



A Historic Perspective

On Thursday, February 8, 2007, in a standing room only news conference in the lobby of the James F. Henry Hill House Center, the Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP) and One HOOD responded to the alarming report that Pennsylvania led the nation in homicide rates for African Americans. B-PEP and One HOOD were joined by numerous community and religious leaders, the Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh, and other area politicians. As a result of the news conference, members of the community were brought together to form the **COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE**, a broad-based coalition consisting of community and religious leaders, police, representatives from education and government institutions, and concerned citizens of Allegheny County. The coalition now stands as an independent anti-violence collaborative with some administrative support from the Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP).

The purpose and the role of the **COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE** is to identify and facilitate the implementation of strategies and initiatives addressing the issues of violence and crime that plague many of the neighborhoods and communities throughout the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. The coalition is committed to boldly and actively support as well as work in collaboration with organizations, agencies, initiatives, and programs already working quietly and diligently to help reduce violence.

The **COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE** established a working group in February 2007 which updated and significantly expanded "Strategy 95." The 1995 document identified strategies to decrease the violence at that time. The coalition's working group added two new sections. The Community Manifesto and the Role of the Family are preambles to the coalition's 2008 document containing specific strategies and actions for change.

The **COMMUNITY MANIFESTO** urges the African American community to seize the time to end the violence NOW! It is a call for citizens to take ownership of the problem and to provide the leadership necessary for finding bold, long-lasting and peaceful solutions to this problem threatening the lifeblood of the African American Community. *Our* institutions, *our* communities of faith, *our* schools and *our* families must set the tone. *As a call to action*, the **COMMUNITY MANIFESTO** contains definitive steps to accomplish far-reaching goals for ending the violence, and challenges us to reclaim the community *by any peaceful means necessary*.

The **ROLE OF THE FAMILY** document contains guidelines for helping families and parents raise their children in a productive, healthy and safe, *and* peaceful environment. The foundation of any community is the family. Because of its profound impact upon the strength and the health of families and the entire community, the violence that permeates our communities and neighborhoods is weakening that foundation.

We cannot expect the family to bear the heaviest burden *alone* when their children are both victims *and* perpetrators. Knowing that families cannot do it alone, the **COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE** recognizes the role of the Community as the village. The *entire* village - institutions of faith, schools, businesses, the government, as well as social and educational institutions, and other caring people in the community – *must* provide the guidance, and the leadership, as well as the *will*, to end the cycle of violence that threatens both the family and the village.

