that affected suburban areas — schools where white kids were killed.”

The Rev. Jeff Brown, from Boston, was angered by the administration’s calculated approach. “When you say something like that and you represent the President of the United States, and the first African-American President of the United States, you know, that’s hugely disappointing,” he said.

Former administration officials said they thought it was tragic that the everyday killings of black children did not get more political attention. “I totally agree with their frustrations,” a former official said. “At the same time, when the nation listens, you’ve got to speak, and you don’t get to pick when the nation listens.”



*The Rev. Jeff Brown, one of the ministers who worked on Boston’s Ceasefire, which resulted in a dramatic drop in shootings. (Gretchen Ertl for ProPublica)*

It would turn out there was little political will to realize the administration’s gun-violence proposals either. Measures to expand background checks and ban assault weapons died on April 17, 2013 when they couldn’t muster the votes necessary to advance in the Senate.

In his 2014 budget recommendations around the same time, Obama again asked for more money for local grant programs to combat urban gun violence. He recommended tripling the funding for a Justice Department grant that helped cities adopt Ceasefire from \$8 million to \$25 million. Overall, he requested \$79 million for grants to support similar initiatives. Obama had asked for almost twice that much to put more cops and psychologists in schools.

Congress slashed Obama's requests across the board. Instead of approving \$150 million to help schools hire cops and psychologists, it created a \$75 million school safety research program.

It also rejected his proposed increases for Ceasefire and similar programs. Instead, Congress took many of the small grants and made them even smaller. One program was cut from \$8 million to \$5.5 million. Another shrank from \$2 million to \$1 million.

In all, Congress spent \$31 million on five urban violence-related grants — less than half of what it approved for research on how to make schools safer.

There have been increasing concerns about rising murder rates over the past year in cities across the country. Some have blamed the increases on the "Ferguson Effect," — the theory that increased scrutiny of cops has made them reluctant to do their jobs — although there is "no data" to support this claim, as Attorney General Loretta Lynch said recently. It's not clear how much murders have increased nationwide. Each city has its own trend. Some have seen an uptick only in comparison to the historic lows they had last year. In other cities, violence is truly spiking. Baltimore recently recorded its 300th homicide this year, the most since 1999.

In Indianapolis, where homicides are set to increase for the third straight year, more federal funding might have made a difference. In early 2012, Indianapolis applied for a Justice Department grant to help implement Ceasefire, requesting \$1.5 million over three years. But just four of more than roughly 60 cities that applied received funding. Indianapolis was not among them.

"Absolutely, there's no doubt in my mind, if we had been awarded the grant we would have had the financial carryover to move the program forward," said Shoshanna Spector, the executive director of IndyCAN, a local faith-based advocacy group that pushed for Ceasefire.

Douglas Hairston, who works on private-public partnerships at the Indianapolis mayor's office, said the city is currently doing "60 to 70 percent" of the Ceasefire strategy.

“Federal funds would have helped,” he said. “We know that we could do more, and we’re striving to find ways to do it.”

Earlier this year, Indianapolis Police Chief Rick Hite said the city was doing the strategy “with modifications” and that the city is always using the “tenets of Ceasefire.”

There have been 133 murders so far this year in Indianapolis, according to police department data, up from 96 in 2012.

In Baltimore, Ceasefire appears to have struggled. The program’s manager resigned in March, the [Baltimore Sun reported](#). Webster, the researcher evaluating the effort, told the paper he questioned whether the rollout of Ceasefire in the Western District was “being done on the cheap and being done in a way that is not even resembling the program model.”

Other cities have seen more success. New Orleans and Kansas City both saw drops in violence that researchers have credited to their new Ceasefire programs. Chicago has been rolling out call-ins to an increasing number of police districts. Gary, Indiana, and Birmingham, Alabama, both launched new Ceasefire programs this year. Cities have often paid for the programs using money from a variety of sources: federal dollars, local governments, and, increasingly local foundations.

Obama has launched an initiative to support young men and boys of color. One of the stated goals of My Brother’s Keeper, which was launched last year, is reducing violence. The initiative is backed by more than \$500 million in corporate and philanthropic commitments. But most of that money has been devoted to mentoring and education programs.

Organizers said they would reduce violence, too, albeit indirectly. “I would challenge this notion that violence reduction resources or targeting is only to be looked at through the lens of reducing violence per se,” Broderick Johnson, the chair of the My Brother’s Keeper Task Force, told ProPublica. “It is just as important to look at it in terms of opportunities for young people to stay in school or get jobs or to get second chances.”

