Creating Solutions to Stop Youth Violence

STOP THE VIOLENCE

Table of Contents

Foreword to Second Edition

As a judge in the Family Division of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, I sit on a "Judicial Bench." This courtroom bench is raised two feet above ground level and fifteen feet in front of the table where the lawyer and juvenile defendant sit. Behind me are a United States flag and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania flag.

On a daily basis, young people come before the bench and I can only imagine that they feel some measure of intimidation and fear as they look up at me from the defendant's table. I consider how intimidated I would have felt at their age and this realization leads me to speak to these young people with sensitivity and in a very caring manner. Additionally, in order to pass down a fair judgment that seeks to impart 'balanced and restorative justice' as opposed to punitive justice, I consider what they have done (the crime they committed), in addition to, how they got where they are; what factors led to the circumstances that placed them at the defendants table before me.

I have noticed three phenomena in relation to why youth find themselves in the courtroom:
- Youth are exhibiting increased aggression; involved in violent altercations, fights…
- More youth are carrying fire arms/weapons.
- There is an increased lack of understanding of the importance of education, leading to poor academic performance, truancy, high dropout rate...

The years that I have spent on the bench have given me insight into 'best practices' or what works best in reaching our youth to encourage them to travel down the right path, to steer clear of violence and other unlawful activities. I can point out two factors that I believe makes a huge and profound difference; <u>Education</u> and <u>Caring Individuals</u>.

In compiling and writing the 2nd edition of the "Strategies for Change: Building More Peaceful Communities" the Coalition Against Violence is exhibiting and providing both, education and care, to every sector of our society. Each chapter thoroughly addresses all aspects of the violence issue and gives guidance toward reducing/eliminating this societal ill. The Coalition Against Violence has updated a document that answers the all-to-often asked question of, "what can I do" with detailed and well thought out responses and action points for every person and community group. This has been a collaborative effort that has the potential to yield great results in this battle against violence. The bible speaks clearly in Psalms 24:5, A wise man has great power, and a man of knowledge increases strength; for waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisers."

I proclaim that accolades are in order for the Coalition Against Violence and all the dedicated individuals who have taken the time to study this violence problem, contemplate it, discuss it, collaborate around it, seek attainable solutions and ultimately, present this document with resolve to educate all and exhibit their care and concern for our children, our communities and our future.

Judge Dwayne D. Woodruff
Court of Common Pleas, Family Division
Allegheny County

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE: Building More Peaceful Communities

The Greater Pittsburgh COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE (CAV) ©
Creating Long Term Solutions to Deep Rooted Problems
"Moving from Complaint to Possibility…from Planning to Implementation"

According to an alarming report written in 2007, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was identified as leading the nation in homicide rates for African Americans. Answering the call the **Coalition Against Violence** was launched on February 8, 2007 to identify and implement broad-based strategies to address the violence.

Comprising youth, street level workers, community and religious leaders, representatives from education and government institutions and concerned citizens from Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, the **Coalition Against Violence** established a working group charged with the task of updating and expanding 'Strategy 95'. This anti-violence document identified strategies to decrease the violence which was rampant in 1995. The CAV working group met on 52 occasions from February 8, 2007 to March 6, 2008. Crossing neighborhoods, racial and ethnic backgrounds and spanning the generations, members of the working group were totally dedicated to their task. Through the diligence and consistent effort of this broad spectrum of committed individuals, this document provides what Dr. Larry Howard, a former Dean of the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA), describes as the most comprehensive and detailed approach to impacting violence ever written by a group of concerned citizens of Metropolitan Pittsburgh! We think we may have one of the most comprehensive anti-violence strategy documents in the nation.

Since Duquesne University hosted the original launching of the **Coalition Against Violence** documents (printed by the University of Pittsburgh) on July 8, 2008, the response and feedback from the Metropolitan area has been tremendous. This has contributed directly to creating partnerships and commitments for implementation of the various strategies listed within this publication. One of the earliest commitments came from the President of The Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC). This led to the development of an ongoing program, the Young Adult Empowerment Program, which has been integrated into the academic infrastructure of CCAC, one of the leading community colleges in the nation.

The **Coalition Against Violence** continues to diligently request, and hold, meetings with various organizations, agencies, institutions and communities to introduce the document components and strategies and to discuss the specific concerns each group brings to the table. This process has prompted the **Coalition Against Violence Working Group** to create this second edition of our document which includes some 13 new strategy components, as well as an expansion of some of the sections contained in the original edition.

This special edition of Strategies for Change: Building More Peaceful Communities was created for schools and youth programs and contains excerpts from the document we feel are pertinent to this particular population. It is our hope that your school or organization use the strategies contained herein to generate discussion, action and implementation.

As we move into the second phase The Coalition Against Violence Working Group asks *all* citizens to choose the action steps and strategies identified in this document which best suit their area of interest, concern *and/or* influence. We ask that you make the action points a reality by partnering with us as we carry on the work of "moving from complaint to possibility…from planning to implementation and mobilization." Let's all strive for a nation and a world without violence!

Tim Stevens and Valerie Dixon, Conveners
The Entire Coalition Against Violence Working Group

The Greater Pittsburgh Coalition Against Violence (CAV) ©

The Vision:

Safe, peaceful and just communities for all!

The Mission:

The mission of the **COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE** is to create and implement a comprehensive anti-violence strategy for Pittsburgh and the nation.

The Goals:

- To FIND collaborators and partners to implement the various strategies of the Coalition Against Violence throughout the Pittsburgh Region and beyond.

- To PROVIDE opportunities for community dialogue using the "Community Manifesto" and "The Role of the Family."

- To PUBLISH an "Implementation Update" describing how the CAV document is being utilized, along with commitments made for implementation. The update will be presented periodically to the public.

- To SEEK financial and other resources that can expand the ability of the Coalition Against Violence to market *Strategies for Change: Building More Peaceful Communities* and mobilize for the implementation of the CAV anti-violence strategies.

- To SPONSOR community forums or mini-summits on issue areas contained in the CAV anti-violence strategy document. Participants will develop action strategies and implement actions relevant to their particular needs

A Call to Action

A Community Manifesto and The Role of the Family formed the Preamble to the **COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE** 2008 document. These two chapters were specifically written as a C*all to Action* for the African American community. We feel strongly that the community must boldly take ownership of this persistent problem which has had the most devastating impact on the communities in which African Americans live and work.

As stated in the Community Manifesto, "we must seize the time to reclaim our community now." As stated in the Role of the Family, the *village* must take the lead in healing the African American community. To significantly decrease the violence *everyone* living, working and worshipping in our neighborhoods and communities must come together.

While the Preamble speaks directly to African Americans, other strategies identified in the coalition's comprehensive anti-violence document provide a role for *every* segment of society. The coalition strongly encourages the entire community to actively, diligently and forthrightly take *action* to help move forth the actions and strategies listed in this document.

Therefore, the **COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE** urges every citizen to read and share this document with their families, friends, workmates, classmates and others within their life circles.

We are convinced that these strategies, if implemented, can *significantly* impact the violence that has become far too common in our communities.

COMMUNITY MANIFESTO

Today our community is at a crossroads. We are appalled at the shootings and senseless deaths of our young people. After all, these are our sons and daughters, our grandchildren, our nieces and nephews, and cousins who are killing each other. These are our children, who are dying or maimed at the hands of other children! In good conscience, we can no longer sit quietly, wringing our hands and shaking our heads at the latest news accounts announcing that another life has been lost.

These seemingly senseless murders, though committed by few, have created a cycle of violence and trauma experienced by everyone living, working and owning businesses in our community. We are living in a culture of violence where a few people, bent on death and destruction, have held the entire community hostage! This culture of violence, which has threatened the lifeblood of our community, is so pervasive that if things do not change the community will descend into further chaos.

When mothers have to snatch up their children in fear at a public event because of a shooting, something must be done! When our elders are so fearful they cannot walk outside of their homes, something must be done! When schoolchildren witness a person wounded and bloodied outside of their school building, something must be done!

There is a multitude of underlying causes for this culture of violence that are so pervasive in our community – causes that include rage and anger, apathy and denial, under-employment, mis-education, and racism. The rise of the "prison industrial complex" and the glamorization of gangster-like activity can also be included. The trauma and stress of loss and pain felt by so many people as a result of this violence – has caused untold damage to our collective psyche. From our elders to people living with disabilities, to our young school children, to every individual in the community, including the victims and their families – *everyone* is vulnerable. It is damaging to the health of the community when the trauma of loss and pain continue to escalate. We must work diligently to heal the trauma because we have a responsibility to the life, health and vitality of the community. We can no longer afford to let a few violent people, who seemingly operate under a law unto themselves and who are preying on their own communities continue to hold the rest of us hostage.

Today, we must look toward one another for answers not so easily explained. While moving forward we must look backward, inspired by our cherished brothers and sisters of the early Civil Rights Movements and the Black Power Movement, There are many lessons they taught us about self-determination, building and uplifting the community and empowering entire generations to change.

Sadly, today, not only are we still fighting our traditional enemies, we must also acknowledge the historical enemy that has always been with us, one that is getting stronger – and that is the "enemy within". Who is threatening the lifeblood of the community? Many of them are our own youth, between the ages of 12 and 25, who are responsible for the shootings and killings we see almost nightly on the evening news. Furthermore, many adults are also committing and supporting these violent acts against the community. What violent acts? Drive-by shootings and gangster-like executions in front of residents, and in public places -- drug dealers selling in and around schools, near senior citizen buildings, on street corners, and in business areas.

Yet, we know that the youth are not the only people responsible for perpetuating this culture of violence. We know that the people selling guns including AK-47s to our youth are also the enemy. And we are very certain that most of them do not live in our communities. We must honestly ask ourselves – why have we, the community, allowed the violence to escalate? Why does it appear that most of us sit by, wringing our hands in despair and lamenting, *"Somebody must do something before it's too late?"*

How long are we going to let the police do it, the government do it, the social service agencies do it and the churches do it? How long will we continue to let this fear paralyze us to inaction? How long will we allow this fear to embolden the enemy to maintain its hold on us? What can we, the community, do for ourselves to end this "madness?"

We must seize the time to reclaim our community: **Now!**

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

"Culture mandates that one make home the primary concern of the heart. The heart creates love, support, cooperation, nurturing, and peace. Home is our first school. Let us put our hearts, minds, bodies and souls back into the home as the first step toward eliminating the violence in the streets."
(Iyanla Vanzant in Acts of Faith: Daily Meditations for People of Color)

We must *heal* the community to end violence. ***We MUST reclaim the African proverb that it takes a village to raise a child***. All aspects of the village must take responsibility for raising the children and supporting *all* families in our community. This includes the schools, communities of faith, social institutions, and community allies.

Therefore, as the village, we recognize the following:

- There are all kinds of families in the African American community – two-parent families, single mothers raising children, single fathers raising children, grandparents and other relatives raising children, and foster care families. The village must support families, no matter what the composition or the orientation. Families need the support of the entire community. Institutions of faith, schools, businesses, and social and educational institutions *must* help them raise children, and provide relevant programs to address the diverse needs of the family, as well as those of the community.

