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THE CONSEQUENCES OF STRUCTURAL RACISM, CONCENTRATED POVERTY AND VIOLENCE ON YOUNG MEN AND BOYS OF COLOR

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INTRODUCTION

Violence can be defined in many ways. Common sense understandings, crime statistics, and self-report victimization surveys focus on interpersonal violence, which includes acts such as fighting, physical intimidation, and injury caused by the use of weapons. But violence also includes actions that create harm that is not strictly physical and that can be understood more broadly as systemic injury directed against a group or geographic area. This violence may be manifested by systematic policies that foster disinvestment, by practices that remove jobs from communities, by historical federal and banking practices that denied bank loans to low income communities of color, by current practices that similarly deny mortgage insurance, and by taxation policy that robs communities of the tax revenue for basic services. This violence is not interpersonal, but results in significant harm. This definition of violence is crucial, both as a systemic injustice done to young men and boys of color and as a cause of interpersonal violence.

There is a pervasive stereotype in our society that young men and boys of color—particularly those who are African American or Hispanic/Latino American—are inherently more violent and prone to criminal behavior and gang activity than their White American counterparts.[1] This stereotype is born from centuries of legally imposed discrimination coupled with current implicit bias and structural racism; it permits society to view differential treatment of young men and boys of color by schools, law enforcement entities, and the criminal justice system as legitimate and to ignore its obligation to remedy these abuses.[2]

We challenge the notion that violent behavior is the purview of any racial, ethnic or gender group. We recognize that some young men and boys of color commit acts of violence, but underscore that many more are affected by violence. We look explicitly at violence found in segregated neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage, defined by high levels of poverty, exclusion from well-paying jobs and other indicators of distress. While the majority of young men and boys of color do not live in neighborhoods where most people are poor, African Americans and Hispanic/Latino Americans do live in such neighborhoods

1. KELLY WELCH, "Black Criminal Stereotypes and Racial Profiling," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 23 (2007): 276-288. See LORI DORFMAN AND VINCENT SCHIRALDI, *Off Balance: Youth, Race and Crime in the News*, Public Health Institute, April 2001, for an account of the way the media portray youth of color.

2. ASPEN ROUNDTABLE ON SOCIAL CHANGE, *Rethinking Crime and Punishment for the 21st Century. Developing a Paradigm that Advances Racial Equity and Social Justice*, Meeting Report, June 2007.

at much higher rates than other groups.[3] This geographic segregation is key to understanding the violence that most young men and boys of color confront and the violence they sometimes commit.

In this brief, we examine the broader structural and institutional elements that research implicates as the true root causes of violence. We stress that most young men and boys of color do not respond violently when wronged by such factors as a history of racism, the aforementioned disinvestment in their communities, and the militarization of space as police forces are charged with dealing with the interpersonal violence found in some communities. Our focus throughout is primarily structural, not individual, but we also acknowledge that young men and boys of color are active agents. Some commit violent acts, sometimes with what they perceive as rational reasons for their actions; others proactively address and contest the violence in their communities.

We conclude with policy solutions and emerging and promising practices that respond to the primacy of broader structural issues, including structural racism.[4] We highlight organizations seeking to change conditions in their communities. In this brief, we cannot begin to address all the issues that affect violence related to young men and boys of color, but instead focus on the structural violence present in disadvantaged communities. In doing so, we recognize the limited impact of discrete policy solutions

that address only institutions and relationships in the community and not broader structural issues. Indeed, recent decades have seen many poverty reduction attempts utilizing these narrow policy solutions and yet violence and concentrated poverty persist.

THE SCOPE OF VIOLENCE FACED BY YOUNG MEN AND BOYS OF COLOR

The media often portray young men and boys of color as perpetrators of violence. The portrayal focuses only on violence between individuals and ignores the fact that while some young men and boys of color commit acts of violence, far more are victimized by violence.[5] According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, African American males aged ten- to twenty-four-years are the victims of murder at a rate almost nineteen times that of their non-Hispanic White American peers, and Hispanic/Latino American males in this age group are six times more likely to be victimized than their non-Hispanic White Americans counterparts.[6]

Self-reported data show that violence is often linked to income. Lower-income individuals are more likely to experience violence and to commit offenses that are documented in crime statistics. This finding is sometimes erroneously used to explain the differences in victimization rates between races and ethnicities. African American and Hispanic/Latino American youth are more likely to witness or experience violence than are White American youth from families with similar incomes. Furthermore, violence is reduced for White American youth as their parents' income increases, but the risk of experiencing and participating in acts of violence does not similarly decline for youth of color.[7]

When we turn from victimization rates to those sentenced for perpetuating harm, the disparities are dramatic. Young men and boys of color are incarcerated at rates much higher than white youth, often for violent crimes against persons.[8]

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3. Paul A. Jargowsky, *Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s*, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, May 2003.