Last year, the Justice Department also launched a modest effort called the Violence Reduction Network, which provides cities with training and advice from former police chiefs and other crime-fighting experts. Many of the needs the network meets are basic: It helped Wilmington, Delaware police create a homicide unit. Wilmington, with 70,000 mostly black residents, has a higher murder rate than Chicago.

Running the network is inexpensive. It costs about \$250,000 per city annually. But once again, it’s not meeting the greater need. The program is targeted at the roughly four-dozen cities with the nation’s highest violent crime rate. The government is only working with 10 of them.



The White House did not comment on questions about the administration's overall response to urban violence. The Justice Department offered the following statement: "In addition to focusing on violent crime reduction in cities, the department also responded to one of the worst mass shootings in our nation's history in Newtown by identifying funding for school resource officers to help keep kids safe in schools and to assist the many victims of this heinous crime."

Biden's office also offered a statement: "Whether it's by banning assault weapons, incentivizing local police to create better relationships with residents of America's cities, or finding alternatives to jail, including diversionary programs like drug courts, the Vice President has worked to support any viable solutions to reduce gun violence in our cities."

When Jeff Brown was at the White House recently for an initiative on extremism, he ran into Biden.

"The vice president walked up to me and said, 'Reverend Brown, good to see you,'" Brown said. Biden said he remembered meeting Brown back in the '90s, when he visited Boston to hear more about Operation Ceasefire and the Boston Miracle.

"I hope we can bring back some of what we did in Boston," Brown said he told the vice president.

"I hope so, too," Biden replied.

Brown laughed at the memory. "You're the vice president — can't you do something about it?"

*This story was co-published with [The New Republic](#).*

*Produced by [Emily Martinez](#) and [Hannah Birch](#).*



*Lois Beckett is a ProPublica reporter covering politics, big data and information privacy issues.*

9/25/2019

El Paso shooting, Dayton, Chicago: Gun violence reporting varies

## El Paso, Dayton, Chicago: Media doesn't treat all gun violence the same

Genese Haseck, Aamer Maibani and John Kelly, USA TODAY Published 6:34 p.m. ET Aug. 5, 2019 | Updated 9:42 a.m. ET Aug. 7, 2019

Fifty-nine people were shot in Chicago, including seven fatally, over the weekend in mostly poor, black neighborhoods on the city's South and West sides.

But as the nation grieved over the mass shooting rampages in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, that left 31 dead, the daily tragedy of gun violence in the nation's third largest city — which recorded 42 homicides in the first 28 days of July — made hardly a blip with national news outlets and cable networks.

For anti-violence activists and social scientists on the frontlines of studying and combating the scourge of gun violence, it was hardly surprising that the national media all but ignored the bloodshed in the Windy City. Still, it doesn't sting any less.

"They're all related," said Tamar Manasseh, founder of the Chicago-based anti-gun violence initiative *Mothers/Men Against Senseless Killings*. "Dayton, El Paso, Brooklyn, Chicago. We kind of separate this to our peril. It weakens us as Americans. It weakens our fight against the NRA and gun violence when you separate urban and rural shootings, suburban and street shootings," Manasseh said.

Manasseh said in an interview that the media too often treats gun violence differently based on the race of those involved. While black-on-black violence is considered "normal," white-on-white crime is believed to be "something that shouldn't happen," Manasseh said.

**Moms were working to end gun violence:** [Then they were fatally shot in Chicago](#)

**Trump is 'inciting violence':** [O'Rourke slams media for its shooting coverage](#)



<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/08/05/el-paso-shooting-dayton-chicago-gun-violence-reporting-varies/1920237001/>

1/4

9/25/2019

El Paso shooting, Dayton, Chicago: Gun violence reporting varies

Charvonda Andrews is consoled as she mourns two women killed July 26 while working as volunteers with a group called Mothers Against Senseless Killings, Tuesday, July 30, 2019 in Chicago. (Photo: John L. Alexander, AP)

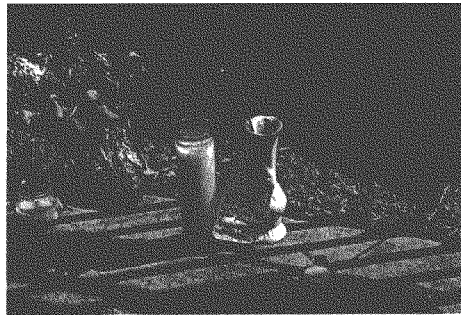
In the case of this weekend's mass shootings, however, many of those shot or killed were minorities and immigrants. Among the 22 killed in the rampage at the Walmart in El Paso were eight Mexican citizens, Mexico's government said Monday.

