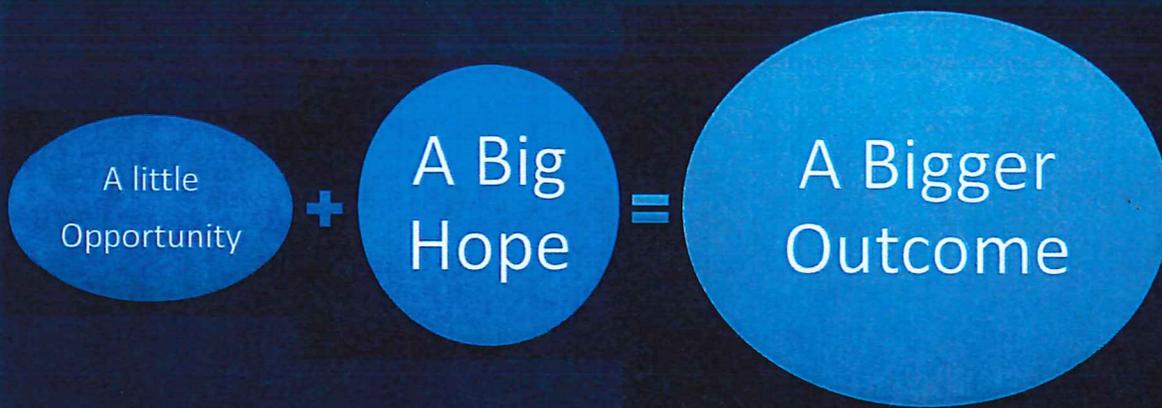


OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY  
(ONS)

2013 HIGHLIGHT SUMMARY



*2013  
SUMMARY  
REPORT*

“Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures.

And, however un-dramatic the pursuit of peace,

that pursuit must go on.”



WASHINGTON DC 2013



# Table of Contents

<b>Director's Message</b>	i
<b>ONS Staff</b>	x

## **ONS 2013 HIGHLIGHT SUMMARY**

• Background	1
• ONS Values and Beliefs	1
• Street Outreach Strategy	1-2
• ONS Operation Peacemaker Fellowship	2-3
• 2013 Fellowship Highlights	3-5
• Collaboration	6-9

## **ONS HIGHLIGHT REEL**

**Reel A** – Op-ed: Young Men Deserve Credit in Steep Declines in Richmond Violence

**Reel B** – Article: ‘You Won’t Believe How These Men Are Ending Gun Violence in Their Deadly Hometown’

**Reel C** – Congressional Record: May 22, 2013

**Reel D** – ONS Ambassador Eric Welch; Letter from Tallahassee Community College Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Reel E** – Congressional Record: June 12, 2013

**Reel F** – Article: ‘Richmond reports lowest homicide total in 33 years, credits multipronged efforts’

**Reel G** – Article: ‘Richmond’s commitment key to reducing gun violence’

**Reel H** – Article: ‘Crime Persists as a Grim Challenge for Blacks’

**Reel I** – Brief: ‘An Innovative Government Solution to Reducing Gun Violence’

**Reel J** – Data: Richmond Firearm Activity – Pre & Post Peacemaker Fellowship



## DIRECTORS MESSAGE

*"Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him and to let him know that you trust him" – Booker T. Washington*

Urban gun violence can be cured! In Richmond and as a nation we MUST FIRST Believe and Expect this conclusion with certainty if this new reality is to manifest! At the City of Richmond's Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) not only do we believe it, we live it daily! The young men that we are partnering with to achieve this awesome vision give us a great sense of hope. With each healthy decision many are making every day to resist handling street conflict with a firearm, our belief is strengthened, even more fortified as they further commit to embracing life. Often against great opposition and odds our Peacemaker Fellows are working with us to fashion a beloved community free of gun violence.

As the cover page of this 2013 ONS Highlight Summary communicates, our efforts, chiefly motivated by love and through trusting relationships are beginning to create circumstances that make it possible for those who have traditionally driven gun violence in our city to change and channel their energies toward more positive, healthy and even healing paths. This represents but one small opportunity that we should all commit to ensure continued maintenance, growth and sustainability. The word HOPE is defined as *"a state which promotes the desire of positive outcomes related to events and circumstances in one's life or in the world at large."* Despair is often regarded as the opposite of hope. For the Fellows and many others served by the ONS, HOPE has become an act of looking forward to something healthy with desire and reasonable confidence that it will occur. Our work has been aimed at increasing HOPE through building trust, security, clarity, and maturity in those that we partner with and are honored to serve. Coupled with raising and nurturing high expectations for a positive future we are afforded a humbling opportunity to instill and push large doses of HOPE where despair once hopelessly abounded. This new and fertile HOPE is indeed birthing bold expectation!

The Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) Street Outreach and Violence Interruption strategy is preventing shootings and killings in Richmond California. In conjunction with its Operation Peacemaker Fellowship ("the Fellowship"), these efforts provide real alternatives to gun violence. In partnership with those suspected to be most responsible for firearm assaults, we are challenging and changing unhealthy norms, creating conditions that reduce behaviors that produce firearm injury and death, and providing a canvass that engenders Hope for a healthy and dynamic future where the genius (versus the destruction and/or annihilation) of our young people is delivered to both Richmond and the global family. Where we are going and what we are accomplishing today demonstrates the power of an extraordinary belief in and partnership

with young people. Yesterday's outcomes are a product of our city's robust confidence in and implementation of effective public health approaches to preventing gun violence.

Even Bigger Outcomes await Richmond if we remain committed and continue to intentionally and deliberately acknowledge, see, develop, validate and invite the genius out of ALL of our young people, including those caught in the cycle of violence and poverty and exposed to nothing but tools of lethal death. In the words of Malidoma Patrice Somè ***"youth must be assisted in giving birth to the genius that he is born with..."*** as we have seen, particularly by way of the experiences of those individuals who are most likely to commit a shooting or be a victim of one, ***"failure to do so kills that genius along with the person carrying it...the community responsible for the death of an inner genius is like an assassin. The community that is willing and able to develop and receive the person's genius however gives birth to the adult who is able to contribute his healing gifts to that community."*** With our youth and young adult partners we will continue to recognize and awaken, and facilitate the delivery of genius to the Richmond community - giving this youthful genius fertile ground to burst forth and blossom.

Happy 2014! Please find herein highlighted activity of and perspectives from the City of Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) for the year 2013.

Best Regards,



DeVone L. Boggan, Neighborhood Safety Director

*The Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) is a non-law enforcement [city government] agency with the sole mission to assist in preventing and interrupting firearm assault and associated deaths.*

# ONS Staff - 2013

Tammi Edwards, Operations Administrator

MyNesha Guerrero, Office Aide

Trinell Graves, Office Assistant

Beth Cayme, Accountant

Sal Garcia, Neighborhood Change Agent

Joe McCoy, Neighborhood Change Agent

Kevin Muccular, Neighborhood Change Agent

Sam Vaughn, Neighborhood Change Agent

Arlinda Love-Penn, Neighborhood Change Agent

Charles Muhammad, Neighborhood Change Agent

Kevin Yarbrough, Neighborhood Change Agent

James Houston, Senior Peacekeeper

DeVone L. Boggan, Neighborhood Safety Director

The Team of 2013 ONS Community Peacekeepers included Elana Bolds, Gabriel Godfrey, Ivonne Malave, Charles Newsome, Tracy Reed, Mark Torres, and Lavern Vaughn. We are grateful to their commitment to community service.

ONS Community Peacekeepers are mature adult community residents who assist the ONS in facilitating peace keeping activities such as school-based intervention services, parole and probation support, street outreach support, parent support, and neighborhood and resident support.



## ONS 2013 HIGHLIGHT SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

The Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) is a non-law enforcement department within city government. The primary goal of the ONS is to reduce firearm assaults and associated homicides. The ONS provides and coordinates targeted intervention services and attention intensive engagement and support structures that are designed to improve the social and emotional health and wellness of those it serves. The ONS works with between 150-230 young men each year who are at highest risk for being involved in gun violence.

### ONS VALUES AND BELIEFS:

- Victims and perpetrators of gun violence and their family members are people of value and worth;
- The power of love and listening can turn lives in a new direction;
- Trusting relationships can heal people;
- Goodwill influences behavior;
- The Relationship is the intervention, and the intervention is the Relationship.

The ONS facilitates two very important primary strategies to achieve its goals and objectives; its Street Outreach Strategy and the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship.

### STREET OUTREACH STRATEGY

The primary strategy of the Office of Neighborhood Safety (“ONS”) is its Street Outreach Strategy. Each day the city’s street outreach team (Neighborhood Change Agents or “NCA’s”) directly engage those on a face-to-face basis who are identified as most likely to be perpetrators and/or victims of gun violence in Richmond (aka -“the ONS population”). NCA’s work to build healthy and consistent relationships with identified individuals serving as mentors and credible messengers of healthy information. NCA’s also provide themselves as living examples of positive and healthy lifestyles. The ONS also works to expand access to quality opportunities, exposures, resources, and services that build on the identified populations strengths in an effort to reduce their involvement in gun violence. Neighborhood Change Agents are the primary facilitator of these important exchanges.

### ***2013 STREET OUTREACH OUTCOMES:***

- 8,327 street outreach hours logged by ONS Neighborhood Change Agents;
- 2,749 outreach contacts were facilitated by Neighborhood Change Agents;
- 573 outreach contacts with formerly incarcerated individuals with firearm convictions;
- 437 service referrals were facilitated by Neighborhood Change Agents;
- 228 individuals who are at high risk of being involved in gun violence provided services by ONS staff;
- 117 individuals provided attention intensive support & mentoring;
- 39 individuals who are at high risk of being involved in gun violence participated in life skills training facilitated by Neighborhood Change Agents;
- 39 individuals provided anger management/emotional intelligence support;

### **ONS OPERATION PEACEMAKER FELLOWSHIP**

An extension of the ONS street outreach strategy is the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship program. “The Fellowship” is a non-mandated Transformative Mentoring Intervention program designed for those 16-25 years old identified as active firearm offenders in Richmond who have avoided sustained criminal consequences. This intervention works to transform the attitudes and behaviors that have given rise to the selected individual’s involvement in gun violence. The Fellowship is representative of those individuals who are most resistant to change and/or are chronically unresponsive to the traditional range of services offered or available in the Richmond community. In addition to the public safety concerns that these individuals pose, they are among the most expensive population to serve in policing, incarceration, hospitalization and social services. Enabling them to right their life trajectory will have a collateral and positive effect on their communities, families and peers, in addition to saving tax payer dollars.

Operation Peacemaker Fellows are provided small incentives (including monetary incentives) in exchange for their program participation, positive behavior and meeting a range of life development/skills, education, employment and restorative justice goals. The incentive structure functions to provide a gateway for the advancement of intrinsic motivation that arises from internal and not external rewards.

### ***FELLOWSHIP OUTCOMES (Current 18-month program cohort @ 10 months):***

Of the 40 total Fellows:

- 40 have completed an individualized life plan (100%);
- 39 are Alive;
- 38 have no gun violence related arrests since becoming Fellow (95%);
- 38 have no gun related injuries or hospitalization since becoming a Fellow (95%);

### *FELLOWSHIP OUTCOMES (3 cohorts to date):*

Of the 68 total Fellows:

- 68 have completed an individualized life plan (100%);
- 65 are Alive;
- 57 have no gun violence related arrests since becoming Fellow (84%);
- 64 have no gun related injuries or hospitalization since becoming a Fellow (94%);

### **2013 FELLOWSHIP HIGHLIGHTS**

**In January 2013** the Office of Neighborhood Safety's (ONS) Operation Peacemaker Fellowship program, staff and Fellows attended the National Mentoring Summit 2013 in Washington, D.C. While in the Nation's Capital Fellows attended the second Presidential Inauguration of Barack Obama and met with Congressman George Miller. Fellows also traveled to New York where they participated in meetings at the United Nations (General Assembly), and at the Council on Thought and Action (COTA).