4. Briefly, structural racism occurs not only when institutional practices legitimate and perpetuate systematic disadvantage for racial or ethnic groups, but also when relationships among institutions serve this end.

5. Our knowledge of the extent of this is incomplete, in part because victimization statistics are known to be unreliable. Many crimes are not reported to the police, jurisdictions record crimes differently, and people may not feel comfortable answering surveys designed to measure rates of victimization. For these reasons, homicide statistics are often used to determine differences in rates of violence. The overwhelming majority of homicides are reported and thus documented in official records, homicide statistics are less sensitive to jurisdictional differences in how crimes are recorded, and murders are the most serious violent crime found in official reports.

6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Violence, Facts at a Glance*, www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention (accessed August 1, 2010).

7. Julie L. Crouch, Rachelle F. Handon, Benjamin E. Sanders, Dean G. Kilpatrick, and Heidi S. Resnick, "Income, Race/Ethnicity and Exposure to Violence in Youth: Results from the National Survey of Adolescents," *Journal of Community Psychology* 28, no. 6 (2000): 625-641. Note: this is for youth ages 12 to 17 and does not take gender into account. Witnessing violence was defined as serious violence such as seeing someone shot, or seeing someone threatened with a gun, knife or other weapon, among other factors.

8. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook*, http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/cjrp, (Accessed August 1, 2010).

Research shows that much of the disparity is due to differences in the actual rates of engaging in the behavior for which they are sentenced. However, there are also significant differences in the ways that African Americans in particular are treated by the police and the courts.[9]

The Causes of Violence

Typically, our society sees violence, whether or not it is committed by a youth of color, as interpersonal and stemming from individual causes such as family dysfunction, individual personality defects, or the negative influence of peers. Interventions are thus aimed at the individual, including the use of social workers and after school programs. Youth, particularly youth of color, are also subjected to punitive measures, including zero-tolerance discipline policies which suspend or expel them for often minor infractions of school rules, increasing the likelihood of contact with the juvenile justice system. We believe these types of interventions do not address the root causes of violence; instead, they improperly locate the entire problem within the individual or his family, without considering the larger context.

Violence Caused by Concentrated Disadvantage

One way to more fully understand violence in context is to examine communities where violence is more prevalent. An emerging academic literature finds that violence is more often found in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage.[10] Disadvantage is understood in different ways, but generally combines measures of poverty, unemployment, and low-wage jobs.

Although the majority of poor people in the United States are White Americans, poor white individuals are less likely to live in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage.[11] Poor African Americans, and to a lesser extent Hispanic/Latino Americans, are more likely to live in such neighborhoods. Individuals may opt to live with others who are similar to themselves, but the legacy of historic, legally enforced segregation, federal housing policies, and ongoing bank lending practices, as well as the actions of the real estate industry continue to impact and restrict where people of color live.[12] African Americans, in particular, are more likely to live in neighborhoods that are isolated from basic services, provide limited access to stable, non-poverty level employment, and are plagued by higher rates of violence.

Research on the relationships between concentrated disadvantage, race and ethnicity, and violence uniformly finds that that most or all of the difference in rates of violence between racial and ethnic groups can be accounted for by differences in the neighborhoods in which these groups live: people who live in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage are more likely to experience violence and to be the victims of violence.[13] That is, White Americans living in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage are similarly likely to commit acts of violence as young men and boys of color.[14] Additionally, being the victim of violence or witnessing violence increases the chance that a young man or boy of color will also commit violence.[15] Thus a reinforcing cycle is established. Young men and boys of color are victimized by violence or witness violence at higher rates, leading some of them to commit violence and increasing the chance that yet others will be affected. Furthermore, African Americans, even if they do not live in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage, are more likely to live adjacent to such neighborhoods. Violence may well spill over, leaving the youth in adjoining neighborhoods at greater risk than those who live farther away.

