ALLEGHENY COUNTY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY VIOLENCE PUBLIC HEARING
- - -
BEFORE:

John P. DeFazio	-	President, Council-At-Large
Michael J. Finnerty	-	District 4
Sue Means	-	District 5
Robert J. Macey	-	District 9
William Russell Robinson	-	District 10
Amanda Green Hawkins	-	District 13

Allegheny County Courthouse
Fourth Floor, Gold Room
436 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

Tuesday, March 31, 2015 - 5:01 p.m.

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IN ATTENDANCE:
Walter Szymanski - Budget Director

MR. ROBINSON: Everyone rise. This public hearing on Violence in Allegheny County is called to order. I'm Councilman Robinson. I have the privilege of chairing this hearing. For those of you who anticipate requesting a copy of the words that are spoken here today, if you will be kind enough to --- to contact our office, and the office will let you know when that material will be available. For those who you know might want to submit testimony, it seems to me that next Friday is a reasonable time in which anybody in our County might submit any written testimony.

It has been the practice of this Council under the leadership of our President, Mr. DeFazio, to not allow people who live outside of our County to participate in these public hearings. I think it's kind of obvious that these public hearings are set up to hear from the people in our County. There have been rare exceptions. Since I'm chairing this hearing this evening, I don't plan to provide any exceptions to those who do not live in our County. We're talking about violence in our County. We're talking to County residents, their perspective on it, any suggestions they have, as well as talking to people in governmental positions who might be helpful in sharing with this Council what they and we are doing to try to end the growing violence in our County.

Unfortunately, it happens far too often and now it's finding its way out of the --- we will call it the usual places. It's spreading into all portions of the County and affects every one of my colleagues, the 13 of us who represent districts, and those two members of Council who are at-large.

I'd like to thank my colleagues who have been kind enough to be here. I ask them to introduce themselves starting on my right and coming to my left, and if they have any opening statement that they would like to make, I ask them to do that at this time. Mr. Finnerty?

MR. FINNERTY: Thank you, Mr. Robinson. My name is Mike Finnerty. I represent District 4, which is out in Scott Township, Carnegie, Robinson/Kennedy, out that area, out the Parkway West, actually, so there's 16 municipalities in that area. Thank you.

PRESIDENT DEFAZIO: My name is John DeFazio. I am a County Councilman At-Large, which means I represent everyone in Allegheny County. I'm also the Council President. At this time I don't have too much to say.

I’m trying to listen here for ideas and things that everyone else has to say first. Thank you.

MR. MACEY: Good afternoon. My name is Bob Macey. I'm the Councilman in District 9, which is what we affectionately refer to as the Mon Valley, and I have 14 communities in my district and represent about 96,000 people. I don't think any one of us have been void of the problems that occur over and over again in our communities. I see some people here from my communities that have tried very, very hard to come up with some solutions, but you can only --- you're only responsible for the effort, and I want to thank them for their efforts. We're not always responsible for the outcome, however. Thank you.

MS. MEANS: Good evening. My name is Sue Means, and I represent District 5, which is Mount Lebanon, Bethel Park, Upper St. Clair and Bridgeville. I want to thank Councilman Robinson for having this public hearing this evening. We're all very concerned about violence in our communities, and I also am here to learn tonight. And I want to thank everyone for coming because I believe we all need to work together and have a holistic approach to end violence and make Allegheny County a safer, more healthy community. Thank you for coming this evening.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, my colleagues. I'd like to again thank my colleagues for authorizing this public hearing and having the confidence in me to Chair.

If there are members of the Council who haven't received already a list of the speakers that we have --- and there are only eight speakers whose names I have --- I have a copy of that for you if you would like it. If there's anybody that needs a copy of the speakers, I will make sure you have it. I will exercise the prerogative of the Chair to call people who I deem we need to hear from in the order that I call them.

The first person that you will see is the Honorable Judge Cheryl Allen, Superior Court of Pennsylvania. I talked to Judge Allen and she is willing to come forward. The second person I would call upon is Julian Craig, if Mr. Craig will be prepared. The third person I'm going to call upon is Dr. Darryl T. Canady. And I see that Dr. Canady, Reverend Dr. Canady is in the room, and I appreciate his diligence in getting here under some extreme circumstances. So Reverend, I am aware of

your circumstances. I'll do everything I can to move you along.

Just one other instruction, if I might, for those who are going to speak. Would you be kind enough to give our transcriptionist your title and any additional information that you feel that I haven't already given, but we will need your address because I want to verify that you are a resident of Allegheny County. If you will be kind enough to do that and recognize that it's being recorded by this very competent young lady right in front of me, and we want to make sure she gets every word. I want to acknowledge the presence of my colleague, Councilwoman Amanda Green Hawkins, and give her the same courtesy I gave to my other colleagues to identify herself and make any opening statement that she may wish to do so.

MS. GREEN HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no further comments or questions at this time.

MR. ROBINSON: Your district, please?

MS. GREEN HAWKINS: Council District 13.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you. Your Honor, the floor is yours. Because we only have eight people, the Chair is not is going to ask our staff to put the timer on, and I certainly wouldn't put the timer on the Judge.

MR. FINNERTY: You could be in big trouble.

JUDGE ALLEN: Good evening, everyone. I am Judge Cheryl Lynn Allen, and currently I am serving as a Judge on the Superior Court of Pennsylvania, where I might add 65 percent of our cases involve violence, drugs and crime. Prior to my election to the Superior Court in 2007, I sat on the Common Pleas Court for a period of 17 years and 5 of those years in Criminal Court and 12 years of those years in Juvenile Court.

I am a resident of Hampton Township, which is in the North Hills of Pittsburgh. My address is 2535 Red Oak Court, Allison Park, 15101. And I think that's all the information you requested.

But what I would like to share, having grown up in Allegheny County, a native Pittsburgher all of my life, I became a Judge in 1990, and initially in Criminal Court, and then in 1992, I transferred to Juvenile Court. And very shortly after my tenure in Juvenile Court began, there was just this proliferation of drug trafficking, and with it, gang violence and gun violence. Now, that was about the time that crack cocaine appeared on the scene in Pittsburgh and all of the issues that surround crack

cocaine. And as I began to work with the young people in Juvenile Court, many of which were charged with everything from simple possession of drugs to homicide, in some cases, I began to notice certain things; one, and I used to complain about the fact that so few juveniles would come to court with fathers. I would always see the mother or the grandmother or the aunt, very seldom the father. And what I also noticed was, as I began to study this, is that people or young people who have fathers who are actively involved in their lives are much less likely to come to Juvenile Court. This brings me to a major issue in our community, and this is throughout Allegheny County, and that's fatherlessness. Because of the breakdown in the family --- you know, the family has to be the bedrock, the foundation of our community. And whenever you have weak families, problems abound. Children need a male figure in their lives. And yes, they need a mother figure also, but I find that it's the father who really sets those boundaries and who really provides that --- those boundaries and that instruction for young people.

The other thing I noticed is that our young people, because of the lack of a strong family, fatherlessness, really had no boundaries. They did not know anything about respect for authority. They did not know even the basic --- basics of conflict resolution. And they were constantly being exposed to violence in the media, through music. And yet we live in a society that has taught these young people that there is no such thing as right and wrong, and that everyone is free to determine his own rights, his own sense of truth and his own wrong. That is a trememdous mistake because there is absolute truth, and there is right, there is wrong.