**In April 2013** the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) provided the opening plenary session for the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA) FORUM 2013 in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Plenary Session entitled "Chapter 2: Government at Work Keeping Young Men of Color Alive and Free - Reducing Youth [Gun] Violence by Leveraging Relationships and Mobilizing Power Across Artificial Boundaries" was the second in a series planned to introduce Richmond's unique government solution designed to reduce gun violence in urban America. The session provided the City of Richmond's Office of Neighborhood Safety as a case study examining the importance and necessity of leveraging, organizing and mobilizing relationships and networks of power towards advancing promising solutions and practices within and outside of implementing jurisdictions. The Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety is the only government agency of its kind in the country with a sole focus of reducing firearm assaults from a non-law enforcement lens. The panel presentation included the Office of Neighborhood Safety, Neighborhood Change Agents, ONS Peacemaker Fellows and Chief Glenn Sapp, from the Quincy, Florida Police Department.

The National Forum for Black Public Administrators is America's premier association for black public leadership. NFBPA's mission is to strengthen the capacity of state and local government manager's through intensive training, professional development programs, and the resources of a powerful network of members and supporters.

**In May 2013** The Office of Neighborhood Safety Operation Peacemaker Fellowship was the "Spotlight" Presentation at the Board of Directors Meeting for The California Endowment (TCE) held in Richmond. By visiting Richmond the TCE Board of Trustees was able to hear firsthand how the Building Healthy Communities strategy is actually

playing out on the ground in Richmond. A select group of Community-Based Organizations and Richmond's 'Health in All Policies' approach were lifted up to reflect the range of work that is happening across multiple areas in accordance with the Healthy Richmond Logic Model.

**In June 2013**, Peacemaker Fellows traveled to San Diego to participate in site-visits and peace-building activities.

**Also in June 2013**, Peacemaker Fellows traveled to Washington DC and New York City. While in Washington, Fellows met with Congressional Representatives George Miller and Barbara Lee. Fellows also met with the New Organizing Institute (NOI). NOI is a community of organizers, and are committed to solving the biggest challenges that stand in the way of change. NOI's basic belief is simple: if people have the skills to engage others, the tools to build powerful campaigns, and a community of practice to help them learn and grow, they can win real change, make measurable improvements in people's lives, and restore faith in our government and our democracy. NOI trains organizers to build and manage effective movements by integrating tried-and-true community organizing, cutting-edge digital strategy, and data-driven decision making. NOI provides free access to revolutionary tools, technologies, and research to help campaigns reach the next level. NOI also builds a community of practice that connects organizers across issues, creating a more integrated, more diverse, and more dynamic movement for change. NOI is working to produce the best leaders and strongest movements of our generation. They help campaigns win today, while working to build capacity and infrastructure that will allow us to keep winning into the next generation. While in New York, Peacemaker Fellows visited and met with United Nations staff.

**In July 2013** Peacemaker Fellows traveled to Southern California (Anaheim and San Diego) to participate in site-visits and peace-building activities.

During the months of **August and September 2013**, Peacemaker Fellows participated in four site-visits and peace-building activities in the following cities:

Tallahassee Florida  
San Diego California  
Philadelphia Pennsylvania  
Washington DC

During the months of **October thru December 2013**, Peacemaker Fellows participated in six site-visits and peace-building activities in the following cities:

Los Angeles California  
San Diego California  
Pasadena California  
San Francisco California  
Washington DC  
Mexico City Mexico (World Health Organization Meeting)

Each 'Fellowship Exploration' is funded by private contributions. Each includes college tours, restorative justice exercises, and meetings with city influencers,

cultural/civic/educational activities and opportunities to facilitate peaceful dialogue with rival group members from Richmond.

### **ONS Youth Ambassador Served as Summer Policy Fellow for the Campaign for Youth Justice in Washington, DC**

Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) Youth Ambassador Eric Welch was chosen to serve as Summer Policy Fellow for the Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) in Washington, DC Summer 2013.

The CFYJ Policy Fellow is a full time intern serving in Washington, DC between June 10<sup>th</sup> and August 9<sup>th</sup>. The responsibilities of the fellow includes assisting senior staff with preparing and organizing Capitol Hill visits, providing Congressional members' education, coordinating conference calls and webinars on Federal Juvenile Justice issues, assisting with drafting and editing action alerts and outreach materials for grasstop and grassroots networks, assisting with implementation of the Campaign's Alliance of Youth Advocates outreach plan; developing a plan for CFYJ's new national youth initiative in Washington, organizing events with youth that have been affected by the justice system; supporting outreach plans and dissemination strategies for new report releases including 'Sharing Your Story' for the Alliance for Youth Justice members, and periodic writing for the CFYJ blog.

Eric Welch graduated from the ONS Operation Peacemaker Fellowship after more than two years of participating, becoming one of four founding members of the ONS Youth Ambassadorship in September 2012. ONS Youth Ambassadors are past Fellows who have "graduated" from the Fellowship with very impressive program participation rates and engagement, and have obtained long-term employment and/or are enrolled in college. ONS Youth Ambassadors have also made a public declaration of commitment to remain free from involvement in gun violence, and provide support to ONS staff in the further development of the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship and its goals.

Upon hearing of the news of his selection, Eric said "I am so excited, I feel tremendously blessed by and grateful for this opportunity. The ONS family has prepared me in such a way that I cannot fail!" ONS Director DeVone Boggan commented that "we are extremely proud of Eric, his hard work, his commitment to making healthier decisions, and his leadership in helping to make the City of Richmond a healthier and safer place to live, learn, work and play. He is a great example for his peers and to anyone who may doubt that people can change."

The **Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ)** is dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing, and incarcerating youth under 18 in the adult criminal justice system. The Campaign works in partnership with state-based campaigns in a number of states. CFYJ serves as a clearinghouse of information on youth prosecuted as adults and makes tools and resources available to those interested in learning and taking action on an issue that personally affects them.

CFYJ strongly believes that any movement must involve those who are most impacted by the laws and policies. Thus, CFYJ seeks to empower those affected by encouraging them to use their voices and experiences to effect meaningful change.

## Sixth Milestones of a Global Campaign for Violence Prevention Meeting hosted in Mexico City Mexico by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Neighborhood Safety Director DeVone Boggan was invited to attend and share his expertise to shaping global violence prevention at the Sixth Milestones of a Global Campaign for Violence Prevention Meeting being hosted in Mexico City Mexico by the World Health Organization (WHO). The theme of this meeting was "Towards Measureable Violence Prevention Targets." The convening focused on consolidating global, regional and national efforts to strengthen the measurement of violence prevention targets in the years ahead. During the meeting, plans were laid to increase action, political support and funding for violence prevention worldwide.

Director Boggan used this occasion to provide a select group of Operation Peacemaker Fellows with a Peacemaker Fellowship "educational, civic and cultural exchange and engagement" Exploration opportunity. Two City of Richmond Neighborhood Change Agents accompanied the Director and the Fellows. The Richmond Delegation used this as an opportunity to meet with other California delegation members and members of other national communities attending to discuss, learn about, and share promising violence prevention and intervention practices, including the City of Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety and Peacemaker Fellowship models.

All travel and meeting expenses were paid for by the World Health Organization/The California Wellness Foundation and The California Endowment Peacemaker Fellowship Fund.

## **COLLABORATION**

**In Partnership with the Brotherhood of Elders**, activities conducted with the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship focused mainly on promoting life-saving/pro-social behavior, expanding personal and professional networks, developing organizational partnerships, and increasing presence at Boys and Men of Color (BMoC) related events. In realizing the importance of intergenerational relationship as it relates to the development of young people, and acknowledging the impact of policies and environmental factors that influenced the interruption of those relationships, we took the timely opportunity to access the wealth of experience and resources that the Brotherhood of Elders has to offer.

The Brotherhood of Elders is a grassroots intergenerational collective of men in the Bay Area who were organized under the leadership of Arnold Perkins, Woody Carter, and Robert Wilkins to be active in addressing the challenges faced by Black men and boys and to engage in an internal healing process as many of the men taking on this enormous task also carry the weight of their own trauma and struggles. With their focus on collectively improving the health status of Black boys and men in the Bay Area, and their connections and influence at the community, academic, public system, and policy level, a partnership with the Office of Neighborhood Safety was only logical.

The Elders Circle met with the Fellows bi-monthly for two hours per meeting. In alignment with the Brotherhood of Elders' manhood development curriculum, "*Art of*

*Being a Black Man*”, the discussion topics spoke to the “Five C’s to Character Development for African Boys & Young Men” (Competence, Confidence, Consciousness, Community, Contribution) and focused on the following areas; Cultural Consciousness, Healing and Well-Being, Manhood Development, Social Justice & Leadership, and Rites of Passage.

In addition to the much needed intentional curricular structured conversations, what was most profound and arguably beneficial about this space with the Elders, is that it created a safe environment for open and honest expression of anger, frustration, struggles, and pain; often informally. The gatherings not only created for Fellows what they defined in their own words as “a space for ‘real’ conversations to take place about relevant issues to the reality on the streets” but they also proved to be beneficial to staff as well who were quoted saying in reference to the sessions; “because of the Elders’ consistency and commitment to us, we felt worthy and valuable. We felt that our work was appreciated. This doesn’t happen a lot from the larger community-this is important to us.” Out of this partnership came the following results as it relates to outcomes;

- Exposure to and relationships with Elders
- Employment opportunities for Fellows
- Access to resources for Fellows
- Attended Brotherhood of Elders retreat
- Assigned to triads
- Support provided for Fellows who attend college

#### *Programmatic Strides*

- A pre/post measurement tool was created and developed and reviewed by current and past fellows to be used in 2014;
- “*Art of Being a Black Man*” preliminary curriculum training session was conducted with ONS staff;
- Weekly life skill sessions conducted with program participants;
- Focus group conducted with participants to obtain suggestions for the development of a Bay -Area health summit which is being customized to address the specific needs of the Fellows and other young men facing similar challenges directly or indirectly related to health.

**In Partnership with Youth Alive in Oakland and the John Muir Trauma Center in Walnut Creek** the Beyond Violence Hospital-Linked Violence Intervention Program piloted by the City of Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety (since 2010) was awarded to the RYSE Center in April 2013 through a competitive RFQ process. We are excited about **RYSE Center** leadership and involvement to further advance and institutionalize this work and its expansion within the community of Richmond and other West County jurisdictions. The **RYSE Restorative Pathways Program (R2P2)** expands the effort to include other intentional injuries (e.g. knife assaults, physical assaults, and gunshot assaults etc.) and increases the programs coverage to include additional West County areas such as North Richmond, the Cities of San Pablo and El Cerrito.

RYSE creates safe spaces grounded in social justice that build youth power for young people to love, learn, educate, heal and transform lives and communities ([www.rysecenter.org](http://www.rysecenter.org)).

**In Partnership with the California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention (CalGRIP) program, the City of Richmond Employment & Training Department, Be A Mentor, Inc., Boys and Girls Club of El Sobrante, Richmond Police Activities League, and the RYSE Center the West Contra Costa Mentoring Partnership provided 88 youth with mentoring opportunities. Of these 88 youth involved:**

55 were provided with educational support;

53 were provided with employment training services;

49 were provided gang prevention services;

21 were provided gang intervention services, and;

39 completed the City of Richmond's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP).