- We have lost an understanding of how the history, cultural values, beliefs, practices, and traditions have sustained and protected the African American family. We have forgotten the significance of the role played by our elders as keepers of wisdom, as teachers of cultural values, and as role models for parenting. Today's youth feel abandoned and disrespected by the rest of the community. We must heal the distrust and the disconnection that seemingly comes from a breakdown of the strong sense of unity once shared by everyone in the village. We must return to and accept the practice of holding youth accountable whenever we encounter unacceptable or inappropriate behavior. Therefore, to have a healthy community, we must repair the relationship between the generations to help break the cycle of violence permeating our neighborhoods. Furthermore, we must make a commitment to reclaim and institute these values, practices and traditions to save today's families.

- Parents must see themselves as the children's first teachers and main role models. Children often learn more from what they see their parents do than from what their parents say. We learn about values and behaviors from our parents. Parents must understand that they have responsibilities as well as rights to raise their own children. They have the *right* to raise children in a safe, healthy, productive and positive environment. Yet, they must take the *responsibility* to empower their children to become responsible and productive adults. However, they cannot do this alone. The schools, communities of faith, social service agencies, and the community *must assist* families in achieving these goals.

It indeed takes an *entire* village to raise a child. If *our* village does not, many more children and youth may seek another kind of *family* – a family that is fostered in violence – one that is called, "The Streets." Therefore, the village *must* provide the guidance, and the leadership, as well as have the *will,* to raise all of our children in a productive, viable *and* safe environment.

If we truly want to have a healthy community with healthy families, we must recognize the family as the *foundation* of the village. Protected and insulated by the entire village, *parents and families* must make a commitment to:

- **Empower** children with a strong sense of self, community, culture, and spirituality to help them feel self-confident enough to avoid negative peer pressure and make the right choices.

- **Instill** children with a sense of responsibility to the family, to the neighborhood in which they live as well as to the wider community. Trust and respect helps to build a healthy family, *and* a healthy community.

- **Support** youth by allowing them to follow their dreams and not be deterred by influences of youth who engage in negative and even criminal lifestyles.

- **Teach** children self-discipline by strongly urging them to resist engaging in unhealthy or illegal behaviors or life-styles. Help them to deal with negative peer pressure, especially with regards to drugs and alcohol.

- **Provide** positive role models. Children must see strong, positive men and women living, working and involved in the community. Fathers must take an active role in raising their children, whether they are in or out of the home. Men in the village must step in to "father" children when biological fathers are incarcerated, or dead, or otherwise absent.

- **Insist** that children show respect for each other and *everyone* they encounter in the community.

- **Keep** open communications with their children and provide opportunities for young people to feel free to share their deepest fears, concerns, upsets and frustrations.

- **Encourage** children to be assertive and not aggressive. Help them to understand they can resolve conflicts without resorting to inappropriate or violent behavior when they are at home, at school, *and* out in the community.

- **Value** the pursuit of education and raise the standard of excellence as an essential requirement for success. Education provides a path to being productive and successful citizens.

- **Develop** and encourage a strong work ethic in children from an early age to prepare them to become productive adults.

- **Recognize** the *necessity* of securing all firearms, *if they are in the home*, to reduce the risk of accidents, theft, or unauthorized use. Remember that deaths or injuries in the home are also committed with guns.

- **Advocate** for safer communities. We must hold *every* school, municipality, and state and federally elected official accountable. Urge them to enact legislation that will protect the community and provide *all* of the resources necessary to make our communities safe for everyone, including families.

Anti-Bullying Strategies

Bullying has become a serious problem in our schools, as evidenced in the statistics below. This behavior takes different forms, direct and indirect which can result in different types of bullying -- i.e., physical, psychological/emotional, verbal and cyber bullying. This type of aggression can be carried out by a group or an individual. The three important contributing factors in bullying incidents are that it occurs over time, is usually repeated and involves an imbalance of power and control. While more youth violence may occur on school grounds, strategies are needed to assure student safety no matter where it happens. Everyone can play a role in stopping bullying.

Why Anti-Bullying Strategies are Necessary:

- More youth violence occurs on school grounds as opposed to on the way to school. (However, youth violence can happen anywhere).

- Every 7 minutes a child is bullied on the school playground and most of the time *no one* intervenes.

- 1 out of 4 kids is bullied. An American Justice Department school bullying statistics and cyber bullying statistics studies show that this month 1 out of every 4 kids will be abused by another youth.

- School bullying statistics surveys show that 77% of students are bullied mentally, verbally and physically. Cyber bullying statistics are rapidly approaching similar numbers.

- In a recent school bullying statistics study, 77% of the students said they had been bullied. And 14% of those who were bullied said they experienced severe (bad) reactions to the abuse. Many have tried to stop cyber bullying according to cyber bullying statistics.

- 1 out of 5 kids on a school bullying statistics and cyber bullying statistics study admit to being a bully, or doing some "Bullying."

- Each day 160,000 students miss school for fear of being bullied.

- A school bullying statistics reveals that 43% of students fear harassment in the bathroom at school.

- A school bullying statistics and cyber bullying statistics poll of teens ages 12-17 proved that they think violence increased at their schools.

- The same school bullying statistics and cyber bullying statistics poll also showed that 282,000 students are physically attacked in secondary schools each month.

Citation: http://www.how-to-stop-bullying.com/bullyingstatistics.html)

Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to address this issue: from the educational institutions, to the parents, to the children and youth, to the entire community.

Educational Institutions roles:

- **Institute** Anti-Bullying Committees or Task Forces in each school, university and college.
- **Enforce** anti-bullying legislation, rules and regulations for each school, university and college.
- **Develop** school district-wide policy statements which clearly define and accurately describe how bullying incidents are to be handled.
- **Inform** students, parents and community members of the anti-bullying policies, programs, and initiatives designed to impact bullying
- **Send** a clear message that bullying is wrong and that it is not to be tolerated. However, understand the possibly negative ramifications of adopting any strict anti-bullying policy that is overly punitive -- i.e., "No Tolerance."
- **Consider** establishing both rewards and consequences to change the culture of the school, if bullying is prevalent. To promote a caring majority of students, consider utilizing a reward system for behavior that defends students who are victimized.
- **Decide** in advance the scale of consequences for bullying behavior and communicate these consequences to parents, as well as apply discipline evenhandedly and equitably to all students.
- **Use** a scale of disciplinary approaches for inappropriate behaviors that range from being onlookers, to being active bystanders, to the students who are actually engaging in bullying behaviors. Consequences should match the infraction.
- **Acknowledge** students' concerns about *any* type of conflict among students, and be especially mindful of allegations and incidences of bullying behavior. Understand that conflict is not the same as bullying. Conflict occurs between two parties of equal power. Bullying implies the existence of an imbalance of power.
- **Create** and provide educational materials, which give accurate information about bullying and its effects on both those who are bullied and those who are accused of bullying.
- **Request** that parents and students sign an anti-bullying agreement that encourages students not to bully and to report incidents of bullying.
- **Institute** learning sessions for all students in the school, not just for students assigned to prevention or pre-intervention groups.
- **Require** that students, who are repeatedly engaged in inappropriate behavior, attend intervention training and classes.
- **Support** victims of bullying and reporters of bullying by providing counseling or encouragement to the victims
- **Consider** instituting a process for investigating the reasons behind bullying incidents and provide a mechanism for mediation and/or resolution.
- **Develop** and implement a multi-tiered warning system for students accused of bullying, including parent-school conference meetings, before making an arbitrary decision to suspend a student without investigating the problem.
- **Conduct** a survey to learn about concerns and issues of the students as it relates to bullying.
- **Recognize** and reward schools in which bullying has been minimized and eliminated.
- **Provide** training for all school district professionals and student leaders/mentors to effectively deal with and eliminate bullying in the schools. This training could be offered to interested adults, family members and parent-school groups**.**
- **Request** principals of each school to select at least one school employee who has regular contact with and availability to students (and whom students feel they can trust) to confidentially mediate and/or facilitate effective conversation about the negative impact of bullying behaviors.

- **Adopt** anti-bullying strategies such as no-blame, common concerns, peer support and group/school-wide discussion circles.
- **Understand** that children accused of being bullies need just as much help as those being bullied, and that bullying behavior may be connected to personal or social problems.
- **Notify** parents or guardians immediately about any bullying incidents which involve their child or children.
- **Initiate** investigations of alleged bullying incidents in a timely manner (possibly within twenty-four (24) hours).
- **Encourage** kids to not take pleasure or satisfaction in bullying and/or to not see bullying as a sense of power. Instead encourage young people to see these qualities as being negative and unacceptable.
- **Look** at bullying as emotional abuse and treat it in the same way institutions work to end physical and sexual abuse.
- **Introduce** depression screening for eighth graders before they enter their freshman year that would provide them with solid emotional support systems.
- **Provide** free counseling in the schools, universities and colleges for students who are experiencing emotional disturbances which might be the result of bullying and/or the misuse and abuse of social media/social technology.
- **Educate** young people about their peers' sensitivity to being teased or taunted due to their weight, their general appearance, their sexual orientation, their race, their religion or any other such issue. Encourage tolerance, sensitivity and understanding.
- **Strive** to develop a culture of caring, helping, inclusion and positive communication among students. Isolated students are those who are most likely to be victimized by bullying.

Parent/Family/Community/Organizations roles:

- **Collaborate** with the school district to develop an anti-bullying campaign, which would include classes and/or opportunities, for all students to learn about bullying and its prevention within schools and communities.
- **Acknowledge** students' concerns about *any* type of student conflict, including bullying.
- **Understand** the differences between conflicts (arguments, single incidents of fighting, etc.) and bullying behavior. Know that conflict is not the same as bullying. Conflict occurs between two parties of equal power. Bullying implies an imbalance of power.
- **Report** any issues of bullying to the school principal, key administrator, and/or school officials, such as a guidance counselor.
- **Volunteer** during lunch and recess to help eliminate opportunities for students to bully; provide additional adults to monitor and assist students.
- **Encourag**e parents and guardians to pay close attention to sudden and/or dramatic changes in their child's behavior. Look out for children who seem to have no friends at school, or 'happy' children who suddenly become withdrawn or pretend to be ill to avoid going to school.
- **Ensure** parental involvement in every facet of their children's lives; model non-violent attitudes and behaviors and teach children appropriate social and communication skills.
- **Teach** children to respect themselves and to respect others as well. Understand and practice the Golden Rule – *"Do unto others what you would have them do unto you."*
- **Have** workshops for parents, caregivers, and people of all ages on the detrimental effects of bullying.
- **Investigate** and apply for grants which will enable schools, religious and social organizations help address the issues of bullying.

Youth roles:

- **Practice** appropriate social skills and interactions toward peers.
- **Participate** in open lines of communication with parents, grandparents, family members, guardians, and teachers about any conflict with peers.
- **Report** any bullying interactions to parents, grandparents, and/or family members.
- **Know** that people who bully normally require a clique or gang, and that bullying others occurs most often when there is an audience to watch**.**
- **Decide** not to be part of the "crowd."
- **Don't** encourage bullying**;** violence is not the answer**.**
- **Learn** to respect yourself and to give respect to others. Remember and practice the Golden Rule – "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you."
- **Strive** to develop a culture of caring, helping, inclusion and positive communication among students. Isolated students are those who are most likely to be victimized by bullying.
- **Continue** to talk about the issue of bullying with other people until bullying is conquered.
- **Stop bullying**!