Our Criminal Justice System --- well, I should say as I continued to sit in Juvenile Court, I found myself constantly asking where is the community, where is the church, what is going on in our schools? And I ask myself these questions because repeatedly, because of this escalation of violence, I would have people out in the community ask me, well, what are you doing as a Judge to settle or to resolve these issues? And my constant response is the Criminal Justice System cannot address the social issues of the community. When young people come before me, my job is to hear the facts, hear the evidence, view the evidence, assign the law or apply the law to the facts, make a decision and render a disposition. The

Criminal Justice System cannot address the social ills of the community. So my response would always be, well, what are you doing? We have got to get to a point where we understand that we are a community. It's not about those kids in Homewood or those kids in the Hill District or those kids in McKeesport. They are all of our children, and we have got to accept responsibility for changing the culture because it’s only when there is a culture change, a change in the mindset.

Now, a lot of people feel, you know, let's just throw more money and let's just have more programs. But you see, programs in and of themselves do not change people. Relationship change --- relationships change people. That father relationship, that mentoring relationship, you know, that person that every child ought to be able to look to for guidance. And when there is no birth father in the picture, we should be about providing mentorship. And I believe that that is a responsibility of every community and every church. And so we have to teach our young people values. We have to teach them respect for authority. And I have to say this. A major issue in our society is we have continually removed Godly authority from every aspect of our community, and then we wonder why our children don’t respect authority.

So we have to begin to change the culture. We have to start when children are young. We have to start when they’re young, teach them conflict resolution, teach them respect for other people, provide them with boundaries. And we, as a community, have to get involved. We have to work to hold the media and the music industry accountable. You know, I am so tired of hearing people say, well, that's censorship. But they will censor faith in God, but they don't want to censor pornography and music that provokes violence. We have to set boundaries on these aspects of society who are influencing our children.

When a child comes into the Juvenile Court System having committed a crime or when that child comes into the Criminal Justice System having committed a crime, it’s because the community has failed, the families have failed, the school has failed, the church has failed. And as I said before, these social issues, social problems, cannot be addressed by the Criminal Justice System. They cannot be addressed by programs. They cannot be addressed by gun regulation because all gun regulation does is

disarm law-abiding citizens. People who are prone to commit crimes are always going to have guns. We have to change the culture. We have to change mindsets.

And I am so glad that Pastor Canady is here and my son Julian is here because I believe that they --- in fact, I know that they have participated in training to address these very things with young children. Thank you.

MR. ROBINSON: Your Honor, we thank you very much for taking time out from your busy schedule, and on behalf of my colleagues and really the people of Allegheny County, I thank you for your long years of service. We've known each other for a long time, and I feel very good when I hear your name. I feel very good when I see you moving along, and I always say to my colleagues stay out of the courtroom, stay out of jail. And I hope I don't see you anywhere else other than in pleasant surroundings. Thank you very much and the best to you.

JUDGE ALLEN: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. ROBINSON: Next, we're going to have Mr. Julian Craig.

MR. CRAIG: Thank you for having me. My name is Julian Craig. I live at 179 Castle Shannon Boulevard, Pittsburgh, PA, 15628.

I'm going to add just a different perspective on what I'm hearing and what I think we're all here to do. And it's rather opinionated, but it comes from a degree of experience that I've had myself and as the founding principle of a company called Edgestone Strategies. We do a lot of community work. I had an opportunity to work with some academy schools and various other programs throughout the State of Pennsylvania dealing with our young people statewide and other areas close by.

1862, the New York Times posed a very interesting question with respect to Frederick Douglas. And they asked Frederick Douglas, we have a large population of individuals who are by and large poverty stricken and uneducated, what shall we do with them? Frederick Douglas, very confident --- in a very confident manner said do nothing, he says, because if we are unable to stand on our own, then individuals will certainly be bound to fall. And what he meant by that is that he understood very clearly the long-term effect and the devastation that would be caused by professional poverty and dependency. And so we take a look at what's going on

in the black community or just the city in general, and what we're seeing is the by-product of professional poverty and dependency. And the opposite of individuals who are capable of being self-sufficient and who have no desire to kill one another is dependency. And this dependency that we're seeing out here is not something that just happens by accident. It’s an agenda of individuals who have a much larger plan at stake, but through this particular experiment, we have seen complete devastation of what we now call our communities. And so we go out and talk to young people, and we find out what it is that they know, what is their perspective on life, what is their overall opinion about what they’re capable of doing, and we find out that they’ve bought into some series of very calculated lies.

I'm going to tell you how in the city the plan goes. The very individuals who have been placed in charge of these communities as so-called community leaders are the main ones leading the population astray. So we move into a time right now where violence has become the norm. And here’s how you destroy a community. I'll give it to you plainly, and then I'll tell you where I'm going with this. You remove the moral compass, you destroy the family structure and dilapidate the economic situation, and then you have what we have right now, which is individuals who are fighting over the doughnut unaware of the fact that they have a God-given right to the actual doughnut shop.

On a macro level, where we're headed ultimately is that what's plaguing certain pockets of Allegheny County as once was stable will ultimately end up plaguing the entire nation as the agenda is to move towards centralized power, global governance; and therefore, family structures, the man and woman being the king and queen of their own domain, that has to go.

There are several programs out there that I would recommend to bring a halt to what I have to say here today. One of them is called the B.O.S.S. The Movement Training. And basically what the B.O.S.S. The Movement Training is involved in is rearranging the myth that a lot of our young people have bought into. And that myth is very simple, and here it is. It’s a myth that it requires outside assistance in order for you to change your individual circumstance. That's a lie. Why do we have members in our own community that seem to perpetuate that

lie, I don't know. Actually, I do know. But that's a lie. So we rewrite this story for young people and we make them understand that the individual responsible for you and your success is you. And the truth of the matter is is that there is absolutely nothing in this country or world that can truly stop you from you succeeding if that’s what you want to do. That's the re-mix. It’s a rhetoric that you hear on a day-to-day basis from our media and unfortunately some of our local politicians. And I'll tell you something else before I close. Any time politics trumps what's right, then we have a problem. We have a problem. And see, we never had a --- this society is not created for us to look at the politicians like they're gods and kings. The American experiment is about each man and woman being his or her own king and that their land be their kingdom. Without being able to break professional poverty and dependence, we'll never see a cease to violence and all the other manifestations of it.

So it's our recommendation, again, I'll reiterate, B.O.S.S. The Movement training, which I believe someone here is going to give a little bit more detail on, which is a proven curriculum where we take young people and we tell them a different story other than the one that their community leaders are telling them about dependence. And we let them know that, in fact, that history has shown you can, in fact, do what you want to do if you want to do it bad enough. Thank you very much for your time and God bless.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, Mr. Craig. Next we're going to hear from Reverend Dr. Darryl T. Canady, Senior Pastor, Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church located right in the 10th County Council District.

REVEREND DR. CANADY: Thank you for the opportunity to come. My address is 611 Rodman Street, and that's Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15206.