Federal authorities said that they are investigating the El Paso shooting as a possible hate crime. About 20 minutes before the shooting, the 21-year gunman posted a four-page screed on the Internet expressing his anger over the "invasion" of Mexicans into Texas.

Authorities have not yet determined the motive of the lone gunman responsible for the mass shooting that targeted a Dayton nightclub district, an attack that was carried out just 13 hours following the rampage in El Paso. Police in Dayton said six of the victims were African American.

James Alan Fox, a criminology professor at Northeastern University in Boston, attributes the difference in media coverage to the nature of the attacks.

"Death is different," Fox said. "Mass shootings in which there are large numbers of injured victims are certainly not inconsequential, but they do not reflect the same level of severity than ones in which significant numbers of victims lose their lives."



A memorial stands at 75th Street and Stewart Avenue, in Chicago, Tuesday, July 30, 2019 where two women were slain in a drive-by shooting Friday night. (Photo: John L. Alexander, AP)

### When is a mass shooting a mass shooting?

Two of this weekend's incidents in Chicago met the standards for what the group [Gun Violence Archive](#) categorizes as a mass shooting: an incident in which four or more people are shot, whether they were killed or not.

Other groups that study gun violence define a mass shooting differently.

Following the 2012 mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, [Congress defined](#) a mass killing as "three or more killings in a single incident." The Congressional Research Service [defines](#) a mass shooting as "a multiple homicide incident in which four or more victims are murdered with firearms, within one event, and in one or more locations in close proximity."

**El Paso shooting:** [How to help victims after the massacre of 22 people at Walmart](#)

**Dayton and El Paso:** [Guns used to kill dozens were legal](#)

### Get the News Alerts newsletter in your inbox.

Get alerted to the latest stories to stay on top of the news.

Delivery: Varies

Your Email



9/25/2019

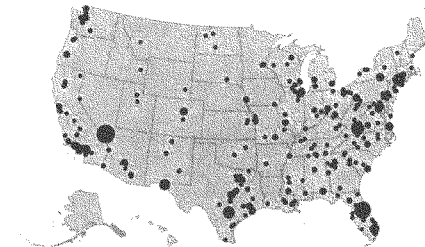
El Paso shooting, Dayton, Chicago: Gun violence reporting varies

USA TODAY in partnership with The Associated Press and Northeastern University maintains a database on mass killings. That database counts every U.S. homicide – not just shootings – where four or more people are killed, not including the offender.

The El Paso and Dayton mass shootings were the 22nd and 23rd mass murders in 2019 so far, according to that USA TODAY/AP/Northeastern University database. The first 21 mass killings this year claimed 100 lives. The shootings in Texas and Ohio over the weekend added 31 more.

### Mass shootings in the U.S. since 2006

Number of deaths: 4 • ● 58



SOURCE The USA TODAY/AP/Northeastern University mass killings database  
Mitchell Thorson/USA TODAY

Almost every state has been impacted by a mass shooting. (Photo: Mitchell Thorson/USA TODAY)

A total of 15 people, including one fatally, were shot in a pair of shootings in Chicago's Lawndale neighborhood, on the West Side. In the first incident, seven people were wounded at about 1:20 a.m. Sunday when someone fired from a car at a group standing in a park.

A little more than two hours later in the same neighborhood, eight people were shot, including a 33-year-old man who whose injuries were fatal, as they stood outside during an early-morning street party, according to police.

"These cases are underreported in the media, and that has to do with the audience," Fox said. "Most Americans don't feel threatened by a gang because they're not in a gang. But they are threatened by a random shooting."

Gary Slutkin, founder of Cure Violence, an organization that fights violence as a health epidemic, suggests that the El Paso and Dayton shootings received more attention, because of their political salience.

Several candidates vying for the 2020 presidential nomination immediately blamed President Donald Trump's harsh rhetoric towards undocumented migrants for stoking the resentments espoused by the El Paso shooter.

They also blamed Trump and his fellow Republicans for blocking lighter gun regulations. The party and much of the presidential field has campaigned for a ban on the military-style assault weapons used in the Dayton and El Paso attacks. Democrats have also pushed for tightening the federal ground check system and implementing federal "red flag laws" that would allow law enforcement to temporarily confiscate firearms from individuals are deemed a threat to themselves or others.