Athletes: Professional and Students

Historically athletes have been in a unique position to influence society. Youth continue to look up to athletes at all levels – high school, college and professional – and they will mimic or imitate what they see them do, whether their behavior is positive or negative. Therefore, these athletes have the responsibility of being good role models. To further this goal athletes should:
:

- **Speak** articulately without using profanity.

- **Dress** appropriately for all occasions.

- **Act** politely and treat everyone they encounter with respect.

- **Utilize** their unique position to reach out and share positive messages with minority communities and beyond.

- **Complete** their own education and encourage others to do the same. Persons with high school diplomas and/or college degrees are less likely to be involved with anti-social or illegal behavior. Athletes should, therefore, exercise the discipline learned within their chosen sport, off the field, in their daily lives and in the community.

- **Take** responsibility for being aware of, and sensitive to, the issues in the community in which they are employed and live in during the season and perhaps off-season as well.

- **Participate** in community events when invited to do so and develop responsible connections to the community. Use the concept of team spirit to mobilize the community. It takes the efforts of *everyone*, including athletes, to heal the community. Team spirit, therefore, becomes community spirit.

- **Demonstrate** and share that athletes have to deal with the same kinds of issues and problems faced by many other people.

Professional Athletes

Professional Athletes are in a unique position to gain access to people in power at a level not available to the average citizen. In addition to the above stated responsibilities, professional athletes have an extremely powerful opportunity to impact the violence in the communities where they play. Therefore, professional athletes should:

- **Support**, organizations that provide needed services for children living within the various communities with their time, talents and treasures.

- **Freely** donate their time for occasions throughout the year in the various communities to demonstrate their commitment to the cities from which they gain their livelihood. Such participation could enhance the financial success of many community events.

- **Consider** forming new foundations; holding major annual fundraising events to benefit charities of their own choosing; providing funds and other resources for smaller events such as school and/or community events; repairing recreational facilities; building new facilities, such as community or wellness centers; providing recreational equipment, uniforms, books for libraries; and so on. Professional athletes could also provide scholarships for youth or others from disadvantaged communities.

- **Partner** with the business and corporate community in carrying out the action points identified in the Coalition Against Violence 2012 anti-violence document and support the anti-violence initiatives of other organizations and agencies.

Student Athletes

Student athletes must embrace the fact that they are often considered role models for their fellow students and the youth of the community that they represent. Because the community supports their team on the playing field, student athletes must return the gracious gift of support to the community and their school.

- **Take** the lead in the classroom. Be the example to other students for appropriate classroom behavior. Fundamentals include: being on time; sitting in the front of the class; sitting up straight (no slouching, side-ways and/or leaning on chairs).

- **Actively participate** in classroom discussion (do not make yourself feel inferior). When students see their leader on the playing field also participating in the class they will probably follow.
- **Be** respectful to the teacher; offer to aid the teacher in helping her to redirect other students that seem to get off task easily.

- **Volunteer** to pass out work or to be a group leader.

- **Consider** becoming involved in other activities besides sports. High Schools offer so many extra-curricular activities that athletes often avoid. Join some clubs and bring positive notoriety to them.

- **Stop bullying incidents** when witnessed. A majority of the time, bullies will listen to a fellow peer before they listen to an adult. If you know that either another student and/or group are being bullied sit at their table during lunch. Ask them to work on school work together. Make them part of your group and avoid making other students feel isolated.

Education: Primary and Secondary

Education is the foundation for financial success and responsible citizenship. Historically, the lack of education has led to the absence of hope, wasted lives, violence, incarceration, and even death.   The entire educational system, from pre-school to university, must be held accountable to the community.   It must empower students to live creative, effective and contributing lives. We therefore challenge the education community from Kindergarten through Grade 12 to do the following:

- **Increase** efforts to assure African American students achieve educational success within all learning environments at *all* levels.

- **Increase** family participation and support for school districts' Student Assistance Programs (S.A.P.).   Families should be encouraged to have input into the school's efforts to maintain S.A.P. funds.

- **Be accountable** for educating all students. Work with community advisory boards and student advisory boards to identify unsound educational practices and develop curriculum changes that will improve outcomes for African American children.

- **Commit** to develop and implement an expanded black history curriculum that establishes links to the past and that makes connections with the present, regardless of the racial mix in the school. Ensure that this curriculum will be taught throughout the year, not just during Black History Month. Make an ongoing commitment to include information that reflects the life achievements and struggles of people of color, both past and present, who can serve as positive role models for all youth. Provide appropriate library resources to support the curriculum.

- **Incorporate** classes that teach the values, cultural principles and belief systems of African, African American and other cultures. Utilize them as a tool to empower students, their families and the community to heal from the violence that prevails today. Investigate local, national, and international approaches.

- **Institute** and expand curriculum at all grade levels to include lessons about democracy that include such topics as fundamentals of constitutional government, civil and human rights and equality before the law, free and fair elections, due process of law – which should be, and are, the pillars of democracy. Teach young people the true meaning of a *fully* democratic society.

- **Review** current textbooks and resources, replacing them with those that provide a multicultural approach, and develop a curriculum that addresses the needs of African American students.

- **Include** courses that assist the student in becoming competent with technology.   It is not enough to "teach to the test" in order to meet minimum educational requirements.

- **Require** students to participate in community service opportunities as a requisite to high school graduation.   Service provides opportunities to learn important life skills and explore potential career options.

- **Require** guidance counselors to provide individualized career counseling and track the student's progress toward meeting educational goals.

- **Require** parents, administrators, guidance counselors and teachers to review the student's progress toward meeting educational goals on a monthly basis.

- **Ensure** that community-based organizations have a thorough knowledge of graduation requirements so that they can offer an action plan to parents and students for completing graduation requirements from high school. This resource should be available in the community for all school age youth to assist them in furthering their post high school education.

- **Provide** information regarding financial assistance for students wishing to obtain further education and training after high school.

- **Encourage** students planning to attend college after graduation to take college courses while still in high school. These courses should be affordable and scholarship discounts should be offered to students with strong grade point averages (GPA).

- **Hire** school principals and other administrators who set high achievement standards for their staff and for the students who exhibit abilities to inspire -- not just those who technically meet the bottom-line requirements.

- **Hire** more teachers throughout all grade levels, who reflect the diverse cultures and races of the community, particularly, more African American male teachers. Increase the number of people of color in managerial and administrative positions.

- **Encourage** teacher's unions to do more to recruit and provide a supportive work environment for African American teachers.

- **Provide** effective cultural sensitivity training to all teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff.

- **Open** school buildings for community use during non-school hours.

- **Advocate** for meaningful parental, family, and caregiver involvement by providing opportunities for *everyone* to get involved, including working parents and caregivers. Implement programming to encourage parents to support parent/ teacher/student organizations.

- **Encourage** more organizations and agencies to sponsor mentoring programs and provide in-school facilities for them. Expand existing in-school programs that successfully serve youth.

- **Invite** social service providers, including mental health professionals, to speak to teachers, parents and the community on various issues that have an impact on students' learning and development.

- **Ensure** that all school activities, including career days, talent shows, and clubs, reflect the diversity of the community.

- **Provide** separate meeting space for speak-out sessions, lectures and assemblies related to issues addressed by the Coalition Against Violence in this document.

- **Be** more responsive to community outcries concerning expelling and suspending African American children for trivial and unnecessary reasons. Examine the negative effect oppressive school policies have on student morale and mental well-being. Such oppressive policies undermine learning and provide opportunities for other negative behaviors.

- **Examine** the fairness and effectiveness of the suspension/expulsion policy. Discipline measures should be corrective, yet supportive, to help students without having to disrupt their education.

- **Advocate** for redefining discipline as a movement away from interpreting misbehaviors or wrongdoings as acts of defiance or opposition to authority. Disruptive behavior may simply be a declaration of frustration, rather than defiance to the school system.

- **Decrease** punishment inequities across race, gender and socio-economic lines. Practice more sincere and effective ways to decrease suspension or expulsion rates which disproportionately affect African American students.

- **Increase** utilization of diverse cultural-values models, which can be incorporated with the current school's discipline processes. Provide training and/or additional training for teachers on how to handle disruptive students. Also, incorporate social-emotional learning programs that teach students how to manage their own emotions and behaviors throughout their school experience.

- **Make** better effort to inform and educate students and families about the school system's expectations for acceptable behavior. Provide public awareness announcements in area newspapers and other media, or post policies on school websites.

- **Provide** parents and the community with information about appropriate corrective services (whether school- or court-ordered) that are not punitive. Such service must be meaningful and relevant for the purpose of challenging students to understand their responsibility to school and to society.

- **Re-examine** the truancy policies currently in place with regards to African American girls and boys. Give parents assistance in keeping students in school and decrease truancy through more effective case management.

- **Utilize** families, concerned community members, and business owners to assist in identifying students who are not in school.

- **Ensure** that school staff persons make every effort to contact parents and caregivers when students have been designated absent by the beginning of classes, for the protection of all students.

- **Require** parents and other caregivers, in the interest of children's safety, to provide the schools with working phone numbers.

- **Make** schools and areas surrounding schools safe zones, specifically with regard to drugs, gangs, and violence. This may include enforcing existing policies around these issues, and/or creating new ones.

- **Identify** and implement age and grade appropriate methodologies that address issues of drugs and alcohol and their impact on education, as well as violence in the community.

- **Utilize** peer education programs to address drug and alcohol abuse and factors which can lead to violent behavior.

- **Welcome** parent-community-teacher involvement in improving employment prospects and developing training programs.

- **Disseminate** resource lists that offer youth information about career paths, existing youth employment programs, apprenticeship programs, and training.

- **Provide** information to parents and caregivers so they know what counseling and training programs are available to their families.

GANGS / VIOLENT STREET GROUPS

In this document we have chosen to use the words 'gangs' and 'violent street groups' interchangeably as we are concerned about violence in all of its forms and manifestations. Furthermore, we also recognize that not all (or most) street violence is perpetrated by organized gangs.

It has been widely acknowledged that Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and many cities across the nation, experienced increased gang activity in the early 1990's. With a tripling of the homicide rate in 1994 in Pittsburgh a series of events occurred that resulted in a marked de-escalation of violent gang activity and a lull in overt gang violence. The most significant of these events was a federally initiated strike to target the most violent of the evolving gangs and their leaders with direct interdiction. Nationally, as the millennium closed, youth violence and gang activity was reduced with the use of various intervention strategies. Even though overt gang violence of the '90's had diminished substantially, since that time there has been a rise in drug trafficking offenses, and its subsequent violence turned away from actual gang activity to criminal enterprise pursuits and apparent 'turf' or territorial disputes.