**In Partnership with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Mentoring Enhancement Demonstration Program, the Richmond Police Activities League (RPAL), Bay Area Community Resources, Oakland Police Athletic League, the East Bay Asian Youth Center, and Be A Mentor, Inc., the East Bay Mentoring Partnership (EBMP) incorporates advocacy and teaching functions into mentors' roles through (1) matching youth and mentors based on needs, skills, experiences, and interests; (2) initial and ongoing training for mentors; and (3) ongoing mentor support.**

Through this national program and resource, youth mentoring opportunities are being expanded and volunteer opportunities are increased on behalf of the Richmond community. As a result of the program, up to 400 additional East Bay youth will be provided a mentorship relationship and opportunity with a caring adult mentor.

**In Partnership with the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) - Mental Health Expansion Grant Program, the Native American Health Center (NAHC), and Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) through Urban Trails Richmond (UTR) provide culturally-competent mental health services for Native American children and their families. UTR was a one year planning project funded by SAMHSA. NAHC is the largest agency serving American Indians in the San Francisco Bay Area with offices in Oakland, San Francisco (SF), and Richmond. This collaboration has expanded Contra Costa County's System of Care (SOC) to support American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and their families who previously have not been effectively served. UTR is therefore an expansion of a system of care for Urban Indians in the SF Bay Area.**

A system of care is a spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports for children and youth with or at risk for mental and behavioral health challenges. The SOC is an organized effort through system partnerships and collaborations to build meaningful partnerships with families and youth; and furthermore addresses their

cultural and linguistic needs in order to help them to function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life. In 2012-2013, with the help of very supportive and intricate partnerships with Youth and Family-serving agencies throughout Contra Costa County, UTR drew from this existing infrastructure to successfully plan the expansion of the SOC specifically for the AI/AN community.

*“When one truly desires to live, better decisions are made, lives are changed, and conditions are created that help to transform a city!”*



## Reel A

# Young Men Deserve Credit in Steep Declines in Richmond Violence

by ADMIN on JANUARY 6, 2014 · LEAVE A COMMENT

[\[Translate\]](#)

OP-ED • DeVone Boggan

Richmond, CA has experienced another consecutive year of historic declines in violence. The City marked its lowest homicide rate in 33 years in 2013.

While we should celebrate this milestone with great exuberance, the media coverage about this success has been shortsighted. The police officers in Richmond certainly deserve recognition, but so do the young men who have decided to stop the violence.

When one truly desires to live, better decisions are made, lives are changed, and conditions are created that help to transform a city.

Each day in Richmond, boys and men of color between the ages of 13-25 (sometimes younger, sometimes older) face significant challenges including that of negotiating conflicts that have traditionally led to vicious cycles of gun violence. For example, such disputes produced more than 160 deaths here between 2006-2009.

In late 2007 the City of Richmond created the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS). The ONS is a non-law enforcement city agency with the charge of reducing firearm assaults and associated deaths. In 2013, the city recorded the lowest number of firearm assaults and homicides in more than three decades, and has experienced a 66% reduction in such crime between the ONS launch and 2013.

Although street level conflicts (disputes that may result in retaliatory cycles of gun violence) are ongoing, and several were certainly navigated by our city's most vulnerable young men in 2013, their responses to these transgressions were far different than in past years.

In mid-2010, the ONS launched the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship, known nationally as "the Richmond Model." As it is called by its local users, "the Fellowship" is an 18-month intensive transformative mentoring program that is responsive to and customized for those identified to be the most likely perpetrators and/or victims of firearm assaults in Richmond. Since 2010, there have been three Fellowship cohorts and as a result 68 boys and young men of color have agreed to participate. The results of this robust engagement have been dramatic and promising.

Of the 68 Fellows over the past 43 month period: 65 are alive (95%); 64 have not been injured by firearm (94%); and 57 are not in custody (84%). The Fellowship, and its Fellows, have contributed to a 50% reduction in firearm related homicides in Richmond compared to the four years before the Fellowship was implemented.

It is essential to communicate the impact of strong partnerships between a caring community and those who have the greatest influence over the direction in which gun violence trends. Without such a relationship, courage, willingness, and the patience required to empower these specific young men – very little changes, and epidemic rates of gun violence persists.

We have made a commitment to acknowledge and affirm the value, worth and humanity of these young men. As such, Richmond must continue to advance positive

investments towards the hope that is dependent upon this specific group of individuals. Only then is real and longstanding “peace in our streets” possible.

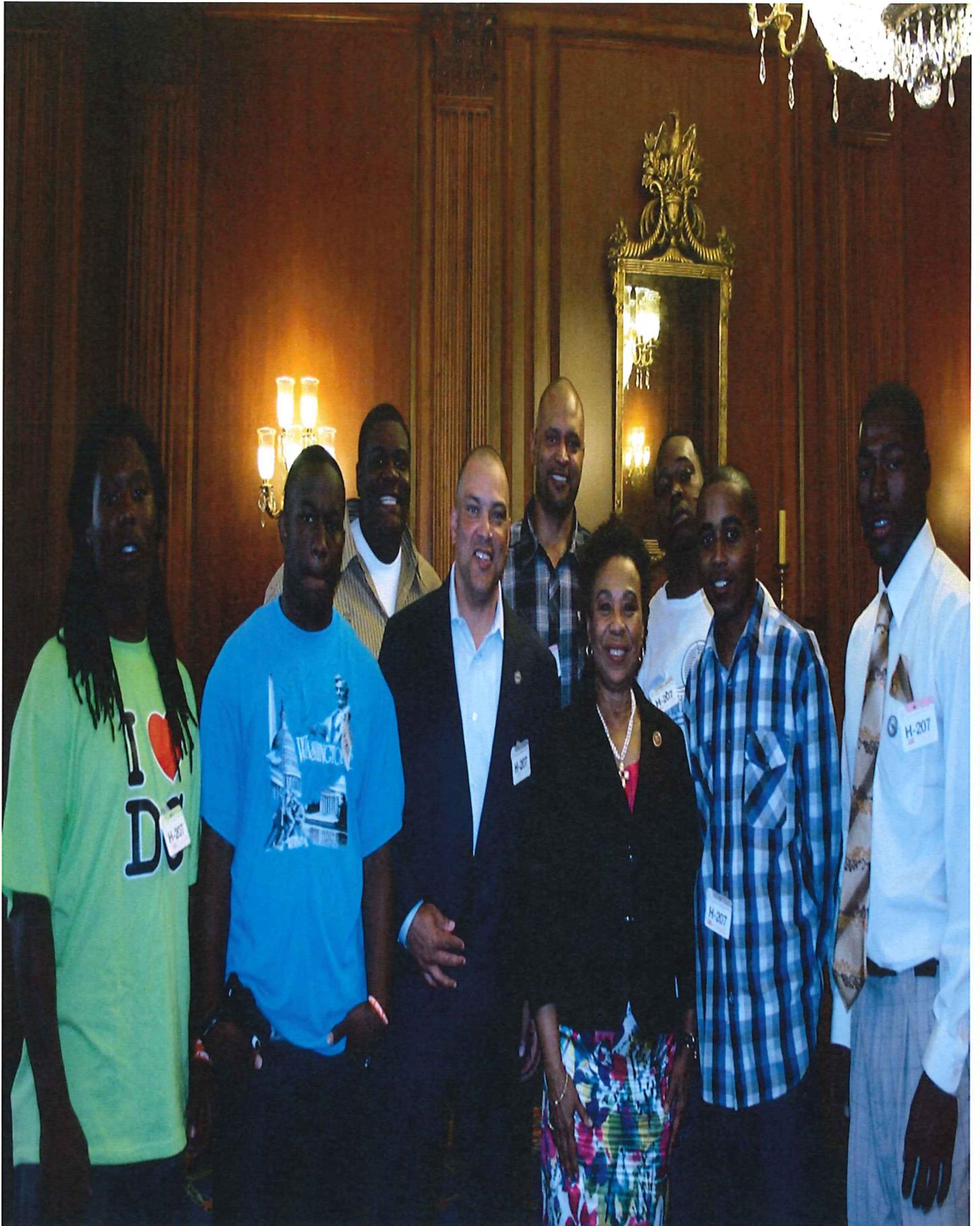
There is still much work to do. No codes have been cracked and we should not be satisfied until gun violence ends in Richmond. For the families that have lost loved ones this year and in years past, you and the memory of those who have passed on have encouraged a firm resolve and an ongoing commitment to make our city a healthier place to live, work and play.

The ONS and I are truly grateful to the many young men who when faced with potentially lethal contention, made healthier decisions. We are proud of your hard work, your strength and resolve to resist years of bad information, advice, example and instruction that point you toward a path known to escalate conflicts. You are our city’s greatest resources and advocates for creating a healthy Richmond. For this we celebrate you.

So with great humility, a strong sense of pride and a heart filled with hope, I thank you!

*(DeVone Boggan serves as Neighborhood Safety Director and Director of the Office of Neighborhood Safety in Richmond, California)*

WASHINGTON DC 2013



POLITICS

WORLD

CULTURE

MILLENNIALS

MORE

Log in

# You Won't Believe How These Men Are Ending Gun Violence in Their Deadly Hometown

Jared Milrad in [Politics](#) 1 day ago

13

198

56



11



You Won't Believe How These Men Are Ending Gun Violence in Their Deadly Hometown

It's been called [one of the most dangerous cities](#) in America and the murder capital of California. Across the bay from San Francisco, Richmond, Calif., has been engaged in what a forthcoming documentary calls "a confused war" — an ongoing, seemingly endless battle between rival communities in the north, south, and central areas of the city. With a crime rate of 55 per 1,000 residents — one of the highest of any community nationwide — the chance of becoming a victim of violent crime in Richmond is 1 in 101. In this city of [just over 100,000 residents](#), [an average of 35](#)

people were murdered each year between 1986 to 2005. Forty-seven people were killed there in 2007 — 10 times the national average.

With statistics as grim as these, many communities might throw up their hands in despair. But **Devone Boggan**, founding director of the city's **Office of Neighborhood Safety** (ONS), had a different idea. A victim of gun violence himself, Boggan believed the problem was not so much a problem of poor policing, but a lack of engagement in the communities directly touched by violence.

So, in October 2007, the ONS team began visiting every murder scene in Richmond and meeting with victims and their families. Modeled on "**Operation Ceasefire**" violence intervention programs in Boston and Chicago, ONS offered grief counselors, assistance with funeral costs, and a consistent presence in the community with a consistent message: Don't retaliate and perpetuate the cycle of violence. By 2008, ONS began to see the fruits of its labor. Homicides remained unacceptably high but were reduced significantly, inroads were made in communities long plagued by violence, and confidence that changes were afoot began to build. But a year later, when 47 people were again killed by firearms in the city, Boggan and his team knew they'd have to go back to the drawing board.



Most neighborhood safety programs target individuals downstream from acts of violence, including victims and their families. But when ONS reviewed the homicides in Richmond, one thing became clear: About 15 young men were responsible for nearly all of them, but police couldn't prove it. So rather than working only with youth who were at-risk to become violent, ONS chose a more innovative strategy — to confront the young men who were perpetrating the violence and give them a chance for a better life.