I'm coming here from an offensive perspective. We talk about the deficiency or the defense. You got to have a little offense if you're going to win the game. So what I want to talk about today is life development. We can't wait until the problem is exasperated. We have to go in the front of it. As I like to say, you can't break an oyster, but you can break a twig. And if you train and give children a smart start to begin with, then you can help to curb the violence that's going on in our communities. So I have here --- I'm developing something

called the Love Community. Working with some professors at the University or Pittsburgh, we are developing something that I believe that would help us to be able to curb the violence that is going on throughout Allegheny County.

We believe that you have to have six pillars. This is a comprehensive approach and not just a single thing. There's not one single answer. We have to look at it from a comprehensive standpoint. And I have six pillars here. The first one is the spiritual pillar. And we'll go through these. The second is physical and recreational. The third is an educational pillar. The fourth is social. The fifth is economic and employment. And the sixth is health and wellness. And what I've done for you, I've broken it down for you to let you see how comprehensively we can attack what's going on in our community.

First of all, from a spiritual perspective, we have to provide counseling intervention. We have to have --- we have to seek opportunities for relationships that will open up the door for people to have a spiritual basis, particularly in Jesus Christ. We have to connect people with resources; but again, we have to train our young people from the very beginning to help them to get a smart start. What Julian talked about and I have here is B.O.S.S. The Movement. It's a youth program that is taking over the nation. The movement is to teach the relevance of God and His Word and really want a need for success but also to economically empower review through the government of their times. So let them know that they can do it.

One of the things that we talk about from a defensive standpoint is that there's an achievement gap. But the truth of the matter is there's an opportunity gap. When the opportunities are equal, then you won't see as much of an achievement gap. And I believe that we have to do this collaboratively. It's not just one institution that will be able to do it. So I have here at the bottom of your sheet we have to collaborate with seminaries, universities and medical centers to be able to provide those opportunities.

The second pillar is the physical and recreational pillar. We can develop a sports academy. When I was a little boy, I played in the Police Athletic League. So I saw policemen in a whole different light

than a lot of our young people are seeing them today. In fact, I moved here from North Carolina. My son, in middle school, his head football coach was a police officer. His head basketball coach was a police officer because the city allocated funds so that these policemen could work in the community with a whistle around their neck rather than a billy club.

I believe we have to put together a health and wellness academy. We have to provide opportunities for our senior citizens, as well as youth development and athletic leagues. But again, this is a collaborative effort with parks and recreation with our police department and sheriff and our schools, because again, this had to be a comprehensive look. You can't just point out one thing.

The third pillar is education, which is a key. I believe that we need to have male-only academies. I very --- believe in that with all my heart. I went to an all male college. I went to Morehouse College, the same school that Martin King, Jr., went to. And I know what that did for me. It gave me a ground. The way we look at what's going on in our communities we have to have fathers involved. We have to have young men understand their responsibility from the very beginning. So I believe we need to have a male, and I'm calling it LIFE, and LIFE simply stands for Living Intelligently Fulfilling Expectations.

One of the problems that are going on in our communities is that the expectation levels are low, and if the expectation levels is low, then the kids, the children, are not going to grow up to where they need to be. Everybody is not going to a four-year institution, so we got to have culinary arts, teaching them skills to help them. Pittsburgh, the industrial revolution is over. The steel mills have closed. So now we're known as for medicine and we're known for technology. Well, we got to try and help this workforce to come up to the standards so they can get a living wage and not just minimum wage.

The fine arts academy, this is really exciting for colleges and universities. Everybody don't want to go on a college campus, but they will come in their community to learn more to help them; leadership development for our youth, to train them and to teach them that they can do; credit counseling academy, so that people will not get so much in debt and all of these things begin to spiral back

to lead to the crime; mentoring programs, so if there is not a father the house we can put another man there that will be able to help; collaborate again with schools, colleges and universities.

The fourth pillar is social pillar. Putting on plays and concerts, making it affordable, entertainment, community forums, community carnivals, dance studios, music studios, being able to collaborate with city arts council and other agencies to put these in the neighborhoods that will help to raise up the neighborhood.

Economic --- the next pillar, the fifth pillar, is economic and employment pillar. And I want to say something here. I was in a meeting yesterday. A lot of the young men that have gone to prison, some of them may have committed a crime at 18, they committed a crime at 19. Now they're 38. They know that it was a stupid thing that they did. They have gone and they have spent time in the Criminal Justice System, but when they come back, they can't get a job because we are not forgiving. Now, certainly if somebody committed a heinous crime, I'd understand that. But if somebody committed a petty crime, they spent their time, we have to try to open up where corporations and companies would give these guys a chance again to be able to get it right. The truth of the matter is the things that I did at age 18 I don't do at age 50. So I think all of you that are sitting here looking at me saying what. So a lot of those guys are going into the Criminal Justice System and they are coming back and there's no opportunities for them so they go back to what they know.

So I think those are some of the things that we have to look at, so maybe putting together business incubators, workforce development. We have a gospel city bank where we teach young people how to bank from a very young age; summer employment for youth. If you want to get the boys and the girls off the streets, we have to give them something to do and put some money in their pocket and let them understand that responsibility and accountability is important; business expos, teaching them that they can do this; career development and counseling, financial literacy and counseling to collaborate with banks, colleges and universities and local businesses.

And the final area that I want to deal with is health and wellness. We have a lot of psychological problems that are going on in these communities. So we

need to provide clinical services. Get some of the doctors and some of the others to do some pro bono items to help people so that they can have proper health, health and wellness conferences, health career symposiums, satellite medical/dental/eye offices, collaborate with medical schools, insurance companies and medical agencies. If you're going to win the game, it's not going to be simply on defense. We have to come up with some offensive strategies so that we can then begin to curb what's going on in our communities. And if all of us would join together with our resources, with our minds, then we can turn it around, because as the tide rises, all the boats go up. Thank you for your time.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you very much, Reverend.

MS. GREEN HAWKINS: Mr. Chairman, may I be recognized?

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, ma'am.

MS. GREEN HAWKINS: Thank you. I have a prior commitment, a family commitment, and I will need to leave in a moment, but I just wanted to take a moment to let our guests here know that I do believe that this is a very important issue and to not take my absence or departure as a sign that I have any disregard for this issue. When Mr. Robinson spoke with me about it, I immediately signed on to sponsor the motion for this public hearing. And I will be reading the transcript of the remaining testimony and working with Mr. Robinson to see what we can do to address this very important crucial issue of violence in our communities. Thank you.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, Councilwoman Green Hawkins. Our next presentor is going to be the Honorable Richard Adams, who is here today on behalf of the Institute of the Black World. He's a former member of our Pittsburgh Public School Board, also a former mayor of Homewood Renaissance and a former member of Urban Youth Action. The Honorable Richard Adams.

MR. ADAMS: Thank you very much. My name is Rick Adams. As has been stated, I live in the 11th Ward of City of Pittsburgh, 700 North Sheridan Avenue, and I've been a lifelong resident. I’m a proud graduate of Westinghouse High School, Belmar Elementary. I work with the community college and believe that we all are involved in this great enterprise to build a better and greater city.

Well, first of all, let me say, Councilman Robinson and Councilwoman Sue Means and the Councilperson who has just left, I want to commend you for having this hearing. Sometimes we get a little bit cynical probably, we probably get a little anesthetized to violence, particularly in certain areas. There is so much around. You can't ignore it. It's there in your face, but you can't break down every time you see it.