Moreover, in recent years, there has been an increase in gun violence and homicides in predominately poor neighborhoods in the Pittsburgh region. With the escalating killings of African American males it is clear that gang and violent street group activity is on the resurgence. Therefore, local government and law enforcement agencies have initiated intensive interdiction efforts in attempts to curtail such activities. There may be similar trends in other cities across the nation.

In Pittsburgh "gangs" consist of groups of peers, neighbors and/or classmates that hang around together and <u>sometimes</u> engage in illegal enterprises (drug selling, "petty" thievery, etc.). They are not imported from other cities or states, which may have occurred in the past, although there are those that have migrated to the area for other reasons. Their activity is known to community and family members and sometimes is implicitly encouraged. Gang or group members typically live by a street code which discourages reporting criminal activity or engagement with law enforcement. That code also encourages the use of firearms to settle disputes. However, only a relatively small number of those are engaged in serious violent crime.

The majority of gangs operating in the Pittsburgh area are broken up into locations, even coming down to specific streets. Since the locations are so small police often do not know which group is responsible and may simply lump them together. In 2009 the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police estimated that there were a total of 41 gangs with approximately 875 gang members operating in Pittsburgh.

The Impact of Gangs and Violent Street Groups

- Gangs with access to guns play a significant role in violent crime in many poor communities across our nation.
- Violent gang activity has an increasingly negative impact on the learning environment of students in the affected communities; i.e. excessive tardiness, chronic absenteeism, suspensions and expulsions.
- Many communities are disproportionately impacted by poverty and social disorganization that places young people at greater risk for gang involvement, which in turn results in ongoing criminal activity.

- Although some resources and programs are available in many of the affected neighborhoods to address the issue of gangs and their impact, there is often a lack of coordinated resources that target and enroll violent, gang involved individuals.
- Family problems significantly impact youth in the neighborhoods harboring gang activity and foster gang membership.
- Gang-involved youth are impacted by poverty, unemployment, limited educational achievement, and a lack of positive activities and positive influences and role models. These same factors often keep young African American and minority males trapped in the gang lifestyle into their early twenties.

Gang Legislation Highlights Reported in 2011 by the National Gang Center

- *Of the 50 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.), all but Vermont have enacted some form of legislation relating to gangs or gang-related activity.*
- *Twenty-two have passed gang prevention laws.*
- *More than half the states have laws that provide for enhanced penalties for gang-related criminal acts.*
- *Forty-one states (41) and DC have legislation that defines "gang."*
- *More than half of the states' legislatures have laws against graffiti.*
- *Twenty-four (24) states define "gang crime/activity."*
- *Twenty-three (23) states have legislation on gangs and schools.*
- *Twenty percent (20%) of the states have enacted laws that deal with gang-related databases.*

Strategies to Impact Gang/ Street Group Violence

- **Be open** to the possibility that gangs and gang-related activity actually exists. Acknowledge that such gangs and gang- related/violent street group activities have most likely not really been eliminated, but have been reduced to happening on a smaller scale (i.e. neighborhoods or streets, or the level of intensity).

- **Maintain** regular identification of gangs/groups and their members as a step towards understanding and redirection of gang members.

- **Initiate** collaborations among community, faith-based leaders, parents, students, law enforcement and political leadership, to collectively assess the depths of a region's gang problem and to determine the realities of what may exist.

- **Deploy** faith-based and community groups, and dedicated street organizations (volunteer as well as professional) to interact with gangs and their members. Such entities can play a very significant role in the redirection of gang members towards more productive endeavors.

- **Help** the healthy growth of our children so that they become law abiding citizens. Encourage and teach the resolution of disputes without resorting to violence and gun play. Let them know that criminal activity is unproductive and unhealthy for the individual, the family, and the community.

- **Promote** messages that encourage the resolution of disputes without violence and gun play.

- **Educate** one's self and family members about the gang culture and learn the signs of gang membership. Don't be afraid to use your influence to correct these behaviors. Also, when signs appear, seek constructive intervention for impacted individuals.

- **Discourage** everyone from selling and consuming drugs or partaking in any illegal matters.

- **Encourage** youth and families to utilize their personal skills and strengths as steps toward a more legitimate, healthy and productive lifestyle.

- **Assist** affected youth in understanding how to constructively deal with grief, loss and disappointment without lashing out destructively or resorting to violence to cope with such issues.

- **Create** opportunities for youth and their families, who have overcome gang violence and who have endured life's obstacles, to become mentors, coaches and educators to others.

- **Mandate** all mentoring programs focused on addressing violent street groups to incorporate community-based and/or professional skills development components for community youth and adult mentors. Include physical, emotional, and social support components for mentees.

- **Encourage** all adults to stop fearing our youth. Invite people from the various neighborhoods to join street level workers to gain a better understanding of the problems youth face. This could include forming neighborhood block watches; holding community celebrations and picnics; engaging youth constructively; or simply by coming out to stand on one's porch. Don't be afraid to talk with our youth.

- **Involve** all segments of the community (including parents, youth, students, elders, etc.) in non-partisan, pro-active community organizing and strategy planning to end violence.

- **Foster** strong, positive, productive and mutual relationships between the community and every level of the school district, the business district, and law enforcement agencies (probation, parole etc.). This relationship must be based upon honesty, integrity and accountability.

- **Insist** that school administrators, local politicians, corporate investors or funders include a process for assessing and determining each community's unique dynamics pertaining to the potential for incidents of violence and crime (including the activities of gangs/violent street groups) in any plans for redistricting schools, government housing complexes and communities. Consider establishing a committee or task force with specific knowledge on these issues/concerns that will help to facilitate the assessment and decision-making process.

- **Pay** special attention to existing or potential neighborhood rivalries when closing schools and relocating students. When redistricting occurs there is a high potential to mix the gangs where, in some instances, there are alliances being created, mostly around drugs and money.

- **Insist** that appropriate regional officials develop and implement a comprehensive regional strategy to deter gang activity that includes coordinating activities among government agencies, local schools and universities, as well as corporations.

Key Points When Working for Gang Peace
"Anti-Gang"

Always seek first to understand, then to be understood by others.
Negotiate the Win.

Title the Message.
Incorporate a holistic approach.
Give support and provide the resources and funding to those who want to do this work.
Anticipate push back from those who have not succeeded in this work.
Never give up on the youth and families that are victimized.
Get out and be visible.

Internet and Social Media/Social Networking/Cyber-bullying
(Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc.)

The Internet has opened up a world of opportunities for everyone. Social Communication Technology/Social Networking (i.e. Facebook, My Space, Twitter, etc.) is a part of our everyday lives since we utilize this technology to remain in touch with others. Most of society utilizes Social Media in the way it is intended. However, when an individual terrorizes another with words and images via the internet, it harms the entire community. Therefore, safeguards must be put into place to keep all members of the community safe and free from violence (i.e. cyber-bullying). Everyone has the responsibility of preventing cyber-violence in the following ways:

Families:

- **Review** account settings and terms and conditions with their children regarding the use of Social Media, including cell phones, and point out the consequences for misuse of the technology.
- **Monitor** children's use of the computer and their social media accounts. Also monitor passwords, phone numbers, etc.
- **Use** the parental controls for children under age 17. Parents should not allow their children to block parental access to their accounts.
- **Be aware** that cell phones with internet capabilities may also contribute to students' retrieval of inappropriate information**.**
- **Report** any misuse of the Social Communication Technology with the website creators of the offending websites.
- **Provide** police officers with information necessary for prosecuting those who misuse the social communication technology.
- **Communicate** with youth in a non-accusatory manner if they have a question about the use of social media.
- **Be present** and open to communication when youth are confronted with social media conflicts.
- **Set aside** time to have personal interaction with their children so that they will not isolate themselves with social media.
- **Adhere to** the age-requirement use of social media. (In 2010 the minimum age was 14).
- **Discuss** with your children the saying that "words can hurt as much as fists."
- **Attend** workshops for parents, caregivers, and people of all ages on how to safely navigate cyber technology, and how to use security and privacy settings that might already be in place.

Media, Education, Business and Corporate Communities:

- **Inform** students that potential and future employers and universities and colleges might use the internet to search for personal information on possible new employees and/or candidates for work-study programs
- **Develop** norms for use of the social communication tools in the workplace and have all members on their sites agree to use of the norms.
- **Produce** literature to inform the communities of the benefits and consequences for using Social Communication Technology/Social Media.
- **Create** a mechanism for employees to report inappropriate use of the Social Communication Technology/Social Media.
- **Develop** "On-Line Safety Programs to present to parents, communities of faith, community and social organizations, pediatricians, and others.

- **Develop** marketing strategies for social media and anti-bullying initiatives for schools, university and colleges, social service and government agencies.
- **Invite** media to become partners in promoting internet safety. Encourage their 'buy-in' for advancing communication via posters, PSAs, billboard ads, newspapers, videos, You Tube, etc. Engage them in the dialogue as well.
- **Publicize** internet safety tips through religious and social service organizations, libraries, parent/school organizations, school assemblies, pediatrician and doctors offices, and media resources.
- **Create** a campaign for "Google Day" or "Go Google Yourself" throughout the community, or even nationally, to encourage people to research what information about themselves may be available on the Internet.
  Ask government agencies to broadcast and distribute internet safety information to their clients and constituencies.
- **Investigate** and apply for grants which will enable organizations to address the issues of the negative uses of social media, including cyber-bullying.
- **Prosecute** individuals that utilize social communication technology inappropriately.

Youth and anyone else using social media:

- **Become** cyber savvy. Understand the meaning of "Too Much Information" (TMI).
- **Practice** appropriate use of social media.
- **Participate** in open lines of communication with their parents about use of technology and the people with whom they communicate.
- **Report** to parents any inappropriate conduct that occurs on the social websites.
- **Be cautious** about who to accept as one's friend and any friend requests on social media forums. Do not give out personal information to strangers or people who they do not trust.
- **Avoid** adding people to social media lists from friends whose mutual friends they may not recognize.
- **Investigate** a requester's profile before accepting a request. Verify and confirm the person's identity or ignore the friend request.
- **Choose** whether to make pictures either public or private to prevent cloning or fraud.
- **Use** common sense about what is being uploaded on the internet to avoid exploitation of personal information.
- **Avoid** putting any personal or family information on any social media website.
- **Choose** pictures wisely for social media websites. Beware of personal surroundings and reflective surfaces such as mirrors or glasses when taking pictures that can be uploaded to social media.
- **Don't** send messages to anyone who has posted personal messages felt to be inappropriate or unwanted. Remove them from one's personal site.
- **Refrain** from posting negative status or comments on one's profile page or anyone else's that may cause regret. Don't post anything on social media websites that wouldn't be said to the person's face.
- **Utilize** all private account settings when creating any social media account.
- **Do no**t make private conversations public.
- **Minimize** the use of social media and maximize human interaction.
- **Acknowledge** the power of personal interaction as opposed to constant use of social media outlets and text messages. For example, a personal visit, eye to eye contact, or calling them on the phone.
- **Abstain** from using social media websites as a diary and/or main source of communication or expression.
- **Consider** using an 'avatar' (character or symbol) instead of actual faces as the picture for one's personal profile.