This new approach led to the creation of the **Operation Peacemaker Fellowship** ("the Fellowship") in 2010. Through intense mentoring, life coaching, and a positive accountability system supported by a private-public partnership with the City of Richmond, the Fellowship connects the young men who instigate gun violence with real alternatives, including opportunities to attend college and participate in job training programs, as well as a chance to learn from older men who themselves were once involved in a life of violence and ultimately chose a different path.

Indeed, since its launch in 2010, the Fellowship has produced extraordinary results. Homicides in Richmond have declined by 35%. Of the 43 Fellows ONS has served, 42 are still alive, 39 have no related gun hospitalizations, 36 have no new gun charges, and 33 have no new gun violence-related arrests. As one of the Fellowship's outreach workers, Sam Vaughn, explained to me: "The basic concept [of the Fellowship] is to love [the Fellows] and treat them as you would want to be treated in their situation using their logic. You do that for them and they will appreciate you and allow you to help guide their lives."

I wanted to learn more about how the program works, how it's changed lives, and whether its participants could offer any insight on the national policy debate on gun violence, so I interviewed three Fellows currently enrolled in the program: James Barker, (23), Lavonta Crummie (23), and Rasheed Shepherd (22). James, Lavonta, and Rasheed each spoke candidly with me about the dangers of growing up in Richmond; what it's like being surrounded by violence as a child; and how the ONS Fellowship showed them a world of opportunity they could have never imagined — or, in James' words, how to become "a citizen instead of a statistic."

**James Barker, 23**



**Jared Milrad (JM):** Can you tell us a bit about growing up in Richmond?

**James Barker: (JB)** Growing up in Richmond there was a lot of violence and that's the only outcome you had. That's all you had to look up to ... I was always in and out of jail for little things. Then [ONS staffers] told me: "It's yourself putting you in there. If you change yourself, [things will change for you]." Now I'm a working man, I've got a son who lives with me. Life's just great.

**JM:** Were you able to stay in school?

**JB:** No, I dropped out in the ninth grade. Going to school was like going to see an enemy or something [because of the rival gangs in other parts of the city]. I got out of school because I didn't want to die.

**JM:** When was the first time you were shot?

**JB:** I was 18 years old. A van pulled up on me and shot me. They just pulled up spraying [bullets]. They shot like 80 times at everyone out there.

It was an ongoing war in the city. A really confused war. One block away could be the enemy zone and we couldn't go there.

**JM:** When was the first time you met anyone from ONS?

**JB:** I was fresh out of jail. A few of my friends were in the program and they were getting a stipend. I needed the money. I was 20 or 21. They won't pay me, though, until they saw what I could do — like go to college, get a GED, prove [that I was capable of changing my life]. They didn't see me for a year, but then they saw me at my job. And they were proud, like a father figure. [They'd] ask, "How you been?" I distanced myself from my friends. I changed everything about the way I lived. I started being a citizen instead of a statistic.

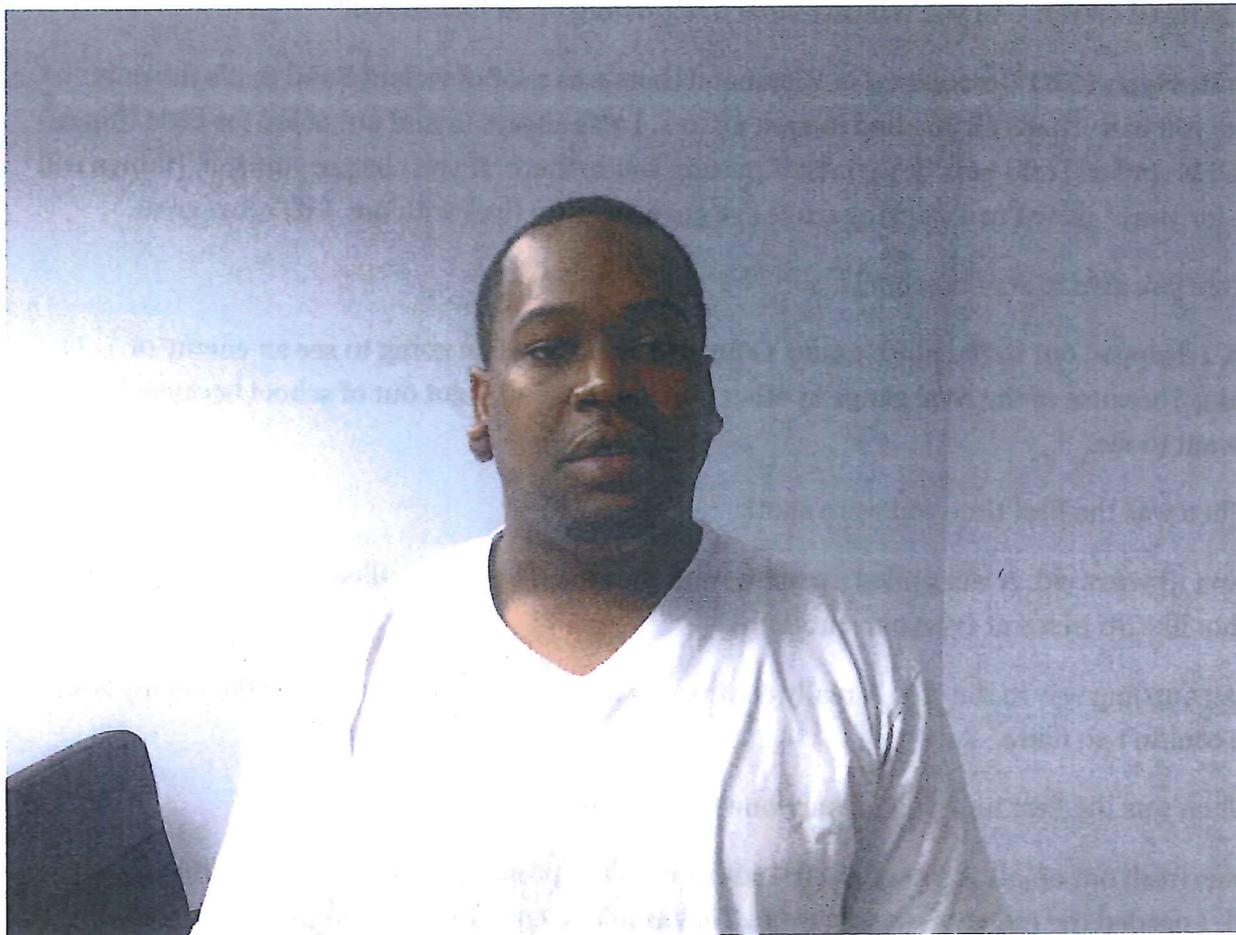
**JM:** How has the program changed what's possible for you?

**JB:** [Before I got involved in the program] I thought I could be dead or in jail. But now, in five years I want to be getting out of college. I want to study a lot of things. Not sure yet [what I want to study], but I want to go to college.

**JM:** Do you think this program could be replicated to reduce gun violence in other cities?

**JB:** Yes, it can be a solution because gang members in other cities would see [that we've been through the same thing]. When they see one person going to college, [it can have a ripple effect] on the rest of the gang and the community.

**Lavonta Crummie, 23**



**JM:** What was it like growing up in Richmond?

**Lavonta Crummie (LC):** Growing in Richmond was different — it was a confused war. It was always segregated from North, South, and Central [Richmond] — meaning the people you were around were all from the same neighborhood. It's impossible for a North Richmond guy to ever be in the same room with a South Richmond guy. We don't even have to have a personal problem, it's just [an ongoing] feud. It was a war that was created before I was even born. I have family members — cousins, uncles — that have been hurt or affected by violence. So the way we grieved and the way we acted out felt civilized.

**JM:** When was the first time you were exposed to violence? What happened?

**LC:** I was 9 years old. I rode a bike up the street and saw a drive-by shooting [when] I was going to meet up with another friend. A car pulled up on me. They saw I was a kid and kept going, and then it pulled up on another gentlemen sitting in a car — it was open, rapid gunfire. Even as my first time seeing it, it's sad to say I wasn't shocked or jumpy about it, because it's been going on so long. Even if you haven't seen it, you've heard stories and details [about gun violence].

**JM:** How has violence personally affected you?

**LC:** I've been stabbed in my face. I was a victim of a robbery when I was 20-years-old. I had 21 stitches in my face, and this happened in my own neighborhood. The place where I grew up and was supposed to feel safest.

**JM:** Were you able to stay in school?

**LC:** Yes.

**JM:** Have you had friends that have been personally affected by gun violence?

**LC:** Yeah. I have a best friend who was gunned down in Richmond. He died [when he was] 21 years old.

**JM:** How did you hear about ONS?

**LC:** I knew Sam [Vaughn, ONS outreach worker] from growing up, but I heard about the program through word of mouth. They hit the streets really. The first time I heard about the program [was when I saw ONS workers driving] an old police vehicle. I saw 6 or 7 individuals that I knew at the vehicle, and it shocked me — like, “What is going on?” [My friends] were at the car in the window talking to [the ONS workers], so I had to see what it was about.

It’s really a program to help yourself. We are our own men as well as intelligent. [By participating in the Fellowship,] we might be seen [by some in our community] as sell outs or traitors as well as leaders. But ONS wanted to hit where the violence starts, so they didn’t just go after the Average Joe. I think that was a good idea.

**JM:** How has the program changed your life?

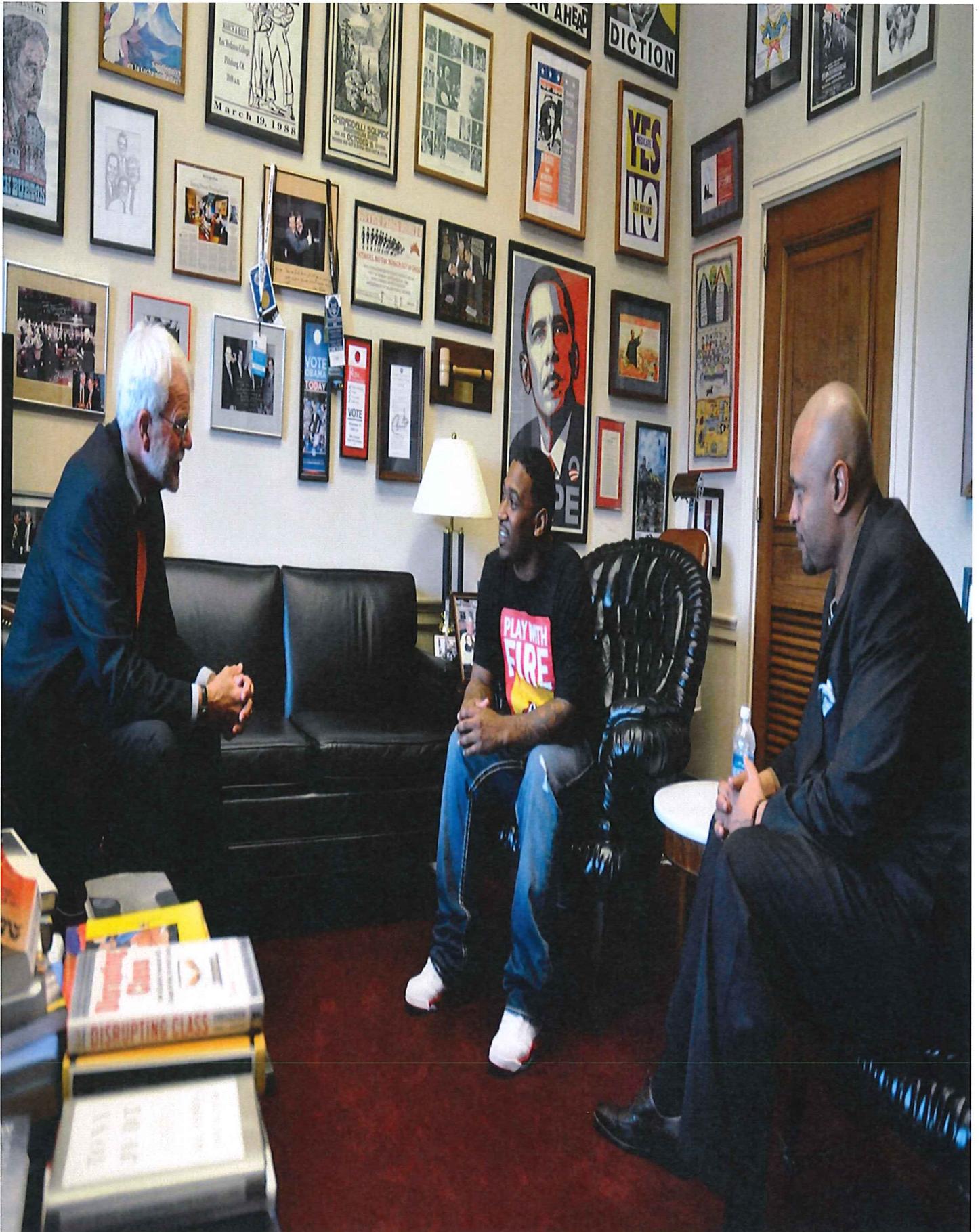
**LC:** It’s done a lot. It brought my confidence up to know that there is more out there than Richmond. Gang violence kicks up too much dust in Richmond given that it’s such a small city. It’s uncivilized to see [so many murders happening in Richmond].

