

Reduce violence among youth in urban areas through educational opportunities, professional support and community/police information networks.

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Scope of the Problem

While a rise in levels of violent crime among young people affects all members of society, the youth themselves feel the immediate consequences in their environments, where peers, family members and mentors become victims. The fear of the violence has far-reaching implications in the youth's life and extended social and educational networks – networks which include their school setting, youth organizations, extra-curricular activities, and family life.

One such youth organization is Young Aspirations/Young Artists (YA/YA). YA/YA is a private non-profit organization, located in New Orleans. Founded in 1988 with a small group of students, YA/YA now trains hundreds of inner city high school students to become entrepreneurs, instructors, artists, and role models in their families and communities per year. Based on their mission to “empower creative young people to become successful adults ... by providing educational experiences in the arts and entrepreneurship,” YA/YA's art, leadership and travel programs seek to continue to extend “far beyond the art world, into the business community, families, neighborhoods, and the health and safety of our city as a whole.”¹

Due to the fact that many of the YA/YA artists live in parishes (counties) outside of Orleans parish, where YA/YA is located, they are dependent on forms of public transportation or rides from parents or friends to attend and participant in YA/YA's programs.

With many of the young artists affected directly by the upsurge in street violence over the past four years, parents are increasingly concerned about their sons and daughters staying at the studio into the evening hours. It is not uncommon for the artists to work at the studio until 11pm or later. As one young artists expressed, “I would stay at YA/YA all night if I could.” YA/YA serves as a safe space for the young artists to socialize and foster community with students from other schools and neighborhoods. As a temporary solution to the problem of inadequate public transportation, YA/YA pays for a chartered van once a week that transports artists to their individual residencies to ensure physical safety. However, over the past year, YA/YA has lost a number of their artists do to transportation concerns and fear.

¹ Young Aspirations/Young Artists Website, yayainc.com, 2009.

The active participation – which demands a physical presence to due to the nature of the hands-on art production -- of the artists in the studio is integral to YA/YA's success and future growth. Without them, YA/YA will cease to exist as an important youth arts and professional development organization in New Orleans.

Past Policy

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Current Policy

YA/YA addresses youth violence in the community through a number of artistic, educational, and professional development programs.

CORE STUDIO GUILD: participation in the studio guild also includes professional skills training and career development, including formal training in art pricing and marketing; art finances and taxation in art careers; curating; and career-building (interviews, resumes, networking, and portfolios).

URBAN HEROES: regular guild members lead workshops at Orleans Parish public and charter schools, train younger students at the YA/YA studio, and participate in community service (teach young patients at Children's Hospital art skills) and outreach projects (teach elementary students at four schools in 2009).

- youth develop leadership and professional skills
- direct civic engagement with local community including but not limited to young (grades K-7) people, teachers, doctors, nurses, parents and local leaders

ART SPEAKS: project that addresses the rise in violence with a social justice framework, engages youth in discussion of local political systems and structures, and develops art production and professional development skills. The students work with an outside professional artist on two separate yet inter-related projects that provide opportunities to express their own experience with the violence that has affected their friends, family and local communities.

- youth develop critical thinking skills and analytical to analyze issues around government policies, stratification, and societal issues.
- the art pieces are displayed and sold at local boutiques and art outlets.
- youth further develop marketing and portfolio production skills.

ARTIST RESIDENCIES: continued professional development for YA/YA artists who have completed the guild system and are pursuing careers in the arts. The artists receive professional support, studio space, exhibitions and paid internships and art mentorships.

- the high school graduation rate of among regular guild participants in 99%.

Model Program 1: Young Aspirations/Young Artists, Inc.

Summary Young Aspirations/Young Artists (YA/YA) is a private non-profit organization, located in New Orleans. Founded in 1988 with a small group of students, YA/YA now trains hundreds of inner city high school students to become entrepreneurs, instructors, artists, and role models in their families and communities per year. Based on their mission to “empower creative young people to become successful adults ... by providing educational experiences in the arts and entrepreneurship,” YA/YA’s art, leadership and travel programs seek to continue to extend “far beyond the art world, into the business community, families, neighborhoods, and the health and safety of our city as a whole.”²

Goal

YA/YA’s program goal is “to empower creative young people to become successful adults. We do this by providing educational experiences in the arts and entrepreneurship” to inner-city, under-privileged youth.

Cost

There is no cost to the young artist participants. The cost to organization itself is unknown. The funding comes from grants, foundations and individual private contributions.

Implementation

The programs have been implemented (SEE ISSUE BRIEF FOR DETAILS AND DISCUSSION)

Evaluation**TK – is it working?**

Increased city, state and federal funding to Youth Development Program, such as YA/YA, will provide structured avenues toward socio-economic upward mobility and college pipelines.

In addition, increased funding allocations to local New Orleans youth development and mentor programs with documented results in high school graduation and college acceptance rates may lead to a paradigmatic shift in the local culture around violence.

Investing in students at a young age has proven results and will offer opportunities to increase cultural and financial capital over the course of their lifetimes.