El Paso shooting: Baby shielded by his mother survived. His parents died

"These two out-of-the-blue events occurred in the context of the national political fight over everything – immigration, violence, race," Slutkin said. "This is the difference between epidemic and endemic: Something that is always there is less newsworthy than something that is new," Slutkin said. "It's a different syndrome of the same disease."

Manasseh cautioned the media and its consumers against "separating" violence that occurs in urban or rural environments.

### Inequality in media coverage?

9/25/2019

El Paso shooting, Dayton, Chicago: Gun violence reporting varies

A ~~survey of recent media coverage~~ by The Trace, a nonprofit organization covering gun-related news, found that major national media outlets dedicated space and airtime to last month's mass shooting in Gilroy, California, but largely ignored another terrifying shooting incident at community event in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, a predominantly African American enclave, that took place less than 24 hours earlier.

The incident at the ~~Gilroy Garlic Festival shooting~~ left three people dead and at least 12 wounded.

The ~~shooting near a Brownsville park~~ left one dead and 11 wounded. While the Brownsville shooting was covered by two national news website homepages for several hours, the Gilroy shooting received an average of 14 hours on the homepages of six national news websites, as well as 20 times more broadcast time, ~~The Trace found~~.

New York City Public Defender Rebecca Kavanagh took to Twitter to express her frustration with the lack of media attention for the Brownsville shooting.



**Rebecca J. Kavanagh**  
@DrRJKavanagh

There was a mass shooting at a festival in Brooklyn last night. One person was killed & 12 injured. Unlike the Gilroy mass shooting all over cable news right now, it happened in a Black neighborhood. So, unless you live in NYC, you probably missed it. [patch.com/new-york/brown...](https://patch.com/new-york/brown...)

**Brownsville Shooting: 1 Dead, 11 Hurt At 'Old Timers' Event**

Twelve people were hit by gunfire during an annual "Old timers" event. One person was killed and another was critically hurt. [patch.com](https://patch.com)

2,511 11:49 PM · Jul 28, 2019

1,808 people are talking about this

"There was a mass shooting at a festival in Brooklyn last night," Kavanagh tweeted. "One person was killed & 12 injured. Unlike the Gilroy mass shooting all over cable news right now, it happened in a Black neighborhood. So, unless you live in NYC, you probably missed it."

Follow Grace Hauck and Aamer Madhani on Twitter at [@ggrace\\_hauck](#) and [@AamerMadhani](#).

**The New York Times**

MOVIES | MOVIE REVIEW | 'THE INTERRUPTERS'

## Confronting a Plague of Violence

**The Interrupters** | NYT Critic's Pick | Directed by Steve James

Documentary, Crime | Not Rated | 2h 5m

By MANOHLA DARGIS JULY 28, 2011

The stories in “The Interrupters,” a hard wallop of a documentary, may weigh heavily on your heart and head, but they will also probably infuriate you. When a frail-looking child with startled eyes breaks down crying, her tiny hands covering her tiny face as she talks about a neighborhood shooting, it’s hard not to want to gather her up in your arms. It’s also difficult not to feel outrage along with a sense of confused, familiar helplessness because this child lives in that war-torn part of the world called Chicago.

Directed and shot by Steve James, best known for “Hoop Dreams,” “The Interrupters” takes a look at a gutsy, activist component of the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention. The project was founded in 1995 by Dr. Gary Slutkin, an epidemiologist who traveled the world, including for the World Health Organization Global Program on AIDS. After returning home to Chicago and hearing stories about children murdering children, he created the project, operating from the reasonable premise that violence is, fundamentally, a public health issue. To judge from the documentary, which follows activists taking their message to Chicago’s mean streets over the course of a year (it winds down in spring, a not entirely persuasive nod to new beginnings), we are living in plague years.

"The Interrupters" gets its name from a specific set of organizers who perform conflict mediation as part of CeaseFire, an initiative of the Chicago Project. The focus of CeaseFire is street violence, which organizers try to stem through outreach workers and so-called violence interrupters who literally put themselves in harm's way. The interrupters were featured in a 2008 article in The New York Times Magazine by Alex Kotlowitz, who produced the movie with Mr. James. In the article Mr. Kotlowitz quotes Dr. Slutkin's succinct epidemiological position on violence: "Violent activity predicts the next violent activity like H.I.V. predicts the next H.I.V. and TB predicts the next TB." The interrupters try to block the transmission of that activity with words and an occasional hand on a shoulder.