The program has changed the inner person I am and has groomed me to be a better individual. They give you the opportunity to do what you want to do. They offer jobs as well as internships. They just show that there’s more out there.

**JM:** Do you want to go to college?

**LC:** Yes. I’m taking classes now at a community college — I’m going for business management. I might even start a program like this one — something to do with youth empowerment for young black individuals. I could say that there’s better things out there. I could make a difference.

WASHINGTON DC 2013





United States  
of America

Reel C

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

## House of Representatives

IN RECOGNITION OF ERIC WELCH

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

BY

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 22, 2013

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend my colleagues to read the following article, titled "East Bay Profile: Veteran of Richmond's neighborhood wars changes life," posted in the West County Times on May 21, 2013.

I've had the opportunity to meet this extraordinary young man, Eric Welch, a number of times, both here in Washington and in my district in Richmond, California, during visits with the City of Richmond's Office of Neighborhood Safety's Peacekeeper Fellowship program, of which Eric is a member.

Eric's only 24 years old but has had a long history of involvement with gun violence. At 14, he was almost killed in a shooting, and by the time he was 22 he had already been shot on four separate occasions. But now, he is on new path in life now, and that is very encouraging.

I was so proud to read that this fall Eric will start classes at Talahassee Community College in Florida, and that he hopes to later transfer to Florida A&M University. And just as exciting, Eric has been selected as a Summer Policy Fellow for the Campaign for Youth Justice in Washington, D.C. this summer where he will write for the group's blog, brief congressional committees on his experience, and work with grass-roots groups to reduce youth crime.

The Richmond ONS Peacemaker Fellowship exists to save lives- Eric is a living testament to that. It is designed to create a viable space for at-risk individuals ages 16-25 to contribute in a real way to building and sustaining community peace, health and well-being— with the express purpose of eliminating gun violence in Richmond. Time and again I'm blown away by the work these young men do to develop a positive life path forward and mentor other young men in similar situations.

I wish Eric all the best, both in Washington this summer and at school this fall. I hope his successes will serve as inspiration for many more to follow in his steps.

**East Bay Profile: Veteran of Richmond's neighborhood wars changes life**

*By Robert Rogers*

*Contra Costa Times*

*May 21, 2013*

RICHMOND -- Eric Welch's mind and heart are on a higher plane, but the street reflexes remain. He'll be in Washington, D.C., this summer, wearing tailored suits and briefing Congress. But for now, Welch still tenses when certain cars round the block. He has good reason. He was shot four times before his 22nd birthday. "At first, getting shot was a source of anger," Welch said. "Now I look back at it differently. I wonder why I got so lucky in a place where people like me get killed all the time."

Welch, now 24 but with the weary face and measured speech of an older man, has gone from self-described "goon" and survivor of multiple episodes of gun violence to celebrated member of the Office of Neighborhood Safety's fellowship program. The program appeals to about 50 violent residents with incentives, including small cash stipends, if they give up gunplay and pick up education and job training.

The program is unique in the region, a city-sponsored department that stems violence through intervention in the lives of violent offenders. For his efforts, Welch earned an internship with the Campaign for Youth Justice, a Washington,

D.C.-based nonprofit focused on juvenile justice. Welch will serve as a "policy fellow" from June 10 to Aug. 9, writing for the group's blog, briefing congressional committees on his experience and working with grass-roots groups to reduce youth crime. It's a far cry from Welch's teen and early adult years, a haze of neighborhood beefs and sporadic gunfire, interrupted by hospital and jail stints. He bounced between a dozen schools, toting guns when most kids still were watching Saturday morning cartoons.

Guns and violence permeated his rugged south Richmond neighborhood. It was only when he enrolled in the Office of Neighborhood Safety program after a 2010 jail stint that he turned away from crime. "Eric is a shining example to other young people in Richmond and beyond that people can change, and in the virtue of hard work," said program director DeVone Boggan.

#### **Cheating death**

Welch leans on a black gate in front of a California bungalow home at 26th Street and Virginia Avenue. "This is the spot where I got shot that first time, almost died, man," Welch says, looking down the street. "I was 14." Welch re-enacts the scene from a decade ago. He was "hanging" with another teen a few blocks from the apartment where he grew up with his mother and sister. One block west, a car glided around the corner. Rifles poked through the windows and spit flames from the barrels, a nanosecond before the crackle of gunfire. "I don't remember the car, just the flame spit out in the night; it was AK-47s," Welch said. Welch and his friend dove to the sidewalk and crawled for cover. "The bullets was whistling by, and ricocheting all over the concrete, too," Welch said.

The pain was an intense heat, Welch remembered. A large-caliber slug struck Welch underneath his left arm, collapsing his lung and breaking his clavicle. Welch's friend was hit in the hip. The car screeched away. "Lot of blood, out my mouth, out my chest. I thought I was going to die," Welch said. "I couldn't breathe." Three scars mark his upper torso. One is the entry point near his armpit. One is the spot in his side where doctors plunged a tube to help him breathe. The exit wound is on his back, knotted into a mound of dark scar tissue the size of a golf ball.

#### **Low points**

Welch survived, but his innocence didn't. "After that, I was bouncing around schools, just living the neighborhood life," Welch said. "I was angry. I was vengeful." His drive for vengeance intensified after the 2006 killing of Sean "Shawny Bo" Melson, a pint-size 15-year-old police say was a charismatic, up-and-coming neighborhood leader. To this day, odes to "Shawny Bo" and old photos are posted on social networking sites. Welch and other friends vowed to "keep it lit" for Melson, meaning to exact retribution on rival neighborhoods they blamed for his death. Welch was shot three more times, in both ankles, the buttocks and the hip. He declines to get into specifics but admits he has been involved in "shootouts."

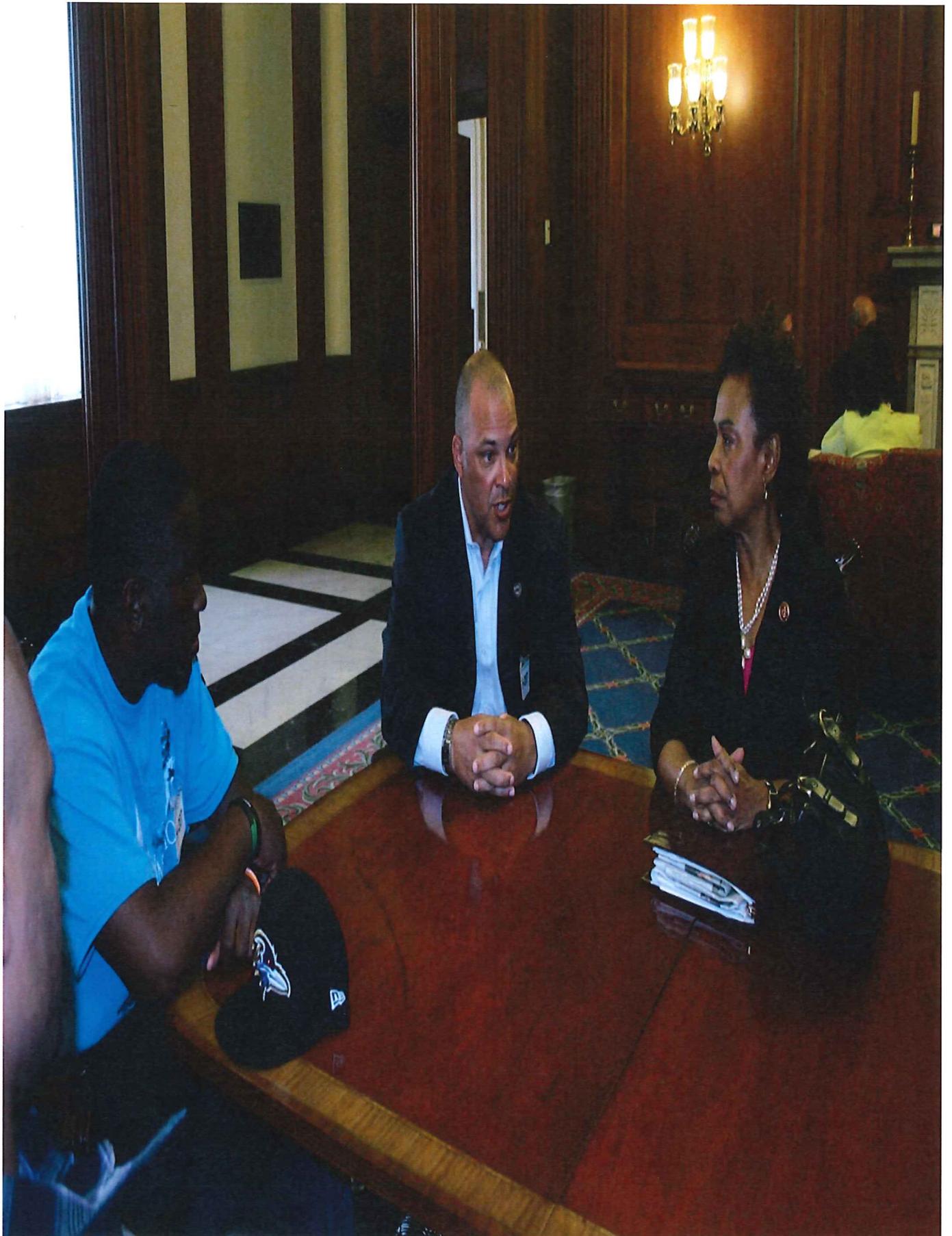
"I have a chance at a peaceful life; I just don't want to die or go to jail when I am so close." Welch said that in Richmond's toughest neighborhoods, violent deaths of relatives and friends, shootouts and close calls "hang over everything."

#### **The future**

The mere notion of a future is a far cry from where Welch has been. "Eric was on his way to prison or death, for sure," said Sam Vaughn, an Office of Neighborhood Safety neighborhood change agent who has worked closely with Welch. "Where he is now, about to go to college, is a miracle given what he's been through." Welch spends little time in the old neighborhood, knowing he could lose it all in an instant.