- **Don't exploit** other people's personal conflicts, i.e. brawls, arguments, or incidents of cyber-bullying through social media.
- **Beware** of sexual predators, sex offenders, or suspicious-sounding persons who might be older and prey on younger people.

Internet Safety:

- **Be aware** that any personal information posted to the Internet is there forever. Be cautious when doing uploads or posting blogs, videos, pictures, and/or statuses, etc., on the Internet.
- **Refrain** from putting personal information on the internet which may be harmful to one's future.
- **GOOGLE yourself.** Research the Internet to find out what exists with regard to one's personal information or history.
- **Do not use** webcams to record and then post acts or activities for which permission has not been granted, particularly those acts or activities which are obviously private and/or sensitive.
- **Know** that acts of invasion of privacy through the internet could lead to five years of imprisonment or, if considered a hate crime, up to ten (10) years of imprisonment.
- **Talk** to family members about the dangers of scams.
- **Realize** that legitimate financial institutions do not and will not solicit funds through the Internet. Beware of money scams.
- **Report** any incidents of someone asking for personal bank account information, as well as any incidents of intimidation to obtain such.
- **Set up** pop-up blockers on personal computers to protect them from viruses.
- **Utilize** the "report as spam" button to filter out unwanted, potentially harmful, or offensive email messages.

The Media: Impact of Rap Music on Violence

Capitalizing on the huge popularity of rap music, the record labels, the movie and TV entertainment industry, as well as the advertising industry, have invested billions of dollars into promoting artists with music influenced by the gangster, the gang, and the pimp cultures. The entire entertainment industry, as well as a few rap stars, have gained huge financial benefits at the expense of the "hearts and minds" of millions of youth. Today's youth are given a skewed view of life and are receiving mixed messages that are damaging to their healthy development and well-being when they are exposed to music videos, video games, or movies with violent themes. Even young children are being exposed to sexually explicit lyrics, curse words, and messages that glorify the 'fast life.' Playing violent video games desensitizes youth to the real consequences of violence. Heavy exposure to negative music and images has a great impact on youth violence in the African American community.

Everyone – the entertainment media, music artists, parents, and the community -- has to take responsibility for what our children and youth are seeing and hearing. These messages and images found in the music contribute to the violence that permeates the streets of our communities. There has to be a change. Therefore, the following groups should accept these challenges:

Parents and Families should:

- **Monitor** what music teens and children listen to and what they see in the media (TV, movies, videos, and games). Recognize and be ready to counteract the potentially damaging messages about gender roles, self-gratification and the acceptability of violence.

- **Prevent** children from playing violent video games, from watching violent movies and consuming other forms of media. Movies, music and pop culture glorify violence and have a strong influence on our youth.

- **Become** educated about the lyrics and the messages in the music and videos and have discussions with their children to help them understand the messages they receive. Be mindful that many of the messages in the music are subliminal.

Rap Artists should:

- **Take** creative control of their music. Learn about the true history of the Hip Hop culture, and reclaim the notion that rap music can be a vehicle for teaching social awareness in a more positive manner.

- **Stop** using curse words, as well as racist, sexist, misogynistic, homophobic and other hateful and derogatory words in their music.

- **Lay** the N –word to rest.

The music, advertising, and other media should:

- **Recognize** the harm being done to the mental and spiritual health and well-being of all youth by consistently promoting artists who project and exhibit harmful messages.

- **Promote** and nurture both local and national rap artists who present more positive messages.

- **Realize** they have traded profits for the well-being of our communities and must provide restitution. For example, provide financial support to community initiatives, agencies and programs counteracting violence.

- **Accept** their complicity in creating and promoting negative stereotypes of African Americans through the exploitation of Black talent.

The Community should:

- **Pressure** the local broadcast corporations to play more music with positive messages by local and national artists.

- **Support** rap artists who present more uplifting messages in their music; artists who do not use misogynistic, sexist, racist, or homophobic words and messages.

- **Lobby** local, state and federal legislators to encourage them to regulate, to the extent they can, violent content in the media.

- **Join** with artists, community leaders, and national spokespeople who advocate for a radical change in the rap music industry, which has seemingly lost its creativity, forgotten its original responsibility to uplift the Black Community through the promotion of the positive values coming from the Hip Hop culture.

Teen Dating Violence Prevention

Teen Dating Violence is a serious problem for today's teenagers. Each year, approximately one in three teens report being the victim of verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual violence. Abusive relationships can impact adolescent development, and teens who experience dating violence may suffer long-term negative behavioral and health consequences. Adolescents in controlling or violent relationships may carry these dangerous and unhealthy patterns into future relationships.

Technology such as cell phones, email, and social networking websites are sometimes tragically used for control, stalking, and victimization. Emotional abuse through digital technology, including frequent text messages, threatening emails, and the circulation of embarrassing messages or photographs without consent can be devastating to young teens.

Though many communities face the problem of teen dating violence, young people are often afraid to discuss it. In some instances, they may not even recognize the severity of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. Parents and other adults can also be uncomfortable with acknowledging that young people experience abuse, or they may even be unaware of its occurrence. Before another generation is victim to this tragedy, the time to break the cycle of teen dating violence is now.

For Teens:

If you are being abused, or are in an abusive relationship:
- **Seek** help NOW! If you don't know what to do, consult a friend, family member, minister/priest, community leader, or the police.

- **Contact** the National Domestic Violence Hotline. This is a an anonymous and confidential, 24/7 resource which provides crisis intervention, information and referral to victims of domestic violence, perpetrators, friends and families - to contact the Hotline call 1-800-799-SAFE or visit www.theHOTLINE.org.

If you have a friend who is in an abusive relationship:
- **Support** a friend who is dealing with relationship violence; talking can make an enormous difference to them. They are probably feeling very isolated and alone. When talking with a friend you think might be abused, there are several things to keep in mind:

    - **Listen** to what they have to say and don't be judgmental.
    - **Let** them know you are there whenever they need to talk and that you are worried about them.
    - **Assure** them you won't tell anyone they don't want to know about the situation—and then keep your word (unless you fear for their physical safety).
    - **Be** specific about why you are concerned - "I felt bad when I saw your significant other insult you in front of all of us. They don't have the right to treat you that way. What did you think about it?"
    - **Reassure** your friend that you won't stand by and let the behavior continue.
    - **Find** someone knowledgeable about abuse that they can talk to, and volunteer to go with them.

For Individuals who are Abusers:

- **Understand** how your actions are hurting and dangerous. Most individuals who hurt their significant others don't consider themselves "batterers"—many are in denial about the severity of their actions.
- **Seek** help NOW!! Find someone who is trained to help abusers – counselors, ministers, community members, support groups, etc.

For Individuals who know Abusers:

- **Reach out**. It's hard for us, as their friends, to believe it, too. But reaching out and talking to a friend we think is being violent in their relationship is truly an act of friendship, though it may seem like the hardest thing you can do. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

  - **Be** specific about what you saw and how it made you feel.
  - **Make** sure they realize that their actions have consequences, and they could get into serious trouble—from getting expelled from school to going to jail.
  - **Do not** look the other way if you are aware of someone abusing his or her partner. Urge them to seek help or, if you don't know what to do, consult a friend, family member, community leader or the police.
  - **Let** them know you care, and that you know they have it in them to change.

What Families and Communities Can Do:

- **Think** about relationship abuse as a major social problem that touches the lives of teens, men and women of all social, economic and racial backgrounds. Focus on the ways in which you, as an empowered bystander, can support at-risk individuals and confront abusers.

- **Educate** teens, their families and the community about dating violence. It is imperative that we end the cycle of violence present in so many teenage relationships.

- **Provide** information about violence prevention in classrooms, public libraries, and community organizations frequented by children and youth.

- **Be proactive** in assisting community leaders, parents and teachers in understanding the challenges today's adolescents face.

- **Empower** students with leadership development so they can work with adults in their communities, schools and government to eliminate dating violence in all of its forms.

- **Help** to educate and empower girls and boys not to tolerate abuse or sexism. Get involved with youth outreach and mentoring programs in local high schools and middle schools.

- **Speak out** If you suspect that someone you know is being abused. Let them know that the abuse is not their fault, and that they have nothing to be ashamed of. Encourage them to seek help.

- **Know** that while many victims of relationship abuse are female, boys can be emotionally or physically abused as well. Boys can be abused by their girlfriends, and they can also be abused by another boy if they are in a same-sex relationship. Either way, let them know that the abuse is not their fault, and that they have nothing to feel ashamed of. Encourage them to seek help.

- **Visit** the National Network to End Domestic Violence www.nnedv.org to locate your state or territory Domestic Violence Coalition.

- **Familiarize** yourself with the resources in your community including counseling centers and health service organizations. Be a positive resource by sharing information and making appropriate referrals.

- **Support** women and men who are working to end relationship abuse. Get involved with local domestic violence organizations.

- **Encourage** organizations, community groups, communities of faith and others to organize a fundraiser to benefit battered women's shelters and rape crisis centers

Especially For Men (fathers, grandfathers, uncles, older brothers, coaches, teachers, mentors)
- **Approach** relationship abuse as a men's issue; involve men of all social, economic and racial backgrounds. Recognize men not only as perpetrators or potential offenders, but also as bystanders who can confront abusive males, as well as potential victims. A *Call to Men* (www.acalltomen.org), whose vision is to shift social norms that define manhood in our culture, offers 10 things men can do to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence.

- **Play** a crucial role in guiding the boys in your life into manhood and into positive relationships as they grow older—by teaching them about respect, showing them how to deal with conflict, and setting an example of how to build healthy relationships.

- **Utilize** the handbook *Tough Talk-What Boys Need to Know about Relationship Abuse* as an education tool. The handbook includes a clear definition of relationship abuse, as well as practical guidelines and suggested questions for men to formulate a dialogue. By starting a conversation about relationship abuse, your actions demonstrate that this is an issue that can be discussed thoughtfully and openly.

Youth Violence Prevention Strategies

Violence is a major public health issue affecting mental, physical, emotional, financial and spiritual health. Education, awareness, and prevention efforts are key components to reducing the prevalence of violence and its devastating impact on society.

Youth Speak Out:

Everyone, but especially the youth, must understand the high cost of violence, such as death, disability, incarceration, family disruption, community fear and distrust of youth, and its impact on the entire community. They must also respect the rights of others in order to earn respect. The youth themselves are speaking out and saying "Be the change you want to see in the world. Become a leader in changing the culture of violence."

To reduce the violence that runs in our communities, youth must do the following:

- **Express** anger in a positive way and address personal issues with help from peers, parents, teachers, coaches, and others.

- **Organize** and call for an *immediate* end to *all* of the violence in our communities. Come together and participate in activities that work toward decreasing the tension that exists among individuals, various neighborhoods and communities. Create councils in each community that will be staffed and led by youth and guided by concerned and committed adults. These councils should meet regularly at a safe place to share relevant ideas and concerns. From the various neighborhoods invite adults and other youth who have been identified as being a positive influence in the community.

- **Advocate** for youth involvement on government and community boards seeking input from youth in diverse communities. Efforts should be made to improve communication between police and youth in the community and to build new bridges for mutual respect.