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9. See Becky Pettit and Bruce Western, "Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in U.S. Incarceration," *American Sociological Review* 69 (2004): 159-161 for a review of much of this research.

10. See Ruth D. Peterson and Lauren Kivo, "Macrostructural Analysis of Race, Ethnicity and Violent Crime: Recent Lessons and New Directions for Research," *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (2005): 331-356 for a summary.

11. Gary Orfield, *Reviving the Goal of an Integrated Society: A 21st Century Challenge*, Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA, January 2009. We note that residential segregation is typically measured by looking at the percentage of the population that is poor, rather than the expanded measure of disadvantage used in the violence literature. However, the two are correlated and the percentage in poverty is included in the construction of the disadvantage measure.

12. Redlining, for example, refers to the practice of refusing to make home loans to particular neighborhoods based on the poverty of the neighborhood and often on the race of the inhabitants. Private banks and the Federal Housing Authority practiced redlining until officially ending the practice in the late 1970s. See for example, Ira Reingold, Ira Fitzpatrick and Al Holfeld, Jr., "From Redlining to Reverse Redlining: A History of Obstacles to Minority Homeownership," *Clearinghouse Review* 34, (2000-2001): 642-654. Some research shows that the mortgage insurance industry continues practices that are equivalent to redlining. See Gregory Squires, "Racial Profiling, Insurance Style: Insurance Redlining and the Uneven Development of Metropolitan Area," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 25, no. 4 (2003): 391-410.

13. See Ruth D. Peterson and Lauren Kivo, "Macrostructural Analysis of Race, Ethnicity and Violent Crime: Recent Lessons and New Directions for Research," *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (2005): 331-356) for a summary.

14. Depending on the study, all or most of the explanatory power of race/ethnicity is removed once neighborhood disadvantage is introduced into the regression model.

15. Joanne M. Kaufman, "Explaining the Race/Ethnicity-Violence Relationship: Neighborhood Context and Social Psychological Processes," *Justice Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2005): 224-251.

Link Between Concentrated Disadvantage and Violence

Some researchers assume that the circumstances of living in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage places strains upon families, which affects parents and guardians' ability to supervise their children or to offer them a realistic sense of a stable future. Certainly, the strain of living in such neighborhoods can affect the youth directly, resulting in increased substance abuse, antisocial beliefs and attitudes, and a history of violent victimization and involvement.[16] At the family level, strain results in low parental involvement, and poor family functioning. At the peer and school level, there is increased association with delinquent peers, poor academic performance, and social rejection.[17] Because of these factors, an often-used guide on best practices focuses on support for parents and families, including providing home visits, mentoring, and training in social and conflict resolution skills as key intervention areas.[18] Proponents of such individual-level approaches maintain that because young men and boys of color are at higher risk, they should receive more services.

An individual-level approach, however, does not address the systemic roots of violence in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage. To the extent that individual risk factors for violence are higher for young men and boys of color, we believe they are directly caused by societal and community characteristics, including economic deprivation, inequality, and discrimination. These root causes create additional strain on the communities where young men and boys of color live and for the young men and boys of color themselves.[19] The factors present that are considered to be risk factors are largely a product of coping with this more stressful environment.

Violence Caused by Lack of Community Control and Collective Efficacy

Another way to evaluate the health of a neighborhood is to analyze its level of community control and collective efficacy—in other words, its ability to self-regulate and realize collective goals.[20] Neighborhoods with greater social efficacy are able to monitor youth who are in danger of getting into trouble and to work collectively to put pressure on local government to secure resources for these youth. Poverty and violence can reduce collective efficacy if people are afraid of the personal consequences of mobilizing or are simply too busy meeting basic survival needs. Poor neighborhoods are often politically isolated, so residents do not have the networks to bring public attention to their issues. Furthermore, neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage are less likely to be able to show collective efficacy because residents evidence more residential mobility and are less likely to be homeowners. Homeownership brings greater security of tenure and often a greater sense of responsibility for the neighborhood. In contrast, a higher percentage of renters results in more residential instability since tenants are subject to landlords who may evict or not renew their leases, particularly given the unstable incomes of lower-income people. In turn, there are fewer long-standing community ties that can be mobilized to monitor the neighborhood and organize. Research shows that collective efficacy is an important predictor of victimization and homicides, once neighborhood disadvantage is taken into account.[21]

Collective efficacy is not simply the purview of the adults in the community but also of the youth. Youth need to see real possibilities and also to see that they have a role in creating a better community for themselves and in helping foster policies that dismantle structural exclusion, including structural racism. Thus, any real solution must start not with the weaknesses created by their environment but instead with the strengths that the youth have, and with the strengths of the larger community.