He plans to attend Tallahassee Community College in Florida in the fall, and he hopes to transfer to Florida A&M University. But first, he's on his way to the Capitol. "I am really looking forward to a new start, a place where I can be by myself and focus and not worry about my past catching up with me," Welch said. "I feel alone here, in my neighborhood. My friends are mostly dead or incarcerated".

WASHINGTON DC 2013





January 29, 2014

Dear Eric:

I write to congratulate you for achieving a grade point average of 3.0-3.99 for the Fall 2013 term. This achievement demonstrates your desire to attain success during your college career and has earned you this letter of Merit Recognition. Upon completion of your college-developmental courses and continued maintenance of your high GPA, you will qualify for one of the Honors' recognitions.

Your grades are a reflection of the high expectations you have for your academic career, and I encourage you to continue in your efforts to reach your goals.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Barbara R. Sloan in cursive script.

Barbara R. Sloan, Ph.D.  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

ATLANTA GA 2013



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 159

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2013

No. 83

## *House of Representatives*

RICHMOND OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY PEACEMAKER FELLOWS

---

REMARKS

BY

HON. GEORGE MILLER  
OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
JUNE 12, 2013

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend two young men from Richmond, California, who will begin classes this fall at Tallahassee Community College in Tallahassee, Florida. Sounds pretty straightforward, I know, but these are no ordinary students.

What makes these young men from my congressional district stand out is their background. It's not just that most people thought they would never go to college--in fact, most people thought they would never make it out of the neighborhood. People thought they would end up in jail, or even worse.

D'vondre Woodard and Eric Welch are two senior fellows at the city of Richmond's Office of Neighborhood Safety Peacekeeper Fellowship, an office that does a remarkable job of changing violent lives. D'vondre and Eric are shining examples of what remarkable transformation individuals are capable of when they desire to make positive change in their lives and when they're supported in that effort.

From a life dominated by gun violence in the streets of Richmond to noses buried in books at college, internships in Washington, D.C., and meetings on Capitol Hill, these young men have come a long way. I wish them the best. I hope their success will serve as an inspiration for many more to follow in their steps and leave the violent streets.

WASHINGTON DC 2013



## Richmond reports lowest homicide total in 33 years, credits multipronged efforts

Posted: 01/06/2014 2:29 PM



[facebook](#)

[twitter](#)

[More News >>](#)

[Next >>](#)

RICHMOND -- Just six years removed from being ranked among the nation's 10 most dangerous cities, Richmond's 2013 homicide total was its lowest in 33 years. Total reported crimes also continued a decade-long fall and were more than 40 percent lower than the 2003 total.

While the reasons for the steep decline are complex and varied, anti-crime advocates point to an event last summer that highlights just how much things have changed in a city once plagued by cycles of retaliatory street violence.

Hundreds of mourners, many of them young men with their fallen friend's face embossed on T-shirts, packed Macedonia Baptist Church in North Richmond to remember Lavonta "Macho" Crummie, a 23-year-old budding rap star who grew up in the neighborhood's notorious housing projects.

Crummie was killed in an Aug. 1 drive-by shooting in Antioch.

Mixed with the crowds and the raw emotions of that day were more than a dozen representatives from the city's Office of Neighborhood Safety, many of them ex-street toughs who now work to keep the peace. They urged Crummie's friends not to retaliate.

August was one of five months last year in which there were no killings in Richmond.

"Particularly because of who (Crummie) was, that was the kind of incident that has historically triggered waves of retaliation," said ONS Director DeVone Boggan. "The violence could have been outrageous, immediate and terrible."

Sixteen people were killed in Richmond in 2013, the lowest total since 1980 and a far cry from the 40-plus tallies of just a few years ago.

"We have a ways to go, but we're headed in the right direction," said police Chief Chris Magnus. "The reputation of Richmond as a dangerous city is not well-deserved anymore; that is becoming the Richmond of the past."

The decline in homicides and overall crime -- Richmond has not had more than 26 homicides in any year since 2009 -- can be attributed to a range of factors, law enforcement and anti-violence officials say, including better police-community relations, improved youth-outreach programs and changing demographics.

On the police side, Magnus has reformed a long-beleaguered department with an infusion of young officers, a focus on data-driven resource deployment and an emphasis on building community trust.

"We don't cast a wide net or move into hot spots like an occupying force, which fosters distrust among community partners," Magnus said. "We are surgical; we concentrate on people that need to be focused on."

At the same time, the ONS employs agents who build relationships with more than 60 young men and teens, identified through criminal records and other data as potential violent offenders. The program includes educational, counseling and job-placement support.

Operation Ceasefire, a volunteer campaign, helps give former gang members and violent offenders job training and counseling.

"We have built relationships with the people who may have otherwise perpetrated gun violence, and helped them become influential peacemakers," Boggan said.

While the drop in Richmond's violent crime is pronounced, it's also part of a larger trend.

Oakland saw a 30 percent reduction in homicides and a slight drop in overall violent crime in 2013. San Jose reported 44 killings, a drop of two from 2012, and San Francisco's homicides fell from 69 to 48. The regional trend mirrors a national one of major urban centers such as Los Angeles, Chicago and New York reporting steep drops in killings, said Barry Krisberg, a senior fellow at UC Berkeley's law school.

Krisberg said Richmond benefits from a confluence of forces, including improvements in policing strategies and the ONS, along with community groups and faith leaders who conduct frequent "peace walks" in the city's most crime-plagued neighborhoods. Krisberg noted that Richmond is "not the same city it was even 10 years ago," thanks to the influx of more upper- and middle-income residents and immigrants.

The focus on offering positive outlets for at-risk youths in Richmond and elsewhere could be key to sustained crime reduction, he said.

"Part of crime reduction is not incarcerating kids in awful places where they become more violent," Krisberg said.

The 16 homicides in 2013 are the lowest total since 1980, when 15 people were killed. The lowest number on record, dating to 1971, was 12 homicides in 1973. But Richmond has about 105,000 residents today, up from just under 75,000 in 1980, according to U.S. Census data, meaning the homicide rate per capita in 2013 was the lowest in the city's recorded history.

While total violent crime dropped 4 percent in 2013, one of the few categories that rose was assaults with a firearm, which climbed from 81 to 91. The city's sophisticated ShotSpotter gunshot-detection system, which records and triangulates gunfire throughout the city, showed no significant decrease in 2013, Capt. Mark Gagan said.

While the statistics show decreases in crime, longtime residents say the decades of gunplay haven't faded from memory.

"Shootings and people dying has been a part of life out here since I can remember," said Joe Alexander, a 38-year-old who has spent most of his life in the high-crime Iron Triangle neighborhood.

Alexander is also the founder of the Facebook group R.I.P. Gone But Never Forgotten, which pays tribute to hundreds of young men killed in Richmond over the years. "I know there's less violence, but when I'm out and about, I still always stay aware of my surroundings."

Contact Robert Rogers at 510-262-2726 or [rrogers@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:rrogers@bayareanewsgroup.com). Follow him at [Twitter.com/SFBaynewsrogers](https://twitter.com/SFBaynewsrogers).

---

MEXICO CITY 2013



## **Drummond: Richmond's commitment key to reducing gun violence**

*Tammerlin Drummond Oakland Tribune Columnist Contra Costa Times*

Posted:

InsideBayArea.com

---

Yet while gun killings in Oakland have continued to soar, they are way down in Richmond. There were 18 homicides in Richmond in 2012. That's still a lot for a city with about 100,000 people. But that's half as many as the city averaged in previous years. How did Richmond achieve substantial reductions in gun killings? What can Richmond teach cities like Oakland?

It's not about fancy crime-fighting strategies or magic formulas.

The key lesson is, nothing changes without an unwavering commitment on the part of a broad cross section of the community to end the violence.

To understand the confluence of forces that got Richmond to where it is now, you have to go back to June 2005. The year before, the city had 35 killings. More than half of the people who died were African-American boys and men in their early 20s. On average, every 10 days, someone was shot and killed.

The Rev. Andre Shumake, a longtime Richmond activist, decided something had to be done. Shumake and other members of Richmond's clergy helped organize a "Black-on-Black Crime Summit." The theme was simple. "We want them to live." About 200 people from across Richmond -- clergy, police, city officials, media and neighborhood groups -- attended the daylong conference at a local middle school to talk about solutions to youth violence.

I covered the event for the Contra Costa Times, one of the event sponsors.

The organizers promised to work on a campaign to reduce homicides to zero in three years. It was wildly optimistic. All the more so when eight people were killed during the first 19 days of that very same month. But the Black-on-Black Crime Summit was the beginning of a communitywide mobilization around violence prevention that has endured to this day.

Later that month, hundreds of people packed a City Council meeting demanding that then-Mayor Irma Anderson and council members take action. Then, a tent city movement emerged where clergy and others camped out near the scenes of killings for more than a month to keep the spotlight on the homicide epidemic. Ministers continue to walk the streets of violent neighborhoods preaching messages of peace.

"All that laid the foundation," says Shumake, who credits Richmond's success in reducing gun homicides to the police department, the city, clergy, the community and the media all working together.

In October 2007, Richmond launched the Office of Neighborhood Safety, a city department.

The agency's sole mission is to identify the people -- most of them between 16 and 30 years old -- who are responsible for most of the gun violence in Richmond and to get them to stop shooting. Says director DeVone Boggan, "We don't focus on hot spots, we focus on hot people."

ONS has outreach workers who try to mediate conflicts before they erupt into shooting.

The most innovative and controversial program is a fellowship where those enrolled earn up to \$500 per month as an incentive to achieve certain goals, whether it's getting their GED, going through drug treatment or attending career training.

Boggan has raised the money for fellowships from private donations. Yet some complain that people are getting paid -- basically to persuade them not to shoot other people.

Regardless of ONS' unorthodox strategy, killings in the city have declined overall since its inception.

The agency has a symbiotic, sometimes tense, relationship with the Richmond Police Department. In order to maintain trust with the men it serves, ONS can't be seen as being too cozy with the police. Some in the RPD have accused the agency of refusing to cooperate in criminal investigations.

Boggan and police Chief Chris Magnus acknowledge that the relationship between the two city departments has at times been difficult. But both acknowledge the other's key role in reducing violence.

Magnus came to Richmond in late 2006 from Fargo, N.D. At the time, some questioned what he could possibly know about policing a city like Richmond with major urban problems.

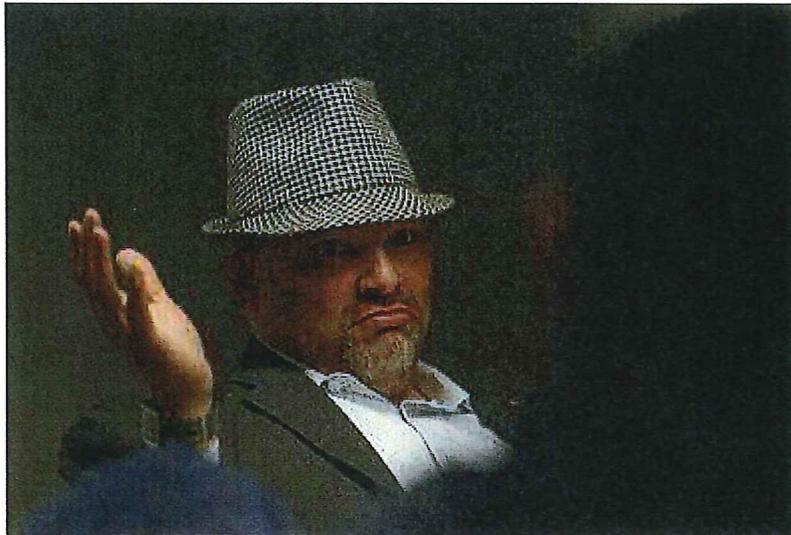
Magnus revamped the department from top to bottom. He focused on building relationships with the community, making officers and supervisors accountable for reducing crime as well as blight in their geographic zones, and using CompStat data for smarter deployment of officers. Since Magnus arrived, the city has hired 50 more police officers.

