

Newark gangs agree to truce

By Corey Muhammad
Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEWARK (NNPA) - After a two-year struggle to quell the rising tide of violence that has consumed this city, more than 200 members of two major gangs turned out to sign a historic ceasefire, vowing to exhaust all possible avenues available in order to live in peace.

The agreement, signed at the Broad Street offices of the Newark Housing Authority, was the culmination of three months of intense meetings between the two gangs that were initially held at the Nation of Islam's Muhammad's Mosque No. 25, but eventually expanded to community centers and other locations.

The tough streets of Newark have been center stage in the last few years for the gangs to play out strikes and counterstrikes against one another. The time has come, as one gang member put it, to change the reality of their everyday lives.

"A lot of things have to change," said Face, a Blood leader and founder of Saving Our Souls, an organization to help gang members become productive. "It won't happen overnight, but we're going to have to work on it," said the 33-year-old father of three. He added that he wants to see his children grow up and it was up to all interested parties to stop the violence. "We're about peace right now. We extend a hand to you all and I hope you extend a hand to us," he said.

Blaze, a Crip member who

worked on the agreement, represented a ray of hope to the crowd. He now works making \$27 an hour doing something he admittedly has no idea about a remark that elicited laughter from the crowd. He said he realized his position represents an opportunity for other gang members. "If I do good, it will open up the door for some of you, but it will take time," he said.

Although he played an integral part in bringing the parties together, along with David Muhammad, the deputy mayor refused to take any credit for the ceasefire. "This meeting is not a cheerleading thing. It's not a zoo or a parade or a circus," he said. "It's about people's lives. I live in Newark. I take no credit for this," he added.

There were high hopes for success on both sides. After years of constant tension and violence, the gangs seemed to welcome the agreement as every speaker was interrupted with cheers and applause from the crowd. A few members cited the fact that the rival gangs were assembled in a packed room without any guns or knives. It was testament to the trust they have in the security that was provided by the Nation of Islam and to their dedication to peace.

Byron "Boogie" Kelley, who was instrumental in organizing the meeting, said he hopes to duplicate the treaty in the prisons where there has been recent clashes between the Bloods and Crips.

A Mother's Day melee left five correction officers

injured and one gang member in the hospital after he was stabbed.

The two groups were housed in two separate facilities, but for the last two months they have been placed in the same cell block at a new \$410 million state-of-the-art jail, according to Essex County Warden, Keith Muhammad Abu Bakr Ali. Exacerbating already existing problems is what has been termed the "blue flu"—where officers who object to the housing arrangements have called in sick in very large numbers, posing security problems. Mr. Ali, who was in attendance, said he also hoped the efforts would be a role model for other cities throughout the country.

Also in attendance were Councilwoman Bessie Walker, Vice President of Newark Public Schools Pat Council, Frederick Bey of the Million Man March, Million Women's Coalition of Newark and Sergeant DeLacy Davis, president and founder of Black Cops against Police Brutality (B-CAP).

Following the meeting, Min. Muhammad said he was optimistic that the ceasefire will work, because it was initiated by the gangs.

"They sought us only to help them and for our guidance," he said, while acknowledging that there are forces working against the peace process, but added that there are people in positions to help make it a success. The deputy mayor agreed.

"It's important to keep

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Missouri cops target Black motorists

By Alvin A. Reid
Special to Sentinel-Voice

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (NNPA) - For the fourth time in four years, African-American motorists are far more likely to be stopped by police than Whites or any other minority.

In addition, regardless of whether there is a warrant involved, Black drivers are more subject to have their vehicles searched.

According to Attorney Jay Nixon's 2003 report on Missouri traffic stops, African-Americans were "stopped at a rate 36 percent higher than expected, based on their proportion of the driving-age population."

In fact, this is up 1 percent from the 35 percent differential in 2002.

Again, the percentages on searches based on race shows a staggering difference based on race.

Just fewer than 12.45 percent of Blacks stopped were searched, compared to 6.1 percent of Whites. This means Black drivers who are stopped are 80 percent more likely to be searched than a White driver.

While the results scream of racial profiling, Nixon says the statistics cannot prove or disprove any theories.

"A statistical disproportion did not prove that law enforcement decisions involving traffic stops are being based solely on inappropriate factors," Nixon said in a press release.

Nixon praised police departments for being forthright with traffic stop information, and said Missouri "is the first state to undertake such analysis on this scale, and our state continues to be a national leader in committing resources to assess traffic stops and eliminate racial disparities in them."

John Chasnoff, a spokesman for The Coalition Against Crimes and Repression, said the weakest part of Missouri's statute calling for data compilation of traffic stops is that "there is no enforcement of penalties."

"There is no process to make change," Chasnoff said.

The policy says that there should be a way to red-flag problem officers and the governor can withhold state funding from departments that do not file their traffic stop statistics with Nixon's office.

In 2002, 59 agencies did not meet reporting deadlines and 56 did not comply in 2003. In 2003, the Missouri Department of Public

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Southern Nevada Water Authority member agencies: Big Bend Water District; the cities of Boulder City, Henderson, Las Vegas and North Las Vegas; the Clark County Water Reclamation District and the Las Vegas Valley Water District