- **Participate** in opening lines of communication between youth and adults during community forums and other activities aimed at reducing violence. Reach out to parents, family members, and other adults to encourage them to participate in activities that youth enjoy. Youth are strongly encouraged to take advantage of all positive opportunities offered.

- **Practice** the proper way to conduct one's self when stopped by the police. Be aware of one's rights and responsibilities when dealing with the police. Take advantage of programs that provide these skills as well as other information. There are brochures and pamphlets provided by social service and government agencies. For example the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) and the NAACP Pittsburgh Branch produced a pamphlet entitled *"You and the Police: Rights, Responsibilities and Realities."* The City of Pittsburgh has published *Information for People Concerned about Police Conduct*.

- **Call** upon parents, guardians and loved ones to be good role models. Share with them the important role they play in influencing the lives and attitudes of children. If necessary *demand* they be good parents by being *present* in their lives. All too often some young people have been forced to take on the role of parenting younger siblings when parents or other family members have been unable to do so. Sometimes young people must take in the leadership role in displaying positive family and community values.

- **Demand** that parents, guardians and/or other caregivers take control of their households and provide the nurturing and discipline that children need from the earliest ages. To do so earns the respect of one's children.

- **Show** respect for parents, guardians and other adults in one's household so that they can trust children and youth to make responsible decisions. Lead by example and show younger siblings how to treat parents respectfully, so that when they become older, they will also be trusted to make good decisions.

- **Interact** with other youth in a respectful way to get respect in return.

- **Lead,** don't follow! Be strong and act independently. Young people should not try to be what *others* want them to be, unless those goals are positive. Far too many youth follow other youth who exhibit serious negative behaviors such as getting involved in unhealthy, and possibly criminal, actions. Be a role model to younger children and encourage them to achieve positive goals, as well.

- **Reject** the mindset that everyone else is the cause of one's negative life circumstances. This kind of attitude encourages one to play the role of victim and fosters feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, and not having the ability to change one's life situation. Understand that one *does* have the *personal* power to change life's circumstances. Develop and adopt the faith to do so.

- **Utilize** one's talents and skills for positive purposes. It is in one's own best interest to pursue legal avenues to make money. Recognize that being involved in drugs and in other illegal activities contributes to the breakdown of the family and the community, imprisonment and even death. Remember that short term money will likely lead to short time lives!

- **Encourage** one's peers to look at legal employment as the preferred lifestyle, one that should be sought by *all* members of the community. Discourage them from continuing illegal and criminal behaviors. Help them understand if they continue they will be forced to suffer the consequences.

- **Influence** one's girlfriend or boyfriend in a positive manner. In many instances both young men and young women negatively influence, and even compete for authority, in their relationships. Be supportive of doing the —right thing. There is more value to a relationship when both parties wait before taking it the next level.

- **Delay** sexual involvement. Both boys and young men *and* girls and young women should place greater value on their bodies. Some girls and some young women believe they need to be sexually involved to maintain a relationship, which may include getting pregnant. Some young men believe that some young women use sex just to —trap‖ a man. Moreover, in some situations, because of the way girls and young women present themselves, some young men may feel pressured to engage in sexual activity. In all cases, such behaviors should be strongly discouraged. Sexual activity before becoming emotionally, and/or financially secure or responsible can lead to STDs, unplanned pregnancies, broken lives and broken dreams.

- **Discuss** healthy sexuality and how to build healthy relationships with parents, guardians, or other trusted adults, before becoming sexually active. Young men *and* young women both should participate in sexuality and family life planning education

where available. Teen fathers and teen mothers should seek out and participate in parenting support/education programs.

- **Respect** the fact that boys and young men do not have the earning capacity of older males. Neither should boys or young men be expected to compete with adult males.

- **Understand** the fact that girls and young women should, in no way, encourage or force their boyfriends or partners to get involved in criminal behavior to provide for their needs or wants. Remember that material possessions do not bring happiness and should not determine someone's self-worth – you are *who* you are inside and not *what* you appear to be on the outside.

- **End** rumoring. Girls and young women are strongly encouraged to quit the rumors, which pit male against male. Such behaviors far too often lead to physical confrontations between competing young males, sometimes leading to death. Such deaths profoundly affect everyone involved spreading to the entire community.

- **Advance** academically. Realize the importance of making good grades and of being actively involved in positive school activities. Share with other students the fact that being a good student is the very best way to guarantee future employment and career success, and a much healthier community. Such students should be seen as the heroes of the school not the brunt of jokes and ridicule. Understand that to be smart is *not* acting *white*, and being smart is giving one the opportunity to be "green" as in making money.

- **Mentor** younger children. Utilize one's talents to improve the educational achievement of the younger people in one's community. This is a constructive use of time and talent and it will positively affect the climate of the neighborhood in which one lives. Volunteering not only helps others, it also makes one feel better about him/her self.

- **Stay** in school and attain the highest level of education possible. Explore other avenues for further education beyond high school that lead toward a career path. These avenues may be technical or trade schools, as well as colleges and universities.

- **Complete** training programs that build trust/respect/self-esteem and give instruction on job application skills, interviewing skills, interpersonal skills, goal setting and job preparation. Take advantage of support systems and training that will teach one how to remain employed and advance one's career goals.

- **Demand** that *all* adults work diligently to assist youth in obtaining meaningful and legal employment. Youth should not feel that the only way to become financially stable is to engage in illegal or criminal behavior. Youth should seek employment opportunities with major businesses and corporations, as well as businesses in local communities.

- **Form** peer support/tutoring groups in schools, community centers, and religious institutions. Train to become peer educators in conflict resolution and anger management.

- **Participate** in student advisory boards that are balanced and diverse. Volunteer to become advocates/liaisons between the student population and school administration so that youth can have a strong voice in their education.

- **Train** volunteers to serve as youth counselors who can also participate in related activities such as speak-out assemblies at churches, schools and community events.

- **Participate** in the political process by voting in each and every election because voting *does* impact every aspect of society. Even youth who have not reached voting age can make a difference. Get involved in the political process; participate in activities such as voter registration, flyer distribution, and making phone calls for getting out the vote.

- **Become involved** with the Coalition Against Violence. Youth from across neighborhood boundaries work together in all initiatives and strategies.

- **Develop** an anti-violence youth task force as an umbrella group of the Coalition Against Violence.

Youth Empowerment:

- **Empowe**r the youth to speak for themselves. Encourage them to speak out at school board city and county council meetings about the plight of youth and insist they provide whatever is necessary to change the culture of violence in the schools and in the community. Seek out adults who are willing to provide 'training' on public speaking.

- **Help** youth discover for themselves their interests, gifts and talents. Motivate them to display and use their talents.

- **Expose** children, when they are young, to different kinds of educational, recreational, cultural, and spiritual events.

- **Provide** programs and activities for strengthening resiliency, including those that foster discipline, accountability, teamwork, self-esteem and character building to give them a sense of purpose, pride, and healthy self-worth.

- **Encourage** all youth to participate in positive uplifting activities and events.

- **Ensure** that all students have an opportunity to become involved in leadership programs by creating a safe group atmosphere and setting. Offer classes that develop leadership building skills and encourage peer leadership programs.

- **Get** students involved in community service and encourage volunteerism; give youth ownership of planning, implementation, and presenting.

- **Empower** youth to organize for peace and other topics important to them.

- **Teach** youth to be stakeholders in their own neighborhoods and communities.

- **Educate** youth about the importance of civic engagement beyond civics class in ninth grade and involve them in the election process as volunteers during elections. Encourage students of voting to register, vote, and even consider running for public office.

- **Reach out** to those youth who say they don't want to change: encourage them to realize their creative talents and motivate them to succeed. Realize that some youth cannot be reached, but do not be discouraged. The main focus it to make every attempt to reach those 'who are on the fence.'

- **Give** girls healthy alternatives, because they can be as aggressive and abusive as teen boys. Provide healthy alternatives for boys as well.

- **Engage** youth, starting at elementary school. Focus on development of violence prevention, anti-violence, anti-bullying, alcohol and other drug awareness and education at the elementary level, or earlier, because the earlier the intervention the better to impact violent behaviors.

- **Encourage** older siblings to show a more positive way to their younger siblings.

Action Steps for Families and the Community:

- **Provide** transportation from neighborhoods and local municipalities to encourage more youth participation in positive events.

- **Actively seek** more adults to serve as mentors, informal teachers and positive role models.

- **Encourage** community groups, communities of faith, schools and other places to provide space for drop-in programs for children and youth.

- **Demand** funding for 'safe spaces' or havens. These could be libraries, extended day programs, or supervised after-school programs.

- **Support** classroom-based programs for all students to engage in discussions of community issues important to them.

- **Develop** a youth-oriented directory listing grassroots organizations and community nonprofits that are willing to provide venues for leadership education and engagement to interested youth.

- **Respond** to community violence in ways that prevent further conflict; provide first responders, mediators, grief workers, community leaders, and other citizens who are trained or equipped with the necessary skills.

- **Encourage** older siblings to show a more positive way for the younger siblings.

- **Learn** family structure to determine who is engaging in violent behavior; engage families as one unit to become less violent.

- **Provide** more city-wide programs that take kids through reality checks by showing young kids what could happen if they continue to display negative, violent behavior. For example "Scared Straight" programs, or programs that show children about the jails, etc.

- **Encourage** the youth who are currently in rehabilitative juvenile programs to explain to younger students their process of transformation.

- **Insist** that policy makers institute viable, workable programs to address the issue of violence. Insist that government support existing programs that have proven success and provide the necessary funds to replicate throughout the city.

- **Utilize** "experts" who actually run city-wide programs instead of going to other cities for expertise.

- **Persuad**e more grassroots organizations to become involved in the process of making positive change for youth and the entire community.

- **Encourage** adults to mentor youth who have been "written off."

- **Reach out** to those youth who say they don't want to change and encourage them to realize their creative talents and motivate them to succeed.

- **Speak out** at school board, city and county council meetings about the plight of our youth and insist they provide whatever is necessary to change the culture of violence in the schools and in the community. Seek out adults who are willing to provide "training" on public speaking.

- **Seek out** adults who can urge student athletes to display more appropriate behavior and become positive role models for other youth.

- **Provide support** for parents to encourage them to take an active and positive role in the lives of their children before they become "street-wise" and engage in violent activities that can lead to injuries, incarceration, and/or death.

- **Provide** family education. Understand family structures to determine who is engaging in violent behavior and provide support for the entire family.

- **Actively show** youth what could happen if they continue to engage in negative and/or violent behavior by providing more programs that take them through reality checks, such as "Scared Straight."

- **Help** youth who are currently in rehabilitative juvenile programs to explain to younger students their process of transformation.

- **Insist** that policy makers institute viable, workable programs to address issues relative to violence.

- **Utilize** more local experts who are providing effective programs that address the issue of violence before seeking expertise elsewhere. Insist on government support for local program with effective, proven success and provide the necessary funds to replicate such programs throughout the city and region.

- **Seek** and encourage adults to mentor youth who have been 'written off.'

