



**“Moving from Complaint to Possibility...from Planning to Implementation”**

## **Executive Summary**

The **COALITION AGAINST VIOLENCE DOCUMENT**, completed in 2008, contains strategies for action for the following stakeholders who have a responsibility to significantly impact the violence in our communities.

**ATHLETES:** Professional Athletes are in a unique position to gain access to people in power at a level not available to the average citizen. They have an extremely powerful opportunity to impact the violence in the communities where they play. Because youth look up to athletes at all levels – high school, college and professional – athletes have the responsibility of being positive role models. (Page 14)

**THE BLACK BUSINESS COMMUNITY:** All sectors of the community are urged to support African American business and business development throughout the region. The goal should include the development, implementation and maintenance of community-based businesses and employment initiatives that will create and establish viable businesses and living wage career and employment opportunities in and around designated African American communities. (Page 16)

**THE BUSINESS AND CORPORATE COMMUNITY:** The Business and Corporate community has a strong interest in improving the quality of life for everyone in the region. Business leaders have a responsibility to impact the violence by providing leadership and creating economic opportunities that will improve the conditions for those historically disadvantaged. (Page 19)

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF THE CITIZEN:** Civic participation is the foundation of democracy. The culture of civic participation must be brought back to a vibrant and relevant lifestyle if we are to be successful in our efforts to stop the increasing violence in our homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, cities and the region. Civic education helps prepare people, especially the young, to carry out their roles as citizens and to help them understand that one's vote *does* matter. Therefore, all citizens must be given the tools to fully participate in the democratic process. (Page 22)

**COMMUNITIES OF FAITH:** The recognition and valuing of the sacred breath within each human being is essential to the building of relationships that can ultimately reduce violence, while increasing respect and tolerance for oneself and others. Indeed, practicing spiritual disciplines can help people understand the meaning of the suffering and frustrations of others, channel their anger constructively, and thus reduce violence. Faith communities have an extremely important role to play in the transformation of communities. (Page 23)

**EDUCATION: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY:** Education is the foundation for financial success and responsible citizenship. Historically, the lack of education too frequently leads to the absence of hope, to 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. (Page 25)

**EDUCATION: COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:** Colleges and universities need to take advantage of the opportunities related to the multicultural diversity of their students by including courses that reflect that diversity. Colleges and universities should be at the forefront of this movement because of their unique position to educate young people from *all* backgrounds. Responsibility for the implementation of this initiative must come from the top. (Page 29)

**FOUNDATIONS/CHARITABLE TRUSTS:** Foundations have an important role to play in reducing violence, because of their ability to foster initiatives, which are holistic, comprehensive, systematic, evidence-based and empowering. Furthermore, foundations can play an important role by making innovative and non-traditional grants that may have a profound impact within the African American community. (Page 31)

**GOVERNMENT:** The purpose of government is to engage in activities to promote the “common good,” and to regulate and control social, political and economic spheres. Government entities must collaborate with local communities, businesses, and the philanthropic communities to impact violence. They should work to alleviate the root causes of violence and not merely control the violence. (Page 32)

**GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION:** A civil society is based on the people and lawful authorities working cooperatively to reduce the violence in our neighborhoods. The irresponsible use of guns, especially handguns, is to blame for a great percentage of the violence and killing that occurs in our neighborhoods. In addition, guns are frequently involved in accidental injuries. (Page 34)

**THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM:** The healthcare system has a unique and important role in reducing the physical, emotional, and social problems that contribute to violence in our communities. It includes responsibilities related to partnership with communities and health care clients to provide health-related education and employment opportunities. Members of the health care system are called on to take the specific actions aimed at healing the wounds caused by violence and reducing the incidence of violence in our communities. (Page 36)

**THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM:** Juvenile justice officials can play a significant role in reducing the numbers of youth impacted by the violence in our communities through greater collaboration among parents and families, schools, human service organizations and other law enforcement institutions. (Page 38)

**LAW ENFORCEMENT:** Strategies and initiatives advocating gun violence reduction must be addressed immediately and will require unprecedented understanding and cooperation between all levels of the criminal justice system and the community. Teamwork is essential in law enforcement activity, as well as “community policing” environments in which citizens, community groups and the police work together as equal partners to attack and solve this problem. (Page 39)

**THE MEDIA:** The media must understand the role they play in perpetuating negative images of African Americans and other people of color. The media have the ability *and* the responsibility to present a more balanced picture of our youth and our community, instead of concentrating on the violence. (Page 41)

**THE MEDIA: IMPACT OF RAP MUSIC:** 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. Everyone – the entertainment media, music artists, parents, and the community -- has to take responsibility for what our children and youth are seeing and hearing. (Page 43)

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:** Restorative justice is an attempt to reverse the damaging impact of a criminal justice system that traditionally relied on a policy of punitive justice resulting in lengthy incarceration and the lifelong stigma of a criminal record. The goal of restorative justice is to repair the relationships between the offender and the other members of the community. (Page 45)

**RESTORATIVE AND REHABILITATIVE JUSTICE:** Having recognized the devastating effects their behavior has had on the life of the African American community, persons incarcerated and formerly incarcerated in the justice system can provide invaluable service for aiding the prevention of violence within our communities. (Page 47)

**SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS:** Service organizations can have a significant effect on reducing violence by offering quality programs that engage youth and adults positively, as well as provide alternatives to violence. They can also provide activities which discourage other types of destructive behavior. (Page 50)

**STREET LEVEL OUTREACH:** Anyone who works at the street level helps reduce violence by providing outreach, activities and services. (Page 52)

**YOUTH:** Youth are encouraged to be the change they want to see in the world. They must become leaders in changing the culture of violence, particularly because they are far too often the *victims* of violence. (Page 54)