A weave of talking-head interviews and you-are-there location material (Mr. James shared the editing with Aaron Wickenden), the movie follows, starting in 2009, interrupters in the field as well as in offices, homes, meeting rooms and cemeteries. It checks in, somewhat too briefly, with Dr. Slutkin, who bluntly likens violence to an infectious disease, and makes more time for Tio Hardiman. The director of CeaseFire Illinois, Mr. Hardiman, a likable man with a bouncer's build, functions as a kind of guide to this world, describing how the interrupters work on a practical level and introducing the three who quickly become the movie's focus: Eddie Bocanegra, Ameena Matthews and Ricardo Williams, known as Cobe. Each is a self-described former gang member and so fascinatingly complex that any one of them could spin off into a separate documentary.

Ms. Matthews, partly because of the contrast between her petite size and outsized personality, and because of her ancestry and background, is a documentary gift. (Her father, Jeff Fort, was a former teenage gang member in Chicago who helped organize its gangs into an influential crime organization.) Now married to an imam, the mother of four children, her hair tucked under a scarf, Ms. Matthews talks openly about her past (an old photo of her in fur at a club helps tell that tale), sometimes while driving through the city, restively scanning its streets. She left gang life after being shot and now, like Mr. Bocanegra and Mr. Williams, radiates a born-again fervor: she's saving souls and perhaps redeeming her own.

Along with their fearlessness it's the candidness of these three interrupters, who have made their lives open books from which they preach a new gospel of peace, that

pulls you into the movie. In one respect “The Interrupters” is about addiction and recovery and a handful of former abusers who, having gone down one path, have turned their lives around and are making amends. The scenes of the interrupters at work — talking to gang members, marching in antiviolence protests, counseling families, being mentors to children, speaking at funerals — vividly suggest the scope of the human stakes. A fight that erupts outside a CeaseFire office, causing Ms. Matthews to charge outside — she wedges herself among a cluster of raging, circling men and women — shows the potential danger of such activist commitment.

“If you provide some alternatives,” Dr. Slutkin once said in an interview for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which helps support the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention, “some modeling, some hand holding, some safe retreat and face saving, you can change people.” It is, he says, “only a behavioral norm.” Mr. James doesn’t challenge or present any outside takes on Dr. Slutkin’s public-health approach to violence, a valid filmmaking choice. Among other things, the movie’s tight focus means that there’s little attention to political and historical contexts: there is nothing about gun control, for instance, or the legacy of race relations in Chicago. That said, a sense of the larger political and policy issues does emerge, mostly through the lived experience of those in front of the camera.

There is a long tradition of what has been described as victim documentaries, nonfiction movies in which filmmakers train their cameras at people enduring crushing hardships. At their worst these documentaries exploit the suffering of others, turning their pain into consumable spectacles. “The Interrupters” evades that trap partly because it doesn’t try to sell a happy, easily digestible story and partly because it digs in. It took 14 or so months to shoot and clocks in at two absorbing hours (down from its original 162 minutes). Mostly, though, it rises above the usual do-gooder cant by giving the interrupters — and the people they work among and periodically come close to dying for — the time to share their stories about life in the trenches. Mr. James has put a face to a raging epidemic and an unforgivable American tragedy.

*“The Interrupters” has not been rated but viewers should know that it includes some intense fight scenes, including one that resulted in the death of a high school student.*



9/25/2019

'The Interrupters,' a Documentary by Steve James - Review - The New York Times

**THE INTERRUPTERS***Opens on Friday in Manhattan.*

Directed by Steve James; director of photography, Mr. James; edited by Mr. James and Aaron Wickenden; produced by Mr. James and Alex Kotlowitz; released by Cinema Guild. At the IFC Center, 323 Avenue of the Americas at Third Street, Greenwich Village. Running time: 2 hours 5 minutes. This film is not rated.

**The Interrupters** NYT Critic's Pick**Director** Steve James**Writer** Alex Kotlowitz**Stars** Tio Hardiman, Ameena Matthews, Toya Batey, Cobe Williams, Gary Slutkin**Rating** Not Rated**Running Time** 2h 5m**Genres** Documentary, Crime

Movie data powered by IMDb.com

Last updated: Nov 2, 2017

A version of this review appears in print on July 29, 2011, on Page C1 of the New York edition with the headline: Confronting A Plague Of Violence.