Violence Caused by Disruption and Police Presence

An intriguing parallel line of research looks at the disruption introduced into neighborhoods when many of the adults are incarcerated. When many adults are removed, sometimes repeatedly, from the neighborhood, there are fewer people who might otherwise watch over or mentor the youth. This

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16. See Martha E. Wadsworth, Tali Raviv, Christine Reinhard, Brian Wolff, Catherine De Carlo-Santiago, and Lindsey Einhorn, "An Indirect Effects Model of the Association between Poverty and Child Functioning: The Role of Children's Poverty Related Stress," *Journal of Law and Trauma* 12 (2008): 156-185. Note that the researchers found weaker effects between poverty and their measures of functioning for African Americans.

17. Kara Williams, Lourdes Rivera, Robert Neighbours, and Vivian Reznik, "Youth Violence Prevention Comes of Age: Research, Training and Future Dimensions," *Annual Review of Public Health* 28 (2007): 195-211.

18. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook for Community Action*, http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/YV_bestpractices.html, (Accessed August 1, 2010).

19. Robert Agnew, "A General Strain Theory of Community Differences in Crime Rates," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 36 (1999): 123-154.

20. Robert J. Sampson, Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls, "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multi-level Study of Collective Efficacy," *Science* 277, no. 15 (August 1997): 918-924. See also Jeffrey D. Morenoff, Robert J. Sampson, Stephen W. Raudenbush, "Neighborhood Inequality, Collective Efficacy, and the Spatial Dynamics of Urban Violence," *Criminology* 39, no. 3 (2001): 517-560.

21. Robert J. Sampson, Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls 1997.

reduces informal social control of youth behavior. As a result, the role of the police is increased and law enforcement entities serve as the default bodies regulating the behavior of youth. Since formal controls escalate the consequences of action and often lead to the incarceration of youth for behavior that might be better resolved through informal responses the resulting harm to young people is magnified.[22] Furthermore, the increased police presence in disadvantaged communities creates what some commentators call the militarization of space.[23] The unequal enforcement of laws and the sometimes illegal behavior of police in communities of disadvantage, particularly African American communities, is well documented.[24] Distrust of the police is high and the perceived legitimacy of the police is low; as a result, people may be less likely to call or cooperate with the police, violent crimes may be less likely to be solved, and the police may be less of a deterrent against violent crime. Thus, in communities of concentrated disadvantage, individuals may be more likely to commit violent crime because they see the police as a violent, illegitimate force.

Causality and Blame

Violence is most easily recognizable when it is interpersonal and immediate. Indeed, most violence prevention programs seek to intervene in a personal and often punitive way. We believe that understanding and responding to the root causes of violence, however, requires an in-depth analysis of the combined effects of concentrated disadvantage. It is deceptively simple to misinterpret data that suggest that young men and boys of color are violent without taking into consideration the effects of circumstances they have not created. When neighborhoods are systematically disenfranchised, when resources and political power are withheld, and when long-standing communities are disrupted through state policies such as urban renewal and disparate law-enforcement practices, blaming violence on young men and youth of color and responding primarily to the absence of informal controls puts the blame in the wrong place and such solutions will be neither effective nor long-lasting.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe that the disproportionate rates of violence experienced by young men and boys of color (both as victims and as

> It is deceptively simple to misinterpret data that suggest that young men and boys of color are violent without taking into consideration the effects of circumstances they have not created.

victimizers) will continue until society addresses the root causes of violence. These root causes are to be found in the structural racism and concentrated disadvantage described above. The redress of such root causes requires long-term, structural changes that take time and political mobilization to achieve. To argue for simple policy solutions that address only the violence, but not the reasons why young men and boys of color live in neighborhoods that create such violence is doomed to failure. Yet, the call for broad structural change cannot ignore the fact that people are struggling with violence right now. Thus, we must also address the trauma individuals are currently experiencing and offer programs and services that create opportunities for greater individual and community efficacy.