I Chair the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, a think act tank, as we like to call it. I also co-convene the Pittsburgh Justice Collaborative. One of the programs that the institute is involved with on a national level is the Black Family Summit. And some of the organizations, they're professional organizations, they involve the Association of Blacks and Criminal Justice, the National Association of Black Psychologists, the Black Psychiatrists of America, the National Dental Association, the National Medical Association, the National Black Law Enforcement of America, the Black Social Workers, the Black Professional Firefighters and the All Healers Mental Health Alliance, to name a few of these organizations. And I bring them up because it is our firm belief as a group that we face an emergency crisis of tremendous proportions in America and in the black community in particular, a state of emergency, if you will. And we've been pursuing the wrong-headed policy. The war on drugs has been, as we state, a war on us. If you look at one of the startling figures that I've learned, and in getting into this deeper and deeper, you kind of live it and see it and work with people that are caught up in it.

When we started looking at the facts, the story is just horrendous. For instance, African-Americans are about 13 percent of the population of the United States. But when you look at who is incarcerated for drugs, it is 70-something percent; over 70 percent are African-Americans. So what does that tell us? It's not that blacks use more drugs. We also see that blacks use drugs at the same rate roughly of their proportion in the population, 13, 14 percent. So the African-American community is the victim of a racialized public policy, criminal justice policy that is discriminatory and oppressive.

I looked at gun violence, and it's interesting because sometimes we focus on guns, and tragically we've

seen recently where people use other things; machetes, knives and things. So the gun is not really the problem. But when I looked into it, it was interesting. The United States isn't necessarily the worst country for homicides by gun. In fact, over 50 years, it has really declined. And a lot of what's going on now is at its lowest level since the 1960s. So in 50 years, you can look at violence surging in the 1970s, hitting a peak in the 1980s, in the early 1990s, that's when the gang situation kind of came to Pittsburgh, but since then, the rates are equal to those around the 1960s. So I think that we need to analyze why is violence continuing, why is the rate of incarceration continuing when actually those kinds of serious drugs are diminishing.

One of the things that I found, and you'll see it in the document, is that the Untied States compares favorably to other nations, except for in Canada, Western Europe and the Scandinavian nations. We have a higher rate of gun violence. We're lower, though, than the Caribbean and Latin American countries. So we're kind of in the middle there. And what that said to me is that the U.S. gun violence rate is a legacy of racial oppression and subjugation and the burgeoning wealth gap in our country. And in that way our country is more like the Caribbean and Latin America, which large areas of those countries are characterized by large swaths of third-world abject poverty, a legacy of racial oppression, lucrative drug trafficking and political violence.

I submit to you that violence is social and cultural and is committed within a geographical sphere where sustained relationships are often settled through physical means. And when you think about it, it could be anyplace, not just the ghetto. If you worked in a mill, you might say five o'clock, step across the line and we'll settle this. That's violence. Not the worst kind of violence necessarily, but violence.

In other words, people who know each other have a familial, racial, social or business relationship when they commit crimes against each other. In other words, they know each other. Hence, there is no such thing as black-on-black crime. Blacks commit violence against each other at about the same rate as whites commit crime against each other. Economic and social distance largely precludes violence between people of varied economic status and ethnicity. I might want to do something in

Homewood/Brushton. It’s another proposition to go across the Highland Park Bridge and enter Fox Chapel. I will be immediately noticed and I will be treated very differently and recognized that I don't even belong in those surroundings.

The only drive-by I ever saw was on the TV show, The Untouchables, and it was largely Italians shooting each other, but sometimes the Irish or Jews are in the mix. The common dominator between Al Capone and the gang and street violence today is poverty and the lack of access to legal means to escape it. For the six decades of my life since I first looked at the 1960 census, black adults have had an unemployment rate twice that of whites. And black youth have had unemployment rates anywhere from 40 to 80 percent. That’s over half a century, which I submit to you in a materialistic society like ours, particularly as the Judge mentioned when you remove the father and increasingly now even the mother, parents from the situation, there's no support to sustain communities and families.

So I think the solution is to be found in several strategic and public policy areas. Under the strategic, the County needs to support black service providers with funding to build sustainable capacities, not just a little money to keep going or the half of a staff person or anything like that. To really make a change, the County needs to support grass-root community initiatives. I understand the Judge said relationships and the good Reverend mentioned relationships. I think relationships are important, whether it's the coach, whether it's the step-dad, whether it’s mom, whoever he is, the next door uncle that has been adopted into your family, we have all looked up to different people who have made a difference. We need to support culturally relevant programs. And in this stand, we need to use African-American and African-centered professionals as service providers.

And then, finally, as a strategic point, it's good to serve the youth, but I get a little tired when you say the youth are the future. The first thing I say to that is, no, they're not the future; they're here now. They're right here walking among us now. They're not the future. But even more telling to me is that we had to deal with the Going To Be Here A While Group is what I call them, and that's the group that’s like 21 to 40 years

of age. If you do something real bad, you're 20 years of age, and you get a 20-year sentence and you serve. Well, guess what, when you get out, you're 40-years of age. And the Creator is blessing many of us now to live into our 80s, our 90s. So if a felony conviction becomes a scarlet F on one's forehead and bars them from getting public housing or getting scholarships or getting certain jobs, what are they supposed to do for the next 40 or 50 years of their lives? I think that’s a wrong-headed policy that we're pursing.

In terms of public policy, we need to implement Ban the Box. I commend you all on passing that. I believe the Executive moved and the City Council of Pittsburgh moved on it, but it's like a civil rights law, you already have it on the books, but if you don't enforce it, whoopee. So in fact, are people being allowed the opportunity to get interviewed for a job if, in fact, they do have a felony conviction? And even more to the point, we need studies that will tell us after that has been done and they have to be cleared, if they move to the next step, have any of them gotten the job? It's kind of unequal opportunity, another canard, if you will. Now, there's not signs up that say no Jews, no blacks or anything like that, but if I go ahead and make my application and I never get the job, yeah, whoopee. So to me, we need to have studies showing that people who have felony convictions have, number one, gotten through the process, have gotten interviewed, and then when they have to reveal that, yes, I do have this in my background, that if they are, in fact, qualified that they get hired for the job.

We need to employ returning citizens, which I just spoke to. We need to embrace divergent programs. I and the Institute of the Black World, we help sponsor delegations from three cities, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Washington DC to go to Seattle, Washington, to look at the Law Enforcement Assisted Divergent Program or LEAD. And this is a fascinating program where police officers, not the community relations or what have you, but officers who work this particular community are involved and they have the power that they can decide to divert someone for a low-level crime to get services, be it mental health, be it physical medical help. Of course, on the East Coast, it's a much different kind of environment than it is out this way. They have for a long time written tickets for

like marijuana use, and they have a different attitude about it. They even have a wet house, they're called, that if you have an alcoholic problem, you can go there and drink. It's an interesting model. I think we need to look at it. Everything won't work for each population in each city, but the idea that we divert people from incarceration --- the United States has five percent of the world's population but 25 percent of all the people who are incarcerated. We have more people incarcerated in the United States than are incarcerated in China that is four times our population. So I would urge you to take a look at LEAD. We're going to try to bring that here to the city and those cities I mentioned.