---

© 2019 The New York Times Company

9/25/2019

When Cities Try to Limit Guns, State Laws Bar the Way - The New York Times

**The New York Times*****When Cities Try to Limit Guns, State Laws Bar the Way***

"Our officers need help, they need help with gun control," Philadelphia's mayor said after six police officers were wounded by gunfire. But in most states, the issue is not up to urban leaders.



By Monica Davey and Adeel Hassan

Aug. 15, 2019

A day after six Philadelphia police officers were wounded in a long, tense standoff with a gunman, the city's mayor angrily called for tougher restrictions on guns.

"I say to our state and federal lawmakers: Step up — or step aside," Mayor Jim Kenney said, hours after the surrender of the suspect, who the police said had a lengthy criminal record.

The mayor said he had little choice but to plead: In Pennsylvania, cities are barred in many ways from setting tough gun restrictions on their own.

"Help our police officers. Help our clergy. Help our children," Mr. Kenney told a room full of city officials and reporters on Thursday. "And if you choose not to help us, then get out of the way — and allow cities like Philadelphia that struggle with gun violence to enact our own solutions."

Mr. Kenney's remarks were the latest in a growing chorus of calls from local leaders for Congress to set stricter federal gun limits, following a series of shootings in American cities including deadly rampages in El Paso and Dayton, Ohio. Facing new pressure, President Trump and Republican leaders in Congress have voiced support for expanding the background check system for gun buyers, though local leaders and others are skeptical about the seriousness of that support.

Growing, too, are clashes between local officials and state lawmakers. Most states prohibit local governments from adopting nearly any gun regulation that would go beyond state law.

"They have pre-empted us totally in enforcing any type of regulation, including really simple legislation that would require someone to report a stolen or lost gun," Mr. Kenney, a Democrat, said of the Pennsylvania State Legislature, which is dominated by Republicans.

The mounting tension among local, state and federal officials over gun laws and who should have the right to set them has not been limited to big-city leaders or those who favor gun control. In some rural counties in states like Illinois and Texas, local leaders have been adopting measures aimed at resisting limits on guns rather than tightening them. Some counties have proclaimed their communities "Second Amendment sanctuaries." And some sheriffs in Washington State have said they would not enforce new state gun limits there.

Still, in some of the large American cities where crime and gun violence can be a daily problem, leaders said they were most frustrated by their own inability to set laws that make sense for their residents.

As of late last year, 43 states had pre-emption laws that bar local governments from enacting nearly any gun regulation that would go beyond state law. Pennsylvania is one of them: Its cities are allowed to adopt their own restrictions on the public carrying of firearms, but that is about it.

Advocates of those state pre-emption rules say they keep gun rights and regulations consistent across the state, so citizens can always know they are in compliance wherever they are. A patchwork of rules varying from city to city would only breed confusion, they say.

But many mayors say pre-emption laws tie their hands on a major issue facing their cities.

"It's a constant problem, and it takes away local control," Mayor Nan Whaley of Dayton, where nine people were killed this month in a mass shooting, said in an interview.

9/25/2019

When Cities Try to Limit Guns, State Laws Bar the Way - The New York Times



Protesters calling for tighter gun laws demonstrated in Dayton, Ohio, when President Trump visited the city in the wake of a mass shooting.  
Maddie McGarvey for The New York Times

Some states go even further. In Kentucky, it can be a misdemeanor punishable by jail time for a city official even to vote for a local gun ordinance that is more restrictive than state law. In Florida and Arizona, officials can be fined and removed from office for adopting such an ordinance.

In 1993, the City Councils of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia banned assault-style weapons within their limits. The State Legislature responded by passing a law that effectively repealed the ordinances, and state judges ruled that guns could be regulated only at the state level, not by municipalities.

The October 2018 attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, where a gunman killed 11 people, prompted the city to try again. The mayor signed legislation in April restricting the use of assault-style weapons within the city. But the legislation is being challenged in court, and it is not being enforced until the case is decided.

In Chicago, where street violence and gun deaths have been a significant problem, efforts to limit guns have been stymied by the courts and the state of Illinois. The city used to set strict limits, maintaining a gun registry from 1968 to 2013 and refusing to register any handguns after 1982, effectively banning civilians from keeping them in the city.