Status

Founded in 1988, YA/YA is currently an active non-profit organization and in 2007 revamped its programs with goals to expand it of Urban Heroes (see Issue Brief) and development international art student-exchange programs.

² Young Aspirations/Young Artists Website, yayainc.com, 2009.

Point of View

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Model Program 2: East Bay Safety Corridor Partnership, Oakland, CA

Summary

Established in 1993, the East Bay Public Safety Corridor Partnership (EBSCP), based in Oakland, CA, was established as a response to escalating youth violence. Once a comparatively small collaboration between mayors, police and administration, EBSCP now includes community groups, schools and youth groups. The organization now includes 16 jurisdictions in the East Bay and has produced numerous programs and policy materials analyzing patterns of crime, social conditions and resources for the youth of the East Bay.

Goal

The goal of the EBSCP is to reduce crime and violence in the community to enhance the economic, social and cultural viability in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

Cost

Cost of the program is unknown. The governing board, the Corridor Council, includes three city mayors, three police chiefs, three school superintendents, three city managers, two elected supervisors, two county administrators, two county school superintendents, youth members, and several members of the community at large. The stakeholders include numerous governmental agencies and taxpayers and funds come from state and federal funds drawn through grants.

Implementation

-12-point Youth Violence Prevention Work Plan, established in 1996, includes two programs relevant to identified policy problems around violence and the types of violence experienced by youth and larger community of New Orleans.

-SAFE PASSAGE PROGRAM: implemented in 1996. The Richmond Police force identified that travel to and from home is a vulnerable time for youth living in communities ridden with violence. Community members are trained so that their homes may be "safe havens" that a young person may go to if a threatened on the way to or back from school.

-YOUTH TOGETHER PROGRAM: seeks to reduce violence based on race in five high schools in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties using a cultural sensitivity program with the goal of reducing peer-to-peer violence in schools. This program utilizes conflict

resolution, high school activities, and ethnic identity courses. Taking a preventative approach, the organization takes preventative measures by organizing field trips that expose the consequences of violence behavior.

Evaluation

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Status

The program has seen substantial growth since its inception in 1993. It began as a three-city collaborative between Richmond, Oakland and Berkeley. By 1995, the project included 16 jurisdictions in the East Bay.

Point of View

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Model Program 3: Comprehensive Homicide Initiative, Richmond, CA (and larger East Bay)

Summary

The Comprehensive Homicide Initiative (CHI) in Richmond, CA works in is part of the community of the East Bay Public Safety Corridor Project (see MODEL #2). In response to the rise in violent crime – and specifically gang violence -- in the late 1908s and early 1990s, CHI established a multi-tiered program in 1995 to establish police-community partnerships, youth violence/gang intervention programs and gun reduction strategies.

Goal

CHI acts to coordinate all government and grassroots initiatives addressing the reduction of gun violence in Richmond.

Cost

Cost is unknown.

Over the 5-year period 1993-1998, grants to CHI totaled \$1.7 million. Funding came from: State of California police-hiring supplement, a Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) grant to implement the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative Project, an Office of Community Oriented Policing (COPS) grant, and a number of other smaller grants.

Implementation

Three programs with particular relevance to this issue brief include: 1) Community-based collaboration and mobilization strategies; 2) High-risk youth intervention and prevention strategies; and 3) Summer Youth Academy.

COMMUNITY-BASED COLLABORATION AND MOBILIZATION STRATEGIES:

- utilization of 30 community councils in existence since the 1960s and local knowledge of neighborhoods and citizen concerns.
- keeps community informed of local incidents and strategies for reduction
- seeks input from the community to evaluate and strategize new programs around guns and violence
- Activities include a communitywide survey of residents living in an area targeted for violence-reduction efforts

HIGH-RISK YOUTH INTERVENTION STRATEGIES:

- provide “safe haven” for students through coordinated after-school programs
- Adopt-a-School Program: 23 police officers are assigned to schools each year and work with school officials on curriculum that addresses racial dynamics of classrooms and cultural-sensitivity issues
- Mentoring and tutoring to high-risk youth

SUMMER YOUTH ACADEMY:

- a 12 week collaborative education project between the Richmond, El Cerrito and San Pablo police departments
- provides education and life development skills for youth populations vulnerable to gang activity
- seeks to provide alternatives to students and education them about community-police information networks and strategies, and drug and alcohol awareness

Evaluation

The City of Richmond has experienced a 40% reduction of gun violence from 1993 to 1997. Established in 1995, CHI cannot take full credit for the reduction. However, as one initiative among many (see MODEL #2), the combined results are positive.

Status

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Point of View

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Glossary of Terms

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Bibliography

See, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs*, http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/gun_violence/contents.html

Young Aspirations/Young Artists, Inc., yayainc.com, 2009.

“Crime statistics for the fourth quarter of 2007, released by the New Orleans Police Department, show a 25 percent increase in violent crime over 2006 in raw numbers.” -- Times-Picayune (2008).

Interview: A friend of one of the most active YA/YA participants was murdered in her high school in 2008. Fellow YA/YA artists created a mural in her memory (2009).