And I'll close by saying under the guise of the War on Drugs we have experienced Mike Brown killed in Ferguson, Missouri. It hasn't been focused on enough that Eric Garner, the young man in New York City, was choked. Do you remember what his, quote, crime was, he was selling loose cigarettes? Oh, my God, what a terrible crime. Yet, he's dead now. And then we have had Jordon Miles savagely beaten and Leon Ford maimed here in Pittsburgh. All of this has been under this War on Drugs. We need to declare a cease fire, pursue a public health warning and strategy that emphasizes mental and medical treatment, harm reduction policies, diversion from incarceration, education, training and employment programs. It's time to end mandatory sentencing, impact patrols and racial profiling. It just agitates and contributes to the level of violence.

And then, finally, here's some groups deserving of support --- it's not all inclusive --- Carter D. Woodson Academy, that's a fantastic program with young people, and Omega Psi Phi sponsors that; the African-American Achievement Trust that I mentioned, which the Urban League sponsors. I have two mentees who have been with me now since the 6th grade and getting ready to on to the 9th grade; Urban Youth Action Program, Homewood Renaissance, House of Manna, 100 Black Men, Amachi Pittsburgh. There's some 80,000 children who have parents, one or more incarcerated now. We're trying to provide service to them; the North Side Coalition for Fair Housing. In fact, we took some of their representatives to Seattle because they already had a program going on with the local zone commander that first they would check with the owners, the North Side Collation owns their

housing. If you want to live here, you got to change your behavior. They would be sent to parenting school, anger management, the things that they needed to get. One Hood is one you may have heard about working with young people and giving them skills and hip-hop and music production and film; New Voices Pittsburgh, United Black Book Clubs of Pittsburgh. There are several, Sankofa Group, Sankofa Ujamaa Collective, Adonai Center, Youth Mentoring Programs, a program called GRASS and the Association of Black Social Workers. One of those units is in Pittsburgh, and they are working on emotional health, demancipation circles and healing is a big thing that we've been investigating because, let's face it, when young people bury more people than we old did, something wrongs. We should be taking our colleagues and going to the funeral home. And I can count how many young people who have gone and seen more of their close friends lost before they were 20 years of age. So we got to figure out ways to reduce this violence. I think it really will --- sense will come from a broad-based comprehensive public health approach to it. Thank you very much.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, Mr. Adams. You gave me good segway into our next presenter. First of all, on behalf of this Council, I want to thank all of the folks who are involved in law enforcement for the very outstanding job you do from day to day. There is no way for us to appreciate it unless we're really out there with you. But I thank you on behalf of this Council for the very diligent work you do and even for some of the abuse you suffer from those who don’t know what you're doing and some of your brothers and sisters who are doing things they should not be doing. But I thank you in advance.

Chief Timothy O'Connor, Chief of Police, Bethel Park Police.

CHIEF O'CONNOR: Honorable Council members, thank you for inviting me here; Timothy O'Connor, O-C-O-N-N-O-R. I'm a resident of the 31st Ward in the City of Pittsburgh, 5137 Glenhurst Road. Thank you.

I've listened to the previous speakers and especially the Judge, and one of the things that I can say is what we really need to do is follow their suggestions. And a primary way is --- we can reduce violence is by building strong families, especially in the urban core and providing job training and education and benefits so that we have people that feel that they have a stake in the

system. And I think those are long-term goals. So I guess I'm going to say what do we do in the interim? I had about 34 years with the City of Pittsburgh. I worked in every city, neighborhood. The last six years I was assigned to the Zone 5 station in the East End, which is one of the most violent stations in the City of the six zones.

A couple of things that I have seen that had worked over the years and I think we need to do more because the police are tasked with taking these shooters off of the streets. That is the primary goal of policing is protecting the neighborhood, protecting the community, protecting human life.

The first thing I would say is the use of technology which we did not have years ago but is now available to the police, cameras. When I was the Zone 5 Commander, the City only had two cameras at two intersections. And when a young man was shot and the detectives were tasked with investigating this, they would say to me, Commander, are there any cameras? And I would say, no, there are not. And they have some more ordered and to be placed out there, but it was the last area to have cameras placed in it.

Where we were successful in solving some of the shootings was on the Port Authority property. They had cameras there, very excellent cameras. The City of Pittsburgh Housing Authority had cameras on their property and our detectives were able to, with a couple of shooting incidents, review the video and swiftly made arrests and take those people out of circulation so that way they cannot shoot anyone ever again.

The second thing that I have seen over the years is a strategy. Rather than us coming out and strong-arming people on the street, what has worked is when we had large investigations behind the scenes. I can say back in the 90s there was an initiative and dozens of people were indicted and they were with this law gang and they broke the back of that gang, and they were a very violent gang at the time. The North Side had an initiative which was very successful. Last year in Zone 5 in Wilkinsburg, there was one. But those things are not easily done and it takes a partnership generally with Federal agency's that have the resources and the time to come in and devote to that, you know, partnership with the local communities. And they've been wildly successful

when they've been employed, but I don't think they've been employed enough. And I think when we take out these people, these most violent people in a town along the Mon Valley or a neighborhood in the City of Pittsburgh, then I think you're going to have a framework for peace where we can then have these programs over a long time come to fruition. So I thank you very much for affording me the time to speak. Thank you.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you very much, Chief. Often times our police officers and those who manage them are unduly criticized for not doing things they are not tasked to do, they show up after something has happened and that's what we see on the nightly news, not some of the things that the Chief was talking about that have to be done behind the scenes. So I thank him for taking time from his busy schedule and his tasks to come and share with me and my colleagues. And again, on behalf of this Council, I thank you very much, Chief, and those you represent for the service you have provided to us.

Next I would like to hear from Marc Cherna, Director of Allegheny County's Human Services Department.

MR. CHERNA: Hi, I'm Marc Cherna. I live at 5307 St. James Terrace in Pittsburgh. Thank you for inviting me to speak about this important topic. The Department of Human Services works to make quality of life better for people of all ages. We serve over 225,000 Allegheny County residents each year through a combination of Federal, State and County funds. Our programs are making families and communities stronger, particularly in areas with the lowest incomes. Life inside their homes may be safer for children and families, but some of the neighborhoods around them are extremely violent.

The four-year homicide rate in the City of Pittsburgh is higher than cities of similar size, as well as large cities such as New York City. The homicide rate for little towns like Clariton, Duquesne, Wilkinsburg and McKeesport is almost double the rate of the City of Pittsburgh. Most of the homicides are from shootings, and most of the shootings are done by people who are part of a gang. The vast majority of perpetrators and victims are known to the system and many are in need of mental health or substance abuse treatment, but they do not successfully engage with providers. The services are available, but folks don't take advantage of them.

The obvious question is how could New York City's homicide rate be lower than Pittsburgh's? What could we do here that could quickly bring down the community violence? I asked my research office to take a close look at this, not just to collect stories and anecdotes and ideas, but look for solid research studies. I also stressed that I wanted solutions that could reduce violence within the next year or two, not waiting for something that is going to take 10, 15 years to do that.

They spent months reading research reports done by national criminologists, including our own experts, such as Al Blumsten and Dan Nagen from Carnegie Mellon and David Harris and Ed Mulvey and Rolf Loeber from the University of Pittsburgh. And they looked to see what actually has a proven effect on violence. They interviewed over 50 experts, including practitioners, people who run programs here, to look at their evidence for ways their programs are reducing violence.