- **Identify** adults who will insist that all student athletes display appropriate behavior and become more positive role models for other youth.

Appendices

A Historical Perspective of Rap Music As it Relates to the
Violence in the African American Community
By Steve Johnson

Music has always touched hearts and minds. People have expressed the social ills of their particular era through popular music, from jazz to rock 'n roll, to country. In the late 1970s, inner city youth (mainly African American and Latino youth) embraced a new culture and consciousness called "Hip Hop" with its innovative art, clothing, and music. The elements of Hip Hop included dee-jaying, graffiti art, break dancing and other dance forms, as well as emceeing or "rapping" over beats, and disseminating knowledge. Groups such as KRS-1 and Afrika Bambaataa with the Zulu Nation intended for rap music to be a tool for teaching the youth in a positive way. Rap lyrics were filled with messages about the realities facing many inner city youth, such as gang violence and drugs. Yet messages about love, unity, justice, respect, and responsibility were also incorporated in the music. During the mid-1980s, groups like Public Enemy, Boogie Down Productions and X-Klan, Queen Latifah, and Salt 'n Peppa carried on the tradition of positive teaching through their music. With one or two exceptions, rap artists were mostly African American and a few Latinos.

From its beginnings, older people, both Black and white, viewed rap as an art form that would not last. While the artists were mostly youth of color, rapping about inner city life, the music was being purchased by more young White men, living in suburban and rural areas, than any other group in the US population. Seeing the huge potential for making millions by exploiting the Hip Hop musical form called emceeing or "rap," the major music and advertising agencies seized the opportunity to capitalize on this gold mine and the Rap Industry was born.

In the early 90s "the industry labeled this new music form "Gangsta Rap." One of the first groups to receive world-wide attention under this new "genre" was called *NWA* (Niggas with Attitude) from Compton, California. *NWA* gave "voice" to inner city youth, who lived the thug life, because they incorporated messages about police brutality, poverty, and crime – issues inner city youth face every day. The message might have been about the realities of life, but the sexually explicit and violent images to which youth were being exposed from the "Gangsta Rap" videos held implications that could be seen as being potentially harmful to the "hearts and minds" of the youth. Capitalizing on the huge popularity of the particular form of music, the record labels, the movie and TV entertainment industry, as well as the advertising industry began to invest millions into promoting those artists with gangster material. Quite often, artists with more positive messages were ignored. Many of the Gangsta and the Crunk rappers have written more socially conscious music, as well. Yet, it appeared that artists who glorified the thug or player life-style received the greatest exposure from the music industry.

It was during this period in history that youth gangs began to rise in many of the inner cities. Rap became an issue of national security when the rapper Ice T wrote "Kill the Police" and Gangsta Rap became part of the national consciousness. Congressional hearings and boycotts of the music were called to protest the dangerous messages being espoused by many rappers. It did not matter that the music was the "voice" of many youths, who clearly understood the impact of poverty, police brutality, under-employment and mis-education on their daily existence.

The music corporations must have understood the effects that this music would have on the mentality of the community, especially the youth, but chose instead to keep getting rich. Music label executives and artist promoters heavily pushed "Gangsta Rap," often to the exclusion of other forms of rap, thereby creating a new culture and mindset. Whether the rap artists actually lived the lives they spoke about in their music, they felt that to be hugely successful, they had no choice but to do "Gangsta Rap" if they expected to survive in the industry. Moreover, many of these rappers actually believe they are giving a positive message through their music when they give their personal testimonies about the realities of their lives. However, when they fail to see, or either choose to ignore the trap being set for them by the industry, such artists are only brainwashing themselves into believing the "hype" set forth by the record labels. Furthermore, many rappers glorify the "skewed" messages about power and wealth gleaned from mainstream movies, such as *Scarface* and other gangster movies.

In recent years, "Beef" CDs or DVDs have become very popular. Rappers "go at" each other to prove how much tougher they are than the next guy. These so-called "feuds" between rap stars may be a marketing ploy to drive up sales, but they also send a potentially dangerous message to the youth. These so-called "Beef" CDs are another brainwashing tool, and the youth are not aware of what is happening.

Far too many music albums, music videos, video games, movies, and other forms of media perpetuate negative stereotypes about African Americans and other people of color. Today's youth are seeing a skewed view of life and are receiving mixed messages that are potentially damaging to their healthy development and well-being. Not only are young men receiving mixed messages about their manhood and their place in society, the messages about women are also potentially damaging because they tend to show women as objects. The music glorifies the gangster life as well as the pimp life with its fixation on fast cars, fast women, and big money. Furthermore, many adults are fearful that our Black youth are being brainwashed into thinking that they must be "gangster" in order to survive, or that one must be a "pimp" to get the woman and the money. This brainwashing may be evident in the state of young Black America today when two-thirds of the youth in prison are Black. This may be evident in the Pittsburgh region where the majority of homicide victims of gang-like or "drug-war" violence is Black.

What children hear and see shapes their growth and development. "We are all a product of our environment," say the rappers." However, not everyone in the inner city, or from the 'hood', is a gangster or a gang member, a "player", or a "gold-digging" woman. Nevertheless, many youth try to emulate their favorite rap artists who glorify these things. This music also exposes young children to sexually explicit lyrics, curse words, and messages that glorify the "fast life." Young people internalize the images and messages they receive from the music, and can become desensitized to the real consequences of violence when they are exposed to too many videos or movies with violent themes.

Rappers and the music industry both reap huge financial benefits, but do so at the expense of the "hearts and minds" of millions of youth. As stated previously, White males buy more rap music than any other group in the United States, approximately 80%. Furthermore, rap music is all over the world; youths from Russia to Africa, from Brazil to Europe are getting their blueprint from watching American videos and listening to rap music. Millions of young people think that all Black youth in America are pimps, players, gangsters and prostitutes, for these are the images they see. Moreover, millions of African American youth and children internalize these negative images. Add this to the effects of internalized oppression from racism, and even sexism, on Black people in this society. One might be tempted to conclude that youth violence in the African American community may be one of the effects of too much exposure to negative music.

Major corporations continue to invest heavily in "Gangsta Rap" or its latest incarnation known as "Crunk Rap," artists with more conscious or positive messages receive less exposure or airplay.

Unfortunately, radio stations all across the country will choose to play a song like "Pop, Lock, and Drop It," with its sexually explicit lyrics, over a song like "I Know I Can" an anthem of self-esteem and self-determination, More often than not, many of the more conscious artists must turn to the music "underground" to get their music played.

The major music networks such as MTV or VH1 show all kinds of music, including Crunk music. However, until recently, BET, the "Black" network, had a late night rotation which featured the uncut, unedited and so-called more adult and sexually explicit versions of many of the videos shown on other times of the day. Furthermore, there are also websites, featuring the uncut or unedited lyrics of this music, to which even children can have access.

Do the rappers understand this or even care how our children and youth are affected by their music? Do the mostly White producers and executives understand or even care if the music they sponsor glorifies and perpetuates negative stereotypes? Do parents know exactly what their children are listening to on the radio, or seeing on TV? Is this music a contributing factor to the violence that permeates the streets of many African American communities?

Everyone -- the music executives and promoters, the TV music and radio network heads, parents and the community – must take responsibility for what our children and youth are seeing and hearing. If this music *is* a contributing factor to the violence that permeates the streets of our communities, there has to be a change.

Steven Johnson is the author of *Wake Up Young Black Males: Life Is What You Make It.*
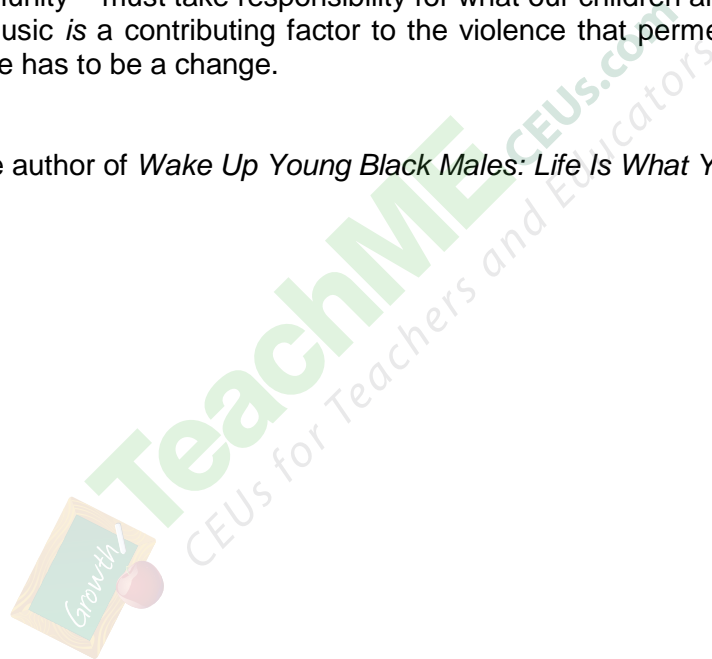
Dedicated to the Youth for Whom We Do This Work

Dear Brother

I watch you prowl the lonely streets,
blocks and blocks of broken dreams.
While you sell drugs and waste your time,
a little voice inside you cries.
He screams and screams because he can see,
the man within that you can be.
But, for some odd reason all that you know,
is violence, drugs, pimps, gangstas and dough.
I observe you brother and I wonder why,
you so willingly let your spirit die.
Your heart is hollow, dark and cold.
You are only your father's sad story retold.
Right now you have the power to change,
but you just want to stay the same.
The same person who walks around with no life,
and has no other place to look, but down.
The streets are addictive, close to a drug.
They sucked you up and stole your love.
Took you so so far away,
that night is night and night is day.
Sometimes you sit alone,
and wish that you had a life of your own.
And when you do, the little boy weeps,
because he wishes he could go to sleep.
He wants to go back to family and love.
And turn his head to darkness and drugs.
Kill your heart the streets demand,
while you walk in burning sand.
You've done too much to go back,
Way too much to carry on.
So the only time you will ever be happy again
is when you are dead, buried, forgotten...GONE!

What To Do If You're Stopped By The Police

Think carefully about your words, movement, body language, and emotions.

Don't get into an argument with the police.

Remember, **anything you say or do** can be used against you.

Keep your hands where the police can see them.

Don't run. Don't touch any police officer.

Don't resist even if you believe you are innocent.

Don't complain on the scene or tell the police they're wrong or that you're going to file a complaint.

Do not make any statements regarding the incident.

Ask for a lawyer immediately upon your arrest.

Remember **officers' badge & patrol car** numbers.

Write down everything you remember ASAP.

Try to find **witnesses** & their names & phone numbers.

If you are injured, take photographs of the injuries as soon as possible, but make sure you **seek medical attention** first.

If you feel your rights have been violated, **file a written complaint** with your local police department's internal affairs division or civilian complaint board, or call the ACLU or NAACP in your area.

KEEP THIS CARD HANDY!
IF YOU HAVE A POLICE ENCOUNTER,
YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF.

IF YOU'RE STOPPED IN YOUR CAR

1. Upon request, show them your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance. In certain cases, your car can be searched without a warrant as long as the police have probable cause. To protect yourself later, you should make it clear that you do not consent to a search. It is not lawful for police to arrest you simply for refusing to consent to a search.