He is cautiously optimistic about Richmond's gains.

"It's a work in progress, " Magnus says. "It's very fragile."

Richmond might not have achieved zero homicides, but it's at least headed in the right direction.

Tammerlin Drummond is columnist for the Bay Area News Group. Her column runs Tuesday and Sunday. Contact her at [tdrummond@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:tdrummond@bayareanewsgroup.com) or follow her at [Twitter.com/Tammerlin](https://twitter.com/Tammerlin).



Office of Neighborhood Safety Director DeVone Boggan, center, talks with staff members during a meeting in Richmond, Calif., on Wednesday, Feb. 29, 2012. The office is seeking money for a third-party evaluation of its violence prevention programs. (Kristopher Skinner/Staff)

WASHINGTON DC 2013



Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)

See a sample reprint in PDF format.

Order a reprint of this article now

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WSJ.com

U.S. NEWS | August 28, 2013, 8:33 p.m. ET

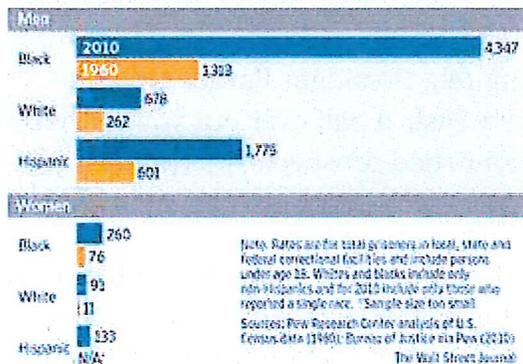
# Crime Persists as a Grim Challenge for Blacks

By **ASHBY JONES** and **ARIAN CAMPO-FLORES**

Five decades after marchers converged on Washington to hear the Martin Luther King Jr. deliver his "I Have A Dream" speech, African-Americans have made notable strides in areas such as educational attainment and civil and economic rights.

### Population Shift

Number of inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents of each race and sex



But one grim problem has become much worse: the extent to which violent crime touches African-American life.

While the overall U.S. murder rate fell over the past several years, the number of black male victims rose—many coming at the hands of black perpetrators. More than half of the nation's homicide victims are African-American, though blacks make up only 14% of the population. And over the

past 50 years, incarceration rates have risen for blacks, especially among men.

Such statistics present a troubling contrast to the gains made in other areas. Since the 1963 march, blacks have largely closed the gap with whites in high-school completion rates, with 86% of African-American adults having a high school diploma in 2012, compared with 92% of white adults, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of census data.

The percentage of black adults who obtained a bachelor's degree hit 21% last year—about four times the rate of five decades earlier—but still trailing the 34% rate of whites, Pew said.

Equal-opportunity and affirmative-action programs opened up more jobs for African-Americans in corporations, public agencies and academia. New government programs to provide health coverage, housing and other assistance to the poor and elderly benefited blacks. And while blacks lag behind whites in life expectancy, the gap has narrowed significantly, thanks in part to improvements in medical care.

"There is no doubt that the ceiling has been lifted, that black people can occupy, and have occupied, virtually all the highest offices in our government and within the corporate ranks," said Benjamin Todd Jealous, chief executive of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "That's significant because our children's aspirations are able to rise proportionally."

But police, political and community leaders are struggling to reduce violence—and in particular, the killings of young black men by other young black men—in poorer inner-city areas. The number of black male murder victims rose more than 10% from 2000 to 2010, to 5,942 from 5,307, according to an analysis of homicide data published by The Wall Street Journal last year.

The violence, coupled with a crackdown on drug crimes that has often involved mandatory sentences, led to a boom in incarceration rates for black men.

In 1960, 1,313 African-American men were incarcerated for every 100,000 black U.S. residents, according to the Pew analysis. By 2010, that number had climbed to 4,347. By contrast, the numbers for white men were 262 and 678, respectively.

While the rates of incarceration for blacks declined between 2000 and 2009, they remained significant.

In a speech Wednesday commemorating the march, President Barack Obama lamented such violence. "The shadow of poverty casts a pall over our youth, their lives a fortress of substandard schools and diminished prospects, inadequate health care and perennial violence," he said.

He alluded to the role black communities must play in addressing the problem. "If we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit that during the course of 50 years, there were times when some of us, claiming to push for change, lost our way," he said. "The anguish of assassinations set off self-defeating riots. Legitimate grievances against police brutality tipped into excuse-making for criminal behavior."

In 2008, Richmond, Calif., implemented some ideas inspired by a program called Operation Ceasefire that has helped cut homicide rates in several U.S. cities through community interventions. It identified several dozen young black men in the city "most likely either to kill or be killed within six months," said DeVone Boggan, Richmond's neighborhood safety director.

"We sat down with all of them and explained that they were setting the city's law-enforcement policies, that their violence was costing the city \$600,000 a month," said Mr. Boggan. "We told them that with their help, we could put that money elsewhere and could turn the city around."

To Mr. Boggan's surprise, the vast majority of the targeted men participated. The program assigned each of them a "caregiver," helped connect them with jobs, gave them opportunities to take trips outside the city and gave some small stipends.

In the three-year period that ended in 2012, firearm-related homicides fell 45% and firearm-related assaults dropped 44% over the three year period that ended in 2009, he said.

"We've still got a lot to figure out in Richmond," said Mr. Boggan. "But we're miles ahead of where we were five years ago."

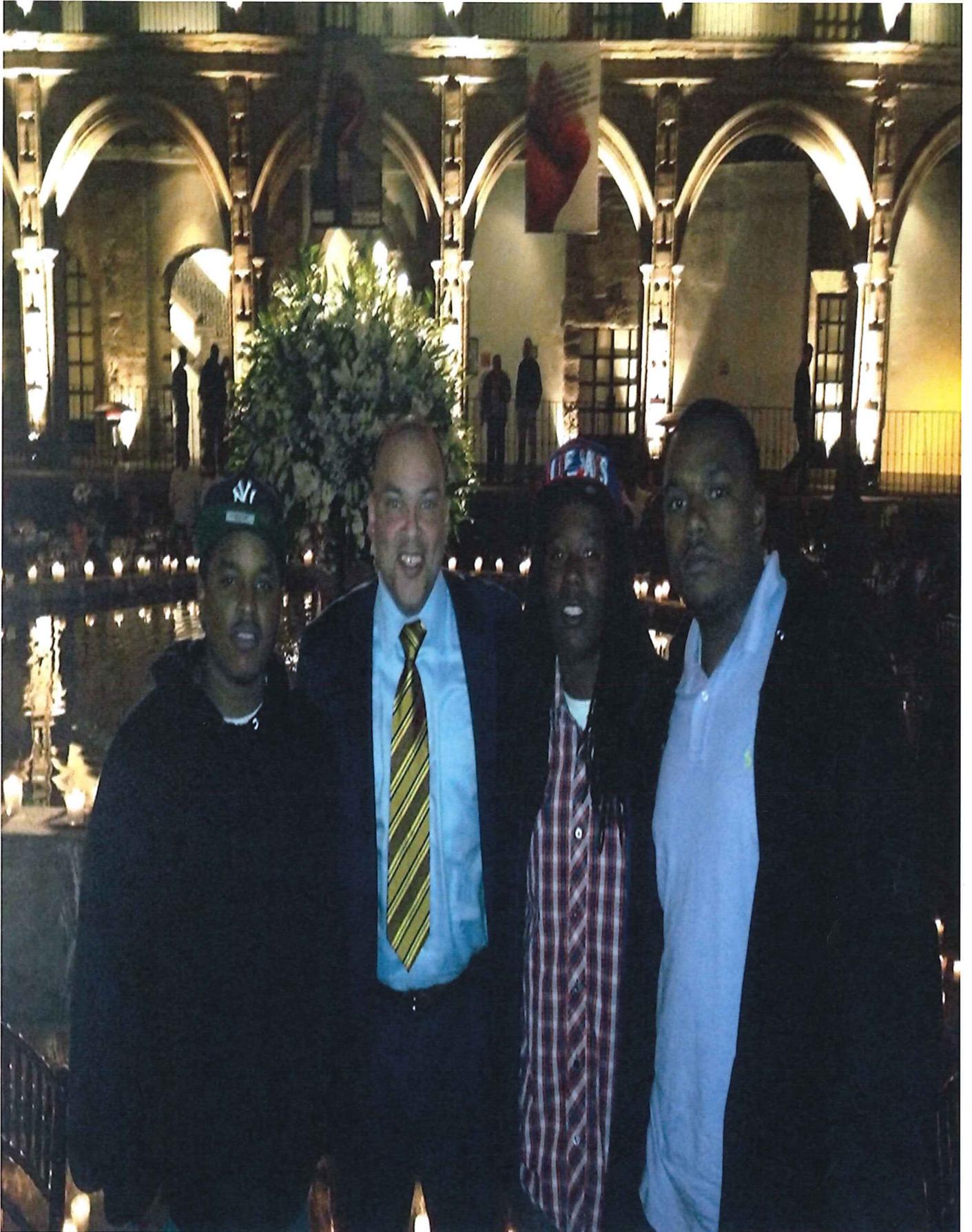
**Write to** Ashby Jones at [ashby.jones@wsj.com](mailto:ashby.jones@wsj.com) and Arian Campo-Flores at [arian.campo-flores@wsj.com](mailto:arian.campo-flores@wsj.com)

*A version of this article appeared August 29, 2013, on page A2 in the U.S. edition of The Wall Street Journal, with the headline: Crime Persists as a Grim Challenge for Blacks.*

Copyright 2012 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com)

MEXICO CITY 2013



**An Innovative Government Solution to Reducing Gun Violence**

**City of Richmond California  
Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS)**

**Name of City:**

Richmond California

**Current Population:**

105,000

**City General Fund Budget:**

\$134,000,000.00

**ONS Agency Budget from General Fund:**

\$1,500,000.00

**ONS Agency Personnel:**

11 FTE

12 PTE

**Categories:**

Public Safety, Public Health, Social Services, Boys and Men of Color, Gang Prevention and Intervention, Violence Prevention, Intervention, Interruption, Gun Violence, Re-entry

**Brief Description of Strategy/Agency:**

Youth related gun violence has persisted in the city of Richmond at an alarming rate for a number of years. In response the City of Richmond created the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) in October 2007. The ONS was created as a non-law enforcement agency within city government with a sole focus to reduce loss of life associated with firearm offenses. The ONS functions proactively and in a fast response mode to quickly interrupt gun violence, and to advance dramatic and sustained reductions in gun violence over time. The ONS facilitates two very important primary strategies to achieve its goals and objectives with active firearm offenders; its Street Outreach Strategy and the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship. By working cooperatively with a broad community of public system, community based and philanthropic stakeholders, in 2013, the City of Richmond recorded the lowest number of firearm assaults and homicides in more than three decades, and experienced a 66% reduction in such crime from 2007 when the Office was of Neighborhood Safety was created.