In June of 2014, DHS released a report entitled Reducing Street Violence in Allegheny County, found on our website, and we sent it out previously, but if you want to take another look it’s there, and from the hundreds of programs and approaches we studied, we found four strategies that reduce violence. One is Focused Deterrence. The basic idea is that law enforcement identifies who is in the groups, gathers evidence it could use to prosecute them, and brings the groups together to let them know that if there's another shooting, they all will be prosecuted or they could stop the shooting and take advantage of human services, like helping them to find jobs. Community members stand up at these meetings and say they want the violence to stop and how it has negatively impacted on them. Pittsburgh Initiative to Reduce Crime, PIRC, is our local version of this strategy. Until the new Chief McLay came to town it was not embraced. It is now and we think that is a --- very positive in development.

The second thing is Violence Interrupters, and these are trained outreach workers who mediate disputes, help group members connect with human resources in ways that complement focused deterrence and affects the group dynamic. Violence interrupters are individuals who work on the street to stop the shootings by paying close attention to what the community and gang members are saying about the disagreements between groups.

These interrupters, who may have been involved with the gangs, but have moved away from criminal activity, detect the possibility of violence and work to mediate disputes and provide important information to law enforcement to prevent violence. With the help of trained outreach workers, violence interrupters connect group members with human services and in a handful of cases have worked with law enforcement and the courts to move individuals at high risk of being shot to another part of the State or County.

Because violence interrupters often have their own criminal histories, law enforcement may reject their assistance. But studies of violence interrupters programs show that they have reduced retaliatory killings and increased the flow of street-level intelligence to police.

The violence interrupter program known as One Vision, One Life operate in the City of Pittsburgh for nearly a decade and included a hospital-based element, but it placed a wider range of demands on its staff and had less coordination with the police than was required and did not focus as heavily on active gang members in a way shown to reduce violence. The newly-formed Community Violence Prevention Project, modeled on a promising practice in Baltimore, is trying to stem the tide of retribution killings. Operated by the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health engages gunshot victims in services and support when they arrive at local trauma hospital. The initiative also conducts homicide reviews. The Community Violence Prevention Project will begin measuring its impact on shootings after it is fully implemented.

Youth Places is another provider who provides summer employment and after school programs throughout the County. While its primary mission has not been to serve as violence interrupters, it does bring gang members together in positive ways. The Youth Opportunities Development, which has conducted street outreach for PIRC received strong endorsements from interviewees for its capacity to reach and engage potentially violent individuals and may therefore be a logical choice to consider in building a violence interrupter program. The problem is the funding has been minimal and they're only able to reach a few neighborhoods, but the results are promising.

The third thing is Directed Patrols. When specially-trained, supervised police force is focused on

getting the illegal guns and ammunition off the streets, it has a large effect on violent crime. Research shows that this needs to be focused on guns and ammunition in hot spot areas, not blanketing a community with police. We made a number of recommendations that documents the strategies that may make an impact.

The last piece was training police in ways that can enhance police-community relations. Chief McLay has embraced these recommendations. He supports the recommendations and has secured Federal grants to train police so that they increase police legitimacy and is committed to focused deterrence and other evidence-based policing.

We also have the services to reduce violence that we could possibly fund through our categorical allocations. The research shows that Aggression Replacement Training, Functional Family Therapy, Multisystemic Therapy, and Stop Now and Plan are four programs that are promising. We are supporting all those programs financially and we're seeking ways of expanding them by applying for grants. Unfortunately, categorical funding is not --- it's very limited for inner city crimes prevention. So we have to come together and be creative to find funds for the program. We're also providing analytical support to law enforcement and the Criminal Justice System. It's not enough to work on making sure this family has housing and jobs if they can't feel safe enough to send their kids to school.

So our recommendations to expand violence interrupters beyond the communities that the YOD can serve is more in the city and in other hotspots in the County requires funding, to support the collaboration and training across police forces and to look at the focused deterrence program for communities outside of the City and within the City and to continue to focus on evidence-based programs to try to get some of them. And also look to engage more of our local experts because they are the ones who work internationally. So thanks for your time.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, Mr. Cherna. As a segway to our next speaker, let me say on behalf of those of us who are sitting here as members of Council, we want to thank Mr. Cherna and his staff, as well as our District Attorney, Mr. Zappala, for the many things that he's doing on a daily basis to support the policing efforts in the smaller communities in our County. There are over a 100

police departments in our County and oftentimes what we think they should be doing they can't do because they don’t have the money or they don't have the technology.

I also thank my colleagues for looking at ways that we can help not only our district attorney but our Superintendent of our County police in providing resources to these smaller police departments; body cameras, equipment, some things that our district attorney is able to provide to them, but it always gets down to the fact that there's not enough money. And hopefully, collectively we can begin to address this even more systematically then we have. A body camera for a police officer in a small community probably could produce wonders for that officer, for the community and in fighting crime and making sure that we have better ways of determining what happens when our police officers encounter the citizens that they are sworn to protect. So I thank you, Mr. Cherna, for your input.

What I'd like to have now is Pastor Jerrel Gilliam, President and CEO of Mosaic Ministry Group, to come forward. If I mispronounced anybody's name, please correct me. And as soon as the Pastor is in force and he gives us his name and address, the floor is his.

PASTOR GILLIAM: Thank you. My name is Pastor Jerrel Gilliam. My current residence is in Forest Hills, 718 Cascade Road. The church that I pastor is in South Park, 2624 Brandis Road, South Park, 15129.

I've been a pastor for over 20 years. And again, I want to thank you all for this opportunity to come and for inviting me and allow me to be a part of this. Over the 20 years, I've been involved in various places throughout Allegheny County and have been involved with various initiatives. I've worked with the B.O.S.S. Urban Leadership Initiative, where they identified young leaders who are involved in youth, in effective youth programs to help them become more effective in what they do. I've worked with PERK, which was recently mentioned here under Jake Gilmer. I've pastored over in East Liberty for awhile and was involved very much in that community. I was a family counselor with Allegheny Academy and worked with the adjudicated youth in that capacity, as well. I'm currently the Director of Programs at Light of Life in addition to being a pastor. So I'm kind of busy. But I've been involved with this issue of violence in our communities for a number of years. And if

I would, I won't speak before you long, but just to tell you a little bit of my story. I graduated from Bethel Park. I see people from here. I went to high school there, graduated there with my family, but my parents were from the Hill District and Homewood. So I still have family members in those areas. Some of my members have died as a result of gun violence.

My wife is currently the interim president of Homewood Children Village, so we're very much involved over there, as well. But my involvement to get involved with all of those things started back when I was just out of college. I decided to get involved and become a paramedic. And I was --- I had this dream to be involved in the medical field, so I became a paramedic and I ran with many of the District's here in Pittsburgh, Medic 2, 9, the Hill District. And what I began to learn in going to a lot of those situations when there's been shootings and overdoses was that I began to feel like I was in that illustration of maybe you've heard of the person who's at the bottom of falls and found himself going to the river and grabbing people out who had gone over the falls. And as a paramedic, we are often the ones at the end of the pipeline helping someone who was now a tragedy either with their health or a victim of violence.