2. If you're suspected of drunk-driving (DWI) and refuse to take a blood, urine or a breath test, your driver's license may be suspended.

IF YOU'RE ARRESTED OR TAKEN TO A POLICE STATION

1. You have the right to remain silent and to talk to a lawyer before you talk to the police. Tell the police nothing except your name and address. Don't give any explanations, excuses or stories. You can make your defense later, in court, based on what you and your lawyer decides is best.

2. Ask to see a lawyer immediately. If you can't pay for a lawyer, you have a right to a free one, and should ask the police how the lawyer can be contacted. **Don't say anything without a lawyer.**

3. Within a reasonable time after your arrest, or booking, you have the right to make a local phone call: to a lawyer, bail bondsman, a relative or any other person. The police may not listen to the call to the lawyer.

4. Sometimes you can be released without bail, or have bail lowered. Have your lawyer ask the judge about this possibility. You must be taken before the judge on the next court day after arrest.

5. Do not make any decisions in your case until you have talked with a lawyer.

---

1. What you say to the police is always important. What you say can be used against you, and it can give the police an excuse to arrest you, especially if you bad-mouth a police officer.

2. You don't have to answer a police officer's questions, but you must show your driver's license and registration when stopped in a car. In other situations, you can't legally be arrested for refusing to identify yourself to a police officer.

3. You don't have to consent to any search of yourself, your car or your house. If you **DO** consent to a search, it can affect your rights later in court. If the police say they have a search warrant, **ASK TO SEE IT**.

4. Do not interfere with, or obstruct the police – you can be arrested for it.

IF YOU ARE STOPPED FOR QUESTIONING

1. It's not a crime to refuse to answer questions, but refusing to answer might make the police suspicious about you. You can't be arrested merely for refusing to identify yourself on the street.

2. Police may "pat-down" your clothing if they suspect a concealed weapon. Don't physically resist, but make it clear that you don't consent to any further search.

3. Ask if you are under arrest. If you are, you have a right to know why.

4. Don't bad-mouth the police officer or run away, even if you believe what is happening is unreasonable. That could lead to your arrest.

IN YOUR HOME

1. If the police knock and ask to enter your home, you don't have to admit them unless they have a warrant signed by a judge.

2. However, in some emergency situations (like when a person is screaming for help inside, or when the police are chasing someone) officers are allowed to enter and search your home without a warrant.

3. If you are arrested, the police can search you and the area close by. If you are in a building, "close by" usually means just the room you are in.

ೞഃ

We all recognize the need for effective law enforcement, but we should also understand our own rights and responsibilities – especially in our relationships with the police.

Everyone, including minors, has the right to courteous and respectful police treatment. If your rights are violated, don't try to deal with the situation at the scene. You can talk to a lawyer afterwards, or file a complaint with the Internal Affairs or Civilian Complaint Board.

Based on information originally produced by the American Civil Liberties Union, with revisions made by the Black Political Empowerment Project and the Coalition Against Violence.

You & the Police: Rights, Responsibilities and the Reality

- All members of the community have Constitutional and legal **rights** when interacting and communicating with the police.

- All members must be aware of their **responsibilities** and their obligations any time they (or a family member or friend) may have some legal contact or involvement with police officers.

- Although legally community members have a right to engage in a particular behavior or demand things from the police, the **reality** is that it might problematic to want to assert all of one's rights at the time of any encounter with police.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS – PITTSBURGH REGION

Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Allegheny County Public Defender Office: 412-350-2401
- Allegheny County Bar Association, Lawyer Referral Service (private defense Lawyers): 412-261-0518

Police, Prosecutors, and Jail
- Pittsburgh Police Department, Chief's Office: 412-323-7800
- Allegheny County District Attorney's Office: 412-350-4400
- Allegheny County Jail: 412-350-2000

Complaints about Police Misconduct
- Citizen's Police Review Board: 412-765-8023
- Office of Municipal Investigations: 412-255-2804
- American Civil Liberties Union: 412-681-7736
- NAACP: 412-471-1024
- Alliance for Police Accountability: 412-256-8449

Everyone deserves dignity and respect.

Take the Pledge!

I will treat everyone with dignity and respect.

Visit: www.dignityandrespect.org or text RESPECT to 313131

Practice the Tips!

Sometimes it's the smallest things that have the biggest impact. By practicing one of the 30 Tips of Dignity & Respect every day, each of us can make Greater Pittsburgh a better place for all to live-with all of our differences.

30 Tips of Dignity & Respect		**Tip 1** **Sweat the small stuff.** It's often the small things, such as being kind and courteous, that make a difference.	**Tip 2** **Smile.** A smile can be contagious.	**Tip 3** **Be considerate.** Your words and actions affect others.	**Tip 4** **Say "Hello."** You could make someone's day.	**Tip 5** **Say "Thank you."** Gratitude is a gift that's never too small to give.
Tip 6 **Reinvent the wheel.** Do something that hasn't already been done.	**Tip 7** **Be open.** Try to experience new thoughts and ideas as learning opportunities.	**Tip 8** **Be flexible.** Things don't always go as planned. Adapt to changing conditions when necessary.	**Tip 9** **Join the team.** Do your part to support teamwork.	**Tip 10** **Be a relationship builder.** Seek ways to expand your network.	**Tip 11** **Treat others the way they want to be treated.** Find out what respect means to others.	**Tip 12** **Be culturally competent.** Differences are barriers only if we allow them to be.
Tip 13 **Break the ice.** Start a conversation with someone new.	**Tip 14** **Demonstrate mutual respect.** Inclusion means being respectful regardless of position or title.	**Tip 15** **Ask.** It's okay to ask when you're not sure.	**Tip 16** **Find common ground.** Discover what you have in common.	**Tip 17** **Communicate respectfully.** It's not just what you say, but how you say it.	**Tip 18** **Practice patience.** Take time to get the full story.	**Tip 19** **Seek understanding.** It's better to not fully understand than to fully misunderstand.
Tip 20 **Share your point of view.** Everyone has a perspective. Let others benefit from yours.	**Tip 21** **Get someone else's point of view.** After sharing your perspective, give others a chance to share theirs.	**Tip 22** **Lead the way.** Let your inclusive behavior light a path for others.	**Tip 23** **Do the right thing.** Be fair.	**Tip 24** **Listen.** People feel respected when they know you're listening to their point of view.	**Tip 25** **Remember, we all make mistakes.** Resist the urge to point out the ones others make.	**Tip 26** **Get involved.** Make a difference. Get caught being good.
Tip 27 **Become a mentor.** You—yes, you—can help others realize their potential.	**Tip 28** **Take a healthy step.** Do something good for your health and encourage a friend to join you.	**Tip 29** **Lend a hand.** A little help can go a long way.	**Tip 30** **Be a champion of dignity and respect.** Encourage others to do the same.			

Dignity & Respect Campaign

Greater Pittsburgh

In partnership with Vibrant Pittsburgh

Young Adult Empowerment Program (YAEP)

Providing training to prepare young adults (ages 17–24 years) for high-priority careers in the Pittsburgh region.

For more information

CCAC Young Adult
Empowerment Program (YAEP)
1000 McKee Place
Oakdale, PA 15071
412.788.7500
YAEP@ccac.edu

Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh
610 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: 412.227.4802
Fax: 412.227.4162

Black Political Empowerment Project/
Coalition Against Violence (B-PEP/CAV)
c/o The Hill House Center
1835 Centre Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412.758.7898
b-pepinfo@b-pep.net

LITERACY COUNCIL
Open up a life.

The Buhl Foundation

Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh | Empowering Communities, Changing Lives.

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS
Howard Heinz Endowment · Vira I. Heinz Endowment

CCAC Nondiscrimination Policy
The college does not discriminate based upon race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry or place of birth, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, familial status, veteran status, age or use of a guide or support animal because of blindness, deafness or physical disability of any individual. Questions may be addressed to diversity@ccac.edu.

Individuals with disabilities who are requesting accommodations should contact the Supportive Services for Students with Disabilities office at 412.469.6215. This publication is available in alternate formats; contact 412.469.6215.

This publication was created by the CCAC Institutional Advancement & External Relations Department.
CCAC YAEP-8803-BN-EJ-SK-OCT10

The first choice for faster results. **CCAC**
www.ccac.edu

Cooperating for Success

The Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) is working in partnership with the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, the Black Political Empowerment Project/Coalition Against Violence (B-PEP/CAV), and the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC) to offer an exciting new opportunity.

The Young Adult Empowerment Program (YAEP) seeks to help undereducated and underemployed individuals ages 17 to 24 in Allegheny County. The program aims to increase the number of young adults who will graduate from college and find employment in high-demand, high-priority fields. The program plans to establish an employer "gateway" that will create a pipeline of qualified personnel in these high-priority fields. In addition, it will address the growing need for remediation in higher education.

Participants may enter the program directly or with the help of participating community organizations. These community organization efforts will be coordinated in cooperation with B-PEP/CAV, the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, and GPLC. Once in the program, participants will be able to:

- engage in an orientation designed to provide encouragement and life skills training as a foundation for the program;
- assess their academic level, including reading performance (whether below, at or beyond high school level) and the need for GED preparation and testing;
- gain needed preparatory academic skills, including the GED (if needed), in a non-competitive, level-specific environment through GPLC and/or CCAC;
- form career goals and enter college-level courses at CCAC;
- receive continuing support through the Urban League and CCAC student support services to enable completion of the program;
- graduate with job readiness and career placement training, including resume skills, interview strategies and job placement assistance;
- pursue careers in high-demand occupations;
- tuition assistance; and
- use shuttle/transportation services provided by the program.

High-demand career programs participating in YAEP include:
- Welder
- Automotive technician
- Plumber
- Building construction worker
- Heating, air conditioning & refrigeration specialist
- Additional options available

Now is the time to seize the future.

Acknowledgments

THANKS to
Pittsburgh Public Schools
Dr. Linda S. Lane, Superintendent,
Janice S. Ripper, Chief of Student Support Services,
Nina Esposito-Visgitis, President, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers,
John Tarka, Past President, Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, (retired),
Janet Yuhasz, Student Support Services Coordinator
for partnering with the Coalition to implement strategies within the school district.

THANKS to
Kenneth L. Huston, Community Liaison to CAV
for his hard work in organizing and outreach in helping to implement strategies and mobilize the entire community.

THANKS to
Lois "Toni" McClendon
for her role as editor and lead writer for the
GREATER PITTSBURGH COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE

THANKS to
Russell Bynum, and the staff at BYNUMS MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS, INC. for graphic design services.

SPECIAL THANKS to the hard working and truly dedicated
COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE Working Group
Convened by Valerie Dixon, founder of the Homicide Billboard Campaign and Executive Director of Prevent Another Crime Today (The P.A.C.T. Initiative) and Tim Stevens, Chairman, The Black Political Empowerment Project.

This course was developed from the document:
The Greater Pittsburgh COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE (CAV);
Creating Long Term Solutions to Deep Rooted Problems, which allows for reproduction.