But in 2010, the Supreme Court held that state and local gun regulations, like federal law, were subject to the Second Amendment. Illinois responded with legislation that undid Chicago's ordinance, leaving city officials furious and frustrated.

"The City of Chicago has tried many times on its own to institute legislation to try to restrict gun ownership in the city, and it's gone up to the Supreme Court, and we've lost," Lori Lightfoot, the mayor of Chicago, said in an interview. "So our ability is really tied to the willingness of the federal government to step up and do its job. And to date, that hasn't happened. I do feel very frustrated, as a mayor, not to be able to unilaterally do more."

Even when cities are able to adopt their own restrictive gun measures, the effects end at the city limits; weapons can still cross into cities easily from surrounding areas and nearby states with laxer rules. Ms. Lightfoot said Indiana — not far from Chicago — has been a constant source of guns that end up on Chicago's streets.

[Read about a proposal in San Jose, Calif., to require gun owners, like car owners, to carry liability insurance.]

In Philadelphia on Thursday, Mr. Kenney said he had received supportive calls and text messages from other mayors as the city was grappling with the standoff on Wednesday, which kept a neighborhood on high alert for hours through a long night.

"The criminal yesterday was better armed than most of the police on the scene," Mr. Kenney said in an interview. "That's insane."

Joshua G. Prince, a Pennsylvania lawyer who has litigated on behalf of gun rights groups, said the dangerous standoff in Philadelphia was not caused by insufficient regulation. "This was already a person who should not have been on the streets," Mr. Prince said. "The laws on the books are not being enforced."

Mr. Kenney said new gun limits were urgently needed — and at this point, he said, the only way to set more gun limits was for Congress to take action.

"I think, in the end, if people like Mitch McConnell had to cower or crouch behind a Philadelphia police cruiser yesterday for seven hours, ducking AK-47 rounds, maybe he might think a little differently," Mr. Kenney said, referring to the Senate majority leader.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/15/us/philadelphia-shooting-gun-control.html>

2/3

9/25/2019

When Cities Try to Limit Guns, State Laws Bar the Way - The New York Times

"It's not a matter of political ideology," the mayor said, adding: "It takes more work and more effort to get a driver's license in Pennsylvania than it is to buy a gun of any kind. And something's wrong with that."

Monica Davey is the Chicago bureau chief, covering the Midwest. She joined The Times in 2003. She previously worked at The Chicago Tribune, and wrote for the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times, the Roanoke Times and others. @monicadavey1

Adeel Hassan is a reporter and editor on the National Desk. He is a founding member of Race/Related, and much of his work focuses on identity and discrimination. He started the Morning Briefing for NYT Now and was its inaugural writer. He also served as an editor on the International Desk. Adeel graduated from Johns Hopkins and Columbia. @adeelnyc

A version of this article appears in print on Aug. 17, 2019, Section A, Page 12 of the New York edition with the headline: When Cities Try to Limit Guns, State Laws Bar the Way

9/25/2019

Gun Reform Is on the Agenda. But Victims of Color Aren't.

## The Trace

September 25, 2019



[Mark Wilson/Getty Images]

HOW WE FIX THIS

## Gun Reform Is on the Agenda. But Victims of Color Aren't.

**Priorities in Congress have given short shrift to community gun violence, activists say.**

by **Champe Barton** · @champebarton · September 17, 2019

· Updated September 18, 2019 10:37 am EDT

Last week's Democratic presidential primary debate featured a lengthy and emotional discussion about gun violence. Candidates pledged to fight the gun lobby and urged Congress to enact a handful of familiar gun reforms, including universal background checks. In one particularly charged moment, former Texas Congressman Beto O'Rourke pledged as president to take away certain assault-style weapons from gun owners.

But the gun debate was also notable for what it lacked. The debate moderators asked no questions about the deadly scourge of community gun violence, and only two candidates, Senators Cory Booker and Elizabeth Warren, addressed it at all. In this sense, the debate mirrored the one playing out on Capitol Hill, which has focused on expanding gun background checks to cover private sales and incentivizing state laws for temporarily disarming gun owners at risk of mass violence or self harm. While voters of both parties call for action in the wake of this summer's mass shootings, the measures are attracting some bipartisan support, opening a window for a potential political breakthrough. But neither directly or immediately addresses the community violence that represents the largest share of gun homicides and assaults.

"We're always the secondary or tertiary part of any national conversation around gun violence," said the Reverend Jeffrey Brown, who runs RECAP (Rebuilding Every Community Around Peace), a Boston-based organization that focuses on reducing gang violence nationwide. "For those of us who struggle with this problem and work every day to overcome it, it's completely frustrating."