Provide the Resources and Structures Needed in Communities of Concentrated Disadvantage

We are not advocates of the often-proposed solution of moving people from their neighborhoods into more advantaged settings. This approach ignores the fact that human beings build connections to one another in their neighborhoods, as well as attachments to their homes and to the advantages a particular locale brings them. It is one thing to open up opportunities for people who wish to live elsewhere to do so. It is something else entirely to create conditions where the only way that people can better their living situation is to leave their community.

Instead, the communities where people live must be improved so that they provide both basic services and opportunities for personal and group efficacy. This will not be easy because required changes go against entrenched belief systems and their ensuing policies in the United States. The private sector is thought to be the best determiner of land use; more affluent people believe they have the right to direct their property taxes to the exclusive benefit of the community where they

22. DINA R. ROSE AND TODD R. CLEAR, "Incarceration, Social Capital, and Crime: Implications for Social Disorganization Theory," *Criminology* 36, no. 3 (1998).

23. MIKE DAVIS, "Fortress LA: The Militarization of Urban Space," in *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

24. Much of this literature is summarized in ROD BRUNSON, "Police Don't Like Black People: African American Young Men's Accumulated Police Experiences," *Criminology and Public Police* 6, (2007): 71-102.

live.[25] However, change is possible. Community improvement involves housing, access to jobs, good education, healthy environments, access to social and health services, transportation, and to safe places to walk, recreate, and live. The difficulty is that when communities are improved, current residents are often priced out of their homes. Thus, policy must concentrate on mechanisms such as limited equity loans and affordable rental housing that permit people to stay in their neighborhoods and do not foster gentrification.[26]

Support Regional Economies that Distribute Resources More Fairly

These changes will require changing the way we allocate taxes—directing more taxes to communities with the greatest needs and fewest resources. Economies are regional and created wealth should not benefit only the communities where people live to the disadvantage of those where they work.[27] In particular, schools should be funded according to need, not according to the local tax base, which privileges higher-income communities.[28]

Encourage Informal, Community-Based Supervision of Youth

We must minimize the negative impact of formal control mechanisms by eliminating punitive, zero-tolerance policies in schools and deploying the police appropriately. Zero-tolerance policies in the schools have increased the number of suspensions and expulsions for activities that in the past would have warranted a note to a parent or detention. Youth are removed from the learning environment, which increases their risk of getting into trouble. Incarceration for teenage behavior that would be better dealt with in the community increases the likelihood that youth will not complete school or go on to higher education. It also harms their chances of employment.

The police should continue to be used as formal control. However, ending abuses within police departments is paramount. Of additional importance is eliminating the circumstances in which the effect of police presence ironically creates more harm than it solves. When the community can access the police and the police force is viewed legitimately, both entities benefit and violence should be reduced.

Help Youth Deal With the Trauma of Violence Now

However important it is to deal with the root causes of violence—by eliminating the systematic structural disadvantage facing young men and boys of color—change takes time and people are suffering from disadvantage now. Some young men and boys of color are experiencing disproportionate contact with the juvenile justice system, and many are at risk for witnessing violence or being a victim of it themselves. We need to develop policies and systems that keep boys and young men in school, and in schools that actually educate them, that help them have a secure future, and that deal with the trauma they and their families experience.

We believe that individual-level programs should be conceptually similar to a triage—helping youth to survive and thrive in impacted communities that are without privileges and advantages present in other communities. While this triage is taking place, the root causes can be addressed. As one example, it can be helpful to create programs that help young men and boys of color cope with the trauma from witnessing much higher rates of violence relative to others. Furthermore, we believe that programs that have an individual-level component can be part of larger efforts to create the structural change that is necessary to reduce violence.

Support Nonprofits that Mobilize Youth in Their Communities

Real change will require much more than a single program or even a single change in policy. Ultimately it will require organizations working both within communities dealing with the trauma they experience as well as organizing to advocate for larger systemic change. Community control requires community education and mobilization. Young men and boys of color are an essential part of this. Community empowerment

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25. Because of this, poorer communities have fewer resources to deal with their problems and local government can only increase revenues in any substantial way by increasing land values and bringing in business. This puts pressure on local government to change land use to increase property values. It also leaves communities dependent on the locational decisions of private firms.