## **Narrative**

Youth related gun violence has persisted in the city of Richmond at an alarming rate for a number of years. In 2007, the City of Richmond experienced 47 homicides, a rate of 47.9 per 100,000 residents. That number compares to a statewide rate of 5.4 per 100,000 in the same year. In 2009 the City of Richmond was identified as the 14<sup>th</sup> most dangerous city in the country in a ranking of the safety of cities based upon violent crime rates. (“City Crime Rankings: Crime in Metropolitan America,” CQ Press, 2009.)

In Richmond, police intelligence indicates that shootings and homicides are driven by a very small group of individuals, primarily African American and Hispanic American young men between the ages of 16 and 25. This group represents 80% or more of those who are engaged in violent activity, or who are the objects of that activity. The majority of the members of this group have experienced previous contact with the criminal/juvenile justice system however most have never been convicted of a firearm offense.

In contrast to the widely dispersed structure of “gangs” found in some urban communities, rival associations in Richmond tend to be geographically based. Membership is often unorganized and tends to be multi-generational rather than hierarchical. Patterns of youth related gun violence in Richmond are frequently shaped by violations of turf or power, which lead to an attack on individuals in rival geographies of the city, followed by multiple cycles of retaliation. These cycles of retribution can take place within days or can extend over a period of years, as one group seeks redress for past wrongs committed by their adversaries.

## **Narrative Solution**

In October 2007, the City of Richmond created the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS). The ONS is a non-law enforcement agency within city government with a sole focus to reduce loss of life associated with firearm offenses. The ONS functions proactively and in a fast response mode to quickly interrupt gun violence, and to advance dramatic and sustained reductions over time. The office provides and coordinates targeted intervention services for those identified as active firearm offenders who have avoided sustained criminal consequences. The ONS outreaches to 150-200 young adults annually, providing attention-intensive engagement, and a support structure designed to improve the social and emotional health and wellness of these individuals. The ONS facilitates two very important primary strategies to achieve its goals and objectives with active firearm offenders; its Street Outreach Strategy and the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship. The city’s street outreach team (Neighborhood Change Agents or “NCAs”) directly engages on a daily face-to-face basis, those individuals identified as the most lethal and likely to be perpetrators and/or victims of gun violence in Richmond. NCAs are city employees who work to build healthy and consistent relationships with these individuals, serving as their mentors, credible messengers of healthy information, and examples of positive and healthy lifestyles. Working through these Neighborhood Change Agents, the ONS works to expand access to quality and customized opportunities, exposures,

resources, and services that build on the identified populations' strengths in an effort to reduce their involvement in gun violence.

An example of the city's street outreach practice in Richmond is "Occupy North Richmond" its 2012 Summertime Gun Violence Interruption Initiative. Most gun related homicides are retaliatory in nature, and many gun related homicides result from some sort of altercation. In 2011, the City of Richmond experienced twenty-six homicides citywide, and seventeen of these occurred between the months of June and August. It is widely speculated, and was commonly communicated, that most shootings during this period, and many of the resulting homicides recorded, were a product of ongoing conflicts/feuds and/or retaliatory acts between warring factions from North and Central Richmond.

In response to this challenge, the ONS intensified its street outreach presence, increased ONS street outreach assets, and worked to stimulate a heightened level of community engagement in North Richmond in an effort to reduce conflicts that produce or fuel increased gun violence between North and Central Richmond factions. In addition to engaging the community and the high risk individuals, ONS Neighborhood Change Agents posted themselves on the corners of the only five entrances and exits of North Richmond. This often resulted in NCAs identifying Central Richmond crews coming into to North Richmond and convincing them to turn around.

At the conclusion of the initiative on August 31<sup>st</sup>, four firearm related homicides and twenty-seven firearm assaults had occurred during the summer months of 2012. ***This represented a 76% reduction in summertime firearm related homicides, and a 16% reduction in summertime firearm assaults over the previous year.*** NOT ONE FIREARM RELATED HOMICIDE OCCURRED IN NORTH RICHMOND DURING SUMMER 2012.

The Operation Peacemaker Fellowship is a non-mandated, intensive Transformative Mentoring Intervention program designed for those individuals, ages 13-25 identified as current catalysts and/or instigators of firearm offences in Richmond. This intervention works to transform the attitudes and behaviors that have given rise to those individuals' involvement in gun violence. The Fellowship actively seeks to include those individuals' who have been the most resistant to change and/or are chronically unresponsive to the traditional range of services offered or available in the Richmond community. In addition to the public safety concerns that these individuals pose, they are among the most expensive population to serve with respect to the costs of policing, incarceration, hospitalization and social services. Enabling them to right their life trajectory has a collateral and positive effect on their communities, families and peers, in addition to saving taxpayer dollars.

Operation Peacemaker Fellows are provided small incentives (including monetary incentives) in exchange for their partnership, active program participation, positive behavior, and meeting a range of life development/skills, education, employment and

restorative justice goals. The incentive structure functions to provide a gateway for the advancement of intrinsic motivation that arises from internal and not external rewards.

**Narrative Results**

Specific outcomes resulting from the Street Outreach Strategy include (2013):

- Over 8,000 outreach hours logged;
- Over 2,700 outreach contacts were facilitated by Neighborhood Change Agents;
- Over 500 outreach contacts with formerly incarcerated individuals;
- Over 400 service referrals were facilitated by Neighborhood Change Agents;
- Over 200 individuals who are at high risk of being involved in gun violence were provided services, including intensive mentoring and life coaching;

There have been two completed Peacemaker Fellowship cohorts and one currently in process over the last 43 months. Each cohort is 18-months in length, with specific outcomes that include

Of the 68 Fellows enrolled over the 43 months:

- 65 remain alive;
- 64 have no gun related injuries or hospitalization since becoming a Fellow;
- 57 have no new gun charges since becoming a Fellow;
- 57 have no gun violence related arrests since becoming Fellow;

The combined results of the Office of Neighborhood Safety in terms of reducing the incidence of gun violence are summarized below:

**Richmond Firearm Activity – Pre & Post Fellowship**

YEAR	HOMICIDES	FIREARM ASSAULTS
2006	42	186
2007	47	242
2008	28	150
2009	45	170
<b>Pre - Totals</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>748</b>
2010	22	118
2011	26	114
2012	18	82
2013	16	95
<b>Post - Totals</b>	<b>82 [-80]/(-49%)</b>	<b>409 [-339]/(-45%)</b>

*In 2013, the City of Richmond recorded the lowest number of firearm assaults and homicides in more than three decades, and celebrates a 66% reduction from 2007 when the Office of Neighborhood Safety was created.*

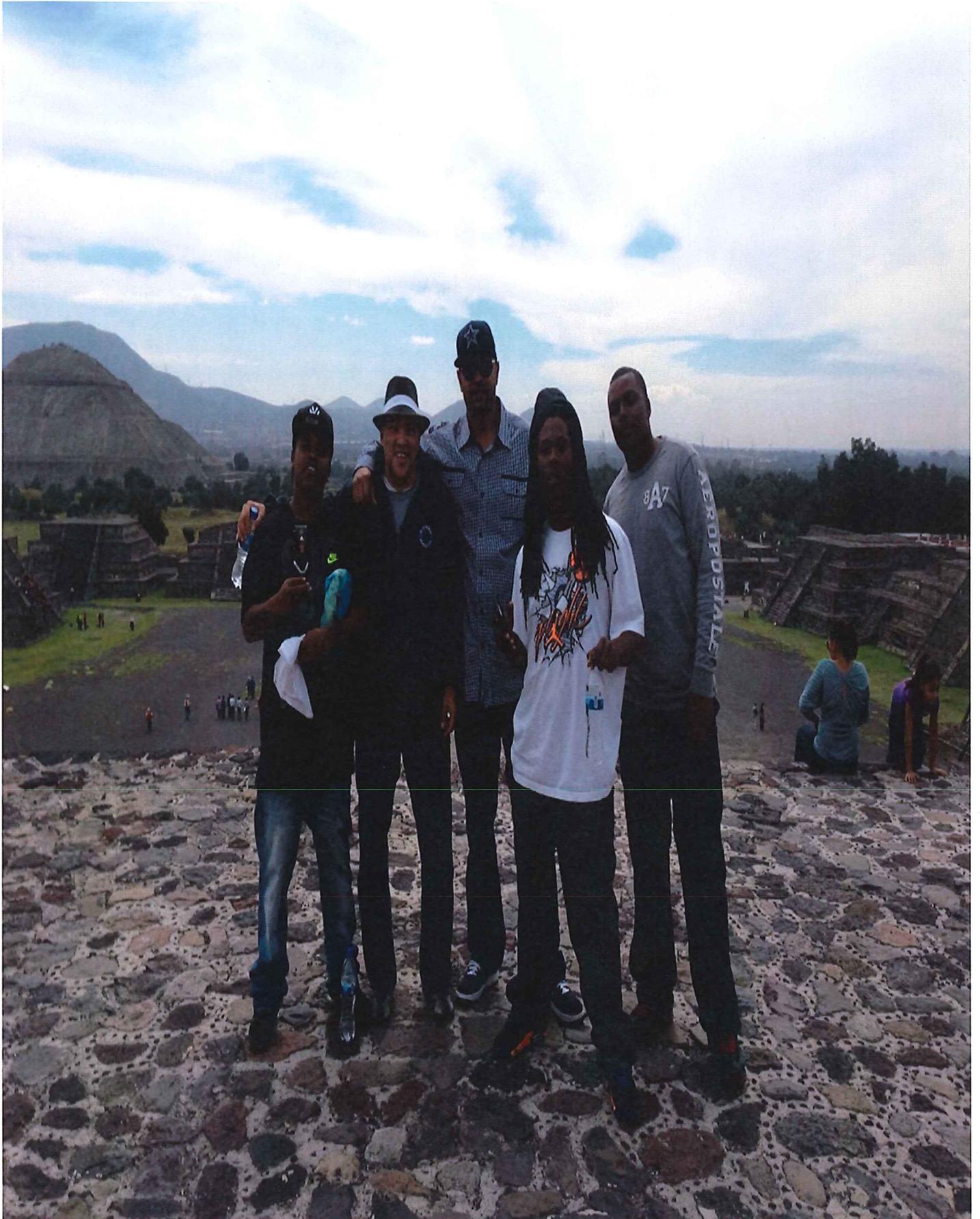
The work of the City of Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety could not be successfully accomplished without the appropriate support and partnership of local and regional law enforcement agencies. These agencies are instrumental to ensuring that the ONS is focusing its limited resources on the right people to achieve maximum impact from each ONS strategy. A select group of philanthropic and community based organizations have also been important to the successful facilitation of ONS work. Community based service providers who are willing and able to provide helpful, customized and viable supportive services for the target population is critical for any success accomplished.

Most importantly, we are grateful to the young men who participate in the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship. The strategy theory of change is that cities must partner in new ways with those who can best influence the elimination of the gun violence. It is they who must decide to stop shooting. The work by the Office of Neighborhood Safety is designed to empower these individuals to do just that, and to provide the assistance that they need to help them achieve this objective.

**Contact:**

DeVone L. Boggan, Neighborhood Safety Director  
[devone\\_boggan@ci.richmond.ca.us](mailto:devone_boggan@ci.richmond.ca.us)

MEXICO CITY 2013



## Richmond Firearm Activity – Pre &amp; Post Fellowship

YEAR	HOMICIDES	FIREARM ASSAULTS
2006	42	186
2007	47	242
2008	28	150
2009	45	170
Pre Fellowship – Totals	162	748
2010	22	118
2011	26	114
2012	18	82
2013	16	95
Post Fellowship - Totals	82 [-80] / -49%	409 [-339] / -45%

WASHINGTON DC 2013