I began to say if I became the best paramedic there was and I could save a life better than anyone else, which I thought I was one of the better ones out there, I really wasn’t changing the impact of what was leading the people to find themselves in this situation. And I began to soul search and to look out there and I began to realize that the fabric of the family was breaking down in the families that I was impacting. I felt like in order to be effective, I needed to do something that would impact families. Some of those things were mentioned earlier. And as I began to do my own research, I found that there were places of faith that were involved and many community missionaries that were effective that I wanted to then dedicate the rest of my life to being involved with kind of grassroots efforts. And so that's when I began. I began to get involved. I began to study faith. I went to a Bible college. I ended up getting involved in church because of those things.

And so just very quickly, the things that I began to do when I would go to these new communities was first I would try to identify groups that were already

actively involved. And whether I was at East Liberty or South Park, there are already individuals that are making an impact, and I would say where are those people? I want to find out who they are and get to know them. So I would spend time with them. So I'm very much an advocate of grassroots initiatives.

I created opportunities for increased communication and collaboration. A lot of times where there is mistrust it's because of lack of understanding. And so we need to have opportunities for people to get to know each other and various initiatives that I was involved in with that. As a Christian, I believe in a lot of the teaching of Christ talked about a shining light and darkness, being a model in communities, working with healthy relationships. So because of those, I got involved with mentoring opportunities. Some were mentioned earlier, sports leagues, recreation centers, summer job programs. All those things are very practical in helping to provide not only practical solutions to youth and to those in the community but most importantly it gave opportunity for building relationships with people. Relationships are the golden thing here. It's getting to know people and working with them so they're no longer a statistic but they're a face.

So in closing, what I would say, I believe that the mentors of the community are already in the community. I believe those who are on the ground are already making the impact and learn from them what's working and what's not working. Collaborate with houses of faith and organizations of faith who are already making impact. If there are any ways to fund grassroots efforts with equipment and tools, again, those are already making an impact, to give them the opportunity to do what they are doing in a more effective way.

I mentioned my wife's organization, Homewood Children Village. They have as one of their initiatives is the Power Pack Program, which helps children who are hungry over the weekends to have food through the weekends so that when they go to school on Monday they're not hungry. For many of them, their last meal was on lunch on Friday, and so there are very innovative approaches like that. I've walked with an organization called Mad Dad's, and they are against violence and destructive behavior, and I've walked with them in Wilkinsburg and they're boots on the ground. Basically, they're just challenging other

fathers to spend time in the community walking the streets, talking to the gang members, being a presence, a positive presence in the community. We need to turn the light on. I'm a chairman of the board of an organization called Melting Pot. And again, it's in the South Hills area, and they work with after school programming for children, especially those that are on reduced lunch, those who are at high risk, helping them with their school work and becoming more effective in reading and math skills.

Shiloh Church, as a pastor there, we've been involved in a community of collaborations of sponsoring a community forum. Again, Councilwoman Sue Means has been a part of that. The Honorable Cheryl Allen is a part of that, as well, and others. And again, it's an opportunity to have those who are public officials, those who are leaders in the community, those who are people of faith to come together around a common bond and say how can we make a positive difference, how can we work together. And we're coming up with some innovative ideas that, again, are at the grassroots level.

As the Director of Programs at Light of Life, we're working with men and women who are struggling with life control issues that have lead to homelessness and addiction. It’s difficult work, but we are committed to working one family, one life at a time to change those a lot of times life-long patterns, but we're seeing success.

And I would end with my example again as a Christian in Jesus Christ and what we saw with him was that he didn't affect change from the synagogue or from churches, he did it by being in the communities. He was with those who were the outcasts. He was with those who were troubled. And he spent time with them and he modeled love. He didn't treat them where they worked. He treated them with who they can be. And so there was a vision for the future, neutral honor that he brought to everyone who he encountered. And as leaders, that's what I believe we can do is model what others can be, not where they are, but the God-given person they have been created to be. Thank you for your time.

MR. ROBINSON: Reverend, thank you very much. When we were putting --- those of us who were putting together the speakers list, we cast a wide net not only among our colleagues or my colleagues but interested parties that we knew about who had different points of

view on violence, different experiences, and in that process, we found a gentleman who's listed as Officer Modrak, a School Police Officer in the Bethel Park District. And if Officer Modrak would come forward and give us a little more information about himself and the floor is his.

OFFICER MODRAK: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Council, for allowing me to speak tonight. My name is Jim Modrak, M-O-D-R-A-K, and I'm the school police officer in Bethel Park School District. I reside at 6018 Ramsgate Drive in Bethel Park. I've just recently retired a few years ago as a patrolman with Bethel Park's police department and my title was school resource officer.

And I got involved with that in our community back in early 2000 because we were hit real hard with a drug epidemic in our community. We were losing young adults left and right. Unfortunately, having kids as young as 14-years old get involved with heroin is something we've never, ever seen. So that department was developed by myself and then a couple of years later another officer was assigned SRO. And we were challenged to go out there and make changes within our community at that time. And one of the things we were successful with was that we had a collaboration of our community leaders starting with our magistrate at the time, the late Rob Wyda, working with Mr. Cherna's office coming out of human services and also the district attorney's office.

Our big thing is we presented to different sponsors in our community. We made our information out there in public as much as we can to inform our community what we were fighting at that time. We got out and worked with our community and got that information.

We got to a point where we had families educated about what to look for and they were contacting us as the police so we could provide assistance to their family to minimize the destruction that the drug was taking at that time. We've been very successful. It took quite a few years, and we were very successful. We maintained that program, that school resource officer program, for over 12 years since 2002. We're still working on this program with our new chief, Chief O'Connor here now, who is our police chief in Bethel Park. And our community is working hard to maintain its relationship with the police department, the school district and the community.

We find that it was a great success that when we identified our problem and how to rectify it in getting everybody to work together. Also included in within this process is that Bethel Park is a very religious community with multiple faiths out there and multiple churches. We brought those into and used those resources as much as we can. My point is we identified our problems, got our message out there, made ourselves available. My role as a school resource officer, now with the school police, is not so much as enforcing the law to arresting anybody is the fact that we go out there, provide assistance to families and work with the systems available with the agencies, the courts and the district attorney has provided us. Act 53 made a big plus for us. I can't speak enough of that. That has brought about a lot of the resources for us and our community to get families, to get their children on to the right path without getting involved with Juvenile Court and a negative within our --- criminal arrest. That's been a big program for us and has been greatly successful.

This has come full circle as we work in our community. And I'll give you one example as I close here is that a few years ago we had a young man move in with his father. He had been living with his mother up in the Hill District of Pittsburgh. When the mother passed away, he was then, through the courts, through CYF, was given custody to the father. The father had taken custody of his son. A very real relationship, the father really cared. They had some problems. They were working with us at the school. I got involved. We got to the point where we were able to try to work and counsel this family the best we can. And this gentleman was not from Bethel Park. He moved here to provide a better opportunity for himself for work and for his other children with our schools and the environment that we provided at that time. We found out that within the last year that that young man had picked up a stolen gun, handgun, which is very uncommon for us in our community. It was very striking. We found out that this young man brought the handgun to school. So obviously we were greatly concerned. What was amazing is the trust this father had with us and the relationship that he cooperated with us completely, save us the opportunity to work with his son. Actually, we were able to search the young man's bedroom without no search warrant, alright, without going to court. The father knew

the importance with working with us to make sure his son was safe, make sure the community is safe. So we have had worked as a community in our school on developing this trust.