26. Limited equity loans (LELs) require that when the home is sold, it be sold for the price paid plus inflation. LELs often come with income restrictions, meaning that the current resident can live there as long as he or she likes, but if the home is sold it must be sold to another household that fits the income requirements. LELs often are used with housing built by nonprofit housing developers that have already reduced the initial price of the unit. Thus, LEL provides security of tenure for the household while keeping the housing permanently affordable.

27. See Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-First Century*, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001 for a longer discussion of this.

28. In California, school funding is allocated based on average daily attendance, rather than the local property tax base. However, the outcome is the same: schools in wealthier communities have more resources either because their attendance is higher or because they have access through school PTAs, foundations or other mechanisms to bring in private resources. See UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education and Access, *Funding Essentials for California Schools*, http://justschools.gseis.ucla.edu/solution/pdfs/FundingEssentials.pdf (Accessed August 1, 2010).

will require policies and practices that ensure that communities have the power and resources to address the issues that confront them.[29] This also will not happen easily, and communities will need to organize to put political pressure on elected officials, business, and other entities to bring about the needed change. Much of this work happens through the actions of grassroots nonprofits that help communities organize; a select few are highlighted in the next section.

Best and Emerging Programs and Practices

Many exemplary organizations are working to change the conditions that lead to violence and to engage youth in advocacy to create social change. Some of the most promising approaches to youth violence prevention are found in organizations and programs that are led by young people themselves and focus on the root causes of violence in our society. We are pleased to highlight a few of the programs that are working to alleviate immediate trauma and to address the long-term, structural changes necessary to end violence. We focus on Bay Area programs, but recognize that there are other exemplary programs throughout California and the nation.

- Youth ALIVE (www.youthalive.org), founded in 1991, runs programs in both Los Angeles and Oakland. It utilizes a multi-prong approach to the problem of violence. The organization provides intensive leadership training to high school students from neighborhoods with high levels of violence and teaches them the critical thinking skills necessary to identify the core causes of violence, to talk about how violence has affected them, and to develop strategies for preventing it. These young people—called Peer Educators—gain an awareness of violence as a public health issue created by environmental and structural factors and institutional racism; furthermore, the scope of this public health issue is seen as a societal problem that they have the capacity to assist in solving.

  After they have been trained, the Peer Educators lead interactive workshops in violence prevention with middle school and high school students and organize other youth to advocate for policy changes. They also become mentors and positive role models for young people whose experience

has taught them that alternatives to violence are not available to them. Earning a monthly stipend, the Peer Educators also acquire valuable employment experience.

In addition, Youth ALIVE brings together community leaders and policymakers to work with the Peer Educators to conduct research and advocate for changes in those policies that increase violence. Peer Educators organized successful efforts to persuade the City of Oakland to ban gun dealers from the city, to convince the Oakland Tribune to refuse gun advertising, and to assist the Oakland Unified School District in implementing youth-led protocols for addressing dating violence.

Youth ALIVE also trains young people who have experienced violence in their own lives to be intervention specialists in the hospital-based peer intervention program called Caught in the Crossfire. These specialists work closely with other youth who have been victims of violence to avoid retaliation, to coordinate services and provide wrap-around care, and to assist in a transition to school or work. Research studies published in 2004 and 2007 showed that those youth who participated in Caught in the Crossfire were less likely to be arrested or become involved in the criminal justice system than other youth victims of violence.[30]

- Youth UpRising (www.youthuprising.org), established in Oakland after racial tension led to violence in the late 1990s in East Oakland, is a youth-led nonprofit organization that transforms young people to be agents of change in their community. The organization focuses on consciousness raising and critical analysis, building individual capacity to transform oppression and trauma into opportunities for positive personal and community change, and providing hard skills and leadership development.

  Youth UpRising concurrently advocates for long-term policy changes, seeks to transform the lives of youth in East Oakland, and works to reduce the violence in Oakland. It reaches out to law enforcement entities to educate the police and others in the criminal justice system about the perspectives and experience of youth of color in Oakland. Youth UpRising's cohort of peace makers, who have been specially trained, are often the first responders to

29. See SHEPHERD ZELDIN, "Preventing youth violence through the promotion of community engagement and membership," *Journal of Community Psychology* 32, no. 5 (2004): 623–641 for a summary of research that shows that engaged youth can help prevent violence in their communities.