<https://www.thetrace.org/2019/09/gun-reform-congress-community-gun-violence/>

1/3

9/25/2019

Gun Reform Is on the Agenda. But Victims of Color Aren't.

A **survey** released earlier this month from the left-leaning political research firm Lake Research Partners found that 70 percent of Latinx adults and 63 percent of African-American adults surveyed agreed that, while effective solutions to community gun violence exist, "elected leaders just don't care enough to help [implement them]."

Instead, legislative priorities frequently focus on how to prevent mass shootings. But those account for only **2 to 3** percent of overall gun homicides, which disproportionately affect communities of color. Black men, for example, make up just 6 percent of the American population, but account for roughly **50** percent of all gun homicide victims.

To Brown and his colleagues in the community gun violence prevention movement, gun reform efforts on Capitol Hill fail to reflect these realities, largely ignoring proven measures to reduce gun deaths.

"I think the Democrats in Congress continue to be tone deaf and myopic in their approach to addressing the gun violence epidemic in our country," said Michael McBride, an Oakland minister who runs the gun violence prevention organization LIVE FREE. "I totally understand the policy proposals put forth, but to continue to lead in ways that erase the strategies we know address the lion's share of gun deaths in this country, particularly in black and brown neighborhoods, is a failure of leadership."

The strategies which McBride refers to have a successful track record. In Oakland, LIVE FREE has worked with local clergy, community activists, and law enforcement officials to implement an intervention known as focused deterrence, whereby police and community partners collaborate to convince high-risk individuals to eschew violence. Since 2012, that approach has helped yield a 50 percent **reduction** in shootings in the city. In Philadelphia, police **reduced** violent crime reports by 23 percent in just three months in 2009 by concentrating on violence "hot spots," where violent crime most frequently occurs. And in Chicago, counselors at Roberto Clemente High School saw a 50 percent reduction in violent crime arrests among students after implementing an innovative cognitive behavioral therapy **program**.

Many **effective strategies** like these exist, but federal lawmakers have done little to support their wider adoption. Patterns in media coverage contribute to the omission. As The Trace has previously **reported**, national news outlets have a tendency to dedicate more reporting to gun violence — particularly mass shootings — outside of black and brown communities than to gun violence within them.

Thomas Abt, a Harvard researcher who recently published a **book** about violence intervention programs, attributes the discrepancy to poverty and race. "Since urban gun violence disproportionately impacts the poorest and most disenfranchised among us, it doesn't get the attention it deserves," he said.

Abt added that policies like focused deterrence, which require sometimes sticky partnerships between law enforcement and social services organizations, are less conducive to pithy political rhetoric.

Another more tangible obstacle that impedes the work of black- and brown-run gun violence prevention organizations is a disparity in resources. More mainstream organizations like Giffords, Everytown for Gun Safety, or the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence dwarf their black- and brown-led counterparts. (Everytown's nonprofit arm provides grants to The Trace.) They receive more substantial donations, wield a heftier lobbying force, and leverage better name recognition.

Erica Ford, who runs the New York City branch of the community gun violence prevention group Life Camp, said this resource gulf is one reason that so little community gun violence legislation passes through Congress. "It's a neglect on our part, too, to not lobby these folks effectively enough," she acknowledged. "But a lot of us are just too busy doing the work, stopping gun violence in our communities."

Every activist interviewed for this story agreed that in recent years, these largely white-led organizations — particularly Giffords — have increased their efforts to elevate the work of smaller, community-focused outfits, and to include community gun violence in their own lobbying agendas. McBride said that LIVE FREE and Giffords have a nascent collaboration to produce a piece of legislation to address urban gun deaths. He said he hopes that they can unveil something concrete in the next 18 months.

9/25/2019

Gun Reform is on the Agenda. But Victims of Color Aren't.

Even so, McBride said they're a long way from seeing their goals reflected in the Congressional legislative agenda. In meetings with legislators and other gun violence prevention organizations on Capitol Hill, he said he's frequently the first person to raise the issue of urban gun violence.

For this reason, he said he believes that any effort to address community gun violence needs to start and end with the black and brown communities affected. "White gun violence prevention organizations should not unilaterally create legislation that specifically affects black people," he said. "They're important partners, but it's just not the priority of these groups to address this problem. It is for us."

[x Close](#)