The one thing I see for this Council --- again, we did recover the gun. And unfortunately, the young man was arrested. He was put in the system. He is back at home with his father. He's a member of our community, and hopefully he'll have success in his life and learned from his mistake.

The best thing I can see from my perspective as a school police officer or school resource officer is allowing me the ability to let these programs sit there, work within the communities and get an opportunity to sit there and reach out to those families and present the opportunity for us to work with our families. And we're not here necessarily to sit there and say we're strictly here about arresting people. We're here to help the families, help them mitigate their problems they are coming across and sit there and make, hopefully, their children be safe and sound and be as successful as they possibly can.

Thank you very much for the time here today, folks, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak. Thank you.

MR. ROBINSON: Officer, I thank you very much. Oftentimes we don't get the first-hand experiences of those who are in law enforcement. And unfortunately, in many of our schools we have police, security officers, probation officers and others. When most of us sitting up here were in school, you never saw anybody in the school with a uniform on unless it was an athlete. Now you go in the schools, before you can get in the door, you see at least one person. I found out a couple of years ago that there were probation officers or parole officers in some of the schools. That just shocked me that they were actually in the school. But I guess if they weren't there, no telling what would be going on.

The last speaker that I have listed is Ms. Flo Taylor.

MS. TAYLOR: Hello, everyone. My name is Flo Taylor. I live in downtown Pittsburgh at 609 Penn Avenue. I've been in and out of Pittsburgh, I guess, not a native, but I've been here back and forth for probably about

30 years. I do a community television program --- well, a couple of them. I have been interested very much in stopping violence, but something happened very recently that just sent me out into the zone from which I may never come back. I do a lot of networking on Facebook. I saw a story about a woman who had just buried the last of her four children to street violence. I have three children of myself, and I thought, oh, my goodness. And I looked at her face and I kept --- I kept looking at her face in this article. And I thought, oh, my gosh, you know, what keeps you --- you know, one child to street violence is enough, but she lost four children to street violence all in a ten year span because of where she lives. What it did was, though --- what seeing that story did was it kind of awakened something in me that I'm pretty sure will remain that way.

It dawned on me that we really need to address this issue of violence in our own communities. It's too much. I reached out to some of the mothers and they are absolutely involved. I'm getting calls now from Los Angeles. I'll be working with --- we set up a Mother's March for Peace. It is set to have happened on Mother's Day, May 10th of this year. There will be a at least one bus load of us going to Harrisburg. We're sending Pittsburgh up to D.C. where this movement begins. So far we have Los Angeles signed up. The person that's in the front of that part of our movement lives in Compton; was born and raised in Compton. They have a lot of information, a wealth of information about how they've been improving things in their neighborhood. I’m waiting to hear from someone from New York City. We will also have mothers going either to their state capitol or to their city council, city county building. So far, I believe there will be six at points; north, south, east and west, New York, Chicago, I believe, will be involved. Los Angeles is already very much involved. We are planning a nationwide movement towards this problem of violence in our neighborhoods.

Because it is a grassroots effort, we do have a lot of people, especially the people from Los Angeles, getting a lot of input and a lot of feedback with respect to the grassroots communities and how they're dealing with these problems within their own communities. There needs to be as much light shed on it as can possibly be. We

--- actually, we cannot have our people running around killing each other. I understand the anxieties, though. I am a parent. And most of the time I was a single parent and so I understand the anxieties. I have a grown son now. If he walks out of the house or he tries to walk out of my house at nighttime, I ask him, I want to know where he's going. I want to know who he's going to be with. We suffer from anxieties that are very, very difficult to explain to people who haven't, you know --- who haven't lived and aren't of us. But I think that as we proceed with the national dialogues, I believe that something very positive will come out of it. I'm already learning about how they have reduced crime and violence in Los Angeles. I don't have the exact statistics, but we're working on that. So far, as soon as we decided to do this and it was kind of a we need to do something about it, we are needing help and support, and we are getting information and feedback, a lot of it, about how to do, and it all, as everyone has said here, it all starts in each community. That's where it starts. We do need help with the problem, but we're coming up with some answers. I ask people please give me operational definitions. You know, don't just say, well, we got theirs and we need to get this. For me, I need something concrete to where we can wrap our arms around it, wrap are arms around the kids that are doing it and help them.

I do work at the Shuman Center. I've been volunteering out there probably for about 10, 11 years off and on. One of the things that I can't wait --- is there some reason I need to stop?

MR. ROBINSON: Not at all. Go ahead.

MS. TAYLOR: Okay. One of the things that I came away with there is that in dealing with the kids, they don't have to write about empathy because they've been bombarded with it from every single direction. And so one day I had the TV cameras, and I went out to Homewood, and there's a little gazebo out there, I set up the camera, I always talk to the kids. One was crying, oh, my gosh, someone just died. The young people walking by were telling me, oh, Ms. Flo, that's nothing, you know, my cousin just died last week; we're just going on down here and get some chicken. So after about an hour, I packed my camera up. I went home very frustrated. But when I got to Shuman Center, I would need for those kids to have some CPR training to try to evolve some empathy.

I had empathy created when Mr. Alex Wilson was there. My dad got sick and I started going back and forth. I kind of lost momentum, but this time something needs to happen. I can't even look at the news. Every time I turn on the news, there's someone getting killed. I turn it off. So I don’t know what's going on in the world and the city and the country because I really don't like watching local news anymore. It's too painful.

But for me, the Mother's Marches for Peace will start. They will be --- it is a national agenda headquartered here in Pittsburgh. We'll be starting it right here and getting together with the mothers who are saying enough, we have to find some solutions. And we definitely need funding once we come up with some things and I guess everybody else is involved with that effort, everyone here. I've heard, you know, grassroots. I keep hearing that, and so we will definitely have to do something about it. That will be my last task on this earth will be trying to find a way to put a dent in it. It is very painful. It's horrific. And we do --- we are going to need funding for something. I'm sure. I don't know exactly. We need to get it all organized and get all the mothers together to see what we can come up with that we can use. City by city, neighborhood by neighborhood we plan to really, really get something started here. So thank you for inviting me here, Mr. Robinson, and nice meeting --- talking with everyone, Mr. Finnerty and Mr. DeFazio, Mr. Macey and Ms. Sue Means. Thank you all.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, Ms. Taylor. Before we end the hearing, do any members of Council have any statement they would like to make? Let me just say that for those who would like a transcript of this hearing what I would suggest that you do is contact the Council office to get details as to when that transcript will be available. Every member of Council will have access to that transcript. Anybody in the general public we will make it available to them if they request it, but please contact the Council office. I want to thank the young lady who diligently is transcribing all of this. I know her fingers are worn to the bone. But I thank her for her service. I thank each and every one of you and I thank all of my colleagues for being here. The hearing is adjourned.

PUBLIC HEARING ADJOURNED AT 6:35 p.m.

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify, as the stenographic reporter, that the foregoing proceedings were taken stenographically by me, and thereafter reduced to typewriting by me or under my direction; and that this transcript is a true and accurate record to the best of my ability.

REPORTER