30. MARLA G. BECKER, JEFFREY S. HALL, CAESAR M. URSIC, SONIA JAIN, AND DEANE CALHOUN, "Caught in the Crossfire: the Effects of a Peer-Based Intervention Program for Violently Injured Youth," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 34 (2004): 177–183. DANIEL SHIBRU, ELAINE ZAHND, MARLA BECKER, NIC BEKAERT, DEAN CALHOUN, AND GREGORY P. VICTORINO, "Benefits of a Hospital Based Peer Intervention Program for Violently Injured Youth." *Journal of the American College of Surgeons* 205, no. 5 (2007): 684-9.

incidents of violence in the neighborhood. By intervening with both the offenders and victims, such peace makers have been instrumental in preventing retaliatory and escalating violence and modeling non-violent forms of dispute resolution.

- Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY, www.rjoyoakland.org), founded in 2005, grew out of a series of meetings between a city council member, other public officials, and community activists. RJOY seeks to interrupt tragic cycles of incarceration, violence, and unsafe schools and communities by encouraging and assisting institutions to shift their focus to restorative approaches that actively engage families, communities, and systems to repair harm and prevent re-offending. In addition to providing education, training, and technical assistance and partnering with academics and researchers to examine restorative justice practices, RJOY has launched demonstration projects with a West Oakland middle school and the Alameda County Juvenile Court. The reduction in suspensions and expulsions at Cole Middle School after implementation of the RJOY restorative justice pilot program, along with RJOY's district-wide training and educational efforts encouraged the Oakland Unified School District to adopt restorative justice as a system-wide alternative to zero-tolerance discipline in January 2010. Working with the Restorative Justice Task Force convened by the presiding judge of the Alameda County Juvenile Court, RJOY has also inaugurated restorative diversion and re-entry projects to reduce both disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile justice system and to save public funds. The positive reports from young men and boys of color (who have been involved in violence both as offenders and as victims) participating in these nascent efforts are encouraging and justify research on the outcomes of such approaches.

- The Greenlining Institute (www.greenlining.org) was founded in 1993 to combat redlining and institutional discrimination against communities of color. A diverse community of activists came together to form an institute to combat systemic discrimination through organizing, leadership development, policy analysis, and activism. Located in Berkeley, California, its work is national in scope and highlights the importance of systemically focusing on issues facing low-income communities of color. The Greenlining Institute also engages in direct work to bring investment and asset development into communities of color. The areas addressed include, but are not limited to, health care, housing, asset development, economic development, and the higher cost of living in these communities. As one example, the Greenlining Institute works with businesses to show them how it is in their own economic self-interest to foster economic development in communities of color through investment strategies, lending, targeted programs and job development. The Greenlining Institute's Advocacy team has created projects in such areas as micro-business development, increasing diversity in the legal profession, small business technical assistance, alternative energy, restructuring the intervener compensation program, environmental justice, technology access, and educational pipeline programs.

- The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights (www.ellabakercenter.org), founded in 1996, is named for an unsung hero of the civil rights movement who inspired and guided emerging leaders. The Ella Baker Center builds on her legacy by giving people skills and opportunities to work together to strengthen their communities. One of its key programs is the Books Not Bars campaign which has exposed the harmful impacts of California's policy of investing more state funding in prisons than in schools. It advocates a rehabilitative model of juvenile justice and works closely with families of youth who are under the juvenile authority to further this goal. It was successful in preventing Alameda County from building an enormous jail to house youth at considerable distance from their families. As a result of its efforts, the jail was relocated closer to home and downsized by 75 percent. The Ella Baker Center's Heal the Streets program trains Oakland youth to become community leaders and violence prevention advocates. The first group of fellows to graduate created a report, based upon participatory action research, which addressed violence in their communities and suggested points of change.[31] Many of their recommendations echo the points being made in this brief.

31. Ella Baker Center, *How Can an Increase in Teen Jobs Decrease Violence in Oakland?* Available at: www.ellabakercenter.org/downloads/hts/hts_policy_paper_2010.pdf